



Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations



**Land Ports
Authority of India**
Systematic Seamless Secure

Summary Report
Webinar
on
***Gender Mainstreaming at
Integrated Check Posts in India***

21 October, 2021

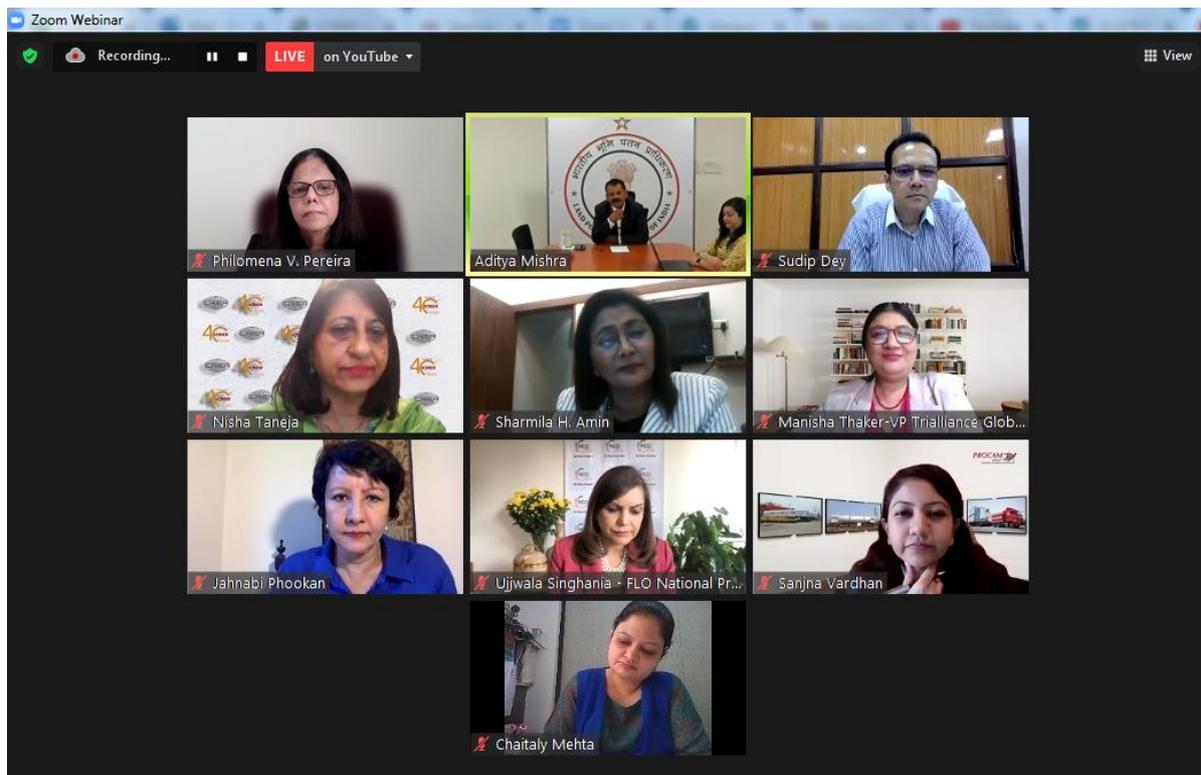


Webinar on Gender Mainstreaming at Integrated Check Posts in India

21 October, 2021

In a first of its kind initiative, the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) and the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) came together to hold a webinar on gender mainstreaming at the Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) in India. *Gender Mainstreaming* refers to an inclusive approach to public policy involving the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programs.

The webinar was supported by the FICCI Ladies Organization (FLO), Federation of Freight Forwarders' Associations in India (FFFAI), and the Association of Multimodal Transport Operators of India (AMTOI).



Webinar Context

In recent years India has undertaken several reform measures to improve its business environment. As a result, its ranking in the *Ease of Doing Business Index* prepared by The World Bank Group improved substantially from 142 in 2015 to 63 in 2020.

India is also a signatory to the WTO’s *Trade Facilitation Agreement* (TFA) which provides an important international framework for reducing trade costs. A *National Committee on Trade Facilitation* (NCTF) has been set up to facilitate implementation of the provisions. In the 2021 *United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation*, which ranks countries based on the implementation scores of 58 measures, India has scored an overall 90 percent as compared to 78.49 per cent in 2019. However, India’s score is only 66 per cent in the “Women in Trade Facilitation” component.

Taking cognizance of this aspect, the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP) 2020-2023 has noted that *gender mainstreaming* “is the only parameter on which India has not performed as well as its regional counterparts”. Accordingly, the NTFAP specifically recommends the promotion of “gender inclusiveness in trade” as an action point.

The Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI), has been actively involved in building land ports – Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) at India’s borders and provide state of the art infrastructure facilities to facilitate seamless and efficient movement of cargo and passenger movement. There are currently nine ICPs operational in India and fourteen under development.

Functional		Under Development	
Punjab	Attari	Uttarakhand	Banbasa
	PTB at Dera Baba Nanak	Uttar Pradesh	Rupaidiha
Bihar	Raxaul		Sonauli
	Jogbani	Bihar	Bhitamore
West Bengal	Petrapole	West Bengal	Fulbari
Tripura	Agartala		Panitanki
	Srimantapur		Jaigoan
Assam	Sutarkandi		Ghojadanga
Manipur	Moreh		Mahadipur
			Hili
			Changrabandha
		Tripura	Sabroom
		Meghalaya	Dawki
		Mizoram	Kawrpuchhuah

The ICPs are important gateways for India’s trade with the neighbouring countries as well as Southeast Asia. In 2019-20, nearly 40 per cent of India’s total trade with Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, and Pakistan took place through the ICPs. The role of ICPs in facilitating trade is set to enhance further with the ICPs forming an essential component of the goal of seamless transport connectivity within the BBIN region as well as realizing the vision of economic corridors linking India and East Asia.

Typically, as in the case of men, the interface of women with the export/import processes through the ICP - from approach to the ICP till issuance of exit pass – as a *user* occurs at two levels.

- First is as *users* - as trader, transporter, or logistics operators such as custom house agents and freight forwarders.
- The second is as *providers* - as staff of LPAI and partner agencies operating the trade facilities and managing the trade processes for cross-border movement of cargo.

In a recent study, Taneja et.al 2021 point out that at both these levels the presence of women is hardly visible. Further, gender responsive infrastructure and facilities are largely missing or of poor quality at the ICPs at Raxaul, Attari, Jogbani, Moreh and Petrapole that were operational at the time of the survey.

Webinar Objective

The objective of the consultative webinar was to gather insights on the challenges related to trade facilitation faced by women at international trading points on the land borders and the measures that can be taken to address these.

The discussion focussed on:

1. Sensitizing trade bodies about the issue of gender mainstreaming highlighted in the *Trade Facilitation Action Plan*;
2. Understanding the “pain points” using a gender lens that constrain women *users* - as trader, transporter, or logistics operators such as custom house agents and freight forwarder - at the land ports in India; and
3. Suggestions on measures that would enhance women’s safety and security at the land ports in India.

Webinar Participants

The participants included:

- Aditya Mishra, *Chairman, Land Ports Authority of India*
- Nisha Taneja, *Professor, ICRIER*
- Ujjwala Singhania, *National President, FLO*
- Sharmila H. Amin, *Convenor, Women’s Wing, AMTOI*
- Sudip Dey, *Vice Chairman, FFFAI*
- Jahnabi Phookan, *Immediate Past President, FLO*

- Chaitaly Mehta, *Director, EKF Global Logistics Pvt. Ltd & Member, FFFAI*
- Ittu Sharma, *CEO, Kodan Solutions & Member, AMTOI*
- Philomena V. Pereira, *MD, PV Agencies Freight Forwarders Pvt. Ltd. & Member, FFFAI*
- Sanjna Vardhan, *Senior Manager - International Business, PROCAM Group*
- Manisha Thaker, *VP-Business Development, Trialliance Global Solutions India Pvt. Ltd and EC Member, EXIM Club, Vadodara*
- Pardeep Sehgal, *Sr. VP, Indian Importers Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IICCI) & Executive Member, SAARCCI*
- Sanjana Joshi, *Senior Consultant, ICRIER*
- Samridhi Bimal, *Senior Consultant, Ernst and Young*
- Kishika Mahajan, *Intern, ICRIER*

Key Takeaways

- While the majority of India's trade is carried out by sea and air and only 3 per cent of India's total trade is carried out by land ports, there is greater awareness at the LPAI to set up gender friendly infrastructure.
- The LPAI has taken cognizance of the issue of gender mainstreaming highlighted in the *Trade Facilitation Action Plan* and has set a target to make the land ports more gender friendly in the next 3 years.
- In contrast, even though in recent years, some steps have been taken at the seaports and airports to provide basic infrastructure such as separate washrooms for women, these have largely been ad hoc and there has been little attempt to engage with stakeholders.
- Many of the logistics associations are not even aware of the NTFAP's highlight on gender in trade facilitation.
- The infrastructure deficits, safety related challenges combine with socio-cultural biases to perpetuate an unwelcoming environment for women at the ICPs.
- Even logistics operators such as customs house agents and freight forwarders prefer to send the male employees rather than female employees to take care of the work at the ports.

- The first ‘pain point’ is the access to the ICPs which are located in remote areas at the border. In most cases the approach roads connecting the ICP with the nearby towns are in a bad condition and unsafe for women. The ICPs are also not connected by public transport.
- There are no gender responsive facilities such as separate information counters, childcare facilities etc.
- Even where separate washrooms are available most often these are not clean or have running water.
- There are hardly any women staff. The only visible presence of women is among the security forces. This too is limited to a couple of women constables for checking women travelers at the immigration desk.
- The LPAI Chairman noted that a study of all ICPs from the standpoint of gender mainstreaming would be extremely useful and provide a strong base for further initiatives and measures for putting in place a gender inclusive and responsive trade facilitation ecosystem at all ICPs.
- Participants hoped that this consultative webinar would lead to more such regular consultations by the LPAI and that other agencies related to trade facilitation would also follow suit.

Media Coverage

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/small-biz/trade/exports/insights/target-is-to-make-all-integrated-check-posts-gender-friendly-in-3-years-aditya-mishra-chairman-lpai/articleshow/87219455.cms?from=mdr>