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Gender Mainstreaming at India's Land Ports

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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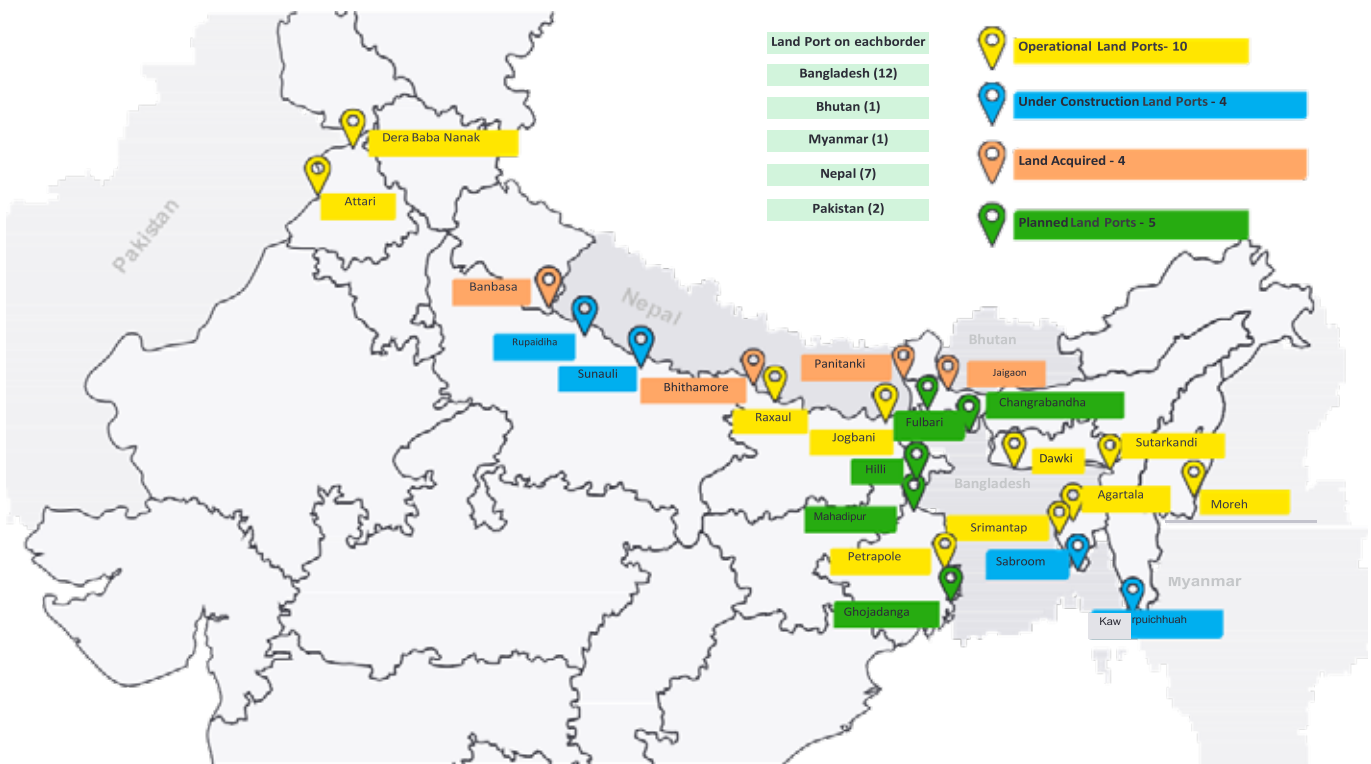
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Introduction

This study was initiated in support of the announcement by the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) in 2021 that it aims to make all Indian Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) gender friendly in three years. India shares land borders with seven countries – Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, China, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh – and the ICPs, spread across 15104 km, operate as key land ports for trade across the land border with neighbouring countries. Land ports are likely to play an even greater role in facilitating trade, particularly on India's eastern flank, since they are an essential component of the goal of seamless transport connectivity within the BBIN and BIMSTEC regions and of realising the vision of economic corridors linking India and East Asia.



Source: Land Ports Authority of India

While enhancement and upgradation of infrastructure at the land ports are important elements in both the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan (NMP) and the National Logistics Policy 2022, the immediate

“Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.”

UN Economic and Social Council Report, 1997

context for the LPAI initiative to make India’s ICPs gender friendly is the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (2020-2023). The NTFAP (2020-2023) specifically includes the promotion of “gender inclusiveness in trade” as an action point (Action Point #27).

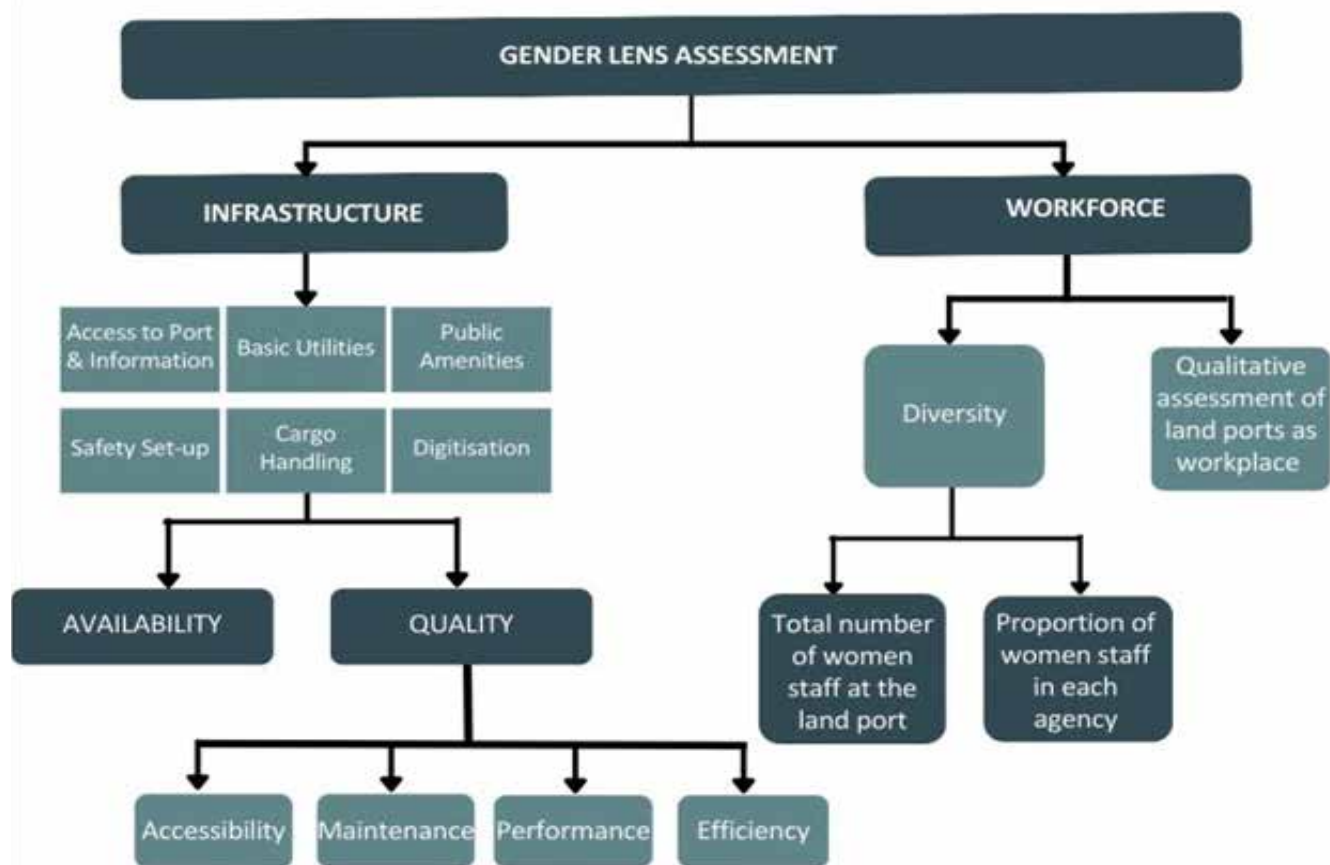
In this context, the objective of this study has been to provide an evidence-based, gender-lens analysis of both hard and soft infrastructure gaps and safety related challenges that combine with existing socio-cultural barriers to constrain women and perpetuate a challenging environment for them at the land ports in India. The study also recommends targeted gender mainstreaming actions

to make the land port environment and operations gender responsive. While prepared with the particular objective of making India’s land ports gender friendly, the study can also serve as a useful reference guide for other agencies involved in trade facilitation in adopting a gender mainstreaming approach, both within India as well as in other developing countries.

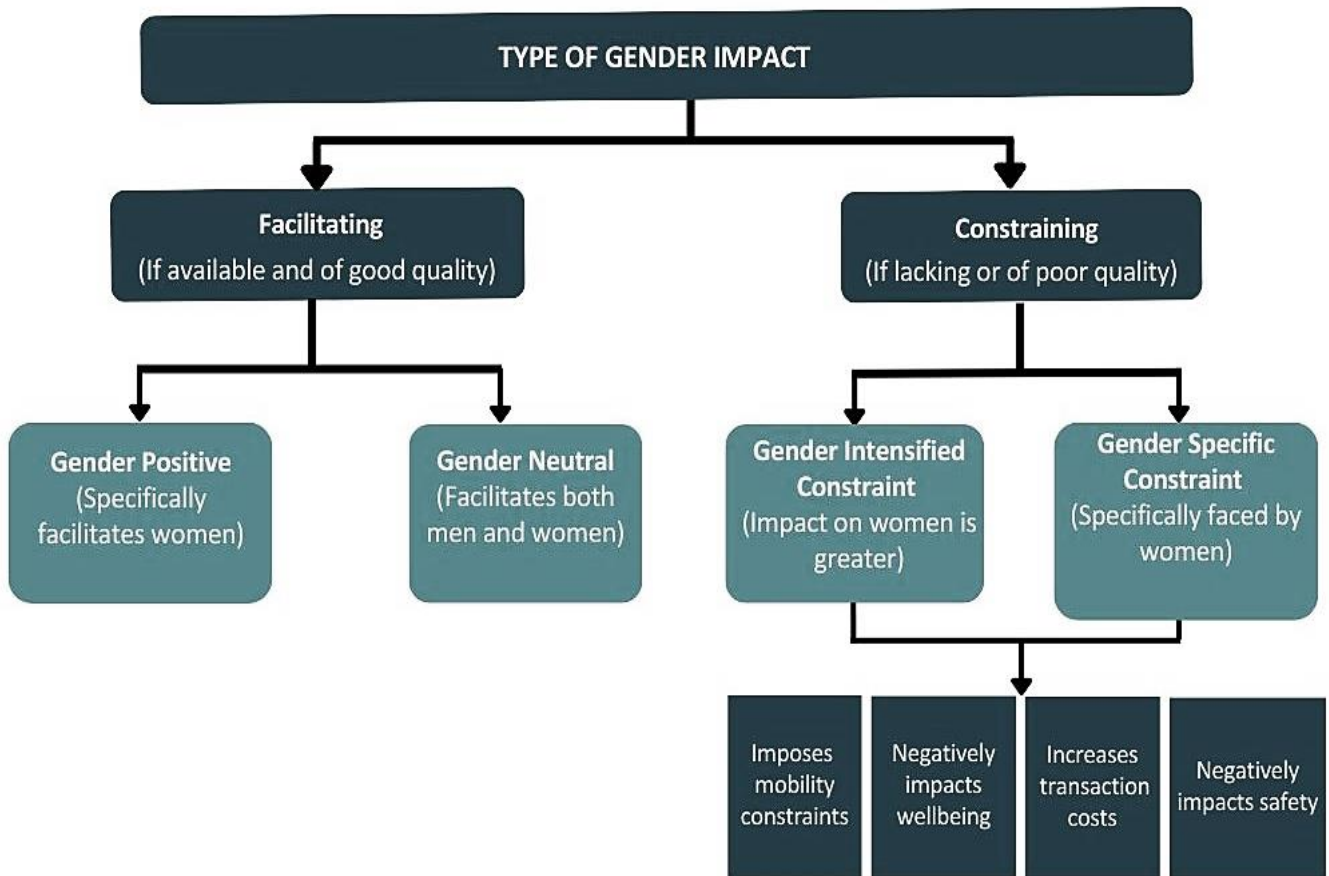
Analytical Framework & Methodology

Gender mainstreaming is important as policy actions tend to be ‘gender neutral’ or ‘gender blind’ and overlook the differences in the impact on men and women. This study is one of the first attempts in India to develop a comprehensive template for a gender lens assessment of hard and soft infrastructure at land ports, as a crucial input into incorporating a gender mainstreaming strategy in trade facilitation measures at the land ports.

The analytical framework was developed in three steps. First a “Model Review Checklist” was crafted as a benchmarking tool to measure the availability of gender responsive infrastructure. The Model Review Checklist for gender responsive infrastructure at the land ports consists of 57 elements across six categories: information and access to port, basic utilities, public facilities, safety set-up, cargo handling, and digitisation. Using the checklist, the availability and quality of infrastructure was assessed to analyse the “as-is” situation. A total of 12 land ports – 9 ICPs and 3 LCSs were surveyed. An appraisal of workforce diversity among the agencies involved in port management and operations was also conducted. Lastly, an impact assessment was undertaken to identify the constraints faced by women due to infrastructure gaps.



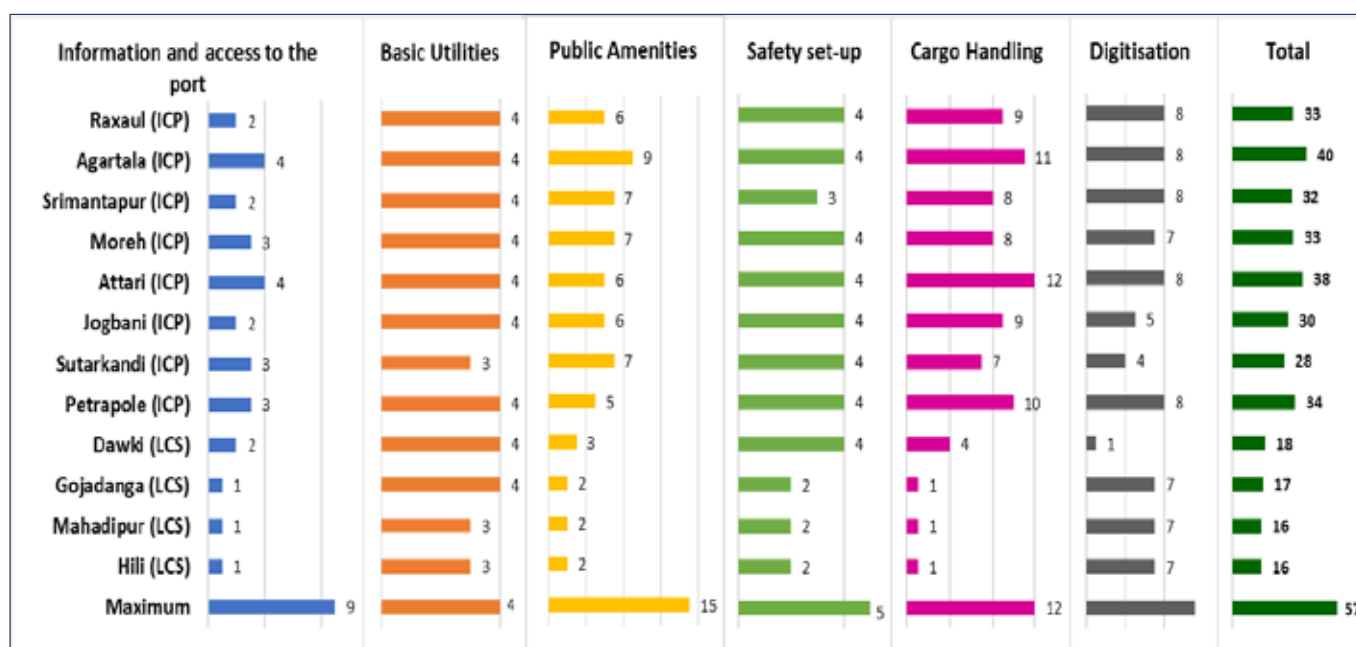
The availability and quality of infrastructure at the land ports was further categorised as being either facilitating or constraining for women. The constraining impact on women was evaluated on the basis of four parameters – impact on mobility, impact on well-being, impact on transaction costs, and the impact on safety.



Key Findings & Insights

- Very few women ‘users’, whether as traders, transporters or logistics operators, actually visit the land ports for trade related activities. The procedures and processes for cargo clearance are primarily handled for women traders by male intermediaries and for logistics operators by male colleagues.
- Similarly, a very small percentage of the staff deployed by the port management and operating agencies – ‘providers’ – are women. Besides the few women security forces’ personnel on duty, women are primarily involved in cleaning and housekeeping tasks.
- The availability of infrastructure elements across the six categories contained in the *Model Review Checklist* is mixed. None of the surveyed land ports has all the recommended elements in place.
- It was observed that the presence of passenger terminals at land ports matters. Infrastructure at the land ports is more gender responsive at land ports when the passenger immigration terminal is in the same complex (like at Agartala, Attari, Moreh and Srimantapur).

Availability of Infrastructure at Surveyed Land Ports



Source: ICRIER Survey

- The 'pain points' for women users that discourage them from undertaking activities that require a physical visit to the land port include the following:

- Information gap with regard to land port processes and procedures is more prevalent among women as compared to men.
- Travel challenges between the land port and nearest town along with absence of safe overnight stay facilities near the port are a greater impediment for women.
- The irregular provision of basic utilities such as electricity, consistent internet connectivity for port operations and cell phone connectivity affects women more acutely.
- The time and mobility constraints of women are accentuated by limited public facilities within the land port complex. The lack of well-maintained toilets and scarce gender specific amenities such as sanitary napkin dispensers and lactation room is not conducive to wellbeing.
- Insufficient safety set-up is a serious concern for women. These are likely to acquire greater salience when the planned 24x7 operations are implemented at the ICPs.
- Cargo handling infrastructure gaps, frequent breakdowns of cargo handling equipment and insufficient mechanisation make for longer dwell time at the land ports, intensifying the time and cost impact on women.
- Women are more affected by incomplete digitisation of the cargo clearance process as this makes the trade procedures lengthy and cumbersome. Further, in the absence of full digitisation and e-processing, several processes and procedures are not faceless and contactless and this increases potential for sexual harassment and extortion.

- Women staff of the agencies involved in port management and operations are constrained by transit challenges between the land port and the nearest town as well as the lack of on-site residential accommodation.
- On the other hand, some good practices were observed at certain ICPs and it would be useful to replicate these at other locations.

Notable Gender Responsive Measures at the ICPs

<p>Transport Facilitation</p> <p>The <i>Suvidha - Vehicles Facilitation System</i> has been developed by the State Government in West Bengal to facilitate the quick clearance and smooth movement of vehicles at several land ports in the State. The <i>Suvidha Portal</i> is a web-based system to book the date and time slot of entry of export-bound cargo trucks to the land ports for a fixed fee. It has reduced congestion at the land ports and also significantly lessened the turn-around time benefitting the traders in terms of decreasing the parking/waiting charges at the land ports. This system has been very successful at ICP Petrapole.</p>	
<p>Medical Assistance</p> <p>The ICP at Agartala has deployed ASHA workers at its border health unit. The Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers are community-based functionaries trained to act as first responders to the health needs of the local population.</p>	<p>Staff Diversity</p> <p>At the newly inaugurated ICP at Dawki almost 40 per cent of the LPAI staff have been proactively recruited from among local women.</p>
<p>Health & Hygiene</p> <p>Among the surveyed land ports, the ICP at Agartala is the only one that provides sanitary napkin dispenser machine in the passenger terminal.</p>	<p>Prevention of Sexual Harassment</p> <p>ICP Attari has a set up a 'Complaints Committee' in line with the provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH), comprising three female staff. Complaints to the committee can be made by the staff and ICP users.</p>

Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming at India's Land Ports

To facilitate the participation of women in international trade by making the land port environment and operations more gender responsive and friendly, the study presents an Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming at India's Land Ports. With focus on seven key areas – information, infrastructure, digitisation, facilitation, staffing, outreach, and capacity building – the action plan lists the enabling measures needed both at the land ports as well as the overall ecosystem to increase women's participation in international trade.



Measures at the Land Ports

I. Address the information barrier	
a.	Website and app with real-time information for all land ports
b.	Toll-free information & assistance helpline
c.	Help desk/information counter at the land port
d.	Display guidance maps of port procedures at the land port reception area
II. Make travel between nearest town and land port easier	
a.	Regular frequency shuttle bus service between the nearest town and the land port
b.	Wide approach/link road and highways
c.	Digital solutions such as the Suvidha – Vehicles Facilitation System at all land ports
III. Basic utilities at the land ports should be operational and well maintained	
a.	Running water supply system
b.	24*7 electricity supply with power backup
c.	Good cell phone signal strength
d.	Stable internet connectivity for efficient digital operations
e.	Wi-Fi hotspots
IV. Offer more public facilities within the land port complex	
a.	Sufficient number of separate toilets for women with running water supply, sanitary napkin dispensers and hygienic sanitary waste management
b.	Lactation and baby care room
c.	Work space for customs house agents (CHAs)
d.	Reserved waiting area/room for women
e.	Dedicated services area with cafeteria, convenience store, ATM, and pharmacy
f.	Functional health centre
g.	Battery operated carts for internal movement at the larger land ports
h.	Separate resting rooms for women drivers and loading/unloading helpers
i.	Vehicle repair services within the land port complex
V. Design land ports for greater efficiency and bridge the cargo handling infrastructure deficit	
a.	All regulatory agencies and requisite infrastructure housed in a single building
b.	Separate gates for movement of export and import vehicles
c.	Separate lanes for loaded and empty vehicles
d.	Adequate parking space for trucks with separate zones for exports and imports
e.	Enclosed and well-lit inspection area
f.	Greater mechanisation of cargo handling
g.	Functional and well-maintained cargo handling equipment (scanners, weighbridges, cranes, etc.).
VI. Accelerate digitisation of land port operations and procedures.	
a.	Regular supply of electricity and strong mobile and internet connections for enabling optimised digital solutions at land ports
b.	EDI-enabled customs operations
c.	Electronic submission & processing of supporting documents
d.	Customs single window
e.	IT-led risk management system (RMS)

f.	Introduce pre-arrival processing
g.	Automatic prioritisation of AEO status holders and perishable cargo
h.	Land port management system for registration, slot management, gate operations, customs filing and unified online payment of customs duty and cargo terminal charges
i.	Spread information on digital processes amongst users so that they reduce dependence on traditional methods
VII. Facilitate small-scale women cross-border traders & women-owned MSMEs	
a.	Fast-tracking of small-scale women cross-border traders with low-value consignments
b.	Relaxed 'AEO compliance criteria' for women-owned MSMEs beyond the recently introduced Liberalised MSME AEO Package
VIII. Enhance safety measures for women at the land ports	
a.	Hard infrastructure such as boundary wall/fencing around the land port complex; adequate lighting throughout the land port, especially if operations are 24x7; functional CCTV cameras at vantage points across the land port complex
b.	Gender sensitisation training programmes for staff of all participating government agencies (PGAs) at the land ports
c.	Periodic police patrolling in the land ports complex and its vicinity
d.	Quick response teams against gender-based harassment or violence
e.	Easily-accessible and confidential reporting mechanisms
f.	Prominent display of reporting information
IX. Improve gender balance in staffing in all PGAs at the land ports	
a.	Assign/employ more women in managerial positions
b.	Avoid gender bias in recruitment for technical positions and provide mechanical skills training opportunities
c.	Support measures such as on-site accommodation, crèche, staff transport facility, etc.
d.	Enforce stipulated provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition & Redressal) Act, 2013
X. Engage with women stakeholders	
a.	Ensure opportunities for women stakeholders to 'comment and suggest' in feedback surveys on existing and proposed policies and measures
b.	Institutionalise periodic interaction with women stakeholders
c.	Conduct awareness sessions on trade processes at the land ports for women
d.	Partner with logistics training centres and logistics related business associations to offer internship opportunities to women applicants
e.	Work in partnership with the private sector in logistics, especially those involved in women's empowerment activities to develop and implement training and capacity building programs

Ecosystem Enabling Measures

I. Mainstream gender in trade facilitation and logistics initiatives/plans at both national and state levels	
a.	Incorporate a gender lens in the identification of critical infrastructure gaps for intervention under the PM Gati Shakti Initiative
b.	Make gender mainstreaming integral to the implementation of the National Logistics Policy, 2022, and the corresponding Comprehensive Logistics Action Plan (CLAP)
II. Mainstream gender in regional trade and connectivity initiatives	
a.	Bring in gender inclusion as a key component in the implementation of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Master Plan and the BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement
b.	Include women as important stakeholders in the consultations process

III. Foster capacity building of women to enable them to take advantage of career opportunities in the logistics sector	
a.	Awareness campaigns on career opportunities in the logistics sector in schools and higher educational institutions
b.	Introduce courses and programmes on logistics and supply chain management as part of the regular courses in more universities
c.	Set up government supported entry-level logistics training centres for women
d.	Provide fee relaxation for women applicants in government certified training and skill development programmes in logistics and supply chain management
e.	Provide reservation for women in the Customs Brokers Licensing Examination conducted by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC)
f.	Partner with the private sector in logistics, especially those involved in women's empowerment activities, to develop and implement training and capacity building programs
IV. Establish networking and support structures for women in the logistics sector	
a.	Set up women's wings in logistics-related industry associations at both the regional and national levels
b.	Organise collaborative events such as conferences, seminars, awareness programmes, training sessions
c.	Companies already involved in women's empowerment activities should take the lead in establishing such networking and support structures
V. Build convergence between the development and management of land ports with the Border Area Development Programme (BADP)	
a.	Partner with state governments and local authorities to address challenges such as improvement in road condition and traffic management and port security
b.	Mentor local youth and promote local recruitment
c.	Provide support to local traders to participate in cross-border trade with outreach programmes on trade related procedures and regulatory compliance
d.	Promote local service providers
e.	Provide designated space in port complexes for local artisans to showcase and sell their handicrafts

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ICRIER's Board of Governors include leading academicians, policymakers, and representatives from the private sector. Mr. Pramod Bhasin is ICRIER's Chairperson and Dr. Deepak Mishra is Director & Chief Executive.

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