



[Press Release]

‘Best Companies for Women’ Launches in India

**Indian corporates to compete for national ranking
& global recognition on gender equality**

7th March 2016

#IWD2016

Chennai [India]

#PledgeForParity

India's first diversity advocate & workplace inclusion expert, the [AVTAR Group](#), has joined forces with the world's most celebrated gender parity champion, [Working Mother Media](#), to bring the latter's prestigious 30-yr old *100 Best Companies for Women* ranking to India. To be called the [2016 Working Mother and AVTAR Best Companies for Women](#), this survey cum benchmarking project will be the largest self-tracking, self-reporting, self-evaluating and self-correcting opportunity for Indian companies, especially at a time when they are losing their female workforce at the rate of 11% per year.

The Project kicks off on International Women's Day and the 2016 Working Mother and AVTAR Best Companies for Women list will be announced in November 2016 at the Global Advancement of Women Conference in India. The best companies will be honoured, awarded & celebrated amidst South Asia's biggest women leaders & diversity experts.

The survey methodology and format is Working Mother's proprietary tool. Supported by AVTAR's data analytics and research wing, it has been adapted to fit Indian business dynamics. It has 350+ questions comprehensively covering all aspects of a company's policies, practices and procedures for attracting, engaging, retaining and developing women in business organizations. The questionnaire will prompt companies to report on important topics such as women's retention & advancement, safety & security, flexible work, paid leave, benefits, gender pay gaps, company culture & work-life programs. The survey aims to be an annual event, enabling the first such long term diversity tracking in the country.



Dr. Saundarya Rajesh, Founder, AVTAR Group, explains the impact of this survey on India: *“The 2016 Working Mother and AVTAR Best Companies for Women will be the first unified mechanism to assess Indian companies on their abilities to engage with their female wealth creators. Lakhs of aspiring young Indian women, especially, the millennials, are joining the workforce and they want to make informed choices. Their say in purchasing decisions and spending power is increasing. And when they are well represented, companies are proven to financially outperform their peers. Engaging and retaining women at the workplace is, therefore, not just a moral imperative, it is a strategic one.”*

She adds, *“I am proud to be associated with an industry leader such as Working Mother on this important journey. Together, we want to create a solid measurable platform for Indian companies to compete on Diversity & Inclusion and give India organizational role models. I also hope to see a trickle-down effect of gender parity consciousness & best practices into other sectors and eventually, into our homes.”*

Subha V. Barry, Vice President and General Manager, Working Mother Media, says, *“We are thrilled to launch the Working Mother 100 Best Companies program in India to track and celebrate the progress of women in the workforce. The 100 Best has been a standard bearer to document and drive change in U.S. companies that are committed to the advancement of women, and we look forward to watching its development in India, now and for years to come.”*

The Companies Act 2013 and business responsibility reporting (BRR) have helped spotlight gender inequality at the Indian workplace, but it did not uncover the depth of the problem. The exodus of women from factory floors and offices continues and has, perhaps, worsened. India's ranking in the 2015 Global Gender Gap Index (an annual compilation by the World Economic Forum) fell five places in terms of women in the workforce, ranking 139, its worst performance since 2006.

AVTAR & Working Mother urge Indian companies – MNCs and domestic corporations, to participate in the survey, self-assess their individual environments and also pose as a national industry collective to identify the factors causing this significant departure of women from the workforce. Participating companies will also be able to make peer-to-peer comparisons on best practices & disadvantageous policies, and judge for themselves the economic impact of their choices. Companies with already-established gender parity goals will benefit from cross industry data and some may come out as equality champions, inspiring others and becoming the most desirable workplaces for talented & highly skilled women.

Many of the companies who've ranked highly on the 100 Best Companies List in the US have large and successful India operations. Following are some comments from their India business heads:

“Gender diversity is a top priority at Kellogg's and a proud legacy of our founder W.K. Kellogg, who was a pioneer in employing women in the workplace and reaching across cultural boundaries. My American counterparts made it to the Working Mother 100 Best Companies list five times this decade. Our India operations, too, have consciously emulated those values and we are excited about benchmarking our



practices with a trustworthy, transparent and equally motivated company such as AVTAR. We look forward to our very first participation in the Working Mother and AVTAR Best Companies for Women list in India.” – Sangeeta Pendurkar, MD, Kellogg’s India

“EY has been featured among the top 10 companies in the Working Mother 100 best companies list for ten years in a row. We are glad that Working Mother in partnership with AVTAR is bringing the list to India. It will provide a platform for us who are committed to and focused on strengthening our diversity and inclusiveness agenda in India to showcase our policies and best practices that sustain an inclusive environment for working parents to thrive and succeed in.” – Giridhar G.V., Chief Operating Officer, EY Global Delivery Network, India

“P&G India has been a leader in Diversity & Inclusion for several years and our Best In Class practices are a key enabler for us to maintain high standards in diversity. We look forward to the Working Mother and AVTAR Best Companies for Women Survey in India and hope it will share best practices across the industry in diversity and inclusion along with solutions on how industry can raise the bar for the same. It is important for companies to lay special emphasis on a variety of areas critical to women succeeding including Mastering work–life balance, having goals and a game plan for success, leveraging great mentors, networking and ensuring full leadership team support at all levels for Diversity and Inclusion.” – Sonali Roychowdhury, HR Head, P&G India

Media Contact

Rashmi TR

Brand Communications Manager, AVTAR Group

+91 73582 48111

rashmi@avtarcc.com