



# All India RRB Officers' Federation (AFFILIATED TO AIBOC)

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Circular # 14:2018

17<sup>th</sup> February 2018

All Affiliates/ Members  
(Please re-circulate)

## **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

We reproduce hereunder the text of All India Bank Officers' Confederation Circular No. 06 dated 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2018.

### **QUOTE**

The 8<sup>th</sup> March of every year is being celebrated as "International Women's Day" to commemorate the movement for 'Women's rights'.

While the observance of a Women's Day was held on February 28, 1909 in New York, March 8 was suggested by the 1910 International Woman's Conference to become an "International Woman's Day". International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated on March 8 every year. It commemorates the movement for women's rights and it was adopted in 1975 by the United Nations.

Now, a century after the first women's day was celebrated, the women have occupied places of power, prominence, polity across the world. In employment also the women has outnumbered men in chosen fields and set to equal and surpass their number within a decade. In the financial and banking institutions many women are heading pivotal positions and their number swelling day by day across all banks.

But, it cannot be said with certainty that women have attained freedom and liberty socially and economically. Still, women are treated as weaker sex and are denied equal rights inside the household as well as in the larger society. Hence, it is time to bring the women to the fore and also high light their sufferings and embark on a mission to change their lives so as to put them in the path of progress as we are privileged people working in premier financial institutions.

Recently, we have celebrated the National Women's Convention of AIBOC at Mumbai which stands as testimony to the skills and organizing capacity of our members. Hence, We are sure that our women folk has the desire to make the change in the society and act as flag bearers. We suggest certain activities that can be undertaken during the second week of March across the country. The list is only suggestive and not exhaustive which members shall include as the desire.

1. Organise Women's Day Seminar / Debate / Celebration
2. Organise a Women's March
3. Vocational Training for Women



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4. Assist Self Help Groups
5. Train women to ride bicycles
6. Conduct Loan Awareness exclusively for Women
7. Conduct an Exhibition of Handmade Crafts sourced from village women
8. Meet and assist the old and uncared women
9. Donate New Clothes to Government Homes
10. Conduct a Medical Camp exclusively for Women
11. Adopt Girl Child for Life

I request all the state units and affiliates to encourage their women members to organize the above programmes extensively across the country as it would provide them an opportunity to get at the truth and support the deprived women.

Arrange for printing of pamphlets, posters, advertisements and exhibits depicting the women and themes to spread the message as well as focus the country's attention on AIBOC as we direly need the support from the general public for our survival. Please use the occasion to obtain signatures for UFBU as well as AIBOC campaign against Merger, Privatization and FRDI bill. Needless, to add that all the District and State units should celebrate the 'International Women's Day' in a grand manner and submit their reports along with photographs to the federation.

I, once again request to make this year's International Women's Day, a memorable one.

**UNQUOTE**

With greetings,

(S.K. Bhattacharjee)  
GENERAL SECRETARY

Encl: Note on Women Empowerment

## **WHAT IS WOMEN EMPOWERMENT?**

Women empowerment means emancipation of women from the vicious grips of social, economical, political, caste and gender-based discrimination. It means granting women the freedom to make life choices. Women empowerment does not mean 'deifying women' rather it means replacing patriarchy with parity. In this regard, there are various facets of women empowerment, such as given hereunder:—

**Human Rights or Individual Rights:** A woman is a being with senses, imagination and thoughts; she should be able to express them freely. Individual empowerment means to have the self-confidence to articulate and assert the power to negotiate and decide.

**Social Women Empowerment:** A critical aspect of social empowerment of women is the promotion of gender equality. Gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life.

**Educational Women Empowerment:** It means empowering women with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. It means making women aware of their rights and developing a confidence to claim them.

**Economic and occupational empowerment:** It implies a better quality of material life through sustainable livelihoods owned and managed by women. It means reducing their financial dependence on their male counterparts by making them significant part of the human resource.

**Legal Women Empowerment:** It suggests the provision of an effective legal structure which is supportive of women empowerment. It means addressing the gaps between what the law prescribes and what actually occurs.

**Political Women Empowerment:** It means the existence of a political system favoring the participation in and control by the women of the political decision-making process and in governance.

**The position of Women in India:** The position enjoyed by women in the Rig- Vedic period deteriorated in the later Vedic civilization. Women were denied the right to education and widow remarriage. They were denied the right to inheritance and ownership of property. Many social evils like child marriage and dowry system surfaced and started to engulf women. During Gupta period, the status of women immensely deteriorated. Dowry became an institution and Sati Pratha became prominent. During the British Raj, many social reformers such as Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Jyotirao Phule started agitations for the empowerment of women. Their efforts led to the abolition of Sati and formulation of the Widow Remarriage Act. Later, stalwarts like Mahatma Gandhi and Pt. Nehru advocated women rights. As a result of their concentrated efforts, the status of women in social, economic and political life began to elevate in the Indian society.

**Current Scenario on Women Empowerment:** Based on the ideas championed by our founding fathers for women empowerment, many social, economic and political

provisions were incorporated in the Indian Constitution. Women in India now participate in areas such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sector and science and technology. But due to the deep-rooted patriarchal mentality in the Indian society, women are still victimized, humiliated, tortured and exploited. Even after almost seven decades of Independence, women are still subjected to discrimination in the social, economic and educational field.

**Major landmark steps taken for women empowerment:** Provisions made under the Constitution of India such as: Right to equality under Article 14 of the Indian Constitution guarantees to all Indian women equality before law; Equal pay for equal work under Article 39(d), guards the economic rights of women by guaranteeing equal pay for equal work; and Maternity Relief under Article 42, allows provisions to be made by the state for securing just and humane condition of work and maternity relief for women. Acts like the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, prohibits the request, payment or acceptance of a dowry. Asking or giving dowry can be punished by imprisonment as well as fine; Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, provides for a more effective protection of the rights of women who are victims of domestic violence. A breach of this Act is punishable with both fine and imprisonment; Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, helps to create a conducive environment at the workplace for women where they are not subjected to any sort of sexual harassment. Panchayati Raj Institutions As per the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, all the local elected bodies reserve one-third of their seats for women. Such a provision was made to increase the effective participation of women in politics.

**Women's Reservation Bill:** It is a pending Bill in India which proposes to reserve 33% of all seats in the Lok Sabha and in all State Legislative Assemblies for women. If passed, this Bill will give a significant boost to the position of women in politics.

**Various Government Policies and Schemes:** The Government of India is running various welfare schemes and policies, both at State and Central levels for the empowerment of woman. Some of the major programs and measures include Swadhar (1995), Swayam Siddha (2001), Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP-2003), Sabla Scheme (2010), National Mission for Empowerment of Women (2010) etc. All such policies and programs focus on social, economic and educational empowerment of women across various age groups. Thus, there has been no dearth of social, economic, political, legal and Constitutional efforts made for the empowerment of women both prior to and post-Independence. However, women in India continue to face atrocities such as rape, dowry killings, acid attacks, human trafficking, etc. According to a global poll conducted by Reuters, India is the "fourth most dangerous country in the world for women".

**Women Empowerment — Challenges Perspective:** The most widespread and dehumanizing discriminations against women are on the basis of the biased perspective. The discrimination against the girl child begins from the birth itself. Boys are preferred over girls; hence, female infanticide is a common practice in India. The ordeal that an Indian girl faces at birth is only the beginning of a lifelong struggle to be seen and heard.

**Patriarchate Bottlenecks :** The traditional Indian society is a patriarchal society ruled by the diktats of self-proclaimed caste lords who are the guardians of archaic

and unjust traditions. They put the burden of traditions, culture, and honor on the shoulders of women and mark their growth. The incidences of “honor killing” reveal the distorted social fiber in the male-dominated society. Economic Backwardness: Women constitute only 29% of the workforce but forms majority of the destitute in the country. There has been a failure in transforming the available women base into human resource. This, in turn, has hampered not only the economic development of women but also of the country’ as a whole. Implementation Gaps Through all these years, the attention is only on developing and devising new schemes, policies and programmes and have paid less attention to the proper monitoring system and implementation short-sightedness, for e.g. despite the presence of the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technologies Act and various health programmes like Janani Suraksha Yojana and National Rural Health Mission (NHRM), our country has a skewed sex ratio and a high Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR). Loopholes in the legal structure Although there are a number of laws to protect women against all sorts of violence yet there has been the significant increase in the episodes of rapes, extortions, acid, attacks etc. This is due to delay in legal procedures and the presence of several loopholes in the functioning of a judicial system.

Lack of Political Will: The still- pending Women’s Reservation Bill underscores the lack of political will to empower women politically. The male dominance prevails in the politics of India and women are forced to remain mute spectators. Way ahead starts with bridging the deep-rooted biases through sustained reconditioning. It is only possible by promoting the idea of gender equality and uprooting social ideology of male child preferability. This concept of equality should be first developed in each and every household and from there; it should be taken to the society. This can be achieved by running sustained awareness programs with the help of Nukkad Natak or dramas, radio, television, Internet, etc. across the country.

**Replacing ‘Patriarchy’ with Parity:** A strong patriarchate society with deep- rooted socio-cultural values continues to affect women’s empowerment. The need of the hour is an egalitarian society, where there is no place for superiority. The Government should identify and eliminate such forces that work to keep alive the tradition of male dominance over its female counterpart by issuing inhumane and unlawful diktats. Education is the most important and indispensable tool for women empowerment. It makes women aware of their rights and responsibilities. Educational achievements of a woman can have ripple effects for the family and across generations. Most of the girls drop out of schools due to the unavailability of separate toilets for them. The recently launched ‘Swachh Bharat Mission’ focusing on improving sanitation facilities in schools and every rural household by 2019, can prove to be very significant in bringing down the rate of girls dropping out of school.

**Political Will:** Women should have access to resources, rights, and entitlements. They should be given decision-making powers and due position in governance. Thus, the Women Reservation Bill should be passed as soon as possible to increase the effective participation of women in the politics of India. Bridging implementation gaps: Government or community-based bodies must be set up to monitor the programs devised for the welfare of the society. Due importance should be given for their proper implementation and their monitoring and evaluation through social audits.

Justice delayed is justice denied. Efforts should be made to restructure the legal process to deliver fair and in- time justice to the victims of heinous crimes like rapes, acid attacks, sexual harassment, trafficking and domestic violence. The idea of fast-track courts, devised to impart speedy justice to the victims of rapes and other crimes against women, is a good initiative taken by the judiciary and the Government of India. Empowering women socially, economically, educationally politically and legally is going to be a Herculean task. It is not going to be easy to change the culture of disregard for women which are so deep-rooted in Indian society. But it does not mean that it is implausible. Only revolutions bring changes in a day, but reforms take their time. This one, in particular, will take its time as well. The idea of women empowerment might sound hard by the yard, but by the inch, it is just a cinch. All we need is a concentrated effort focused in the right direction that would rest only with the liberation of women from all forms of evil.