

ICAI Initiatives to Encourage Women Chartered Accountants: An Overview



In order to encourage empowerment of women Chartered Accountants in India, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has been taking a range of initiatives through its Women Members Empowerment Sub Group (WMEG) (erstwhile Women Members Empowerment Committee) for more than three years. The main objective is to formulate and implement plans, policies and programmes for development of women members. The Sub-Group is committed towards its objective of empowering women members by conducting various women-centric workshops/seminars/ conferences for the benefit of CA Women fraternity at large. WMEG endeavours to give special attention to enable them to effectively utilise their professional knowledge and expertise in the profession of Chartered Accountancy. Following are the highlights of some women CA-oriented initiatives of the ICAI.

Towards Empowering Women Members, WMEG has carried out the following activities:

- 1) World class training for professional enhancement through seminars, workshops,

Conferences, Webinars and hands on training: WMEG (erstwhile Committee) has organised 91 programmes and 6 webcasts since its inception in 2014, for professional enhancement of women members. The sessions discussed during these programmes deliberated upon pertinent topics

(Contributed by Women Member Empowerment Group of the ICAI. Comments can be sent to wmeec@icai.in.)

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in the areas of topical and emerging interests in global economy, which were both technical as well as non-technical women-centric topics. These programmes have been well appreciated by the audience at large.

- 2) **International Events:** With an aim to provide our women members an International forum wherein they can articulate their views and network among themselves for the benefit of the profession, the sub group has organised following two International Programmes:
 - i) **World CA Women Summit**—Two Days International Conference was organised by the Committee and hosted by Dubai Chapter of ICAI at Dubai in the year 2015. Accomplished speakers from India & UAE took sessions on technical and non technical topics Around 600 participants from India & UAE took part in the said programme.
 - ii) **International Residential Refresher course:** WMEG had organised an IRRC in Singapore in the year 2016 which provided a platform to our women members to disseminate knowledge and bring together members to discuss matters of strategic importance for the profession. These Programmes provided our women members an opportunity to showcase their ability in the emerging scenario and spread a message to the entire world on the strength of Women Members. It also provided a unique opportunity to all the participants to meet, interact & network among themselves.
- 3) **Training programmes to equip members with latest trends in technology and business:** WMEG had organised IT workshops for women members. The Workshops aim to teach hands-on skills to participants, provide learning about new developments in this field and to enhance their IT skills which they require in the profession.
- 4) **Programmes to help members specialise in emerging areas of audit, accounting and consulting:** WMEG has organised various programmes during the year for professional enhancement of women members. It has been working with the objective of empowerment of women CAs in the profession by organising various Programmes/Seminars/Conferences for Women Empowerment on various subjects, issues/concerns relating to Women Members. The sessions discussed during these programmes deliberated upon pertinent topics related to women participation in the areas of topical and emerging interests in global economy. The basic purpose of all the programmes is to keep the women members abreast of the latest changes happening in the profession. With this concern, WMEG has organised various programmes on emerging topics like ICDS, GST etc. which have been taken up by eminent speakers.
- 5) **“Train the Trainer” Programme** to train & prepare the Women Members for the role of faculty and to provide them a platform to enhance their general management & communication skills. The major focus of this training programme is on upgrading the teaching, training, and research skills of trainers, especially those who have not had an opportunity to acquaint themselves with recent developments in teaching methods.
- 6) **Creating specific professional opportunities for women and work towards their empowerment:** WMEG endeavours to give special attention to Women Members to enable them to effectively utilise their professional knowledge and expertise in the profession of Chartered Accountancy.
 - WMEG encourages women members to involve themselves as **Resource Person in various women empowerment programmes**, in GMCS & Orientation Programmes, Certificate & Post Qualification Courses and also to act as Examiners, Observers, Paper Checkers, Technical Reviewers, etc., in a manner that the work schedules are flexible.
 - **WMEG endeavours to train Women Members for the role of Independent Directors** in the board of companies, under the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013. For the same, the Committee has been organising programmes on Women Independent Directors and programmes

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wherein sessions on Independent Director are taken up by eminent faculty.

- **WMEG has a separate addressal forum (info.wmec@icai.in) for Women Chartered Accountants** wherein they can write their concerns, queries and suggestions related to the profession. The members also contribute by submitting self-written articles on women-centric and other related issues of the profession. They also show their willingness in Committee's initiatives by participating in programmes/seminars/conferences/workshops organised by the sub group.
- **Portal for Women Members (www.womenportal.icai.org)**- The Committee also has a dedicated portal "Women Portal" running under its aegis which aims to provide a platform to women members to articulate their views and concerns pertaining to Chartered Accountancy profession. The portal is running with an objective to provide flexi working/part time working opportunities to women members.
- **Flexi working options for Women Members:** WMEG, for the purpose of creating opportunities for women members, will organise 'Flexi Staffing Placement Programmes.' Also, the sub-group has started creating awareness for providing employment opportunities to Women Members at branch level/regional level.

Going Forward

WMEG is planning to organise various programmes with an aim to provide technical & non-technical knowledge to the women members of the profession and continue to empower them by conducting more Specialised Training Programmes. These programmes will serve the dual purpose of motivating & encouraging by keeping them abreast with the latest changes happening in the profession. WMEG has plans to organise such programmes with the following key areas of focus for the benefit of Women Members:

- **Training Programme on "Women Independent Directors"** for female members. The Companies Act, 2013 has incorporated

several important provisions that modernise India's corporate world and necessitates and addresses numerous issues that are relevant to this sector. Recognising the role a woman professional can play, mandatory appointment of women directors in some classes of companies is a major milestone in enhancing corporate governance and values in corporate sector. It is one of the pioneering steps to have women directors on the Board of the Company which the Indian Government has taken towards gender equality. With this, the ongoing search for women Board Directors in India today has increased. The training programme for women directors is an initiative to mentor women members to become eligible to be appointed to boards of Indian companies. The Women Directors can bring richer corporate Governance standards and can improve the quality of discussions on the board rooms.

- **Refresher Course** to help the women members to enhance and brush up their skills pertaining to Indirect Tax & Direct Tax regulations. The programme shall provide opportunities to the female members and make them abreast with the entire knowledge of related recent changes and amendments.
- **I.T. Workshop** to help women members polish their I.T. skills and learn to walk with the pace of the I.T. world. These workshops aim at providing updated I.T. knowledge to the women members which is the need of the hour in our profession.
- **E-Taxation Practical Training Programmes** to help the women members to enhance and brush up their skills pertaining to Indirect Tax & Direct Tax regulations. The programme shall provide opportunities to the female members and make them abreast with the entire knowledge of recent changes & amendments in the profession.

II. Flexi working options for Women Members:

For enhancement of professional opportunities, the sub group will forward a copy of the profiles of women members received to the respective branches, where they belong, with a request to engage those women members as faculty in various programmes/Seminars organised by those POUs.

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Professional Opportunities for Women CAs

To encourage Women Members in the profession, the sub group has identified various professional opportunities for Women Members in our esteemed Institute. The following are the major avenues wherein Women Members can avail the professional opportunities provided by ICAI on paid basis:

- Act as EXAMINER OF Answer Books
- Act as OBSERVER During Exam Days
- Act as FACULTY in Various Certificate Courses conducted by ICAI
- Act as FACULTY in Post Qualification Courses conducted by ICAI
- Act as PAPER SETTER AND EXAMINER in the examinations conducted in the Post Qualification and certificate courses
- CONTRIBUTE BY
 - Writing Articles
 - Technical Review of Articles
- **Quality Review Board**
 - Act as reviewer of Financial Statements

➤ Financial Reporting Review Board

- Act as Technical reviewers of Financial Statements

➤ Board of Studies

- Act as Visiting faculty in IT labs run by Board of Studies
- Video lecturing to students of CPT, Inter & Final
- Contribute by writing articles in students' newsletter
- Act as reviewer of Article to be published in students' newsletter
- Act as reviewer of Study Material
- Act as Faculty in GMCS classes and Orientation Programmes

➤ Other Avenues

- One can act as resource person in Study Groups
- Act as Faculty for in-house Executive Development Programmes
- Writing basic draft of Technical Publications on varied subjects

For more details visit: www.womenportal.icai.org. ■

Women in Accountancy: Historical Perspective

1. First lady to have topped CA Final Examination was Ms. Nandita Shah. She achieved this feat in November 1983 examination.
2. First lady to have got elected to the Council of The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) was Ms. Priya Bhansali.
3. CA. G. Rajani was the first ever visually impaired CA as recorded in ICAI history.
4. Noted business woman and Padma Shri CA. Naina Lal Kidwai is first Indian woman to graduate with MBA Degree from the prestigious Harvard Business School in 1982.
5. *First ICAI Groups/Committees for Women CAs:* A 17-member 'Women Steering Group' was constituted in 2009 and a full-fledged non-standing 'Women Members Empowerment Committee' had been set up in Council Year 2014-15. Presently, the same continues to function as Women Empowerment Group of the ICAI.
6. *First Flexi Working Portal for Women Members:* In yet first in ICAI history, a Flexi Working Portal for women members (<http://womenportal.icai.org/>) was launched on 21st April 2014 to provide women CAs a platform to explore suitable opportunities with option for part time jobs, jobs with flexi hours or jobs with work-from-home facility.