



WOMEN IN PHARMA

TURNING GENDER PARITY INTO COMPETITIVE EDGE

Lessons from Biocon Biologics

July 2025

Enabling the Edge

How Biocon Turns Gender Inclusion into Impact

The pharmaceutical industry, like many others, continues to grapple with the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles and the persistent challenges women face when returning to work after career breaks. From navigating biases¹ around caregiving to the lack of structured support for re-entry, many women in the sector encounter barriers to sustained, upward career trajectories.

Biocon Biologics is setting a powerful example by actively addressing these systemic challenges. This case study explores how Biocon is creating an enabling ecosystem for women at every stage of their careers. Women are not mere beneficiaries of this ecosystem, but drivers of the various policies.

Key interventions include:

- **Returnship Support:** Structured reintegration for women post-career breaks, with phased onboarding, managerial guidance, and peer support.
- **Inclusive Hiring Practices:** Targeted efforts to onboard women across functions, including manufacturing and quality, with a focus on creating gender-diverse teams.
- **WLDP (Women in Leadership Development Program):** Cohort-based leadership training for high-potential women, supported by mentoring and sponsorship pathways.
- **Biocon Women's Network (BWN):** A formal ERG offering community, peer support advocacy, and professional growth opportunities through regular engagement.

By centering women's experiences and institutionalizing support structures, BBL is not only cultivating a diverse talent pipeline but also strengthening innovation, decision-making, and organizational performance.



Methodology

The Udaiti Foundation has been working with Biocon Biologics (BBL) over the past year with the goal of gaining a comprehensive understanding of diversity and inclusion practices at BBL which have resulted in a gender diverse workforce in an industry that remains significantly unequal. The purpose of the analysis was to understand the motivations behind investing in gender inclusion programs and their impact on not only women's entry to BBL, but their retention and advancement to build rewarding careers at BBL. The case has been developed through in-depth interaction with various stakeholders at BBL, and literature review of the Pharmaceutical Industry's gender progress and key challenges.

DATA WAS COLLECTED ON THE FOLLOWING PARAMETERS:

- 1 Diversity Statistics:** Gender-wise headcount and percentages across financial years (e.g., FY21–FY24) for India-based employees.
- 2 Hiring, Retention, Return to Work & Advancement:** Gender distribution across job levels and years, including hiring rates, post maternity return to work rates, retention, and promotions.
- 3 Qualitative Insights:** Themes such as program genesis, organizational structure, leadership accountability, and rationale behind gender-focused initiatives.

Additionally, detailed conversations were conducted with the DEI Leads and Human Resources team to understand the processes and policies in place and gain insights. Semi structured interviews were conducted with various women employees across geographies in India in order to understand the impact of interventions highlighted in the case study.

Sector Landscape and Biocon Biologics' Overview

The Indian pharmaceutical industry plays a key role in the global healthcare system, supplying medicines to over 200 countries and contributing 20% to global generic medicine exports. It is the **third-largest pharmaceutical industry** in the world by production volume.¹ In FY25 (April to December), the exports of drugs and pharmaceuticals stood at Rs. 1,87,573 crore (US\$ 21.72 billion).²

This growth has been driven by cost advantages stemming from lower labor costs, economies of scale, and efficient manufacturing practices. The government's focus on investment and innovation in engineering and technology is set to significantly expand employment prospects in the pharmaceutical sector. Coupled with growing domestic and international demand for medicines, the Indian pharmaceutical and healthcare sector is estimated to add almost **one to two million new jobs by 2030**.

Biocon Biologics (BBL), a subsidiary of Biocon Limited, is a pioneering biopharmaceutical company based in Bengaluru, India. Specializing in the development, manufacturing, and commercialization of biosimilars, the company focuses on providing **affordable access to advanced therapeutics for chronic conditions such as diabetes, cancer, and autoimmune diseases**. In the Indian pharmaceutical landscape, BBL has played a crucial role by offering a diverse portfolio of biosimilars, including insulin analogs and monoclonal antibodies.

The company's commitment to innovation and quality has positioned it as a key player in enhancing healthcare accessibility both domestically and internationally. Through strategic collaborations and a focus on research and development, BBL continues to contribute significantly to the growth and evolution of the Indian pharmaceutical industry.

1 India Brand Equity Foundation. (2024). Pharmaceuticals. <https://www.ibef.org/industry/pharmaceutical-india>

2 India Brand Equity Foundation. (n.d.). Pharmaceutical exports from India. India Brand Equity Foundation. <https://www.ibef.org/exports/pharmaceutical-exports-from-india>

Gender Diversity in India's Pharmaceutical Industry

Despite growing opportunities, women's representation in **India's Pharmaceutical sector remains low, just 11%**, according to *Close the Gender Gap Data*,³ far behind **46%** in similar roles in Europe and **41%** in allied hospital roles in India. The industry must act swiftly, as closing this gap is not just an opportunity, but a necessity for inclusive and sustainable growth.

11%

Women's Representation

1

Achieving Gender Parity in Senior Leadership: Gender inclusivity is crucial in the Pharmaceutical industry, as women, despite making up the majority of the global health workforce and half of the Pharmaceutical industry's consumer base, are still underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles.

According to the *Close the Gender Gap Data* women's representation in Key Management positions is just **19%**. Close to half of the largest organizations have **no women in a KMP role**. Even at the board level, women's representation is a meagre **23%**. This disparity reflects vertical segregation within the sector, where women often play a key role in delivering global health outcomes, but men dominate leadership positions.⁴ Globally as well, **nearly three-quarters of biopharma C-suite members are men.**⁵

2

Diverse perspectives to enhance innovation: The pharmaceutical industry hinges on innovation, particularly in research and development. A more gender diverse workforce brings varied perspectives, which can lead to **better problem solving, improved product design and enhanced outcomes in healthcare solutions.**⁶

³ Source: *Close the Gender Gap data* - Analysis of ~1300 NSE/BSE-listed companies' data

⁴ Manzoor M, Thompson K. Delivered by women, led by men: a gender and equity analysis of the Global Health and Social Workforce. *WHO Hum Resour Health Obs.* 2019;(24). <https://www.who.int/hrh/resources/health-observer24/en/>

⁵ Heidrick & Struggles. (2022). *Biopharma board and executive survey: Focus on gender diversity.* https://www.heidrick.com/en/insights/biopharmaceuticals/biopharma_focus_gender_diversity

⁶ Shannon, G., Jansen, M., Williams, K., Cáceres, C., Motta, A., Odhiambo, A., ... & Epprecht, M. (2019). Gender equality in science, medicine, and global health: where are we at and why does it matter? *The Lancet*, 393(10171), 560–569. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)33135-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)33135-0)

3

Patient-Centric healthcare: Fair representation at the top of the pharma industry is important for another reason. A more inclusive approach to clinical trials and patient-centric care will ensure that healthcare solutions are tailored to the specific needs of various demographic groups (and are not one-size-fits-all.) This is especially true in the countries of the Global South, where women disproportionately bear a bigger burden of disease than men.⁷

4

Improved Financial Performance: Evidence highlights the significant economic benefits for companies with greater representation of women in senior roles. For instance, Companies in the UK's FTSE 350 Index without women on their executive committees achieve an average net profit margin of just 8.9%. In contrast, companies with at least 25% women in these roles see their average net profit margin rise by 5 percentage points to 13.9%.⁸ This demonstrates the tangible financial advantages of fostering gender diversity in leadership.⁹



⁷ World Economic Forum. (2020, March 9). Pharma and healthcare: Curing gender bias. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2020/03/pharma-healthcare-curing-gender-bias/>

⁸ The Pipeline. (2018). Women Count 2018: Role models and champions. <https://execpipeline.com>

⁹ Manufacturing Chemist. (2018, July 23). A cure for gender diversity stalling in pharma. https://www.manufacturingchemist.com/news/article_page/A_cure_for_gender_diversity_stalling_in_pharma/1452460

Gender Diversity Journey at Biocon Biologics

GENDER DIVERSITY AT BBL: A SNAPSHOT

- Biocon Biologics is setting the benchmark for gender diversity in Pharma, with **29% women in FY 2024, against the industry average of 11%**.
- This journey is rooted in a leadership commitment to inclusion, championed by founder **Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw**.
- Dedicated **DEI Chapter**, including a Global Head and a Culture & Belongingness team, ensures integration of diversity across hiring, policies, and leadership.
- Women employees play an **active role in co-creating DEI programs**, reinforcing ownership, trust, and meeting employee needs.

While the broader pharmaceutical industry in India faces notable challenges in improving gender diversity and supporting women in the workforce, some companies have taken progressive steps to address these issues. BBL is one amongst these key players in the sector that has been making **concerted efforts to enhance diversity and inclusion in their initiatives and practices**.

Against an industry average of 11%, BBL is a positive outlier with **29% women** in FY 2024. It presents a compelling case for us to understand the challenges, motivations and initiatives that have driven their journey towards this development.

BBL's gender diversity programs stem from founder Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw's vision of an inclusive workplace where women can thrive as leaders. Early on, Mazumdar-Shaw faced her own challenges and built Biocon with an ethos of inclusivity, evident even before formal DEI initiatives, as women comprised 50% of top leadership roles. Notably, women constitute close to **50% of the research and development workforce in India**, and this figure rises to 65% in some global offices. Key leadership positions, such as the COO, are held by women, inspiring the next generation.

BBL's organizational structure integrates gender diversity at all levels fostering leadership and representation for women. At BBL, gender diversity initiatives are overseen by the Global Head of DEI & Leadership. Apart from a dedicated DEI department, BBL has a full-fledged Culture, Values and Belongingness team that sustains a support system for employees to deal with any bias they might encounter, and works to foster a better sense of belongingness – the sense of enhanced value and ownership in the relationship between employee and institution. This team collaborates with senior leadership, including the CEO and chairperson, to embed **DEI values in decision-making, recruitment, and policy development.**

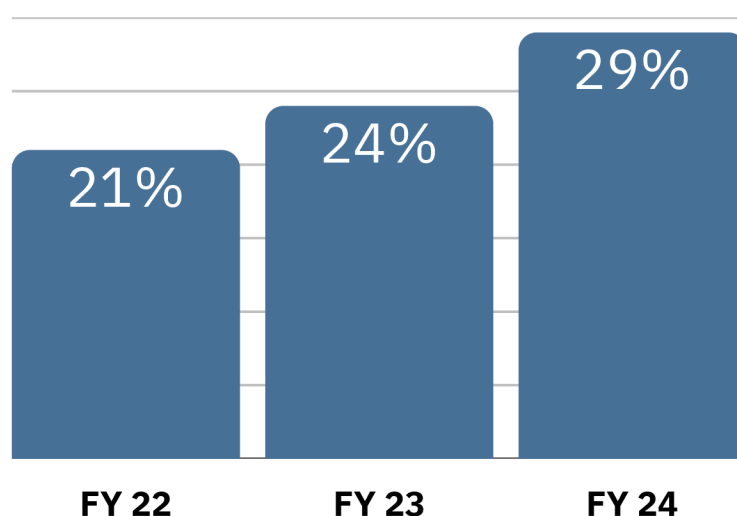


Figure 1: Percentage and number of women at BBL between FY 22- 24

Conversations with women employees at BBL reveal that they are not merely beneficiaries of DEI and HR policies, they are **active partners in shaping them**. By contributing ideas, offering suggestions, and even leading some initiatives, these employees help ensure that policies reflect real needs. This collaborative approach not only increases the impact of the initiatives but also fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among employees.

“

We want to create an inclusive environment here so that they feel that they belong and that they're heard. It's nice to have a community for women employees. I see a lot of leaders and other women employees getting benefited from these initiatives and them taking the lead in organizing these events.

-DEI Team Member

23 MoSPI. 2012. 'Participation of Women in Specified Activities along with Domestic Duties'

24 Top listed companies here refers to companies that are publicly traded and listed on stock exchanges.

25 Jhawar et al. 2014. 'Analysis of the skilled work force effect on the logistics performance index - case study from India'

26 UNDP. 2010. 'Power, Voice and Rights'

Women's Hiring at Biocon Biologics

INCLUSIVE HIRING PRACTICES

- BBL has steadily increased women's hiring, particularly in **STEM roles**, with a consistent upward trend from FY21–24 driven by **targeted efforts**.
- **100% women trainees were hired in manufacturing under the NAPS program in 2022**, and campus/apprenticeship channels have seen higher female intake than male.
- MOUs with top educational institutions have strengthened the pipeline of women in science and tech, reinforcing BBL's long-term commitment to **gender-balanced hiring**.

The organization has focused on increasing the percentage of women in hiring, particularly in **STEM fields**, which remains a challenge across the industry. Their HR team has mentioned that the organization has successfully achieved a **higher percentage of women hires compared to men through campus placements and apprenticeship programs**. The company has also been able to expand women representation through the NAPS (National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme) programme, hiring **100% women trainees in manufacturing in 2022 in BBL**.

100%

*Women Trainees in
Manufacturing under NAPS*

Additionally, they have signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with leading educational institutions, demonstrating a strong commitment to the recruitment and empowerment of women in STEM. Through these strategic partnerships, they gain access to a diverse pipeline of female talent, particularly in scientific and technical disciplines. The result has been commendable, with **74% of the interns in STEM roles being women in FY 24-25**.

UPWARD TREND IN WOMEN'S HIRING

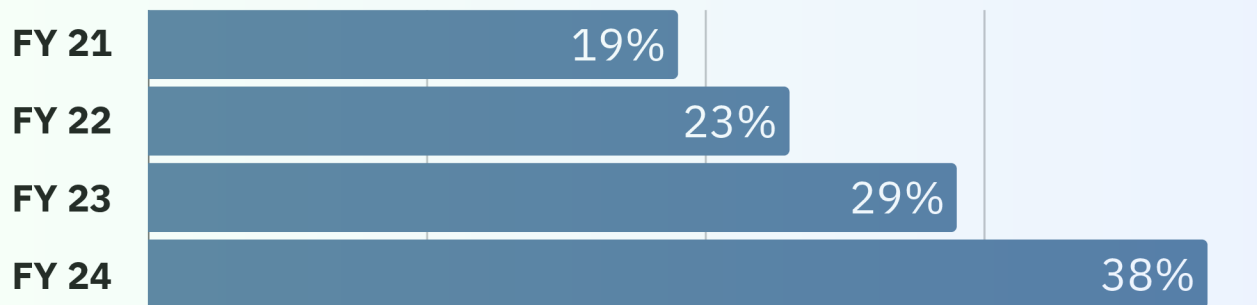


Figure 2: Women's hiring percentage between FY 21-24

As a positive consequence of the concerted efforts, there is a noticeable increase in the percentage of women hired over the years, showing an **improving trend in gender diversity.**



The company's dedication to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has been **nationally recognized**, earning it the '**Best Organizations for Women**' certification by **ET NOW** for two consecutive years, in FY 2023–24 and again in FY 2024–25.

Building a workplace that retains women's talent and advances them

Across industry, including pharmaceuticals, lack of support, biases and norms often force women to leave at key career points, creating a **leaky talent pipeline**. Enabling women to return and thrive after breaks is essential for building future leaders. Addressing this challenge requires joint efforts, especially from organizations that shape career trajectories.

A study titled '**Women in India Inc HR Managers Survey**' conducted by The Udaiti Foundation in partnership with Centre for Economic Data & Analysis (CEDA) at Ashoka University, revealed that **34% of women leave their jobs due to work-life balance issues**, compared to only 4% of men. The study surveyed 200 senior human resource managers and highlighted that work-life balance is a significantly greater concern for employed women in India than for their male counterparts.¹⁰ Sustaining women's workforce participation requires removing hiring barriers and providing post-joining support. Without **flexibility or caregiving accommodations**, many women exit even after rejoining.

As BBL moves towards its ambitious goal of **50-50 participation**, and more and more women join the company, a key challenge thus remains to ensure women's retention at various critical junctures of their lives and their subsequent advancement to more senior positions. In this regard, BBL has made remarkable strides in retaining women by implementing a robust return-to-work program and providing ongoing support after their reintegration. This is evident in their **post maternity retention rates going from 27% in FY 23 to 59% in FY 24**.

27% to 59%

*Post Maternity Retention Rates
from FY 23 to FY 24*

¹⁰ The Udaiti Foundation, Godrej DEi Labs, Centre for Economic Data & Analysis at Ashoka University, & Dasra. (2024, February 22). 34% of women leave jobs over work-life balance, only 4% of men do: Report. Business Standard. 34% of women leave jobs over work-life balance, only 4% of men do: Report | Company News - Business Standard

Women who have been working at BBL for a long while have noted a significant change in the workplace culture. With 24 years at the organization, one employee mentioned that she has witnessed a **notable cultural transformation**. Over the years, she has seen a clear shift toward a more inclusive environment, including increased representation of women across various levels, especially in leadership, and the kind of challenges she once faced in balancing maternity leave, childcare responsibilities, biases and prejudices from lack of male allyship, she feels, have eased, owing to **sustained organizational support**.

“

"I was told that being a woman, when you are going on a maternity leave, why don't you leave your job and then stay at home and then rejoin later. But now I see that a complete transition has happened."

– Senior Woman Employee & DEI Team Member

This case study will particularly look at the maternity leave policies and the back to work program design at BBL which has **enabled women to continue in their careers** and made BBL a resilient, competitive and diverse workplace.

Biocon Biologics’ Maternity Support

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Women’s roles are protected** during maternity leave as no replacements are hired.
- **Teams plan ahead** by sharing work and sometimes bringing in interns to manage the load smoothly.
- Conveniently located crèche facilities, **complete with transport support, safety protocols, and a nurturing environment**—enable returning mothers to balance career and caregiving.
- **80% of women return to the same role**, showing the approach helps women stay and grow in their careers.

India had a Maternity leave policy in place much before many of the advanced economies. The Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 entitled women employed in the formal sector to 12 weeks of leave which now has been amended to a paid leave of 26 weeks. This ensures job security for the woman returning to her job, but she is not guaranteed to return to the same level and role she left. Women returning from the long maternity leave may find their roles diminished, reassigned, or even eliminated, leading to career setbacks and a sense of professional displacement. **At BBL it is ensured that women do not get penalized for taking a break.**

Employees can also take pre-maternity leave starting at least two months before their expected delivery date, allowing them to work from home during this period based on their job role and alignment with their manager and larger team.

During the maternity break women employees' responsibilities are shared with others in the team and **no replacement is hired till the end of the 6 month maternity leave period**, to ensure the position is secured till the time the employee returns to work. Freezing their position allows the returning employee to resume their career without disruption. Without role security, many women end up leaving their jobs or struggle to grow in their careers, resulting in a loss of skilled employees for companies as well.

With freezing of positions and shared work responsibility, comes the mammoth task of aligning business needs with this design. BBL has successfully implemented this model by **planning for work contingencies well in advance.**

1

Phased Transition: The manager has to map co-workers who will be sharing the responsibilities of the woman availing maternity leave. The manager would usually plan it beforehand, and slowly reduce the workload of the employee as her due date approaches. The other team members also start picking it up early, so that the transition of work is smooth and there is no productivity loss. This ensures that the change in work streams is not sudden, and the team gets used to the new set up.

2

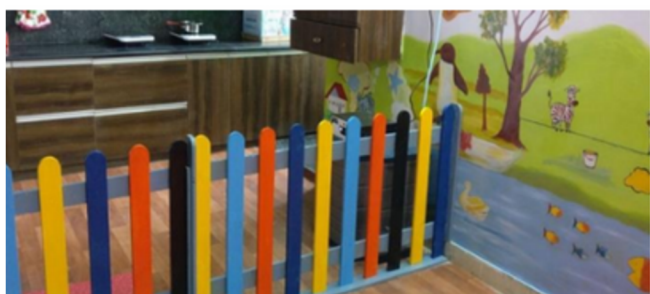
Hiring interns: The team also hires interns at times, in the absence of the woman employee, to help support routine tasks and ease the work load of the team. The internship program is designed to be inclusive, allowing interns to engage with various departments and understand the broader organizational goals. This aims to create a pipeline of talent that can **transition into permanent roles**. This also ensures that business needs are aligned with women's maternity leave and the organization can benefit from interns who have hands-on experience in the team already.

Employee Resource Group (ERG) for employees on maternity breaks: Women on maternity leave also have the option of being a part of an ERG for to-be-moms and new moms at BBL. This group helps and supports each other throughout the journey. The employee can at any point of time reach out to the HR team or their managers for additional support.

Creche facility: Once back, if the returning employee wishes to avail the company-provided crèche facility, she should notify the HR Business Partner at least one month prior to her return to ensure the support is in place. The crèche services are provided *free of cost* to Biocon employees, making quality childcare accessible to all.

Multiple centers located near major campuses ensure convenience, while **shuttle services and transport for lactating mothers within a 5 km radius make it logistically feasible and safe.**

Strict visitor rules, CCTV access, and clear safety protocols ensure a secure, hygienic space for young children. By providing a safe, nurturing, and structured environment for children, the crèche supports employees in balancing their caregiving responsibilities.



A Creche at Biocon Park, Bangalore

FY 2024-25	Numbers
Number of employees who availed ML	58
Employees returned/planning to return to same role	46
Employees returned to work in a different role	4
Number of employees who resigned	8

Figure 3: Maternity leave and return to work post ML data

Recorded Impact: As the data suggests, the freezing of positions of women who availed maternity leave, has resulted in close to 80% of women returning to work in the same positions. This is a healthy sign and demonstrates that the organisation values their skills and wants them to continue growing in their careers without having to start over.

80%

Return to Work Post Maternity Leave



Biocon Biologics' Back To Work Program

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BACK TO WORK PROGRAM:

- BBL's Returnship program successfully addresses common re-entry barriers through structured support—**skill-building, mentorship, and flexible work**.
- BBL actively prioritizes women with career breaks in hiring, tracks their post-hire performance, and leverages employee referrals.
- The **6-week Enabler framework** includes buddy systems, technical and behavioral training, self-paced learning, and alumni mentorship to rebuild confidence and upskill.
- **Flexible work options** in the first month via reduced hours or hybrid schedules—help ease the transition and enable retention.
- Over **200 women have re-joined the workplace owing to the Back to Work Program**.

Post a career break, women often face significant challenges in re-entering the workforce, not due to a lack of ambition or ability, but because of **limited institutional support**. While women are statistically more likely than men to take career breaks, research shows that a majority are eager to return to work. A report by Avtar estimates that approximately **7 million women** in India are seeking employment after taking a career break.¹¹

However, without structured pathways back, many face barriers like **skill gaps, unconscious bias, or inflexible workplace policies**. In response, forward-thinking organizations like BBL are now implementing structured return-to-work programs, initiatives designed to help women reskill, rebuild confidence, and reintegrate into the workforce. These initiatives not only help talented women resume their careers with confidence, but also allow companies to tap into an **experienced, motivated, and often overlooked talent pool**.

¹¹ Avtar. (2023). Second careers of women professionals: A latent gender diversity enabler. Avtar Group. <https://www.avtarinc.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/second-careers-of-women-professionals.pdf>

When BBL initiated its Returnship program, it began by asking **critical questions** to evaluate existing policies, practices, and infrastructure, identifying what was in place, what was missing, and where the gaps needed to be addressed. These questions were as follows:

- Do we have the **right career path clarity** and role for people who have had a career break?
- Do we have **adequate facilities** to support people who are returning from a career break?
- Do we have **well defined policies/flexibility** to enable people who have come back to work?
- Do we have **mentors/buddies** or a go to person to get adequate guidance when they rejoin?
- Do we have a **roadmap for the returnees**?
- Do we have adequate initiatives to hand hold and **build confidence** for those who have taken a break?

Based on the gaps and questions identified, **BBL developed its Back to Work Program**. The program is not limited to women; it is open to both men and women who have taken a career break and wish to return to work, within and outside the Biocon network.

Openings for the program are posted on various job portals, and the DEI team ensures women with breaks are generally prioritized by the **Talent Acquisition** team. BBL also captures the data on how well women are performing post returning for the recruiters. This data helps the recruitment team understand the success of these women in their roles and how they are managing their responsibilities. Additionally, employees are encouraged to **refer women from their networks, especially with breaks to widen their search for adequate talent**.



Enabler Framework

They have also developed its **Enabler framework for returnees**. Spread over six weeks, the program runs for **2 hours on alternate days**, combining orientation, skill-building, mentorship, and peer support.

Week 1 – Organizational Culture: The program begins with an orientation that introduces participants to the organization's culture, values, and a strong emphasis on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Participants are also assigned a buddy to guide them through the program.

Week 2 – Buddy Programme: This week focuses on building connections. Returnees interact with their assigned buddy, identify personal and professional needs, and engage with alumni who have successfully transitioned back.

Week 3 – Behavioral Skill Building: Confidence-building takes center stage at this point. Through interactive sessions with others who've had career breaks, along with leader-led discussions and success stories from previous returnees, participants gain inspiration and practical insights.

Week 4 – Training and Skilling: Participants are reintroduced to key internal tools work platforms. This week includes customized technical skill enhancement sessions tailored to their roles, helping bridge any skill gaps.

Week 5 – Learning: Self-paced learning is encouraged through curated videos, articles, and a shared database of online resources. Participants also take part in structured corporate training programs for further development.

Week 6 – Mentor & Alumni Connect: The final week is about reflection and long-term support. Returnees share feedback, connect with their managers, and are paired with mentors for continued guidance over the year. The program concludes with a 'Back to Work' alumni connect to foster a lasting sense of community.

This framework is supported by **flexible working hours** during the first month of the employee's return. She can choose between two options: either start with a **reduced schedule of five working hours per day instead of the usual nine, or opt to work four days a week with the flexibility to work from home for one day**, depending on the nature of her role.

This flexibility helps enable them to restart their professional journey and get back into the mainstream of work. Many women employees at BBL reflect that these provisions stand out for them within the larger industry, and they have witnessed this flexibility support women after returning to work. Owing to this robust reintegration mechanism, BBL has welcomed back over **200 colleagues after career breaks, creating an enabling environment for women to return to the workplace.**

200

Number of women Back to Work

Women's Leadership at Biocon Biologics

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP BUILDING:

- **Women's leadership hiring is on the rise**, with 22% of senior management hires in FY24 (up from 12% in FY23) and over 40% in Q3 alone.
- **Programs like WLDP and IIM-B courses** are building internal leadership pipelines, offering mentorship, learning, and advancement support to over **400 women**.
- The Biocon Women's Network (BWN) fosters peer mentorship, confidence-building, and leadership visibility through **regular events and self-led chapters**, engaging 60% of women employees.
- **Initiatives like the 'Spoorti' talk series and rotating chapter leads** create safe, inspiring spaces for women to share stories, build networks, and grow as visible voices within the organization.

Women in the organization are rapidly taking on leadership roles, through targeted hiring, advancement strategies, and various leadership development programs aimed at women. 22% of the hiring in FY 24 for senior management positions were women, a stark increase from 12% in FY 23. In the December 2023 quarter alone, **women hiring in leadership roles stood at over 40%.**

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT

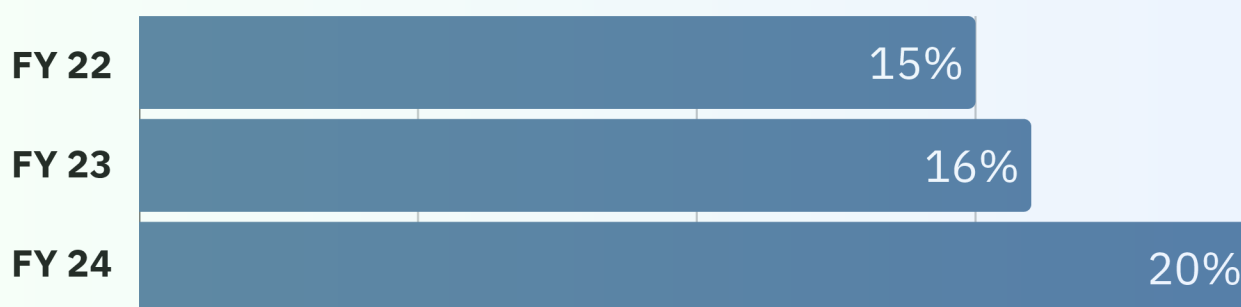


Figure 4: Women in Senior Management between FY 22-24

However, BBL continues to face challenges in hiring women for key management positions. (L13 and above).

- **Talent pool constraints:** Finding women with the right combination of leadership experience, technical expertise, and industry knowledge for these high-level positions remains a challenge.
- **Internal Pipeline Building:** Ensuring that women who are promoted into senior positions are supported in maintaining a work-life balance and are given opportunities for career progression is still a challenge according to BBL.



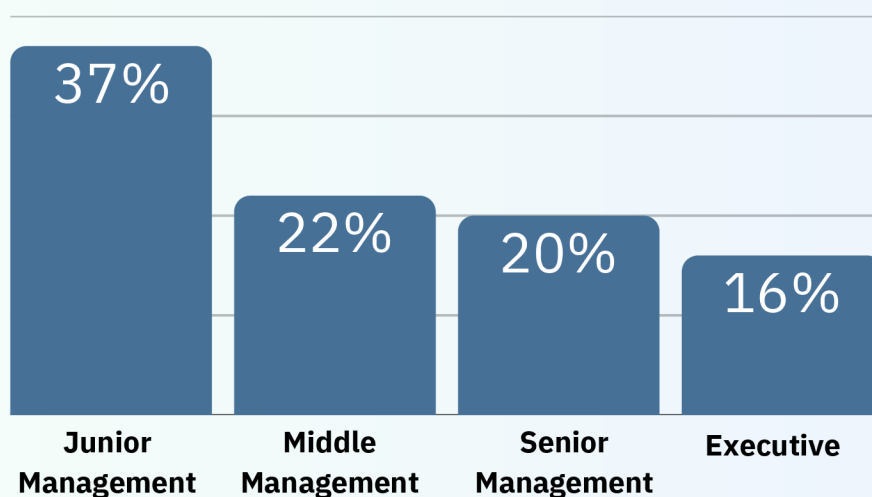


Figure 5: Women's representation at various management levels in FY 24

BBL is focusing on expanding their executive search networks and building stronger relationships with leadership development programs to address this gap. **400+ women employees** are actively participating and benefitting from the company's dedicated learning and development programs.

1

Management course in collaboration with IIM Bangalore: The organisation offers management courses tailored for women employees in collaboration with the IIM-B, aiming to nurture leadership qualities and provide mentorship opportunities.

2

Women Leadership Development Program (WLDP): Another program is the Women Leadership Development Program which focuses on mentorship, leadership skills, and professional development, and has enabled women to advance into leadership positions. The program lasts close to 8 months, features learning sessions with both external and internal stakeholders.

The WLDP is designed to align with both **business objectives and individual growth**, with various workshops and training materials provided to participants. This program not only focuses on leadership training but also provides mentoring opportunities for women to connect with senior leaders. These mentors guide women in navigating their career paths, making strategic decisions, and **preparing for senior roles**.

These programs are for every women employee in the organization irrespective of the field in which they are working in.

Women can apply for the program through a self-nomination process or be nominated by their team leads or managers based on their potential for leadership roles. A senior leader noted **significant transformations in participants from her team** after completing the program, indicating its effectiveness in developing leadership skills.

The organization currently has two cohorts running - **26 women from Senior Manager to AVP level in India, and 24 women from Assistant Manager to Manager level in Malaysia.** Two more cohorts are in the pipeline to begin this year.

3

Women in STEMM Mentoring: The *Women Mentoring Women initiative* led by the BWN, supports emerging women leaders in STEMM roles through structured one-on-one mentoring over 6 to 9 months. By connecting them with senior leaders for monthly sessions, the program fosters growth, industry insight, and a strong sense of belonging within the organization. **Mentors play a key role in building confidence and leadership** in women professionals while enhancing their own skills and networks.

The program engages women across career stages, internally, it includes volunteer BWN members, WLDP participants, and the BBL Gen Z network; externally, it reaches college students, schoolgirls, and NGO-supported learners, building a comprehensive Women in STEMM pipeline. These mentoring programs have empowered over **200 women to thrive in STEM careers, helping them overcome barriers and grow as leaders.** Notably, several women mentors are now also guiding male colleagues—an important step toward building a more inclusive and gender-equitable workplace.



Biocon Women's Network (BWN)

As part of the **Employee Resource Group**, the Biocon Women's Network facilitates mentoring relationships where experienced women leaders within the organization act as mentors to younger or newer employees.

At BWN, events are organized by the leads, DEI vertical and HR focusing on the specific needs of women employees. With **women leads rotating annually**, their deep knowledge of their specific BWN chapters, both functionally and geographically, ensures that the activities remain **participatory, inclusive, and meaningful, not just a check box**. The DEI vertical mentioned the BWN has successfully engaged around 60% of women employees in various events, both virtual and offline.

A participant **highlighted networking opportunities provided by such platforms** is deeply appreciated, and the opportunity to lead BWN chapters leads to recognition and deepening of aspirations to take up leadership roles in the future.

A BWN lead from Chennai mentioned that the program places strong emphasis on self-improvement, confidence building, and learning through mentorship. By encouraging open dialogue about career paths, the initiative helps women reflect on their journeys and gain clarity about their goals. This program is voluntary and mentors could be both men and women.

“

'We had a panel discussion with women from different age groups, and it was incredible to hear their diverse experiences. A 35-year-old might have a different opinion than an 80 year-old, and that variety of perspectives is invaluable.'

Scientist, BWN Lead

Spoorti Talk Series: One of the offline events which garners a lot of participants, is the ‘Spoorti’ talk series organized by various BWN chapters. The series is structured similarly to **TEDx talks**, allowing speakers to present on a topic of their choice, women have previously presented on personal anecdotes, facing gender biases et cetera, resulting in impactful sessions. Women present in **comfortable spaces, honing their public speaking skills and get feedback from the attendees.** Our conversations reveal that women really look forward to these sessions and the other events, as they have emerged as platforms fostering communication, community building and cross-learning.



Call to Action

BBL demonstrates a data-driven approach to advancing gender equity by systematically tracking key diversity metrics. They monitor gender representation, absenteeism, attrition, promotion rates, and pay equity, and identify gaps and tailor its strategies to address them. This commitment to continuous measurement and improvement underscores its broader goal of fostering a more inclusive and equitable workplace.

To ensure these programs are implemented effectively and have the desired impact, BBL ensures accountability is attached to the leaders in the organization through integrating diversity goals into leaders' Key Performance Indicators.

For the organization, investing in maternity benefits, flexible work models, and structured Returnship Programs is not just an added benefit for women, it is a smart business imperative to not lose out on significant talent. In sectors like Pharmaceuticals, where women have historically been underrepresented, particularly in mid- to senior-level roles, these interventions are not merely progressive; they are essential.

Moreover, with India being a key hub for global pharmaceutical manufacturing and R&D, companies must align their talent strategies with international standards of equity and inclusion. Maternity support, flexible roles, and returnship programs allow women to rejoin and contribute meaningfully, often bringing renewed perspective, resilience, and commitment. Biocon Biologics has identified this and is building a workplace that benefits from it.

By enabling women to thrive through all phases of their professional journey, the sector can unlock untapped potential, strengthen leadership pipelines, and set a powerful example for other industries to follow.

ANNEXURE

Function-Wise Women's Representation¹²

Function ¹³	Percentage of women
BFI	9.75%
Business Enabling	33.83%
CD	34.52%
Commercial	46.08%
Global Procurement and External Manufacturing	28.79%
IPR	56.25%
Manufacturing	19.85%
MSAT	35.00%
Quality	33.90%
R&D	44.89%
RA	39.81%
SCM	22.50%

¹² Data updated last on 31st March 2024

¹³ BFI - Branded Formulation in India
CD- Clinical Development
IPR - Intellectual Property Rights
MSAT - Manufacturing Science and Technology
R&D - Research and Development
RA - Regulatory Affairs
SCM - Supply Chain Management

About

The Udaiti Foundation

The Udaiti Foundation is committed to driving India's vision of a Viksit Bharat and a \$30 trillion economy through two key objectives of increasing India's Female Labour Force Participation Rate to 50% and doubling the number of women-owned enterprises in the country. As a force multiplier in the Women's Economic Empowerment ecosystem, we actively provide data-backed evidence to the private sector organizations, state governments, and the start-up ecosystem and collaborate with them to drive change on the ground.

Close the Gender Gap

The private sector holds significant potential to enhance women's participation in the workforce. Close the Gender Gap (CGG) is an ambitious initiative to increase women's workforce participation in large enterprises in India from the current **18%**. The initiative brings together India's leading companies to transform India's workforce by accelerating **women's workforce participation in the private sector**.

Since the adoption of the Business Responsibility and Sustainability (BRSR) framework, there have been promising efforts to fill the gap in gender-disaggregated company-wise data. For instance, the reporting of gender data by NSE-listed companies has increased from 52% in FY 2022-23 to 57% in FY 2023-24.

To this end, the Udaiti Foundation has launched the **CGG Data Hub** under the ambit of the CGG Initiative, a data-to-solutions platform for data, insights, tools, and resources on gender representation and policies in the formal sector. As a browsable web resource, the platform allows users to interact with the data and generate sector-wise, year-wise, and comparative reports through the Women's Formal Employment Tracker. CGG aims to catalyse commitments and action for gender parity at work.

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