EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Indian IT industry, a knowledge-intensive sector and equal opportunity employer has been actively hiring women in its workforce over the past decade. The 800,000 women currently working in the sector account for over 30 per cent of the existing hires and this figure is all set to rise in the future with 20% in 2004 to 30% in 2012 (NASSCOM). The last few years has seen a spate of conferences, panel discussions & dialogues around diversity, primarily gender and the dilemmas in Indian IT organizations. With so much focus and understanding of this space it’s time to ask some key questions: Is there greater sensitization within our businesses on diversity & inclusivity related issues? Is there a real pipeline of women leaders in the making? or are we still grappling with the same dilemmas from where we started. The Indian IT-BPO industry has set high standards in inclusion and is among the first to recognize the business imperative for Diversity & Inclusion. Inclusivity actions have evolved from individual programs to culture changing organizational efforts. Recognizing the global leverage of our “demographic dividend”, industry is gearing up to develop a diverse and inclusive workforce for women though women continue to have disproportionate representations on corporate boards and executive committees, with Asian countries having significantly lower representation (Barsh, Devillard, & Wang, 2012).

The need for gender inclusivity is well recognized and the IT and BPO industry have been in the forefront of attracting, retaining and growing women into leadership positions. Currently, approximately 31 percent of the IT-BPO workforces are women. This is much ahead of most industries in the organized sector. However, less than 6 percent of them are in top leadership positions. While the past NASSCOM Diversity Summits have addressed the issues around the Business Imperative of Gender Inclusion, the NASSCOM Diversity and Inclusion Summit 2013 had the theme ‘From Case Studies to Pervasive Inclusion’ – Making Diversity Work.
Moving beyond gender, they are also now focusing on cultural, generational inclusivity, and people with disabilities, and the relevance of this to companies in successfully taking center stage in a rapidly evolving world economy. Over the last five years while the number of women in the workforce has been increasing, the numbers have not significantly altered the proportion at all levels. Sustained progression among women employees are few and far between. This clearly points to the fact that merely sustaining current efforts is not sufficient. While we like to believe that the agenda for Gender Inclusivity is now well established with Industry having invested considerable time and effort to sustain and build on it, we are far from the overall objective of creating a culture that fosters inclusivity and builds an environment conducive for growth. Inclusivity as we now know is not just about gender and our next imperative is to unravel the various elements that impact the culture of organizations. ‘People with Disabilities’ is a potential talent pool that is waiting to be harnessed with the right enablers to manage them. D&I in India is a very complex issue with its own set of challenges, hence Understanding what the organization needs and for what purpose is critical, else an entire Diversity and Inclusion initiative could fail.

This thesis attempts to assess the women workforce composition in Indian IT organizations, evaluate the available benefits of Gender Inclusivity, Examine the gap between the prevailing and expected gender Inclusivity practices, to measure the levels of Gender Inclusivity, using appropriate statistical tools with a sample of 201 women executives at different levels of management complemented by personal Interviews in IT industries in Bangalore.