



A Strategic Step towards Women Empowerment

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Abstract

Gender equality is conceived to be a subtle and a critical element in achieving social change that leads to collective sustainable development with equity and growth. Inequalities are most obviously in health and education, economic development. Violence against women in public life and policymaking and social attitudes and is a conventional conception. House hold churns the economic development sector indicates that, official data does not reflect the amount of work that women actually do to enable their families to sustain, collecting fuel, fodder, water, keeping poultry, working as cheap labor in family farms. Women also slog in home-based industries, bidi and agarbatti-rolling, bangle-making, weaving. Without social security and are the lowly paid lot that which forms an important share in the family's income. Indian agrarian economy is largely labor intensive, 1/3rd of this labor force is constituted by women, but, they are the lowest paid unpired to men. The present study analyses the gender gaps and lists out the strategies in the Twelfth Five Year Plan of Government of India for women's empowerment.

Key Words: gender gaps, empowerment, gender gap index, Economic and Social disparity.

Introduction

Rural women have many roles and responsibilities. They are farmers, nourishes, laborers and micro manufactures they pre-requisite invest huge hours fetching water and collecting firewood. The empowerment of women is fundamental to reduce poverty, hunger and malnutrition. Gender equality and women's empowerment are therefore urgently needed factors for socio economic development of a nation. The promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to which India is a signatory.

➤ **Gender gap**

The differences between women and men, especially in socio-Economic, political, intellectual, cultural,

attainments. The Global Gender Gap matrix was introduced by the World Economic Forum to examine four important areas of inequality between men and women:

1. **Economic opportunity for participation:** outcomes of salaries, participation levels and attainment of high skilled Employment opportunity.
2. **Educational achievement:** State of basic and higher level education
3. **Political empowerment:** Degree of representation in decision-making structures
4. **Health and expectancy:** life expectancy and sex ratio

The Gender Gap Index examines countries on how efficiently are they



dividing their resources and opportunities among their male and female populations, in this context, India ranks 123rd in terms of economic participation, 121st in educational attainment, and 134th in health Care and 17th in political empowerment. India, having 1.3 million elected women representatives, has the largest number of women participates in local governance among the Asian countries, in excess of 33% reservation. Women in local government roles came out with excellent outcomes for communities in budgetary decisions and were more potential in garnering resources despite lower education and hence, empowerment labor market experience, of women is to be sensitized at the earliest.

Gender Gaps in Certain sectors in India

The gender gaps with regard to education, health and economic sector have been discussed below.

➤ **Educational Sector:**

There is a wide gender gap in the literacy rate in India: The literacy rate in 7 and above aged groups in 2011 was 82.14% for men and 65.46% for women. The census provided that growth in female literacy rate at 11.8% was substantially higher than male literacy rate at 6.9% in the 2001–2011.

➤ **School attendance**

Only 2/3 of girls and 3/4 of children aged 6-17 years are attending school. The sex ratio of children at school is 889 girls per 1,000 boys. There is gender equality in school attendance in urban areas; but, in rural areas, the female disadvantage in education is marked and increases with age. Age-appropriate school attendance is lower than any school attendance for both boys and girls. However, boys and

girls who are in school are about equally likely to be in an age-inappropriate class. School dropout beyond primary school is a major problem for both girls and boys.

➤ **Educational attainment among adults**

Gender disparity in Education is far greater in rural India than in urban India 41% of women and 18% of men aged between 15-49 have never been to school. Educational attainment remains dismally low: even among the 20-29 age groups.

➤ **Health Sector:**

Discrimination against women is common place starting with birth in India the slated sex ratio of 943 women to 1,000 men (Census 2011) portrayed in the ensuing pages. This is becomes of heavily weighing love towards male child out of cultural fabric of India. This cultural passage lenders the growth of girl child trough various malicious social mechanisms the social neglect of women and girls, less access to nutrition, healthcare, and high maternal mortality. Are some of the more notorious causes in maternal mortality in India is the second highest in the world, at 385-487 per 100,000 live births. Close to 125,000 women die due to pregnancy and pregnancy-related illnesses every year. In rural areas, 60% of girls are married before the age of 18, and 60% of married girls bear children before they are 19. Almost 1/3rd of babies born with low weight because of poverty, early marriage, malnutrition and for healthcare during and post delivery period.



➤ **Economic Sector:**

Women, invariable need to be more rigorously integrated into the economy in order to promote India's long term development potential. The census identify many activities that women actually involve to enable their families to survive the activates such as collecting fuel, fodder or water, keeping poultry, working on land etc. Women also work in home-based industries, bidi and agarbatti-rolling, bangle-making, weaving, etc. They do not get due social security benefits and are paid very low wages for this informal work. 1/3rd of agricultural workers are women. Their wages are 30% lower than men's wages. Women with this merge salary can't get credit from banking institutions for they are often unable to provide collateral. They get microscopic loans even though their repayment record is much better than that of men. Women's right to landed assets is not satisfactory. Though legislation has been introduced to ensure that women share is due in ancestral property, enforcing such rights in a patriarchal society is constitutionally to smoothen over the glaring disparity.

Gender Pay Gap in India

Sundry Articles of the Constitution of India stabs to ensure that there is no prevalence of gender pay gap. Certain legislations also try to redress gender pay gap. The articles which uphold the pay parity and equality justice are as follows.

- **Article 14:** Men & women to have equal rights & opportunities in the political, economic & social spheres.
- **Article 15(1):** Prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex etc.

- **Article 15(3):** Special provision made available to the State to make affirmative discriminations in favor of women.
- **Article 16:** Equality of opportunities in matter of public appointments for all citizens.
- **Article 39(a):** The State shall direct its policy towards securing all citizens men and women, equally, the right to means of livelihood.
- **Article 39(d):** Equal pay for equal work for both men and women
- **Article 42:** The State shall make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

The Survey conducted by Paycheck India with 16,500 online observations (13,729 males and 2771 females) marked that a wide gender pay gap prevailing in India. The average gender pay gap is roughly about 54% for years 2006 to 2011. The data also uncovered that gender pay gap has shrunk over the years. It was above 70% before 2008 and has come down to almost 40% in 2011. Gender pay gap appears so due to increase in wages, for wages below Rs1 Lakh and above Rs 50 Lakhs, the gender pay gap is negligible. But for the wage ranging From Rs 1 Lakh to Rs 50 Lakhs the gender pay gap is above 40%. The pay gap increases with age, the gender pay gap is highest for 50-60 years aggregate with 157% and lowest for 20-30 years age group at 38.

National Mission for Empowerment of Women of India

The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) was initiated by the Government of India (GOI) on International Women's Day in 2010 with



purpose to empower women socially, economically and educationally. The Mission decided to achieve empowerment of women on all these fronts by binding together the schemes/programmes of different Ministries/Departments of Government of India and State Governments. The Mission relies on existing structural arrangements including Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs) for implementation of schemes/programmes. The Mission has been called as Mission Purna Shakti, implying a vision for holistic/fuller empowerment of women.

Mission Spotlights

- Access to health, drinking water, sanitation and hygiene facilities for women
- Coverage of all girls irrespective of class and caste with special emphasis on to vulnerable groups in schools from Class 1 to class 12
- Higher and Professional education for women
- Skill development, Micro credit, Vocational Training, Entrepreneurship, SHG Etc.
- Gender sensitization and dissemination of information
- Steps to prevent crime against women and for safe environment for women

National Policy for the Empowerment of Women in India (2001)

Policy and Objectives

The goal of this Policy was to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The Policy was widely circulated in order to encourage active participation of all stakeholders for

achieving its goals. The objectives of Policy are as bellows.

- (i) Creating an environment through positive Socio-Economic policies for overall development of women to enable them to realize their potential
- (ii) The *de-jure* and *de-facto* enjoyment of all human rights and freedoms on equal basis with men in all fields like political, economic, social, cultural.
- (iii) Equality based participation and decision making opportunity for women in the national economic development.
- (iv) Equal access of women to health care, quality education, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office, guidance etc.
- (v) Stream lining legal systems to elimination of all forms of discrimination against women
- (vi) Transformation of societal attitudes and community practices through active participation and involvement of both men and women.
- (vii) Inclusion of gender perspective in the development process.
- (viii) Uproot discrimination of all forms and violence against women and the girl child; and
- (ix) Building and strengthening of all civic bodies with women participation.

Conclusion:

The term 'Gender gap' and 'women empowerment' is being treated as hackneyed for some genuine reasons like looking at women through traditional and conservative spectacle that, most often, in traditional society keeps women hedged in, and as a consequence that women's issues remain, un-resolved.



However, the 'Political will' across the spectrum of the system end the policy making, mechanism women representation could, to some extent, eliminate the obtrusive elements in the way of women empowerment and usher in is the reduction of gender gap in terms of women development in sundry aspects of her existence.

In the end, the government should be firm enough to pursue women causes in an incisive manner and willful change in the attitudes of governing bodies and societal attitudinal change need to be embarked upon on war footing to realize the positive results.

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