



## Women Empowerment Through Education - An Overview

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**Abstract :** "Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with knowledge, skills and self-empowering women with knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate in the development process." ICPD Programme of Action, Paragraph 4.2 Women and men in India enjoy de jure equality. Art 14 of the constitution of India guarantees equal rights and opportunities to men and women in political, economic and social spheres, Art 42 directs the state to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions for work and maternity itself and Art 51(A) imposes upon every citizen, a fundamental duty to renounce the practices derogatory to dignity of women. However, this de jure equality has not yet materialized in to a de facto equality, despite the efforts made in the Five Year Plans, National Policy for Employment of women emphasized an equal access to education through the Special Action Plan of 1998, plans for the education of girls up to the college level and vocational training.

### Introduction

Women and men in India enjoy de jure equality. Art 14 of the constitution of India guarantee equal rights and opportunities to men and women in political, economic and social spheres, Art 42 directs the state to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions for work and maternity itself and Art 51(A) imposes upon every citizen, a fundamental duty to renounce the practices derogatory to dignity of women. Women bear almost all responsibility for meeting basic needs of the family. Yet are systematically denied the Resources, information and freedom of action they need to fulfill the responsibility.

The vast majority of the world's illiterate are women. Of the millions of school age children not in school, the majority are girls. Hence education is very significant for girls and women.

However women's literacy rates are significantly lower than men in most developing countries. Closing the gender gap in education is a development priority and it is one of the benchmarks for the millennium development goals.

### Need for women's education :

- to eliminate illiteracy
- to develop self-esteem and self confidence
- to have knowledge about their bodies and sexuality
- to have the ability to make their own decision and negotiate
- to raise the women's awareness of their rights
- to provide skills for income generation
- to make participation in community/society more effective and



- to prepare them to be good women leaders.

**Various Education Schemes started by Government :**

- Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA)
- National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Education (NPEGEL)
- Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)
- Education guarantee scheme
- Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVS)
- National Programme of Mid day meals in school
- Mahila Samakhya Programme

In terms of government Policies on women's Education, it was observed that while there is no explicit discrimination by gender in most places, neither is there a real commitment to provide sustainable programmes for women. There is a perceived gap between the rhetoric and policies of decision makers that many of the women considered the policies as simply paying lip service to women's concerns.

**Constraints to Women's Education**

First of all the actual working and living conditions of women prevent them from meaningful participation in women's educational programmes. The increasing impoverishment of women makes it necessary for them to focus on income-generation activities simultaneous with the performance of Household chores. This, therefore limits their time and energy to get involved in education programme.

**The following are the constraining factors:**

- Heavy work load of women;
- Low school participation occurs due to parental indifference. Isolation of women from each other.
- Traditional views that limits participation internal strife
- Discriminatory policy environment
- Negative end sensational coverage of media
- Stereotyped mindest of the people
- Sending a girl to school is like watering someone else plant according to a popular perception.

**Facilitating factors**

- existence of women's organizations
- availability of support systems for women
- availability of women - specific data and other relevant information
- availability of funds
- feminist leadership
- networking; favourable media coverage
- favourable policy climate

**Few Suggestions to overcome barriers in women's Education**

- *The* Government, Community, NGOs and other social and religious organizations have to come ard for highlighting essence of female education.



- Training to prepare educational programmes for women's
- empowerment needs to integrate the four components: gender issues, work oriented activities, literacy and numeracy skills and principles of curriculum design.
- Feminists will have to continue their struggle to make women aware of the benefits of the education
- Women Panchayat members can play an important role in promoting inclusive education.
- The schools and colleges need to be safe places where parents will prefer to send their daughters happily
- A gender sensitive curriculum has to be developed
- Creation of suitable infrastructure like separate girls schools, female teachers nearby schools, (wash rooms, transport facilities and a scene environment is necessary.

## CONCLUSION

Education is the milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life; so that we can not neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment. Empowerment through education is ideally seen as a continuous holistic process with cognitive, psychological and political dimensions in order to achieve emancipation. Empowerment is needed to break a number of real dichotomies affecting women: personal/collective, domestic/public, material/ideological. Empowerment enables the person to gain insight and have an awareness of what is undesirable and unfavourable about

her current situation, the possibilities of attaining it and realising what is within her reach and what she could do to get to a better situation

As education is a fundamental right of every individual, it becomes imperative for the government to make education mandatory for all sections of the society especially for the female folk who *have* not availed this opportunity fully. What Indian women need therefore is not just empowerment, but complete identity revolution.

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