

Addressing Gender Equality and Development

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality and Inclusion of Women in Development is a debatable issue in policy making, administrative and academic domain. Development is not mere an economic phenomenon, it includes the growth and progress in the whole social system. As we know that, there are discriminations and differentiation on the basis of gender in many areas of life rooted in the Institutions. That can change the economy of the country and affect the overall development.

Gender inequality is a major challenge for development. In this background, the Gender in development process has been analyzed in the new paradigm. Gender equality and empowerment of women is essential to economic and social development. Women's e empowerment is seen today as the most important factor in promoting equality between women and men and it is a prerequisite for the achievement of developmental goals.

Key words: Development, Gender Equality, Social Development, Empowerment

INTRODUCTION

There has been discrimination and differentiation on the basis of gender in many areas of life rooted in the institutions, including marriage and family, employment, education, culture and religion. Sex and gender differentiation evolves itself in the form of male domination and female subordination. Traditionally Indian women have had a dependency syndrome as for as economic participation is concerned. Generally, they bear almost all responsibility for meeting the basic needs of the family. Yet they are systematically denied the resources, information and freedom of action.

Today, inequality on the basis of sex and gender makes a gap between men and women in accessing opportunities. Women and girls often face barriers and so many constrains and restrictions on their mobility; lack of access to the recourses, decision-making power; lower literacy rates. There is a discriminatory attitude of communities, accessing health facilities, having information and getting services and so on. The inequality between genders not only affects the lives of individual men and women differently, but also holds and limits the economic growth and hinders development.

Gender inequality is a social process by which men and women are not treated equally. The treatment may arise from biological, psychological and social distinctions, or it may arise from cultural norms prevalent in the society. Some of these distinctions are empirically grounded, while others appear to be socially constructed. Gender inequality is a major challenge for development. Inequalities between genders not only affect the individual's wellbeing and development. It can change the economy and affect the overall development.

There are two main ways to measure social inequality:

1) Inequality of conditions, which refers to the unequal distribution of income, wealth, and material goods. Housing,

2) Individuals Inequality of opportunities refers to the unequal distribution of life chances across. This is reflected in measures such as level of education, health status, and treatment

The prominent faces of gender Inequality can vary from one region to another, and also from one period to the next.

Development:

Development is not mere an economic phenomenon It includes the growth and progress in the whole social system raises the income and consumption, education, through growth. Development creates conditions conducive to growth and develops self esteem in turn promotes human dignity and respect.

The main aim of development is to improve the level of the quality of life of people. Through changes in the Economic, Social, Political and Demographic components it will lead to growth and progress. But it is quite visible and justifiable that the existing situation is completely different.

Many faces of Gender Inequality

In this context Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen has worked on discrimination against women in the development process. His work on Gender Inequality explains the Main indications of inequality between the sexes.

According to him “there is a high mortality rate of women which increases the number of men in the total population extensively in North Africa, China and South Asia. The Sex selective abortion and preference to the male child resulted in the Natality inequality. Inequality in the opportunity to basic and special facilities, leads to gender bias and Gender inequality in Professions. Due to inequality in ownership makes difficult to women to enter the economic activities”. Focusing on South Asia, Census of 2001 he discovered an interesting phenomenon – ‘A split India’, “something of a social and cultural divide across India, splitting the country into two nearly contiguous halves, in the extent of anti-female bias in natality and post-natality mortality.”

Gender inequality exists in most parts of the world, from Japan to Morocco, from Uzbekistan to the United States of America. However, inequality between women and men can take different forms. He identified the principal issues, emphasizing the need of gender inequality, and called for action to combat and put an end to gender inequality.

GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT

The role of Women and men are different in the economy of country this is the basic concept for the gender planning. There are different policy approaches to the development from a gender perspective. The gender analysis has been the central to the development in the new paradigm. Gender is one of the important categories to be emphasizing in the process of Development.

In fact, several studies show that excluding women’s input into development by inhibiting their involvement in education, leader-ship, finance, and social improvement have negative impact on development (Lucas, 2001; Okojie, 1996). Though Women have potential to change their own and nation’s economic status, often their economic contributions are undervalued. It is the fact that women still lag behind men in

education, employment, politics, health, and access to public services.

There are Several major challenges affect gender inequality such as low educational attainment of women, lack of employable skills, gender discriminatory labor laws, and burdens imposed on women in the name of culture, unrecognized domestic work. Gender equality benefits everyone; hence it is the major objective of Sustainable Development. Equality stimulates economic growth. Now the question is how to bring gender equality to promote the development.

The only way to bring gender equality is supporting women in empowering themselves. Equal opportunity strengthens the process of development. Or otherwise, Women continue to be ascribing to the domestic work, responsible for childbearing, procreation, and in maintaining household works. They may involve in agriculture, industry, entrepreneurship or in work', and taking decisions in the major matters in the way of development.

Gender equality and empowerment of women is essential to economic and social development. Women's e empowerment is seen today as the most important factor contributing to equality between women and men and it is a prerequisite for the achievement of developmental goals.

However, it has become accepted that promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) is essential in achieving sustainable human development. Through empowerment there is a need to strengthen women's rights and enable them to participate in economic and other activities. Empowerment helps women to increase their productivity as well as income-generating pursuits and entrepreneurial ventures. They become stronger leaders and more effectively contribute financially to their families, communities and to the country.

The Gender Equality Task Force of the MDGs identified three domains:

1. The capability domain, notably girls' and women's education, training and health.
2. Access to resources, notably to assets, including land and finance; and employment the domain of decision-making and power
3. The security domain: protection from violence of all sorts (political, criminal and domestic).

The principles of women empowerment policy (WEP) also prescribes that, "Women Leadership Promotes Gender Equality Equal Opportunity, Inclusion and Nondiscrimination Health, Safety and Freedom from Violence Education and Training Enterprise Development, Involvement of women in Supply Chain and Marketing Practices, Community Leadership and Engagement all are supportive to the development.

There are some initiatives taken by Government of India for removing the gender gap in all aspect of social, economic and political life like:

Economic Participation:

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao ensures the protection, survival and education of the girl child.
2. Scheme for Adolescent Girls aims to empower girls in the age group 11-18 and to improve their social status through nutrition, life skills, home skills and vocational training
3. Working Women Hostel ensures the safety and security for working women.
4. The National Crèche Scheme ensures that women take up gainful employment through providing a safe, secure and stimulating environment to the children.
5. Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana aims to provide housing under the name of the woman also.
6. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana aims to enable a large number of Indian youths including women to take up industry-relevant skill training in securing a better livelihood.
7. Deen Dayal Upadhyay National Urban Livelihoods Mission focuses on creating opportunities for

women in skill development, leading to market-based employment.

8. Sukanya Samridhi Yojna – Under this scheme girls have been economically empowered by opening their bank accounts.
9. Skill Upgradation & Mahila Coir Yojna is an exclusive training programme of MSME aimed at skill development of women artisans engaged in coir Industry.
10. Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme is a major credit-linked subsidy programme aimed at generating self-employment opportunities through establishment of micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector.
11. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana provides access to institutional finance to micro/small business.

Education:

1. Samagra Shiksha Scheme inter alia has provisions of gender segregated toilets in all schools and teachers' sensitization programmes to promote girls' participation, Rani Laxmi Bai Atmaraksha Prashikshan and stipend for girl children with special needs.
2. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) have been opened in educationally backward blocks for girls belonging to disadvantaged groups.
3. University Grants Commission (UGC) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) are implementing various fellowship/scholarship schemes. Women Studies Centres have been established in various Universities and Colleges to undertake research and develop curricula in the areas of gender equity, economic self-reliance of women, girls' education, etc.

Health and Nutrition:

1. Government has announced Mission Poshan 2.0 to strengthen nutritional content, delivery, outreach and outcomes with focus on developing practices that nurture health, wellness and immunity to disease and malnutrition.
2. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandna Yojna aims to provide maternity benefit to pregnant and lactating mothers.
3. Implementation of Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent Health plus Nutrition (RMNCAH+N)
4. Rollout of Comprehensive Primary Health Care including health promotion through Ayushman Bharat-Health & Wellness Centers (AB-HWC)
5. Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK) to eliminate out-of-pocket expenses for pregnant women delivering in public health institutions and sick infants accessing public health institutions for treatment.
6. Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) to provide financial assistance to pregnant women for encouraging institutional delivery.
7. Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN) to provide assured, dignified, respectful and quality healthcare at no cost and zero tolerance for denial of services
8. Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) to provide comprehensive and quality ANC to pregnant women on the 9th of every month.
9. LaQshya initiative to improve the quality of care in Labour room and Maternity Operation Theatres

Political Participation:

1. To bring women in the mainstream of political leadership at the grass root level, government has reserved 33% of the seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions for women.
2. Capacity Building of Panchayat Stakeholders including Elected Women Representatives is conducted with a view to empowering women to participate effectively in the governance processes.

There are different models which explain the inclusion of women in development. For instance, “one of the models explains the reasons for women being treated as beneficiaries of the crumbs thrown at them, in the margin of the economy consumer and an auxiliary labour force to be utilized in the crisis period and eased out the moment men are ready for takeover. The discourse revolved around the economic growth paradigm”. This model integrates women in the development as active change agents. State affirmative actions are advocated by these models for women empowerment. Yet despite of the programmes the progress towards gender equality is very slow.

The Global Gender Gap Index 2022, released by the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranks India at 135 out of 146 countries. “The estimated earned income of women in India is only one-fifth of men’s, which puts the country among the bottom 10 globally on this indicator”. This report is a measure of gender gap and inequality. The report also says that “the gender gap persists in health educational attainment in economic participation and opportunity Health survival and political empowerment”. The report also says about gender-inclusive recovery.

CONCLUSION

There is a need for efforts to tackle discriminatory attitudes and gender stereotypes which perpetuate discrimination against women. The mechanisms and programmes promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women are to be effectively implemented. In all the development programmes, a gender perspective needs to be mainstreamed in order to address women’s specific needs. Gender-sensitive policies and programmes will promote the Gender equality and in turn leads to development. Gender equality and empowerment of women need to be achieved through women’s participation in all stages long-term development.

In this context, development and its sustainability relies on ending discrimination towards women, including them in the process of development seriously and providing equal opportunities in all the spears of life and society. There are disparities in the economic and social development. This is a challenge in the way of development. Hence inclusive growth that is, Development of the social sector such as education, health and empowerment of Women is much needed for the nation’s economy.

According to Bilance 1997 “Social Development is the promotion of Sustainable society that is worthy of human dignity by empowering marginalized groups, women and men, to undertake their own development to improve their social and economic position and to acquire their rightful place in society”. For the overall sustainable development interlinking the economic and social approach is essential.

Development is not purely an economic phenomenon but rather a multi-dimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social system. The government has to prioritize to bridge the gender gap by reducing the inequality by improving health, and incising participation of women in socio economic activities.

For the overall sustainable development interlinking the economic and social approach is essential.

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