

Empowering Women Through Education, Health And Employment

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INTRODUCTION

“*Na Stree Swathantryam Arhati*”¹ (woman are undeserving of independence), reflects our whole attitude towards women in our country. Women suffer discrimination and injustice in all stages of their lives. Though we say that our country India is developing economically and technologically, women here still continue to be discriminated.

The declining sex ratio portrays our discrimination towards the female sex even at the stage of birth. Often, the lame excuse is women are the 'weaker sex'! But biological evidence proves that due to the presence of two X hormones, women are more resistant to diseases as compared to men. Life expectancy is a proof of this (In our country, life expectancy of women is 65 whereas for men, it's only 60 years). Census 2001 showed our national sex ratio as 921:1000 (921 females for 1000 males), and this will lead to detrimental social problems if not corrected. The main reason for this is female infanticide. While the overall sex ratio improved slightly from 927 in 1991 to 921 in 2001, the Child Sex Ratio (06 years) plummeted from 945 to 927. At 880, the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) for 2003-05 was even lower². What is truly worrying is the dip in child sex ratio in economically prosperous States like Punjab (793)³, Delhi (865), Haryana (820), and Gujarat (878)⁴. This negates the popular belief that female foeticide stems from illiteracy and poverty and will cease with economic growth. Dowry still remains the major reason for all the discrimination and injustice meted out to women. Dowry has always been an important part of Hindu marriages. Not only among Hindus, its evil tentacles have other religions in its grip too. Although dowry was legally prohibited in 1961 (Dowry Prohibition Act), it continues to be highly institutionalized.

Mainstreaming and women's empowerment is central to human development. Empowerment of women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved. This can be possible only by adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total development of women and to make them realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings. The various articles of our constitution enshrine principle of gender equality. We started giving special attention to the causes of women by the fifth five-year plan. For considering the grievances and preventing the atrocities against women, a National Commission for Women (NCW) was set up in 1990.

Women are significant contributors to the growing economy. For growth to be truly inclusive, we have to ensure their protection, well being, development, empowerment and participation. India has committed to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and is a signatory to many international conventions, including *Convention For Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women* and the *Convention On The Rights Of The Child*. Yet, at the start of the Eleventh Five Year Plan, women and children continue to be victims of violence, neglect, and injustice. The government of India, through the Eleventh Plan, will address these problems by looking at gender as a cross-cutting theme. It will recognize women's agency and the need for women's empowerment. At the same time, it will ensure the survival, protection, and all-round development of children of all ages, communities and economic groups.

A review of 2009 budget shows that about 43 percent of funds of gross budget support for Women Component

¹ Phrase from Manusmriti.

² Registrar General of India 2003.

³ Sansarwal village of Patiala District, Punjab. A health survey showed an alarming figure of 438 girls for 1000 boys (Hindustan Times, 11 November 2007).

⁴ Missing: Mapping the Adverse Child Sex Ratio in India, 2003.

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Programmes from the 15 ministries and department were ostensibly spent on women. Of these, Family Welfare contributed 70 percent of gross budget support, Health Education and Indian system of Homeopathy contributed 50 percent of gross budget report and the contribution of Rural Development and labour was 42 percent and 34 percent respectively.

NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN (2001)

The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India in 2001 introduced a new policy for the empowerment of women. The policy has highlighted the empowerment of women in two aspects: **a)** Economic Empowerment and **b)** Social Empowerment of Women.

SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

✿ EDUCATION

Equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured. Special measures will be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, create a gender-sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long learning as well as development of occupation/vocation/technical skills by women. Reducing the gender gap in secondary and higher education would be a focus area. Sectoral time targets in existing policies will be achieved, with a special focus on girls and women, particularly those belonging to weaker sections including the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/Other Backward Classes/Minorities. Gender sensitive curricula would be developed at all levels of the educational system in order to address sex stereotyping as one of the causes of gender discrimination.

✿ HEALTH & NUTRITION

A holistic approach to women's health, which includes both nutrition and health services, will be adopted and special attention will be given to the needs of women and the girl child at all stages of the life cycle. The reduction of infant mortality and maternal mortality, which are sensitive indicators of human development, is a priority concern. This policy reiterates the national demographic goals for Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) set out in the National Population Policy 2000. Women should have access to comprehensive, affordable and quality health care. Measures will be adopted that take into account the reproductive rights of women to enable them to exercise informed choices, their vulnerability to sexual and health problems together with endemic, infectious and communicable diseases such as malaria, TB, and water borne diseases as well as hypertension and cardio-pulmonary diseases. The social, developmental and health consequences of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases will be tackled from a gender perspective. To effectively meet problems of infant and maternal mortality, and early marriage, the availability of good and accurate data at micro level on deaths, birth and marriages is required. Strict implementation of registration of births and deaths would be ensured and registration of marriages would be made compulsory. In accordance with the commitment of the National Population Policy (2000) for population stabilization, this Policy recognizes the critical need of men and women to have access to safe, effective and affordable methods of family planning of their choice and the need to suitably address the issues of early marriages and spacing of children. Interventions such as spread of education, compulsory registration of marriage and special programmes like Balika Samirddhi Yojana (BSY) should have an impact in delaying the age of marriage so that by 2010, child marriages are eliminated. Women's traditional knowledge about health care and nutrition will be recognized through proper documentation and its use will be encouraged. The use of Indian and alternative systems of medicine will be enhanced within the framework of overall health infrastructure available for women. In view of the high risk of malnutrition and disease that women face at all the three critical stages viz., infancy and childhood, adolescent and reproductive phase, focused attention would be paid to meeting the nutritional needs of women at all stages of the life cycle. This is also important in view of the critical link between the health of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women with the health of infant and young children. Special efforts will be made to tackle the problem of macro and micro nutrient deficiencies, especially amongst pregnant and lactating women, as it leads to various diseases and disabilities. Intra-household discrimination in nutritional matters vis-à-vis girls and women will be sought to be ended through appropriate strategies. Widespread use of nutrition education would be made to address the issues of intra-household imbalances in nutrition and the special needs of pregnant and lactating women. Women's

participation will also be ensured in the planning, superintendence and delivery of the system.

❖ **DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION**

Special attention will be given to the needs of women in the provision of safe drinking water, sewage disposal, toilet facilities and sanitation within accessible reach of households, especially in rural areas and urban slums. Women's participation will be ensured in the planning, delivery and maintenance of such services.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF DIFFERENT INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE RECENT PAST

For the first time (as per the eleventh five year plan), women are recognized not just as equal citizens, but as agents of economic and social growth⁵.

As women and children constitute roughly 72 per cent of the population of this country; the Ministry of Women and Child Development was carved out as a separate Ministry in 2006 to further accelerate their development. Two schemes are being implemented for the development of adolescent girl's viz. Kishori Shakti Yojana (KSY) and Nutrition Programme for Adolescent Girls (NPAG). KSY aims at addressing the needs of self- development, nutrition and health status, literacy and numerical skills, and vocational skills of adolescent girls in the age group of 11-18 years. The scheme is currently operational in 6,118 ICDS projects. NPAG is being implemented in 51 identified districts across the country to provide free food grain @ 6 kg per beneficiary per month to undernourished adolescent girls (11-19 years) irrespective of financial status of the family to which they belong. Both the schemes are being implemented through the infrastructure of Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS). A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation "*Ujjawala*" has been launched recently. The scheme has five components-prevention, rescue, rehabilitation, re-integration and repatriation.

Due to the untiring efforts of the women's movement, the country amended and enacted women-related legislations during the Tenth Plan. The Married Women's Property Act (1874), the Hindu Succession Act (1956) were amended and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) (2005) was passed. The Union Budget 2005-06, for the first time, included a separate statement highlighting the gender sensitivities of the budgetary allocation under 10 demands for grants. Gender Budgeting Cells (GBS) were set up in 52 Central ministries/departments to review public expenditure, collect gender disaggregated data, and conduct gender-based impact analysis. Under Women Component Plan (WCP), efforts were made to ensure that not less than 30% of funds/benefits under various schemes of all ministries/departments were earmarked for women. The performance, however, has been far from satisfactory. The Mid Term Appraisal of Tenth Plan revealed that while 42.37% of the GBS to the Department of Education flowed to women under WCP, only 5% of the GBS of Ministry of Labour (against 33.5% in the Ninth Plan) went to women in the first three years of the Tenth Plan.

APPROACH TO THE ELEVENTH FIVE YEAR PLAN

The vision of the Eleventh Five Year Plan is to end the multifaceted exclusions and discriminations faced by women and children; to ensure that every woman and child in the country is able to develop her full potential and share the benefits of economic growth and prosperity. Success will depend on our ability to adopt a participatory approach that empowers women and children and makes them partners in their own development. The roadmap for this has already been laid in the National Policy on Women -2001 and the National Plan of Action for Children-2005.

ESSENCE OF THE APPROACH

- ❖ Recognition of the right of every woman and child to develop to her/his full potential.
- ❖ Recognition of the differential needs of different groups of women and children.
- ❖ Need for intersectoral convergence as well as focused women and child specific measures through Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD).

⁵ Eleventh Plan (2007-2012), Social Sector, Vol-II.

✿ Partnership with civil society to create permanent institutional mechanisms that incorporate the experiences, capacities and knowledge of VOs and women's groups in the process of development planning. The Table 1 explains some of the major schemes for women during the Tenth plan .

Table 1: Major Schemes For Women

| Schemes (Major) For Women During Tenth Plan | Target | Achievement |
|--|--|---|
| Swayamsidha, Implemented in 650 selected blocks. | 16000 SHGs | 1767 |
| Support to Training and Employment Programme For Women (STEP). | Provide Training To 2.5 lakh | 2.31 lakh |
| Swawlamban Scheme | 5 lakh | 2.32 lakh |
| Hostels for Working Women | Construct 125 hostels benefiting 12500 women | 111 hostels were constructed during the Plan benefiting 6976 women. |
| Swadhar | To provide shelter, food, clothing, and care to the women living in difficult circumstances. No specific target. | 21464 women benefited |

Source: Compiled by the author's from Eleventh Plan (2007-2012), Social Sector, Vol- II.

✿EMPLOYMENT

The scaling down of public investment in vital urban infrastructure and initiation of cost cutting measures in the public sector have in fact reduced the efficiency and accessibility to urban infrastructure. It has also led to the reduction in the employment generating capacity of the private sector, particularly the small procedures who accounted for more labour intensive methods of production: they have been automatically driven out of the economy. The output growth has taken place in those sectors of the economy where the scope of labour absorption is quite low. The policies adopted by the government in the 1990s i.e. the New Economic Policy was aimed at curbing public investment and reducing state intervention. Over the years, there has been a slow change in the competition of the workforce in rural India, with an increasing tendency to move out of the agricultural sector, dependency of rural female workers on agriculture declined from 88 percent in 1977-78 to 86 in 1999-94 and further to 88 percent in 2004-05. Despite the decline, large number of the women among the rural population depend on agriculture and allied activities. In urban areas, there has been a slight increase in the share of industrial sector i.e. 28.5 to 32.2 percent in 2004-05. The share of the tertiary sector remained almost unchanged during the above mentioned periods. The employment status (self employment, regular salaried employment, and casual employment) has also been changing. In rural areas, while self-employment is on a decline, casual employment is on the rise. In urban areas, regular and salaried employment has been on the rise and self employment has been on the decline. In 2004-05, in rural areas, 64 percent females, usual status workers (principal plus subsidiary) were self employed, 33 percent casual labour and urban 47 percent were casual labour (NSSO 2006). It is important to recognize that self-employed and casual workers are not covered by effective social security and are, therefore, likely to be exposed to the risks originating from various shocks. The NREGA Scheme has the potential to reduce the risks associated with the labour market and thereby contribute to the protection of rural casual wage labour from transient poverty.

Table 2 : Workforce Participation Rates By Gender And Location 1977 To 2005

| Year | Male | | Female | |
|-----------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban |
| 1977-78 | 55.2 | 50.8 | 33.1 | 15.6 |
| 1983 | 54.7 | 51.2 | 34.0 | 15.1 |
| 1987-88 | 53.9 | 50.6 | 32.3 | 15.2 |
| 1993-94 | 55.3 | 52.1 | 32.8 | 15.5 |
| 1999-2000 | 53.1 | 51.8 | 29.9 | 13.9 |
| 2004-05 | 54.6 | 54.9 | 32.7 | 16.6 |

Note: Refers to principle plus subsidiary status.
Source : NSSO, Employment Survey 61st Round 2004-05, Report Number 515, Statement 5.1

It is well known that the female work force participation rates in India are quite low as compared to other East Asian (Horton, 1996) and developed countries. The workforce participation rate for rural men and women remained somewhat stable during the years 1993-94 and 2004-05, but it rose in the urban areas. Women participation in urban areas being exceptionally low and stable over the earlier two and half decades, rose by 1 percent age point during the last decade⁶ (Table 2). Also we can see from the (Table 3) that there is an increased participation of younger women in the labour market. The provision of gainful employment for all in the labour force is essential for reducing poverty and achieving inclusive growth. Accelerating productive employment is important because wage income is the main source of income for the poor. It is well recognized that employment generation by itself is not enough to lift people out of poverty as poverty is widespread even among the employed. What is required is the growth of productive employment. This needs to be tackled on a war footing if women are to be relieved from this yoke. It primarily calls for enumerating all women and reaching out to them. The second factor which possibly has the greatest impact on the quality of motherhood and mother is without doubt, literacy. Metros do not have a paucity of teachers and the target groups can be identified easily. Identifying old-timers and new-comers and organizing special late night classes, rewarding high attendance and achievement through a guarantee of wage jobs can be an affective method to spread literacy. Thus, it is imperative to frame a broader macroeconomic policy based on the revival of the Keynesian demand management policies that would reinstate the extremely important role of the state, particularly in employment generation, instead of leaving it entirely to the market focus. Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. Legislatures such as Equal Remuneration Act, Factories Act: Constitutional safeguards such as maternity relief, and other provisions should be strictly followed. Poverty eradication policies need to be implemented. Macroeconomic policies would help in this drive. Through economic empowerment women's emancipation could be realized.

Table 3 : Workforce Participation Rates By Gender And Age Group, 1993 To 2005 In Urban Areas

| Age Group | Urban Male | | Urban Female | |
|-----------|------------|---------|--------------|---------|
| | 1993-94 | 2004-05 | 1993-94 | 2004-05 |
| 15-29 | 61.8 | 62.3 | 17.3 | 18.4 |
| 30-44 | 97.5 | 97.5 | 29.5 | 31.0 |
| 45-59 | 93.5 | 92.3 | 28.3 | 25.2 |
| All Ages | 52.1 | 54.9 | 15.3 | 16.6 |

Note: Refers to principle plus subsidiary status. Source: NSSO, Employment and Unemployment Survey, 61st Round, 2004-05, Report Number 515, Statement 5.2

✿ THROUGH EDUCATION

According to Mahatma Gandhi, *“If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate an entire family.”* Our predominant patriarchal system doesn't provide enough chances to women to have higher education even if they wish. Girls should be motivated to take up higher education. Universal education for all below 14 years should be strictly implemented. There is an urgent necessity of framing gender sensitive curricula at all stages of primary education and to address the sex-stereotyping menace.

An educated woman can participate in income-generating activities and can promote some addition to the family-income and thus helps the family to get rid of poverty. Besides that, an educated mother will always educate her daughter but an illiterate mother may not. For women, education can be a pivotal catalyst out of gendered patterns of discriminations, a springboard by which they may claim their rightful place in society and development. Education would actually accord women certain advantages in areas where they have traditionally lacked access or differential rights. Thus, education promotes women empowerment, which ultimately leads to gender equality. An educated mother has a better understanding of child-rearing. An educated mother is more capable of keeping herself and her family healthy.

⁶The very sharp increase since 1999-2000 may reflect a downturn or some problems in data collection in that year and hence we ignore it.

Education is also a key means of empowering girls against HIV/AIDS and other diseases, giving them the knowledge and self confidence needed to protect them through proper precaution. Evidence shows that education among women usually builds environment consciousness in them. It enriches them with the basic knowledge about the adverse impact of environmental degradation. Since women are still deprived of basic educational facilities, education to every woman broadens the scope of universalization of primary education. The gap between enrollment of boys and girls or the female-male ratio in education is still a matter of concern, and it has been steadily improving over the years. In primary education, the female male ratio has gone up from 71% in 1990-91 to 88% in 2004-05. In secondary education, the increase has been from 50% in 1990-91 to 71% in 2004-05 and in higher education, the increase has been from 50% to 65% during the same period. The ratio of literate women to men (in the age group 7 plus) also increased from 0.61 in 1991 to 0.71 in 2001 at the national level.

Table 4 : Number Of Girls Per Hundred Boys Enrolled In School

| Year | Primary (Class I-V) | Upper Primary (VI-VIII) | Secondary / Higher Secondary (Class IX-XII) |
|----------|------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| 1950-51 | 39 | 18 | 16 |
| 1960-61 | 48 | 32 | 23 |
| 1970-71 | 60 | 41 | 35 |
| 1980-81 | 63 | 49 | 44 |
| 1990-91 | 71 | 58 | 50 |
| 2000-01 | 78 | 69 | 63 |
| 2004-05* | 88 | 80 | 71 |

*Provisional. Source: Selected Educational Statistics 2004-05,
Ministry Of HRD, Department Of Education.

It is evident from Table 5 that only slightly more than half of the female population was literate as against three fourth of males (7.85%). It may be seen that it took almost five decades for male- female disparity to reduce to half of what it was in the 1960's.

Table 5 : Male- Female Literacy Gap In India (in Percent)

| Census Year | Persons | Males | Females | Males- Female Literacy Gap |
|-------------|---------|-------|---------|----------------------------|
| 1951 | 18.33 | 27.16 | 8.86 | 18.30 |
| 1961 | 28.30 | 40.40 | 15.35 | 25.05 |
| 1971 | 34.45 | 45.96 | 21.97 | 23.05 |
| 1981 | 43.57 | 56.38 | 29.76 | 26.62 |
| 1991 | 52.21 | 64.13 | 39.29 | 24.84 |
| 2001 | 65.38 | 75.85 | 54.16 | 21.76 |

Source: Census of India 2001

GENDER PARITY INDEX

Gender Parity Index (GPI) is yet another measure to assess gender equality in education. GPI is the ratio of girls 'General Enrollment Ratio' (GER) to boys GER at a given level of education. It signifies that opportunities for and access to education are available equally to both girls and boys at the level of education. Over the years, the gender gap has been narrowing; yet, substantial gender disparity still persists -which is evident from the Table 6.

In a recent paper, Basant (2008) presented the current participation in higher education in the population by defining measures of stock and flow. This helps us get an idea of the supply of the educated population that is likely to enter the labour force. It was expected that improvement in participation in higher education in the recent years would result in higher current generation flow (CGFⁱ) as compared to both stock measures and higher current generation stock

(CGSⁱⁱ) than the all generation stocks (AGSⁱⁱⁱ). The CGS rates were found to be higher than the AGS rates for all subgroups except urban males. The current flows (CGF) are higher than the stock rates only for the males and females in rural areas (Table 8). The interesting and surprising results are, however, for women. Eligible women in the urban areas in the current generation are matching the male generation flow. CGF are all higher for women than men in urban areas. In fact, even in rural areas, women CGF rates are substantially higher than those for men. Of course, this might not translate into women entering the workforce, but the increasing supply of educated women in the urban areas can change the present situation of the labour market.

Table 6 : Gender Disparity Index: 1950-51 To 2000-01

| Year | Gender Disparity | | |
|---------|------------------|---------------|------------|
| | Primary | Upper Primary | Elementary |
| 1950-51 | 0.49 | 0.69 | 0.49 |
| 1960-61 | 0.43 | 0.52 | 0.42 |
| 1970-71 | 0.32 | 0.42 | 0.33 |
| 1980-81 | 0.29 | 0.31 | 0.26 |
| 1990-91 | 0.25 | 0.31 | 0.26 |
| 2000-01 | 0.17 | 0.18 | 0.16 |

Source: Based On Selected Educational Statistics
Department of Education, Ministry of HRD.

Table 7 : Measures Of Participation In Higher Education By Gender And Location (Percentages), 2004-05

| Measure | Rural | | Urban | |
|--------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| AGS | 4.5 | 1.4 | 19.1 | 13.2 |
| CGS | 5.9 | 3.0 | 18.3 | 18.7 |
| CGF | 6.9 | 4.4 | 16.5 | 14.7 |
| For Eligible Population | | | | |
| AGS | 40.5 | 34.1 | 55.7 | 58.2 |
| CGS | 35.7 | 34.7 | 49.0 | 56.6 |
| CGF | 44.4 | 56.7 | 61.4 | 70.2 |

Source: Basant, 2008, computed from unit level data of NSS, Employment and Unemployment Survey, 61st Round, 2004-05
CGF- Current Generation Flow; CGS- Current Generation Stock
AGS- All Generation Stock

In the higher education sector, the UGC has been implementing various schemes for promoting women's education in universities and colleges. Some of these are **(i)** Scheme of Grants to women universities for technical courses. **(ii)** Scheme for Construction of Women's hostel and **(iii)** Setting up of women study centers in 72 Universities. Currently, 43% of total beneficiaries are women. Access to higher education for girls has been expanding as also is their enrolment in various courses. Their numbers in colleges, universities, professional institutions like engineering, medicine etc. has increased from 3.81 million in 2002-03 to 4.04 million in 2004-05. Based on empirical evidence, (Anupam, 2009⁷) it has been estimated that countries that fail to provide basic education to women are likely to face considerable cost in terms of foregone economic growth (0.1-0.3 percent lower per capita growth). It is estimated that the goals of growth and sustainable development can be achieved only by bringing equality through proper and sufficient education between men and women. The government of India, through the Ministry of Women and Child Development, are now implementing various schemes for the promotion of education among girls. Let us discuss some of the major schemes that are ment for educating girls.

⁷Hazra, Anupam, Yojana, September, 2009.

✿ **SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN**

The scheme has special features focusing on education of girls, which include provision of free text books to all girls up to class VIII, separate toilets for girls, back to school campus for out-of school girls, bridge courses for older girls, recruitment of 50% women teachers, early childhood care and education centers in /near schools in convergence with ICDS programme.

✿ **NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR EDUCATION OF GIRLS AT ELEMENTARY LEVEL (NPEGEL)**

The National programme for education of girls at elementary level has been formulated for providing additional support for education of underprivileged/ disadvantaged girls at elementary level. NPEGEL is a part of SSA and is implemented under its umbrella, but as a distinct and separate gender component plan of SSA.

✿ **KASTURBA GANDHI BALIKA VIDYALAYA**

This is a new scheme for setting up to 750 residential schools with boarding facilities at elementary level for girls belonging predominantly to the SC, ST, OBC and minorities in identified educationally backward blocks, where the rural female literacy is below the national average and gender gap in literacy is more than the national average. The objective of KGBV is to ensure access and quality education to the girls of disadvantaged groups of society by setting up residential schools with boarding facilities at the elementary level.

✿ **MAHILA SAMAKHYA**

The Mahila Samakhyas Scheme was started in 1989 to translate the goal enshrined in the NPE into a concrete programme for the education and empowerment of women in rural areas, particularly those from socially and economically marginalized groups through informal learning. The MS scheme recognizes the centrality of education in empowering women to achieve equality. The Mahila Sanghas or women's collectives at the village level provide the women a space to meet, reflect, ask questions and articulate their thoughts and needs and make informed choices. The programme has focused on awareness of the need to educate the children, especially girls, which has resulted in a direct impact on enrolment and retention of girls in schools. The Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP) seeks to provide updated skills and new knowledge to poor, assets-less women in 10 traditional sectors viz. agriculture, animal husbandry, dairying, fisheries, handlooms, handicrafts, khadi and village industries, sericulture, social forestry and wasteland development, through mobilizing them into cohesive groups. Thirteen new projects had been sanctioned during 2007-08 (up to 30.11.2007). To facilitate employment of women away from their homes/towns, schemes such as Working Women Hostels with day-care centers and crèches/day centers continue. Care and protection of women in distress is a focused area for attention and is provided through Swadhar Homes and Short Stay Homes. A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation "Ujjawala" has been launched recently. The scheme has five components-prevention, rescue, rehabilitation, re-integration and repatriation.

HEALTH

Jawaharlal Nehru had said, "You can tell the condition of the nation by looking at the status of women."

A shocking study reveals that half of the world's malnourished children live in India owing primarily to the lack of nutritious food available to the mother. In all the critical stages, be it infancy, childhood, adolescence or the reproductive phase, many women suffer malnutrition purely due to the discrimination and the narrow mindsets of the society. Discrimination against women and girls impinges upon their right to health and manifests itself in the form of worsening health and nutrition indices. Thus, India continues to grapple with unacceptably high MMR, IMR, and increasing rates of anaemia, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS among women. According to NFHS-3, incidence of anaemia had risen from 49.7% to 57.9% in pregnant women and from 51.8% to 56.2% in ever-married women within a period of seven years (1998-99 to 2005-06). This raised anaemia among children by 5 percentage points (to 79.2%) and is also partially responsible for the high MMR. Anaemia is particularly high for women with no education, women from scheduled tribes, and women in the lowest wealth quintiles. Maternal mortality has a direct correlation with lack of

accessibility to health care facilities. Paucity of resources and age old discriminatory practices deny large number of women access to good nutrition and care before, during, and after child birth, thus increasing their mortality. Only 22% of mothers consume Iron Folic Acid (IFA) tablets for 90 days or more, and less than half of them receive three ANC visits. As many as 51.7% births take place without assistance from any health personnel. Practices such as female feticide also affect women's health, as they are forced to go through multiple pregnancies and abortions. As a result, although MMR had fallen from 398 in 1998 to 301 in 2001-03 (SRS), we are far from meeting the Tenth Plan target of reducing MMR to 200 per 100000 live births. States like UP (707), Uttaranchal (517), Assam (409), and MP (498) have very high MMRs⁸.

✿ ANTENATAL CARE

Among mothers who gave birth in the five years preceding the survey, almost three-quarters received antenatal care from a health professional (50% from a doctor and 24% from other health personnel). More than one in five mothers received no antenatal care. Almost two-thirds of women in Bihar did not receive any antenatal care. Less than half of the women received antenatal care during the first trimester of pregnancy, as is recommended. Another 22 percent had their first unit during the fourth or fifth month of pregnancy. Just over half of mothers had three or more antenatal care visits.

✿ DELIVERY CARE

Three out of every five births in India take place at home: only two in five births take place in a health facility. Home births are more common among women who received no antenatal checkups, older women, and women with no education, women in the lowest wealth quintile and women with more than three previous births. Less than half of the births took place with assistance from a health professional and more than one-third were delivered by a traditional birth attendant. The remaining 16 percent were delivered by a relative or other untrained person. A disposable delivery kit (DDK) was used for only once in five home births. This disparity between urban and rural women is especially pronounced in this area.

✿ POSTNATAL CARE

Only 37 percent of mothers had a postnatal checkup within 2 days of birth, as is recommended; most women receive no postnatal care at all. Postnatal care is most common following births in a medical facility, however, about one in five births in medical facilities were not followed by a postnatal checkup of the mother. Only 15 percent of home births were followed by a postnatal checkup.

✿ HIV AWARENESS

The new findings from NFHS-3 on the extent and sex differentials in knowledge of HIV/AIDS are of concern. Only 84% of men and 61% of women have ever heard of AIDS. Further, only 70% of men and 36% of women know that HIV/AIDS can be prevented by using condoms. The results underscore the pressing need to educate women and men about the virus, how it is transmitted and how it can be prevented. Increasing HIV/AIDS education will be a critical step up curbing the number of new HIV cases in India. Two schemes are being implemented for the development of adolescent girls viz. Kishori Shakti Yojana (KSY) and Nutrition Programme for Adolescent Girls (NPAG). KSY aims at addressing the needs of self-development, nutrition and health status, literacy and numerical skills, and vocational skills of adolescent girls in the age group of 11-18 years. The scheme is currently operational in 6,118 ICDS projects. NPAG is being implemented in 51 identified districts across the country to provide free food grain @ 6 kg per beneficiary per month to undernourished adolescent girls (11-19 years) irrespective of financial status of the family to which they belong. Both the schemes are being implemented through the infrastructure of Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS).

⁸ India, Registrar General and Census Commissioner (2004). Primary Census Abstract Total Population: Census of India 2001, NewDelhi, p. iii.

CONCLUSION

In the past, the Government of India has undertaken a large number of schemes aimed at the socio-economic development of women under various Five year plans. But despite all these measures, there should be a strong determination among every man that every woman in this country should be honored. Only then empowerment in its true meaning will be realized. Swami Vivekananda had said “*That country and that nation which doesn't respect women will never become great now and nor will ever in future.*” and in pursuit of making India a great nation, let us work towards giving women their much deserved status. Gender disparities vary across cultural, geographical and historical context. Women specific and women related legislations have been enacted to safeguard the rights and interest of women, besides protecting against discrimination, violence, and atrocities and also to prevent socially undesirable practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All programmes need to evolve a common set of indicators for measuring progress on women empowerment in order to assess the contribution of distinct strategies towards women empowerment. Government should promote micro credit system only when they are linked to social mobilization and community empowerment. Single window system needs to be adapted with specific purpose of women's empowerment as there is too much overlapping in inter-departmental, interministerial and inter-agency functioning. Success will depend on our ability to adopt a participatory approach that empowers women and makes them partners in their own development.

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NOTES

ⁱ A current generation flow measure of educational attainments was the share of the population currently studying in the age of 18-25 years.

ⁱⁱ A current generation stock measure of educational attainment was the share of graduates and above in the 20 to 30 aged population.

ⁱⁱⁱ An all generation stock measure of educational attainment was the share of graduates and above in the 20+ aged population.

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Annexure 1: Selected Development Indicators Relating to Women

| S No | Indicators | Women | Men | Total | Women | Men | Total |
|-------------------------|---|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| DEMOGRAPHY | | | | | | | |
| 1. | Population (in million in 1991 & 2001) | 407.07 | 439.23 | 846.30 | 496.4 | 532.1 | 1028.6 |
| 2. | Decennial Growth (1971 & 2001) | 24.03 | 25.52 | 24.80 | 23.08 | 22.26 | 22.67 |
| VITAL STATISTICS | | | | | | | |
| 3. | Sex Ratio (1991 & 2001) | 927 | - | - | 933 | - | - |
| 4. | Expectation of Life at Birth (1991-96 to 2001-05) | 61.7 | 60.6 | - | 66.1 | 63.8 | - |
| 5. | Mean Age at Marriage (1991 & 1997) | 19.5 | 23.9 | -1 | 9.5 | NA | - |
| HEALTH | | | | | | | |
| 6. | Birth Rate (1991 & 2005) | - | - | 29.5 | - | - | 23.8 |
| 7. | Death Rate (1991 & 2005) | - | - | 9.8 | 7.1 | 8.0 | 7.6 |
| 8. | IMR (1991 & 2005) | - | - | 80 | 61 | 56 | 58 |

Annexure 1: Selected Development Indicators Relating to Women (Continued)

| S. No | Indicators | Women | Men | Total | Women | Men | Total |
|-------|---|-------------|-------|-------|-----------------------------|--------|---------|
| 9. | Child Mortality rate (1991 & 2005) | - | - | 26.5 | 18.2 | 16.4 | 17.3 |
| 10. | MMR (1997-98 & 2001-03) | 398 | - | - | 301 | - | - |
| | LITERACY AND EDUCATION | | | | | | |
| 11. | Literacy Rates (1991 & 2004-05) | 39.3 | 64.1 | 52.2 | 57.00 | 77.00 | 67.30 |
| | Literacy Rates, SCs | 23.8 | 49.9 | 37.4 | 41.9 | 66.6 | 54.7 |
| | Literacy Rates, STs | 18.1 | 40.7 | 29.6 | 34.8 | 59.2 | 47.1 |
| 12. | Gross Enrolment Ratio (1990-91 & 2004-05) | | | | | | |
| | Classes I-V | 85.5 | 114.0 | 100.1 | 104.67 | 110.70 | 107.80 |
| | Classes I-VIII | 70.8 | 100.0 | 86.0 | 89.87 | 96.91 | 93.54 |
| | Classes VI-VIII | 47.0 | 76.6 | 62.1 | 65.13 | 74.30 | 69.93 |
| 13. | Dropout Rate (1990-91 & 2004-05 [Provisional]) | | | | | | |
| | Classes I-V | 46.0 | 40.1 | 42.6 | 25.42 | 31.81 | 29.00 |
| | Classes I-VIII | 65.1 | 59.1 | 60.9 | 51.28 | 50.49 | 50.84 |
| | Classes I-X | 76.9 | 67.5 | 71.3 | 63.88 | 60.41 | 61.92 |
| | SC Classes I-X | 83.4 | 74.3 | 77.7 | 74.17 | 69.11 | 71.25 |
| | ST Classes I-X | 87.7 | 83.3 | 85.0 | 80.66 | 77.75 | 78.97 |
| | WORK AND EMPLOYMENT | | | | | | |
| 14. | Work Participation Rate (1991 & 2001) | 22.3 | 51.6 | - | 25.7 | 51.9 | |
| 15. | Organized Sector (No. in lakh in 1991 & 99) | 3.8 | 23.0 | 26.7 | 4.8 | 23.3 | 28.1 |
| 16. | Government (No. in lakh in 1997) | 1.6 | 9.1 | 10.7 | - | - | - |
| | DECISION MAKING(ADMINISTRATIVE & POLITICAL) | | | | | | |
| 17. | Administrative (IAS in 1997 & 2000) | 512 (10.2%) | 4479 | 4991 | 535 (10.4%) | 4624 | 5159 |
| 18. | PRIs (Figures in thousand for 2006) | | | | 916.61 (42.8% of the total) | 1225 | 2141.61 |
| 19. | Parliament (No. in 2001 & 2005) | 70(8.5%) | 750 | 820 | 73 (9.24%) | 717 | 790 |
| 20. | Central Council of Ministers (1985 & 2001) | 4(10.0%) | 36 | 40 | 86 (10.8%) | 6 | 74 |
| | Crime against women 21. 2001 & 2005 | 143795 | - | - | 155553 | - | - |

Source: 1 to 4Census of India; **5**SRS, Registrar General of India; **6 to 10**Family Welfare Statistics in India, 2006; **11 to 13**Selected Educational Statistics, 200405; **14 to 16**Census of India, Registrar General of India; **17, 19, 20**NRCW Website; **18**Statistics on Women, National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development 2007; **21**NCRB Website.

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(Contd. From Page 13)

Annexure 2

| Learn More, Earn More, Discriminate More | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|------------------|--|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A report by Infochange India (CCDS) uses data from Census 2001 to question the popular belief that literacy rates have a direct bearing on population and that literate people are less prone to gender bias. Although this may be true in some cases like high population growth rates, the same logic does not hold true for child sex ratio. | | | | | | |
| HAVE MONEY, WILL RAISE ONLY BOYS | | | | | | |
| | Overall Sex ratio* | Child sex ratio* | Proportion in India's total population** | Overall literacy rate** | Female literacy rate** | Female work participation rate** |
| Hindus | 931 | 925 | 81.4 | 65.1 | 53.2 | 27.5 |
| Muslims | 936 | 950 | 12.4 | 59.1 | 50.1 | 14.1 |
| Jains | 940 | 870 | 0.4 | 94.1 | 90.6 | 9.2 |
| Sikhs | 893 | 786 | 1.9 | 64.4 | 63.1 | 20.2 |
| Christians | 1009 | 964 | 2.3 | 80.3 | 76.2 | 28.7 |
| Buddhists | 953 | 942 | 0.8 | 72.7 | 61.7 | 31.7 |
| Others | 992 | 976 | 0.7 | 47 | 33.2 | 44.2 |
| The North- South divide | | | | | | |
| Punjab | 798 | | Kerala | 960 | | |
| Haryana | 819 | | Tamil Nadu | 942 | | |
| Delhi | 868 | | Karnataka | 946 | | |
| chandigarh | 845 | | Andhra Pradesh | 961 | | |
| <i>Notes: *as number of females per 1000 males: ** as%</i> Child Sex ratio (0-6) as number of girls per 100 boys Source: The disappearing girl child—Info Change news and Features Development news India, October 2004. | | | | | | |