

## EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

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### ABSTRACT

Empowerment allows individuals to reach their full potential, to improve their social and economic status and to believe in their own capabilities. Education plays an important role in women empowerment. Women are crucial part of Indian economy. Women empowerment can be achieved by combining learning and influence through community action and peer networks. This paper tries to analyze how and why educational programs can contribute to sustainable development and processes of empowerment.

**KEYWORDS:** Development, Education, Empowerment

### INTRODUCTION

Indian governments have seen education as a crucial development tool and it has been identified as key to translating ideas of sustainable development into practice through enhancing people's skills to respond to change. The development of the education system in India highlights the changing emphases within government policy to remove the difference between the male and female literacy ratio. The Indian School education system is one of the largest and most complex systems in the world. In the field of education in India has made phenomenal progress since Independence. Immediately after Independence, a Department of Education under the ministry of Human resource and Development was set up on Aug 29, 1947 with a mandate to expand the educational facilities. With the vision of providing quality education the national policy for Education was formulated in 1968. Over subsequent years, several policies have been formulated by the Indian Government to ensure the increase in literacy level, to reduce the school dropout rate and to reduce the gender gap of education.

The two prominent policies of the Indian Government – The SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA) in 2001 and the right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 have seen education priorities rise amongst households and catalyst improvements in educational performance. The mean years of schooling of the working population (those over 15 years old) increased from 4.19 years in 2000 to 5.12 years in 2010. The growth of enrollment in secondary education accelerated from 4.3 per cent per year during the 1990s to 6.27 per cent per year in the decade ending 2009–10. Education continues to remain a top priority for the Government of India with rising budgetary allocations. There are many hindrances in the path of women to get the education. Some of them are financial constraints of their family, Family responsibility, social status of the family, economic exploitation, low enrolment of girls in School, Low ambition, gender based Inequality. In spite of these efforts by the government, the tables below show the wide gap between the male and female population and the literacy rate.

**Table 1: Population Census -2001 &2011 (in Crore)**  
Data Source: O/O RGI, Census 2001 & 2011

	2001	2011
<b>Total</b>	102.80	121.02
<b>Male</b>	53.20	62.37
<b>Female</b>	49.65	58.65

**Table 2: Male & Female Ratio, Literacy Rate**

POPULATION	URBAN	RURAL	TOTAL	LITERACY
<b>MALE</b>	19,54,89,200 (31.4%)	42,76,32,643 (68.6%)	62,31,21,843	82.10%
<b>FEMALE</b>	18,16,16,925 (30.9%)	40,58,30,805 (69.1%)	58,74,47,730	65.50%
<b>TOTAL</b>	37,71,06,125 (31.2%)	83,34,63,448 (68.8%)	1,21,05,69,573	74%

Source: Census of India, 2011 (Final Data), Register General of India, Databook for PC; 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2014

Women's employment in urban area is 13.9%, while in rural area is 20.9%. Employment of women in organized sector is less than 8%. Recognizing the importance of education in national development, the Twelfth Plan (2012–2017) places an unprecedented focus on the expansion of education, on significantly improving the quality of education imparted and on ensuring that educational opportunities are available to all segments of the society.

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

About 66% of the female population in rural area is initialized. This is mainly due to existing social customs. In rural areas women mainly works in agricultural land, and animal care and they contribute 90% of the total workforce. Women perform nearly 2/3 of work hours, receive 1/10th of the world's income and own less than 1/ 100th the World property. Among the world's 900 million illiterate people, women outnumber men two to one. 70% of people living in poverty are women. The existing studies show that the women are relatively less healthy than men, though belong to the same class, community. They constitute less than 1/7th of the administrators and managers in developing countries. Only 10% seats in World Parliament and 6% in National Cabinet are held by women. Women empowerment is the process by which women enhance their power to take control over the decision that shape their lives, including access to resources and control over distribution of benefits.

The five major components are:

- A woman's sense of self-worth
- Their right to have and determine choices
- Their right to have access to opportunities and resources
- Their right to have the power to control their own lives
- Their ability to influence the direction of social change (UNPOPIN, 2010)

There have been several efforts to devise micro indicators of empowerment. In this effort, NailaKabeer, Linda Mayoux, Anne Marie Goetz, Rahman, Ackerley, JSI (John Show International researchers), Sara Longwe and Hashmi

have provided their own indicators. JSI Six Domains of Empowerment

**Table 3**

Domain	Expressions
1. Sense of Self & vision of a future	Assertiveness, plans for the future, future-oriented actions, relative freedom from the threat of physical violence, awareness of own problems and options, actions indicating a sense of security.
2. Mobility & visibility	Activities outside of the home, relative freedom from harassment in public spaces, interaction with men.
3. Economic Security	Property ownership, new skills and knowledge and increased income, engaged in new/non-traditional types of work
4. Status & decision-making power within the household	Self-confidence, controlling spending money, enhanced status in the family, has/controls/spends money, participation in/makes decisions on allocation of resources, not dominated by others
5. Ability to interact effectively in the public sphere	Awareness of legal status and services available, ability to get access to social services, political awareness, participation in a credit program, provider of service in the community.
6. Participation in non-family groups	Identified as a person outside of the family, forum for creating a sense of solidarity with other women, self-expression and articulation of problems, participating in a group with autonomous structure.

JSI defines empowerment in a behavioral science as the ability to take effective action encompassing inner state (sense of self, of one's autonomy, self-confidence, openness to new ideas, and belief in one's own potential to act effectively) and a person's status and efficacy in social interactions. In particular, it is the ability to make and carry out significant decisions affecting one's own life and the lives of others.

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

Education has definitely raised women's status, whether she contribute in the income of the family or not. She can be at par with men. The majority of the women in rural areas of our country is uneducated that is why they are suppressed.

It is the responsibilities of the teachers and the Education Department to orient these women about the benefits of the Education. Education can bring phenomenal change in women's life, resulting in social transformation in the long run. Some of the attributes which education can bring into their lives are: Enhancing their confidence, Raising their status in the family and society, bring awareness about their rights, Boosting their self-esteem, increasing their confidence, reducing their dependency, better upbringing of their children, opening career opportunities, Increased knowledge, self-confidence and awareness of gender equity are indicators of the empowerment process (Murphy-Graham, 2008). There is evidence that these components are usually developed during and as a result of higher education (Maslak and Singhal, 2008). Women, who are educated and earning, are in much better position in our society as compared to the uneducated women worker. This is a commonly understood view about the role of education in transforming women.

## CONTRIBUTION OF LITERACY CAMPAIGNS TO FEMALE LITERACY

The provision of educational opportunities for women has been an important part of national endeavor in the field of education since Independence. This does not yield significant result in the rural area and socially backward communities. Since women account for an overwhelming percentage of the total number of illiterates, the National Literacy Mission (1988) is for all practical purposes a Mission of imparting functional literacy to women. It makes an effort to create an environment where women demand knowledge and information, empowering themselves to change their lives. It inculcate in women the confidence that change is possible, if women work collectively. Spread the message that education of women is a pre-condition for fighting against their oppression.

These literacy campaigns have heightened social awareness among women the importance of education for them and to their children as a result of its enrollment in schools has been increased.

These campaigns have given them an opportunity to meet with other women and learn together, exchange their ideas, and fight for their rights, and know the policy and schemes, government is providing them, how to avail and how to make use of it. The vast majority of women's literacy programs takes a functional literacy approach in order to link literacy learning with income-generating activities. These campaigns also trained them to manage their expenditure and most importantly to make a saving. Literacy campaigns have helped to spread knowledge about health care and nutrition, thus women can take care of their health and their families.

## NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE PROGRESS OF WOMEN

The people in rural areas, especially women continued to lag behind in receiving basic facilities of life, including education, healthcare facilities, socioeconomic development and political participation. These rural women spend long hours on household chores, in the farm or in agriculture allied activities. All through their strenuous work load, they played a significant role in the rural economies. In addition, they carried out vital functions in caring for children, older persons and the sick (UN, 2008).

Women empowerment in rural areas is particularly hard to achieve within a generation because communities are often governed by strict social norms, which can both be driven by and drive the choices traditionally made by women in the village. If the social stigma associated with working outside the home is prohibitive, then mere access to education may not change their social status. Advance technology always has a dramatic effect on the society. The Information and communication technology has brought drastic changes in the field of education, employment, skill generation and employment all over the world. There is growing agreement, that the impact of ICTs in developing countries is not gender neutral. There is immense potential in ICTs to educate and create awareness among rural women. It encourages them to participate in community development and provides them new employment opportunities to contribute significant gains in efficiency and effectiveness in enterprises.

Some of the government Scheme for women empowerment are Mother and Child Tracking System (MCTS), 2009, Indira Gandhi MatritvaSahyogYojana Conditional Maternity Benefit plan (IGMSY-CMB), 2010, Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls – Sabla (RGSEAG), 2012, RashtriyaMahilaKosh (RMK), 1993, Priyadarshini, 2011.

BetiBachao, BetiPadhaoYojana (2015), SukanyaSamridhiYojana.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Governments should accelerate the implementation of commitments to advance gender equality and women's rights.
- Emphasis should be given to ensuring that women have full and equal access to and control over productive resources through the equal right to own property and the right to inherit, and equal access to finance. Equal rights and opportunities to be given in political decision-making processes that are participatory, responsive, equitable and inclusive. Access to quality and affordable family-planning and other sexual and reproductive rights and health services to be ensured.
- Employers should take a comprehensive approach to advancing equality in the workplace, Opportunity to be given to women to take up leadership roles, in framing policies, to take up training and professional development and more importantly giving recognition to their work.
- Allowing access for women farmers to land and resources and control over their earnings.
- Improving access to markets through trade and technical assistance programs.
- Women in rural areas are to be provided with skill based training, vocational training, so that they are at par with the people around the world
- Providing them the necessary ICT skills so that they can do business electronically. They can gain the benefit of E –commerce, can easily work from home and look after their family. There is immense potential in ICTs to educate and create awareness among rural women. It encourages them to participate in community development and provides them new employment opportunities to contribute significant gains in efficiency and effectiveness in enterprises

ICT-based enterprises have a potential to employ a number of rural women who are educated up to 10th or preferably 12th classes, at the lower end of the BPO sector. There are also opportunities to train some of these rural women for self-employment in the IT sector. ICT skills enable them to use the Internet and acquire knowledge and empower themselves. For example Women participating in the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation's Village Knowledge Centre in Pondicherry "have acquired some status and standing in the community. Men – farmers, landless laborers, traders – come and ask them for information and they provide the answers.

## CONCLUSIONS

A country can progress only when the women are empowered and the Empowerment of Women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Most importantly, women herself has to take out some time from her routine work to educate herself and her family so that she can contribute to her family income and the development of the nation.

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