

Gender Equity and Sustainable Development Goals for Viksit Bharat@2047

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Abstract: The Sustainable Development Goals lay out a uniquely ambitious and comprehensive agenda for global development by 2030. NITI Aayog is the nodal institution for achieving SDGs in the country, leading the 2030 Agenda with the spirit of cooperative and competitive federalism. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to transform our world. They are a call to action to end poverty and inequality, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy health, justice, and prosperity. SDG 5 strives for gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. It is predicated on ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls including harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriages. Unsustainable production and consumption patterns are gendered, with women suffering disproportionately from resource scarcity and natural disasters resulting from climate change. Article 23 - Equality between women and men. Equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work, and pay. The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in Favor of the under-represented sex. The state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Article 14 embodies the general principles of equality before the law and equal protection of laws. Article 15(1) and (2) prohibits the state from discriminating against any citizen only based on any one or more of the aspects such as religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, or any of them. No citizen shall be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction, or condition on grounds only of religion, race, case, sex, or place of birth. Gender equality is a fundamental human right and a keystone for achieving sustainable development. In India, the advancement of gender equality has made significant progress on one hand but on the other hand, it has persistent challenges. A vision for India's sustainable development represents a transformative roadmap for India's growth and development by the centenary of its independence. This ambitious vision aims to build a nation that is economically robust, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable.

Keywords: SDGs, NITI Aayog, Viksit Bharat, Gender equality and Inclusive.

I. Introduction

The term 'Viksit Bharat' means 'Developed India'. Viksit Bharat 2047 represents the government's vision to transform the country into a developed entity by its 100th independence in 2047. The four pillars of Viksit Bharat are Yuva (Youth), Garib (Poor), Mahilayen (Women) and Annadata (Farmers).

India dreams of becoming a developed and self-reliant nation by 2047, when we complete 100 years of independence. To achieve this goal, special attention will be given to sustainable development goals. This includes the improvement of gender equality. The International Women's Day 2022 theme of 'Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow' underscores the contribution of women and girls to climate change adaptation, mitigation, and response at every level in every country to build a more sustainable future.

Objectives of the study:

- To examine the progress, challenges, and societal structures influencing women empowerment and gender equality in India.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of women's empowerment programs and their impact on reducing gender inequality.
- To propose actionable strategies for fostering a gender-equal and inclusive society in India.

Gender Inequality in India: Barriers to Equal Opportunities for Girls

Wherever they live in India girls and boys see gender inequality in their homes and communities every day – in textbooks, in movies, in the media, and among the men and women who provide their care and support. Across India gender inequality results in unequal opportunities, and while it impacts the lives of both genders, statistically it is girls that are the most disadvantaged. Globally girls have higher survival rates at birth, are more likely to be developmentally on track, and are just as likely to participate in preschool, but India is the only large country where more girls die than boys. Girls are also more likely to drop out of school.

The Impact of Patriarchal Norms on Girls' Rights and Development in India

In India girls and boys experience adolescence differently. While boys tend to experience greater freedom, girls tend to face extensive limitations on their ability to move freely and to make decisions affecting their work, education, marriage, and social relationships. As girls and boys age the gender barriers continue to expand and continue into adulthood where we see

only a quarter of women in the formal workplace. Some Indian women are global leaders and powerful voices in diverse fields but most women and girls in India do not fully enjoy many of their rights due to deeply entrenched patriarchal views, norms, traditions, and structures.

India will not fully develop unless both girls and boys are equally supported to reach their full potential.

Addressing Gender Discrimination: Risks and Vulnerabilities Faced by Girls in India

There are risks, violations and vulnerabilities girls face just because they are girls. Most of these risks are directly linked to the economic, political, social and cultural disadvantages girls deal with in their daily lives. This becomes acute during crises and disasters. With the prevalence of gender discrimination, and social norms and practices, girls become exposed to the possibility of child marriage, teenage pregnancy, child domestic work, poor education and health, sexual abuse, exploitation, and violence. Many of these manifestations will not change unless gender equality.

The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. Editorial Comment -Article 14 rejects any type of discrimination based on caste, creed, religion, race, or sex. NATMO has celebrated International Women's Day (IWD) on 8th March 2024 at Rashtriya Atlas Bhavan. The theme of the program was "Invest in women: Accelerate progress".

Gender equality, also known as sexual equality or equality of the sexes, is the state of equal ease of access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation and decision-making, and the state of valuing different behaviors, aspirations, and needs equally, regardless of gender. Article 16 provides for equality of opportunity for all citizens, including women, in matters of employment or appointment to any office under the State. It also prohibits discrimination or being made ineligible for any employment or office under the State on grounds of only sex. Gender equality refers to the equal participation of women and men in different life domains (e.g., the economy, social life, politics, education). Women's rights movements linked to the first and second wave of feminism fought to establish gender equality as a fundamental human right.

The four priorities have been structured around four pillars:

1. promoting women's security and combating gender-based violence
2. women's political participation and influence
3. women's economic empowerment and working conditions.
4. national accountability on gender equality and women's empowerment.

With the patriarchal mindset and gender inequality in India continuing to prevail, women are made to adopt contradictory roles. The strength of a woman is evoked to ensure that women effectively play their traditional roles of nurturers as daughters, mothers, wives, and daughters-in-law. On the other hand, the stereotype of a "weak and helpless woman" is fostered to ensure their complete dependence on their male counterpart.

The current status of gender equality in India is as follows:

State performance: According to NITI Aayog, the states of Uttarakhand, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Goa, and Himachal Pradesh are the top performers whereas Bihar, Jharkhand, Nagaland, and Meghalaya have the most distance to cover in meeting the Sustainable development goals. Among Union territories, Chandigarh is the top performer. The score shows the distance covered so far in meeting the targets adopted by all United Nations (UN) members in 2015 to ensure prosperity for people and the planet. It also indicates the gap to be bridged by 2030.

Education: Girls are more likely to drop out of school; although the data from the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE 2021-22) shows that the female gross enrolment ratio (GER) has increased to 28.5 in 2021-22 from 27.9 in 2020-21. The GER for females has shown improvement in recent years.

Mortality rates: India has a concerning trend where the mortality rate of girls at birth is higher than that of boys, which is atypical for a large country like India.

Gender Inequality in India: Important Statistics Paradoxically, in our Indian society where women goddesses are worshipped, women are discriminated against and denied equal opportunity. The present status of gender disparity or gender inequality in India can be seen through the following statistics:

Overall Disparity

Overall Gender Gap: As per the Gender Gap Report, 2023, India ranks 127 out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity.

Socio-Cultural Disparity

Sex Ratio: As per the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019-21), the Overall Sex Ratio in India is 1020 females per 1000 males. However, the Sex Ratio at Birth remains low at 929, indicating continued sex selection at birth.

Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR): As per the Special Bulletin on MMR released by the Registrar General of India, the MMR of India stands at 97 per lakh live births for the period 2018-20.

Malnutrition: As per the NFHS-5, 18.7% of women aged 15-49 years are underweight, 21.2% of women aged 15-49 years are stunted, and nearly 53% of women aged 15-49 years are anaemic,

Education: As per the NFHS-5 (2019-21), the literacy rate in females is 70.3% compared to about 84.7% for men.

Gender-Based Violence: As per the NCRB's "Crime in India" 2021 report, over 4 lakh cases of crimes against women were recorded in the year 2021. With this figure reflecting only the reported incidents, the actual figure remains much higher.

Child Marriage: As per the NFHS-5, 23.3% of women aged 20-24 years were married or in a union before age 18.

Economic Disparity

Employment: As per the latest PLFS report, only around 32.8% of females of working age (15 years and above) were in the labour force in 2021-22.

Informalization: According to the International Labor Organization, 81.8 percent of women's employment in India is concentrated in the informal economy. This indicates that most of the female workers in India are not able to get into high-paying jobs.

Wage Gap: The wage gap between genders in India is among the widest in the world. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2021, on average, women in India were paid 21% of the income of men.

Political Disparity

Representation in Parliament: At present, only around 14.94% of the total number of Members of Parliament (MPs) are women.

Representation in State Legislatures: As per the official data of the Election Commission of India, as of December 2023, the overall average female representation in State Legislatures is just 13.9%.

Representation in Local Panchayats: As per the Ministry of Panchayati Raj data from April 2023, around 46.94% of panchayat elected representatives are women. However, the prevalence of the 'Sarpanch-Pati' culture means that this figure is effectively very low.

Gender Equality in India

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) India Index shows that the scores of states range from 57 to 79 in 2023-24, marking a substantial improvement from the range of 42 to 69 in 2018. The government has taken targeted steps such as educating the girl child, providing housing and subsidies, health insurance, and loans for small businesses. Despite improvements, SDG 5 deals with ensuring gender equality and India's overall score is 49. This observation suggests that a little more than half the distance needs to be covered to achieve the targets specified under this. Emphasizing the need for better infrastructure facilities, safe workspaces, and gender-based discrimination is minimal, women would continue to face challenges.

Gender inequality is inherently seen at home, public places, workplaces, and communities regularly. It is in the textbooks, in movies, in the media, and among men and women who provide their care and support. In the context of India, gender inequality is deeply rooted in societal norms, affecting opportunities, and while it impacts the lives of both genders, statistically it is the girls that are the most disadvantaged. The girl child tends to face extensive limitations in mobility, decision-making, and access to education and health services. Though there are Indian women who are global leaders and hold positions in diverse fields most women and girls in India still face issues and are not able to enjoy and exercise their rights due to deeply entrenched patriarchal views, norms, traditions, and social structures and construction. There are struggles, risks, violations, and vulnerabilities women and girls face because of their gender and most of these are directly linked to the economic, political, social and cultural disadvantages they deal with in their daily lives. With the prevalence of gender inequality, and social norms and practices, they become exposed to the possibility of early marriage, domestic work, sexual abuse, violence, and exploitation. Many of these manifestations will not change unless girls are given access to opportunities and valued more.

Gender equality is essential for sustainable development and collectively contributes to economic, social, and cultural upliftment. Empowering women and girls requires focused investment and collaboration to achieve short-term, medium-term, and long-term results.

Increasing access to education, and nutrition, reducing anemia, and better sanitation at the school premises are a few short-term measures provided by the state level and central schemes and programs.

Here are some of the key ways to end discrimination:

1. Ensure equal access to education.
2. Empower women in the workplace.
3. Protect reproductive rights.

4. Strengthen legal protections.
5. Provide better medical care.
6. Achieve better political representation.
7. Prioritize the most marginalized.

The other measures to be undertaken are by engaging men and boys in gender equality discussions to sensitize them. Awareness generation and mobilizing many sectors in society is crucial for changing societal perceptions. The infrastructure and services have to be women- and girl-friendly. Providing them with services and a safe environment at home, school, public space, and workplace can reduce and mitigate the risks they face.

II. Conclusion

Women empowerment and gender equality in India are not just goals in themselves but are fundamental to the nation's overall development and prosperity. As India strides towards its vision of **"Viksit Bharat @2047"**, the government, civil societies, communities, and individuals, should put their collective efforts into fostering a society where every woman has the opportunity to thrive. Measures, as suggested above, can help in this direction. Achieving gender equality is vital for sustainable development in India. It requires a multifaceted approach involving education, societal change, and supportive infrastructure to empower women and girls, ultimately contributing to the nation's growth and development. The proposed solutions will foster an inclusive environment where all individuals, regardless of gender, can thrive and contribute to the overall development.

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