

Empowering Women for Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

The centrality of women's empowerment, gender equality and the realization of women's human rights in achieving sustainable development have been increasingly recognized in recent decades. On the one hand women empowerment needs the building of an enabling environment for the implementation of women's human rights. On the other hand it needs the announcement of women's skills and capacities as active agents of change or sustainable development. Women who make up half of the world's population have benefited more than men from the progress in economic and social development in the last three decades. Nevertheless they continue to be overrepresented among the world's most vulnerable groups, as access to resources and power remains highly skewed towards men. By providing the same opportunities to women and men, including in decision making in all kinds of activities, as sustainable path of development can be achieved to ensure that women's and men's interests are both taken into account in the allocation of resources. Sustainable development is "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs". It therefore encapsulates the need of both women and men. Sustainable development initiatives must reinforce the consideration that women and girls are at a higher risk of being left behind. The voices and perspectives of women and girls must be included in policy development implementation and monitoring in all issues. This would promote the inclusion of women and girls as leaders and decision makers, as well as relevant stakeholders. This paper focuses on women's empowerment as a key process in reaching gender equality and, through that, sustainable development. The next section includes the objectives of the study and discusses concepts of women's empowerment and sustainable development. The remainder of the paper is then dedicated to the findings of the study and suggestions for what needs to be done, and is being done for women empowerment.

Key words: - Empowerment, Sustainable Development, Women Empowerment

I. INTRODUCTION

Empowerment can be defined as a "multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives, their communities and their society, by acting on issues that define as important" (Page and Czuba, 1999).^[1] Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. In India, women have been always made a subject of honour killings and have been given their basic rights for proper education and freedom. For the empowerment of women and girls to be realized through sustainable development, there must be concerted action across all countries and communities-dedicated resources should be provisioned to empower women of all ages and girls as part of the SDGs. Approaching gender equality as a crosscutting issue in SDGs requires that gender is included at all stages of policy development, means of implementation, monitoring and accountability.

The need for a cross-cutting inclusive and gender sensitive approach is clear; without this approach the global transformation envisaged by the SDGs will not be achieved. Women and girls are crucial contributors, implementers and beneficiaries of sustainable development. Their empowerment is fundamental to the achievement of the 2030 development agenda. The stand alone SDG on gender equality should be celebrated.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Venkata and Venkatraman(2005) focused on the effects of SHG in women participation and exercising control over decision making both in family matters and in group activities. Duflo (2011)^[2] studies Women's Empowerment and Economic Development, National Bureau of Economic Research Cambridge. The study argued that the inter-relationships of the empowerment and development are probably too weak to be self sustaining and that continuous policy commitment and equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women. Terlilt(2011)^[3] Does Female

Empowerment promote Economic Development ? This study is an empirical analysis suggesting that money in the hands of mothers benefits children. This study developed a series of non-cooperative family bargaining models to understand what kind of frictions can give rise to the observed empirical relationships.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To know the need of women empowerment.
2. To assess the awareness of women empowerment in India.
3. To identify the ways of empowering women for sustainable development.
4. To offer useful suggestions in the light of findings.

IV. WHAT IS WOMEN EMPOWERMENT?

As per the United National Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the term women's empowerment means:

- . Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the ways in which these relations may be change
- . Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life
- . Gaining the ability to generate choices exercise bargaining power
- . Developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change, to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Thus, empowerment means a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power and legal rights. It is multi level construct referring to individuals, and community involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valid resources gain better access to the control over these resources.

V. WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

In the late 1980s, the report our common future by the world commission on Environment and Development defined the concept "Sustainable Development" as development which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". While aiming to maximize the well-being of today's generation, it is important to take a long-term perspective, taking into account the consequences of our actions for our children, their children and grand children, ensuring that the resources they will require for their own well-being are not depleted, and that the natural environment into which they will be born will not be polluted or distributed. Sustainable development is conceptualized as resting on three inter-related pillars economic development .social development and environmental protection. A fourth pillar-the preservation cultural diversity has been proposed. This conceptual categorization can lead to treating these areas in isolation without accounting for a whole range of channels through which these pillars reinforce each other and bring about sustainable development. Instead by taking an integrated and holistic approach to socio-culturally responsible, environmentally-friendly economic development, sustainable development can be revealed as a multi-faceted and dynamic process.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper a'n attempt has been taken to analyze the empowerment of women in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

VII. WHY NEED OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The United Nations children's Fund, estimated that up to 50 million girls and women are 'missing' from India's population because of termination of the female fetus or high mortality of the girl child due to lack of proper care. Fem Participation of women in the workforce is only

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Decision making power Freedom of Movement Access to Education	Access to Employment Exposure to Media Absence of ambition for achievement
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VIII. WAYS TO EMPOWER WOMEN

- . Changes in women’s labour patterns
- . Changes in women’s access to and control over resources and
- . Changes in women’s control over decision making
- . Providing education
- . Changes in women’s mobility and social interaction
- . Self employment and self help group
- . Encouraging women to develop in their fields

IX. WOMEN AND GIRLS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Women and girls comprise the majority of people living in poverty and experience multidimensional inequalities. Previously efforts were only made to include women and girls in ‘women issues’ which failed to recognize the fundamental nature of gender in development. Additionally, persistent and chronic underinvestment in gender equality and women’s empowerment has exacerbated development limitations. These mistakes must not be repeated. Therefore, sustainable development initiatives must reinforce the consideration that women and girls are at a high risk of being left behind. The voices and perspectives of women and girls must be included in policy development; implementation and monitoring on all issues .This would promote the inclusion of women and girls as leaders and decision makers, as well as relevant stakeholders and partners in sustainable development.

To mainstream the involvement of women and girls in sustainable development demands a change in attitudes and behavior toward women and girls across all levels. For and girls to be agents of change their input must be considered important; they should not only be thought of as ‘ beneficiaries’ or ‘vulnerable’ , they must be considered as equal partners and valuable contributors to sustainable development. With this attitude change it would be unnecessary to repeatedly call for women’s and girl’s inclusion because they would be included automatically. Women and girls can increase community capacity at the grassroots level, by leading effective community-based sustainable development actions that contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals. These actions reveal grassroot expertise that women and girls have on what actions are needed to better their lives.

X. HUMAN RIGHTS, THE SDGS AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

That the SDGs (sustainable development goals) are ‘Inspirational global targets’ and can be adjusted for ‘national circumstances’, is of concern. Although it is important for sustainable development policies to be contextualized, there is the potential for national agents to dilute the strength and purpose of the SDGs to the disadvantage of all. It is risk to allow countries to define development according to their own priorities in their national plans, as numerous Countries systematically disadvantage and legally disempower key development stakeholders, including women and girls. Human rights frameworks and mechanisms are crucial to ensuring that ‘national circumstances’ are not used as a justification for diluting the implementation of the SDGs.

XI. EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH NGO’S AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society organizations, including women’s and grassroots organizations are critical to facilitating the inclusion and empowerment of women and girls in sustainable development. These organizations increase capacity through their networks and roll out sustainable development programmes effectively. As accountable organizations that represent the views of traditionally disempowered groups, including women and girls, NGOs can provide support and legitimacy to sustainable development programmes and other development agents cannot. Empowering the society is also critical to the empowerment of women and girls. Since the SDG negotiation process started, hundreds of laws and regulations across the world have been agreed that limit civil society space. This encroachment upon civil society , and the limitations being placed on NGOs ,will only further disempower women and girls and will work against efforts to implement the SDGs .Without the support of NGOs and CSOs women and girls will not be able to access essential services that empower them

,including legal representation, education and health care .If women and girls are to empowered through the effective implementation of sustainable development principles then CSOs and NGOs , women and girls will be listened to as partners and not merely co-opted into a development agenda that does not reflect their needs.

XII. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Globalization, liberalization and other socio-economic forces have given some respite to a large proportion of population. However, there are still quite a few areas where women empowerment in India is largely lacking.
2. There needs to be sea change in the mind set of the people in the country. Not, just the women themselves, but men have to wake up to a world that is moving towards equity and equality.
3. There are several government programmes and NGOs in the country, but there is still wide gap that exists between those under protection and those not.
4. Poverty and literacy add to these complications. The Empowerment of women begins with a guarantee of their health and safety.
5. Empowerment of women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved. This could be possible only by adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total development of women and make them realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings.
6. In order to create a sustainable world, we must begin to empower women.

XIII. SUGGESTIONS

1. The first and most priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem. Hence, education of women needs to be paid special attention.
2. Awareness of programmes should be organized for creating awareness among women specially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.
3. Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so their status can be elevated in the society.
4. Strict implementation of programmes should be there to curb the mal-practices prevalent in the society.
- 5.

CONCLUSION

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls must be used as a method of implementation across the SDGs to ensure their success.

All the countries hold the same responsibility to ensure the full implementation of 2030 agenda for sustainable development within their own borders, and to support other countries in achieving the SDGs which reaffirming and contributing to the fulfillment of gender equality .Gender equality is a cross-cutting development issue, and unless addressed in a multidimensional way ,gender equality will not become a reality .Not one of the SDGs will be achieved without including women and girls as equal partners. Including women and girls in sustainable development would complement and support state responsibilities.

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