

RESEARCH REPORT

Inclusive Development of Women under Five Year Plans

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The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. The Indian constitution gives a lot of provisions for the development of women. Women as an independent group constitute 48% of the country's total population as per the 2001 Census. The importance of women as an important human resource was recognised by the Constitution of India, which not only accorded equality to women but also empowered the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in their favour. A number of Articles of the Constitution specially reiterated the commitment of the constitution towards the socio-economic development of women and upholding their political right and participation in decision making.

Drawing strength from constitutional commitments, the Government of India has been engaged in the continuous endeavour of concretely translating all the rights, commitments and safe guards incorporated in the Indian Constitution for women from *de jure* to *de facto* status.

- 1) Article 14 men and women to have equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic and social spheres.
- 2) Article 15(1) prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex etc.
- 3) Article 15(3) special provision enabling the State to make affirmative discriminations in favour of women.
- 4) Article 16 equality of opportunities in matter of public appointments for all citizens.
- 5) Article 39(a) The State shall direct its policy towards securing all citizens men and women, equally, the right to means of livelihood.
- 6) Article 39(d) Equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- 7) Article 42 The State to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

- 8) Article 51 (A), (e) To renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
- 9) Article 243 D (3) Reservation of 33% seats in every Panchayat for women
- 10) Article 343 (T) Reservation of 33% seats for women in each Municipality.

Legislations and laws for women

The State enacted several women-specific and women-related legislations to protect women against social discrimination, violence and atrocities and also to prevent social evils like child marriages, dowry, rape, practice of Sati etc. The recently notified Prevention of Domestic Violence Act is a landmark law in acting as a deterrent as well as providing legal recourse to the women who are victims of any form of domestic violence. Apart from these, there are a number of laws which may not be gender specific but still have ramifications on women. Some laws are following:-

Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 provides for equal pay to men and women for equal work.

Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 amended in 1976 provides the right for girls to repudiate a child marriage before attaining maturity whether the marriage has been consummated or not.

The Marriage (Amendment) Act, 2001 amended the Hindu Marriage Act, Special Marriage Act, Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, the Code of Criminal Procedure providing for speedy disposal of applications for maintenance; the ceiling limit for claiming maintenance has been deleted and a wide discretion has been given to the Magistrate to award appropriate maintenance.

The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1956 as amended and renamed in 1986 makes the sexual exploitation of male or female, a cognisable offence. It is being amended to decriminalise the prostitutes and make the laws more stringent against traffickers.

An amendment brought in 1984 to the **Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961** made women's subjection to cruelty a cognisable offence. The second amendment

brought in 1986 makes the husband or in-laws punishable, if a woman commits suicide within 7 years of her marriage and it has been proved that she has been subjected to cruelty. In addition, a new criminal offence of 'Dowry Death' has been incorporated in the Indian Penal Code.

Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1976, enhance the age for marriage of a girl from 15 to 18 years and that of a boy to 21 years and makes offences under this Act cognisable.

Medical Termination Pregnancy Act of 1971 legalises abortion by qualified professionals on humanitarian or medical grounds. The maximum punishment may go up to life imprisonment. The Act has further been amended specifying the place and persons authorised to perform abortion and provide for penal actions against the unauthorised persons performing abortions.

Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986 and the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 has been enacted to protect the dignity of women and prevent violence against them as well as their exploitation.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 provides for more effective protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the Constitution who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. It provides for immediate and emergent relief to women in situations of violence of any kind in the home.

A National policy had been made by the Ministry of Women and child development for the development of women with following goal and objectives:

The goal of this Policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The Policy will be widely disseminated so as to encourage active participation of all stakeholders for achieving its goals. Specifically, the objectives of this Policy include

1. Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realise their full potential,
2. The *de-jure* and *de-facto* enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres – political, economic, social, cultural and civil,
3. Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation,
4. Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance,

employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc.,

5. Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women,
6. Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women,
7. Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.
8. Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; and
9. Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organisations.

In Five years plans

The **First Five-Year Plan (1951–1956)** envisaged a number of welfare measures for women. Establishment of the Central Social Welfare Board, organisation of Mahila Mandals and the Community Development Programmes were a few steps in this direction.

In the **Second Five Year Plan (1956–1961)** efforts were geared to organise "Mahila Mandals" (women's groups) at grass root levels to ensure better implementation of welfare schemes. Promotion of women's organisations at various levels, but especially at the community level was the main thrust of this 5-year plan. Mahila Mandals were given the role in "delivery mechanism" for essential services like education, health, especially maternal and child health, etc.

The **Third, Fourth and other Interim Plans (1961–1974)** accorded high priority to women's education. Measures to improve maternal and child health services, and supplementary feeding for children, nursing and expectant mothers were also introduced. However, one feature was the declining support to the strategies of organisation building and human resource development. Planners however failed to address the major problem of poverty, illiteracy, non-enrolment, drop out, etc. that affected the large majority of girls and women. From the third plan onwards the issues of population control acquired increasing priority. Family Planning services were introduced within the health services, but very quickly and increasingly dominated the health services, with separate allocation and staff. Repeated directives from the Planning Commission from the 4th plan onwards to integrate Family Planning with MCH were not implemented. Programmes for supplementary nutrition of the children and nursing and expectant mothers from disadvantaged

groups were introduced by the welfare department but received far less priority and resource and no integration with MCH.

In the **Fifth Plan (1974–1978)**, there was a shift in the approach from ‘welfare to ‘development’ as the scope of social welfare was enlarged to cope with several problems of the family and the role of women. The new approach integrated welfare with developmental services. The conceptual approach evolved identified women’s developmental needs as having multiple dimensions-cutting across economic, social and political sector-requiring explicit examination of women’s situation in various sectors like agriculture, industry, labour, employment, power, energy, science and technology as well as the social and infrastructure sector.

The **Sixth Five Year Plan, released in Dec 1979**, contained definite admission of failure to remove disparity and injustice in both social and economic life. It also stated that the objective of population control could not be achieved without bringing about major changes in the status of women. Including women within the chapter on employment and manpower and rural development, this plan made a definite departure from earlier plans where women had been mentioned only in the chapters on social services. In suggesting the need for “administrative innovation” and “collection of sex wise distribution data on development assistance” the plan acknowledged the previous neglect, the need for better information flow and new mechanisms to ensure women receiving their ‘due share’ of government attention and support and “equal opportunity for growth and distributive justice”. The framework of the 6th plan which was released by the new planning commission in 1980 reverted back woman to the social services and did not reflect any of the home work undertaken by various official expert groups between 1975 and 1980. Nor did it reflect approaches and perspective advocated by Indian delegations to international conferences of the UN or the Non-aligned movement. It was from this point onward that the national women’s organisation began to make some impact on the planning process. A memorandum was jointly submitted by seven women organisations in 1980 and support from women parliament members persuaded the planning commission to incorporate for the first time in Indian planning history, a chapter on women and development.

In the **Seventh Plan (1985–1990)** the approach paper highlighted the strategy of a direct attack on the problems of poverty, unemployment and regional imbalances with

the accelerated development of human resources. There was greater emphasis on employment to women and youth. The strategy of organising women around socio-economic activities was reiterated for the twin objective of making projects economically viable and adding to their social strength for overall enhancement of the status. Despite the plan documents refusal to adopt the special component or the quota approach, the Department of Rural Development announced a 30 percent quota for women in all anti-poverty programmes for the rural areas. Steps were initiated to bring gender sensitisation as a mandatory part of training of rural development officials. Another thrust, emerging from some experiential training programmes sponsored by Dept of Rural Development, and Women and Child development was an attempt to make the organisation of beneficiaries a central and common element in all programmes targeting women. A final attempt by the Department of Rural Development to introduce the special component approach by earmarking 30 percent of the allocation for anti-poverty programmes to match the 30 percent quota of beneficiaries, however, ran into resistance from the cabinet and had to wait till the 8th five year plan.

The **Eighth Five Year Plan (1992–1997)** promised to ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors do not by-pass women. Special programmes were to be implemented to complement the general development programmes. The flow of benefits to women in the three core sectors of education, health and employment was to be monitored vigilantly. Women were to be enabled to function as equal partners and participants in the developmental process. This approach of the Eighth Plan marked a definite shift from ‘development’ to ‘empowerment’ of women. The strategy of formation and strengthening of women’s organisation at the grassroots was reiterated.

The major strategy for the **Ninth Five Year Plan (1997–2002)** will be to bring a holistic approach to women’s development. This underscores harmonisation of various efforts in different fronts -social, economic, legal, political and cultural. This calls for consolidation of various programmes and efforts in different sectors of the government, and their integration in a logical fashion to converge various services, and facilities required by women. A sub plan approach to package all relevant resources and benefits for women’s development will be laid down to ensure their systematic focus on women.

The **Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002–2007)** aims at empowering women through translating the recently

adopted National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001). Approach to the Tenth Five Year Plan for empowering women has been very distinct from that of the earlier plans, as it stands on a strong platform for action with definite goals, targets and timeframe. A sector-specific 3-fold strategy for empowering women based on the prescriptions of National Policy for empowerment of women have been adopted such as Social Empowerment, Economic Empowerment and Gender Justice.

In the Eleventh five year plan, the Government has stated that it has committed to meeting the 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 Eleventh Plan will address these problems by looking at gender as a cross-cutting theme. It will recognise women's agencies 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.

Approach of Eleventh Five year plan towards women

The vision of the Eleventh Five Year Plan is to end the multi-faceted 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.

The Eleventh Plan recognises that women and children are not homogenous categories; they belong to diverse castes, classes, communities, economic groups, and are located within a range of geographic and development zones. Consequently, some groups are more vulnerable than others. Mapping and addressing the specific deprivations that arise from these multiple locations is essential for the success of planned interventions. Thus apart from the general programme interventions, special targeted interventions catering to the differential needs of these groups will be undertaken during the Eleventh Plan.

The gender perspectives incorporated in the plan are the outcome of extensive consultations with different

stakeholders, including a Group of Feminist Economists. In the Eleventh Plan, for the first time, women are recognised not just as equal citizens but as agents of economic and social growth. The approach to gender equity is based on the recognition that interventions in favour of women must be multi-pronged and they must: (i) provide women with basic entitlements, (ii) address the reality of globalisation and its impact on women by prioritising economic empowerment, (iii) ensure an environment free from all forms of violence against women (VAW)-physical, economic, social, psychological etc., (iv) ensure the participation and adequate representation of women at the highest policy levels, particularly in Parliament and State assemblies, and (v) strengthen existing institutional mechanisms and create new ones for gender main-streaming and effective policy implementation.

The Eleventh Plan lays down six monitorable targets (1) Raise the sex ratio for age group 0–6 from 927 in 2001 to 935 by 2011–12 and to 950 by 2016–17; (2) Ensure that at least 33% of the direct and indirect beneficiaries of all government schemes are women and girl children; (3) Reduce IMR from 57 to 28 and MMR from 3.01 to one per 1000 live births; (4) Reduce malnutrition among children of age group 0–3 to half its present level; (5) Reduce anaemia among women and girls by 50% by the end of the Eleventh Plan; and (6) Reduce dropout rate for primary and secondary schooling by 10% for both girls as well as boys.”

On other hand a Committee (Working Group on “Women’s Agency and Empowerment,

Aged & Destitute) has been made under **Twelfth five year plan** for following:

1. To review the financial and physical progress made in the programmes related to State and Centrally Sponsored schemes of empowering women, aged and destitutes in the Eleventh Five Year Plan; and suggest, if necessary, alternative strategies, priorities, policies and programmes to accelerate the empowerment process.
2. To identify the deficiencies/constraints in achieving the Eleventh Plan objectives and the implementation of the programmes and to suggest corrective measures.
3. To formulate the objectives, strategies and programmes for the Twelfth Plan period for the social and economic empowerment of women.
4. To suggest specific measures for involvement of NGOs, PRIs etc. In the planning and implementation

of the programmes/schemes relating to women, aged, and other vulnerable groups.

5. To suggest measures to strengthen SHGs as a means of achieving women's empowerment.
6. To assess the existing institutional capacity for the development, implementation and monitoring of women-related programmes and gender mainstreaming, with qualitative analysis for improved effectiveness.
7. To prepare a strategy note on engendering the planning process in the Twelfth plan period.
8. To recommend how the role of Women in Governance can be strengthened and their rights to participation in improving public institutions and the delivery of public services realised.
9. To suggest interventions for institutionalising the 'gender lens' with recommendations for capacity development of key institutions for promoting gender mainstreaming.
10. To propose measures and initiatives which need to be taken during the Twelfth plan to promote women's empowerment and assess the fund requirements for the same.
11. To review the effective implementation of the legislation on old age protection and to strengthen the effective implementation of the package of services meant for older persons including health, pension, shelter, financial security, welfare protection and other needs of the older persons;
12. To suggest over all welfare/empowerment and development of the aged to special measures for their protection, socio economic rehabilitation and social security.
13. To take up any other issue pertaining to the sector, which needs investigation so that a suitable policy framework is formulated by the Working Group?

Suggestions

Some suggestions have been made for inclusive development of women, which are as follows:

1. Review and formulation of laws, procedures, rules and policies, programmes to ensure that they uphold all human rights and fundamental freedoms, ensure gender equality and equity, take into account the needs of women and incorporate their perspective;
2. Ensure women's participation in all decision making processes including political processes and structures and resort to affirmative action such as reservations;
3. Ensure the visibility of women's contribution to society by drawing up satellite accounts that will reflect the true value of their work whether paid or unpaid, whether in the formal or informal sector;
4. Ensure gender disaggregation of all information and data relating to input, output and impact parameters to draw up gender development indices for the country;
5. Identify separately in every sector the benefits flowing to women by drawing up women's component plans, which will earmark women's share of allocation in every department/ministry/programme.
6. Focusing on the girl child and her age-specific needs.
7. Eradicating poverty with focus on women in poverty.
8. Ensure capacity building in women through education and training.
9. A comprehensive gender sensitisation process to change discriminatory social attitudes to build a strong society of gender justice.

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