

WOMEN AS A KEY FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

Asst. Prof. Ms. Gulshan Miyagamwala

Department of Economics, Bharat College of Arts & Commerce, Badlapur (w).

Abstract :

THE WOMEN workforce has been playing a very significant role in the expansion and growth of the Indian economy. The statistics reveal that in the year 1981, the share of women in the workforce was 19.67%, which roused to 30% in 2003.

A discussion about sustainable development is not complete without a conversation on gender equality. Since women account for half of any country's talent base, empowering their participation in the workforce, greatly growth. In fact, World Bank studies show that development strategies focusing on gender equality see stronger economic growth than gender-neutral strategies.

Extreme poverty presents a large obstacle, as women and girls comprise 70% of the 1.3 billion people living on less than a dollar per day. Empowering women to take part in the workforce is not a simple problem to solve. Moreover, women across the globe still require investment in basic health and education. A crucial part of the solution is getting resources for these working women to access .allowing them to thrive in their economic environments so that they may, in turn, foster the success of local communities. However, the solution must fit both the lifestyles of women and their cultures. The strategy for economic empowerment, according to the World Bank is twofold: (1) making the market work for women and (2) empowering women in the market. Supporting the economic empowerment of women is not just good company policy; it actually benefits the corporate world. Firms that employ women in leadership positions have better performance and higher profits.

INTRODUCTION :

Women account for roughly half the world's population, perform two-thirds of the hours worked, receive one-tenth of the world's income, and have less than one hundredth of the world's property registered in their names. Education of women improves child health because of educated mothers' greater knowledge of the importance of hygiene and of simple remedies. All this lowers infant mortality, which in turn means that a family does not need to have a large number of children in order to hedge against the possibility of premature death of some children .Over the last 40 years, the benefits from increased participation of women in economic activity, in terms of financial independence, personal development and social status, have become increasingly clear and accepted. India's economy has undergone a substantial transformation since the country's independence in 1947.

The Evolution of 'Women in Development' to 'Gender and Development' the key was then to place women 'in' development by legislatively trying to limit discrimination and by promoting their involvement in education and employment. Investment in the human capital, health and education, of women and girls is presented as a key way forward as witnessed by the MDGs. The logic is that 'educated, healthy women are more able to engage in productive activities, find formal sector employment, earn higher incomes and enjoy greater returns to schooling than are uneducated women...' Educated women are more likely to invest in the education of their own children, and they are also more likely to have fewer children. Women have been shown to use micro-finance effectively to develop small enterprises and are recognized as good at paying back loans. When women are in paid employment, they are more likely to be

engaged in part time rather than full time work, in the informal rather than the formal sector, and across the globe women earn less than men for comparable work. Women play the key role in the ‘care economy’, which not only provides care to the young, old and the sick, but also is vital for ensuring a productive workforce.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Five Year Plans and Women

The **first** five year plan was focused on providing equal status to women. The aim was to organize various welfare activities and prioritizing women’s education. The **fifth and sixth** plans shifted the approach to overall development of women with thrust on health, education and employment of women. The **seventh** plan stressed on identifying and promoting beneficiary programmes for extending direct benefits to women. The **eighth** plan stressed on women empowerment, recommending 30% reservation for women at government levels. The **ninth** plan aimed at ensuring a minimum of 30% of benefits to women from all ministries and departments. ‘**Empowerment of Women**’ as a gents of socio-economic change and development became one of the nine specific objectives of the Ninth Plan (1997- 2002). The **tenth** plan called for a threefold strategy of social empowerment, economic development and providing gender justice. The **eleventh** five year plan targeted in extending 33% benefits, both direct and indirect, to women and girl children .The positive effects of the efforts have manifested in increase in female literacy rate from 39.29% in 1991 to 54.16% in 2001 census.

Women’s economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of all the MDGs Women’s empowerment is about rights and equitable societies. Economic empowerment increases women’s access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information. Women’s economic participation and empowerment are fundamental to strengthening women’s rights and enabling women to have control over their lives and exert influence in society. It is about creating just and equitable societies. Women perform 66% of the world’s work, and produce 50% of the food, yet earn only 10% of the income and own 1% of the property. Whether the issue is improving education in the developing world, or fighting global climate change, or addressing nearly any other challenge we face, empowering women is a critical part of the equation.

Why women's economic empowerment matters for pro-poor growth? Higher female earnings and bargaining power translate into greater investment in children’s education, health and nutrition, which leads to economic growth in the long-term. The share of women in waged and salaried work grew from 42% in 1997 to 46% in 2007. In India, GDP could rise by 8% if the female/male ratio of workers went up by 10%. Achieving women’s economic empowerment is not a “quick fix”. It will take sound public policies, a holistic approach and long-term commitment from all development actors. Women’s economic empowerment is both a right and “**smart economics**”. Development actors need to reach and enhance opportunities for the poorest of the poor and women in remote communities.

TAKING A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Social and political factors have a significant influence on women’s ability to participate in the economy. These include: access to family planning and other healthcare services; social protection coverage; girls’ completion of a quality post-primary education; improving literacy rates of adult women; and, increasing women’s influence in governance structures and political decision-making. Many of these dimensions are mutually dependent and reinforcing. Cultural barriers, including discriminatory practices and attitudes, also need to be actively identified and tackled. Education provides women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence they need to seek out economic opportunities. Removing school fees and providing financial incentives for girls to attend school have proven to be effective for increasing girls’ enrolment and completion rates.

Making markets work better for women

Many women entrepreneurs in developing countries face disproportionate obstacles in accessing and competing in markets. These include women’s relative lack of mobility, capacity and technical skills in relation to men The World Bank Action Plan (2006) Gender Equality as Smart Economics argues that economic empowerment is about making markets work for women and empowering women to compete in

markets.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Programmes should be designed to maximize poor women's and men's access to the benefits of roads, telecommunications, energy and water. Infrastructure initiatives that help women to carry out everyday chores more efficiently, such as the supply of piped water, free up time for educational opportunities, productive work, and participation in community life and decision making. Improving rural roads, transportation facilities and services increases rural women's mobility and can increase their productivity and income by easing access to markets, reducing post-harvest loss of perishable goods. Improvements to rural water and irrigation systems and transportation infrastructure reduce the amount of time women spend on arduous tasks such as fetching water and tending family crops. These investments will bring returns in the form of increased women's engagement in market-based activities and greater productivity.

IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT FOR WOMEN

Women's participation in the labour market can be increased by addressing the constraints and barriers women face accessing work, including public employment Programmes, and by providing well-focused vocational training.

Over the last 40 years, the benefits from increased participation of women in economic activity, in terms of financial independence, personal development and social status, have become increasingly clear and accepted.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Woman is bestowed with immense moral strength than her male counter parts. This has enabled her to tide over the adversities and be a survivor. She can face any challenge, provided she gets assurance and a rock solid support from her family and peers. For the holistic empowerment of women, the social, economic and political aspects impacting on them must converge effectively. The cultural development of the society has caused a significant progress in the status of women. More and more women are becoming financially independent and this has had a remarkable impact on the country's economy.

Creation of Self Help Groups in rural India has given an opportunity to the women, not only to add to the family income but also contribute to the GDP of national economy. Family plays a pivotal role in the development of society. Management starts in the family itself. Women should be given their due respect and not treated as an object. Family development necessitates a mother's key role in shaping up an individual's character. If it is not for the faulty culture and upbringing, we would not have been witness to juvenile delinquency, female foeticide and other such vices which are detrimental to the socio economic fabric. Management starts from home. An effective manager is the one who can take along the manpower and steer towards achieving the corporate objectives by creating an amiable working environment. Women empowerment should have its base on human values, strong ethics and religious cultural ethos. Empowerment must not be western focused.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure women's equitable access to and control over economic and financial resources, Member States should fully implement the commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the Millennium Development Goals. (a) The macroeconomic environment:

- ◆ Adopt measures to ensure the equal representation of women in all areas of economic decision-making, including at the highest levels in relevant Government ministries, international organizations, corporate boards and the banking sector.
- ◆ Improve the collection, compilation and use of data on women's participation in economic decision-making bodies.
- ◆ Develop and adequately resource active labour market policies on full and productive employment and decent work for all, including the full participation of women and men in both rural and urban areas.
- ◆ Adopt and implement legislation and policies to promote the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, including through increased flexibility in working arrangements such as part-time work;

and ensure that both women and men have access to maternity, paternity, parental and other forms of leave, and are not discriminated against when availing themselves of such benefits.

- ◆ Promote lifelong learning and equal access of women to vocational and workplace education and training programmes and innovative information and communications technology programmes, including in nontraditional areas and in leadership and management programmes, giving particular attention to unemployed women and women re-entering the labour market.
- ◆ Encourage women's participation in male-dominated fields of study, employment and training and encourage men's participation in female dominated fields.
- ◆ Adopt policies and support mechanisms that create an enabling environment for women's organizations and networks, including self-help groups and workers' organizations and cooperatives.
- ◆ Strengthen efforts and investment to increase the productivity of rural women's work through improved access to credit and savings; to critical infrastructure and services, such as transport, energy, water supply and sanitation, extension services and markets; and to appropriate technologies, including information and communications technology.
- ◆ Recognize and protect, through appropriate measures, women's existing access to communal resources, including forests, wetlands and commons.
- ◆ Increase investment in programmes providing water supply and sanitation to rural areas and urban slums through consultative and participatory processes, to increase health and well-being, relieve the workloads of women and girls, and release their time and energy for other productive activities, including entrepreneurship.
- ◆ Take measures to ensure the full participation of women in planning and decision-making on forest and water management and increase the number of women participating in training programmes.
- ◆ Review agricultural policies and strategies to ensure that women's critical role in food security is recognized and addressed as an integrated part of both short- and long term responses to the food crisis.
- ◆ Develop strategies to increase resource allocation to women's off-farm income generation activities, including through access to financial services and improved technologies.
- ◆ Strengthen the capacity of existing and emerging microcredit institutions to reach poor women in both rural areas and urban slums.
- ◆ Ensure that microfinance programmes focus on developing savings products that are safe, convenient and accessible to women and support women to retain control over their savings.
- ◆ Assess the impact of the growing commercialization of microfinance on women's access to and control over financial resources.
- ◆ Create a climate that is conducive to increasing the number of women entrepreneurs and the size of their businesses by giving them greater access to financial instruments, providing training and advisory services, facilitating networking and information-sharing, and increasing their participation in advisory boards and other forums to contribute to the formulation and review of policies and programmes being developed by financial institutions.
- ◆ Promote the equal representation of women in decision-making at all levels in both formal and informal financial institutions.

REFERENCE

1. Business Standard (2006). October 2006 issue of Business standard. pp.5
2. Catalyst (2004). The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity, New York, p.30.
3. Census of India (2002). Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi, p.70.
4. Census of India (2011). Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi, p.80.
5. World Fact Book (2010). Central Intelligence Agency, USA
6. India 2010 (2010). A reference annual compiled and edited by Research, Reference and training division, Publications division, Ministry of information and broadcasting, Government of India, p.129.