

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A MOVE FOR CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

Women Empowerment considers as the power which inculcate the feeling of independence to take the decision and promoting the sense of self-worth. In contemporary society, women are enjoying the high esteem of empowerment as in various fields has acknowledge their hard work and appreciate her for the sane. Along with it, various laws in our country give the authority to her to recognize her self-worth. But, it has also seems that ample number of women have no idea about their rights and laws which government has provided to her. Present paper is an attempt to highlight several rules and laws to the women so that they can get awareness about their rights.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Government initiatives, schemes and commissions.

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment means being free to explore the best way of doing things, not just doing what you are told; it means 'giving power to' and 'creating power within'. Women Empowerment means providing a healthy and amiable environment to women where they can make independent decisions on their personal development as well as enjoy equality in the society. The worth of a civilization can be judged from the position that it gives to women. Women constitute about half the population of India, received only a small share of development opportunities. Women Empowerment does not mean 'Deifying Women.' It means replacing patriarchy with parity. Gender discrimination is the least of worries in India, known otherwise as the fourth most dangerous country in the world for women.

Measures taken for Empowering Women in India

The Principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its preamble, Fundamental Duties, Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles. Article 14, Art.15 (1), Art 16, Art. 39(d) of Constitution of India guarantees equality to all irrespective of their caste color, creed or sex. Also, Directive Principles of State Policy make special provisions for improving

the status of women and children (Art. 15(3), Art. 51(a), (e), Art. 42. Five year plans also approach towards development and empowerment of women.

- National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (NPEW), 2001 in India had the goal to bring about equality, care, advancement, development and empowerment of women. It includes mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process and strengthening legal systems. NPEW involves creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for holistic development to enable them to realize their full potential. It includes building and strengthening partnerships with civil society including women organizations.
- National Mission for the Empowerment of Women 2010 (NMEW), Government of India launched NMEW on International women's day in March 2010 for all round empowerment of women. The mission had the mandate to strengthen the inter-sector convergence; facilitate the process of coordinating all the women's welfare and socio-economic welfare programmes across ministers and departments. The mission has an Executive director and experts in different fields like health and nutrition, law, central budgeting, poverty alleviation, information and communication technology etc. At State level, State Mission Authority under the leadership of C.M. & ministers of some women related departments and State Resource Centre for Women works with the support of NMEW. So far 27 States and UTs have set up State Resource Centres for women (SRCW). The key strategy includes strengthening institutional framework for greater efficiency in support to women. The women centre at village level its 'Poorna Shakti Kendra' through which services to women would be facilitated NMEW is also concerned with declining sex-ratio, child marriage, crime against women and girls, save and educate the girl child etc. The mission also conducts research in various areas leading to women empowerment It also organizes seminars, conferences, discussions and competitions on women sensitizing issues. It is a single window service for all programmes run by Government for women through various central ministries.

National Commission Women (NCW)

Parliamentarians and legislators gave the needed push to the passing of National Commission for Women Act 1990 to perform various functions like investigation and examination of all issues concerning safeguards for women under the constitution and other laws. National Commission for Women (NCW) was constituted on 31st Jan 1992 under the

National Commission for women Act, 1990. The commission reviews, amends and suggests remedial legislative measures to meet the lacunae in such legislation. The commission also examined and formulated required measures in areas where there are no laws such as domestic crimes, adoption of destitute children, compulsory registration of marriage etc. The commission also enters into the fields relating to deprivation of women's rights, non-implementation of laws to achieve its target of equality and development. It was exclusively set up to help women via the constitution. It holds the powers of a civil court in trying a suit.

In its crusade against discrimination, violation of women's rights also human rights and gender injustice, N C.W. has gained recognition by various esteemed commissions and Supreme Court.

Structure of NCW

NCW is comprised of a National Forum of 07 full time members—a chairperson, 05 members and a member secretary.

Its chief objectives are:

1. To ensure safety and security of all women.
2. Prevention of crime and violence against women,
3. To punish the criminals who have committed such crimes.
4. Investigation of problems related to gender based denial of Opportunities.

Ministry for Women & Child

Ministry for women and child was set up as a department of the Ministry of Human Resource Development in 1985 for the all round development of women and children and later on in 2006 the department was given the shape of ministry to plan, execute and evaluate the programmes and policies, amend legislation, guide and coordinate the efforts of Government and Non-Government organizations working in the field of women & children.

Government Initiatives for the Empowerment of Women

1. Support to Training and Employment Programmes _ for Women (STEP)—A Central Sector Scheme introduced in 1986-87 for enhancing their Productivity and Income generation in Ten (10) important sectors of production like Agriculture, Fishery, animal

husbandry, dairy, sericulture, waste-land development, handloom, sericulture, handicrafts etc. Per capital cost should not exceed & 10,000. 90% of project cost is borne by GOT. whereas only 10% by the implementing agency. STEP has an objective to provide competencies and skills that enable women to become self employed /entrepreneurs.

2. National Credit Fund for Women: Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) RMK extends micro finance to the needy women for housing, micro enterprises and for their socioeconomic upliftment. To be eligible for loan from RMK the intermediary micro-organizing organization should be experienced in thrift and credit management for 3 or more years. It has extended micro credit to more than 20 states & UTs. The organizations that take loan from RMK are instructed to conduct awareness programmes and training in the fields of education, health and nutrition, legal and fundamental rights to women self help group members.
3. Reservation in Gram Panchayats & Municipal Bodies the need of the hour is women empowerment. On March 9, 2010 the most long awaited act of law making since independence for women happened, when upper house of India, Rajya Sabha voted to amend the constitution to reserve 33 of seats in Parliament and State Assemblies for women. The bill was passed by Rajya Sabha by majority vote of 186 against 01. The proposed legislation was drafted for the first time by HD Deve Gowda led United Front Govt. In 1988 the National Perspective Plan for Women recommended 30% of seats in Panchayats and Municipalities. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 involves women in decision making and states that at least 1/3rd of women would be members of Panchayati Raj System at 3 levels - Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Panchayat.
4. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guaranteed Act (MGNREGA)—National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is Indian Legislation enacted on 5th Sept., 2005 and came into being from February 2, 2006 After amendment on December 31, 2009 renamed as MGNREGA, 2005.
5. A legal guarantee for 100 days of employment in a year to every rural family whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage. The job card having detail and photo of adult man woman is issued by Gram Panchayat

Right to employment mandates 1/3rd employment to women and equality in terms of payment. It is clearly mentioned that individual Bank or Post office account must be opened in the name of all women workers and wages directly credited to their accounts. It also advised the states to identify widowed, deserted and destitute who qualify as household under the Act, to ensure that they are provided 100 days of work. The payment is made through Post offices and saving bank accounts also. It is compulsory that at least 1/3rd workers should be women. By earning equal wages they enjoy gender equality and equal status in the society. MGNREGA 15 covering 34 states and UT, 614 districts, 6000 blocks, 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats.

The budget allocation for MGNREGA in 2014-15 is about ₹ 34,000 crores as against ₹ 33,000 crores in 2013-14 mentioning 'that no one who is poor is left without employment'. The Act is important in improving income opportunities for single women and women headed households and providing more autonomy to women within their families.

Salient features of this Act are :

- a) Right based framework
- b) Women Empowerment
- c) Time bound guarantee
- d) Decentralized and Labor intensive planning.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)—Women's education in India plays a very important role in overall development of the country. Education can empower women in each and every field of life.

Important indicator of empowerment of women is education. SSA is being implemented to achieve the goals of universal access and retention, bridging of gender and social gaps in enrolment levels and enhancement of learning levels of all children.

6. Mahila Samakhya (MS)-Mahila Samakhya is a specially focused programme on the educationally backward blocks (EBBs) for empowering rural, poor and marginalized women. Currently the programme is being implemented in 41622 villages in 126 districts of 10 states. The role education plays for transformation of status of women in society is important. MS was launched in 1989 as a Pilot Project in 6 States in India with the financial support of Netherlands Govt. The scheme was launched by the Central Govt.

under the National Policy of Education (1986) recognizing the empowering potential of education and to provide equal participation of women in decision making and to seek equality in rights and opportunities.

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao

UNICEF report 2012 ranked India 41st among 195 countries in child sex ratio. Keeping in mind this shocking figure, P.M Narendra Modi launched the scheme on Jan. 22, 2015 with initial corpus fund of 2 100 crore.

The objectives are :

- a) Improving the sex ratio
- b) Access and availability of education, health and nutrition.
- c) Equality in social, economic and political fields.

7. Women Vocational Training Programme- Vocational training facilities for women in India are organized through 369 women Industrial Training Institutes and 844 women wings in general ITIs/Private WITIs.

National Council for Vocational Training has recommended that in general upto 30% of the sanctioned seats may be reserve for women candidates.

Schemes Related to Women Health Care

8. National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)- In April 2005 renamed as National Health Mission (NHM) strives to achieve progress in providing universal access to equitable, affordable and quality health care to the rural population re, especially the vulnerable groups. It was launched in 2005. The primary services under ICDS are delivered through Health Ministry's programme of Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) under NRHM for addressing health needs of mothers and children. It is an access to quality health care to all. Under NRHM financial assistance is provided to the states and UTs for infrastructure, mobile medical units, community participation, human resources and emergency response services. Central Assistance of more than 7 101288 crores have been released to States and UTs under NRHM since inception to enhance public expenditure on Health. The investment for NRHM in 2006 was % 7986 crores while in 2013-14 outlay was 16972 crore for NRHM. The investment in NRHM is showing increasing trends.

9. Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojna (IGMSY)—A conditional maternity benefit scheme was introduced in Oct. 2010 for pregnant and nursing mothers by providing cash incentives for better health and nutrition to pregnant and lactating mothers. It is a centrally sponsored scheme and implemented on pilot basis in 53 selected districts using the platform of ICDS 12.5 lakh pregnant and nursing mothers are expected to be benefited every year through this scheme. The cash is transferred through Nationalized Co-operative banks or Post office. Pregnant women of 19 years of age and above for first two live births are eligible under this scheme.
10. Janani Suraksha Yojna- Another Health Care Scheme, Janani Suraksha Yojna ensured that an additional 12-13 million women are now delivering in government facilities each year with institutional delivery rates touching 80 per cent.
11. Restructured Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)—Integrated and restructured integrated child development services were launched in 1975 with the objective to improve the nutritional and health status of children, pregnant and nursing mothers. The services are provided so that synergetic development takes _ place.

Nutritional development programmes like preparation of low cost nutrition recipes, fruit and vegetable preservation are organized to achieve better nutrition.

I.C.D.S. is one of the flagship programmes of the Govt. & represents one of the world's unique programmes for Early Childhood Development.

Schematic Interventions for Protective Environment for Women.

- Ujjawala—Launched in Dec. 2009, Ujjawala is a comprehensive scheme for prevention of trafficking with five (05) specific components

- Prevention
- Rescue
- Rehabilitation
- Reintegration
- Repatriation

Initiative for Girl Children

15. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent girls RGSEAG-SABLA SABLA was started in 2010-11 and it's functioning on pilot basis in 205 selected districts. It aims at improving the nutritional and health status of adolescent girls 11-18 years.

The scheme covers two important components:

- i. Nutritional
- ii. Non Nutritional component

Each adolescent girl is provided with 600 calorie, 18-20 gm protein and micro nutrients per day for 300 days in a year.

In 2013-14 the budgetary outlay was 2 650 crore. The nutritional component improved the health and nutrition status of adolescent girls, the non-nutrition component fulfills development needs like health checkup and referred services, nutrition and health education, guidance and counseling. SABLA also aims to draw out of school girls into formal and non-formal education system.

Other Schemes and Programmes

17. Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojna- (AMSY) - AMSY is an exclusive scheme for economic development of S.T. women at a highly concessional rate of interest. Under this scheme upto fifty thousand per individual unit profit centre is provided by NSTFDC.
18. Women Empowerment and Livelihood Programme in mid-Gangetic plains (Priyadarshini): This scheme is to organize women into effective Self Help Groups It is a pilot project in Mid Gangetic plains in 13 Blocks spread over 05 districts in UP. and 02 districts in Bihar. It aims at economic and social empowerment of women and adolescent girls through formation of Self Help Groups. About 7200 SHGs will be framed by the end of 2016-17. It is estimated that about 01 lakh adolescent girls and women will be benefited under this scheme by 2016-17.
19. Skill upgradation Training Programme for Women in 200 Border/Tribal/Backward Districts- The programme aims at enhancing the vocational skills of women in Border, Tribal and Backward Districts also to help them to acquire self employment.
20. Short Stay Homes - Temporary accommodation for 6 months to 3 years and also maintenance and rehabilitation services are provided to homeless women and girls through voluntary organizations. To make them self reliant, skill development is provided to them.

21. Gender Budgeting initiative -In order to ensure that benefits of development reach women as much as to men; the setting of Gender Budgeting Cells in all departments and Ministries was made compulsory by the Ministry of Finance in 2005. Till date about 56 Gender budget cells have been set up in 56 ministries and more than 1500 officials have been trained in Gender Budgeting so far.
22. Schemes for Women Empowerment by Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) SIDBI has been implementing two special schemes for women.
 - Mahila Udyam Nidhi for providing equality to women entrepreneurs,
 - Mahila Vikas Nidhi provides development assistance for pursuit of income generating activities.
23. Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)—It is a credit linked subsidy scheme of micro, small and medium enterprises Financial assistance upto @ 25 lakh is provided for setting micro enterprises. The scheme has successfully empowered women through self employment More than 65,000 women have set up PMGEP units during the last six years.
24. Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (Girl Child Prosperity Scheme) - Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22, 2015 launched a small deposit scheme Sukanya Samridhi Yojana for girl child under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) campaign. The scheme will ensure equitable share to a girl child in resources and savings of a family in which she is generally discriminated against a male child. Sukanya Samridhi Yojana will enable parents to open bank accounts of girls who are under 10 years of age.
25. Scheme on safety of women in large cities : The Ministry of Home Affairs has been allocated @ 150 crore in 2014-15 for this purpose. Setting up 'Crisis Management Centers' in all the districts of NCT of Delhi during 2014-15 at all government and private hospitals with funding from the Nirbhaya Fund.
26. Several steps taken by the Government to prevent cyber crimes including those against women. The government has taken following steps for prevention of Cyber Crimes :
 - Cyber Crime Cells have been setup in States and Union Territories for reporting and investigation of Cyber Crime cases.

- Government has set up cyber forensic training and investigation labs in the States of Kerala, Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur and Jammu & Kashmir for training of Law Enforcement and Judiciary in these States.

Some Important Acts or Laws related to Women

- ✓ The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
- ✓ The Indecent Representation of Women Prohibition) Act, 1986
- ✓ Maternity Benefit Act, 1961
- ✓ Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- ✓ The Commission — of (Prevention) Act, 1987
- ✓ Pre conception and Post Natal Diagnostic Technique Act, 1994
- ✓ Protection of women from Domestic Violence Act, 2006
- ✓ Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- ✓ Right to Education Act, 2009
- ✓ Sexual Harassment of Women at work place (Prevention Prohibition & Redressal) Bill, 2013)
- ✓ Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013

CONCLUSION

Women's empowerment is more than a phrase; it is a must for the optimal growth of a family, society, nation, and a sustainable planet. The article has explored a wide range of affirmative legislation, strategies, and programmes implemented by the government, NGOs, and corporate sector through their Corporate Social Responsibility, ranging from the Indian constitution to recent development. It has been reflected in improvements in achieving gender parity in educational attainment, as well as improved political engagement but a worsening trend in economic participation and opportunity, as well as health and survival. Even among SAARC countries, the situation is worse in terms of health and survival. We have a decade to achieve our goals the government should place a greater emphasis on these two areas in order to achieve gender parity. There is an urgent need to reassess India's affirmative action policies, giving new impetus to empowering girls and women not only through traditional education, but also through skill acquisition and providing them with equitable economic opportunities, as well as appropriate medical and healthcare. The findings open up a number of possibilities for policy debate and intervention in the area of women's empowerment.

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