

# Kurukshetra

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## Empowering Rural Women





## PM on Women Empowerment at GES 2017



*The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi addressing the Global Entrepreneurship Summit-2017, in Hyderabad on November 28, 2017.*

- The theme “Women First, Prosperity for All” makes this edition of GES stand out. In Indian mythology, woman is an incarnation of Shakti - the Goddess of power. We believe women empowerment is vital to our development.
- Our history has references to women of remarkable talent and determination. Gargi, an ancient philosopher, around the seventh century BC, challenged a male sage to a philosophical discourse - something unheard of in those times. Our warrior queens like Rani Ahilyabai Holkar and Rani Lakshmbai fought bravely to defend their kingdoms. Our freedom struggle too is replete with such inspirational instances.
- Indian women continue to lead in different walks of life. Our space programmes, including the Mars Orbiter Mission, have had immense contribution from our women scientists. Kalpana Chawla and Sunita Williams, both of Indian origin, have been part of US space missions.
- Three out of four oldest High Courts in India are now headed by women judges. Our sportswomen have done the country proud. This very city of Hyderabad is home to Saina Nehwal, PV Sindhu, and Sania Mirza, who have brought laurels to India.
- In India, we have provided for not less than one third of women representation in rural and urban local bodies, ensuring women's participation in grass-root level decision-making.
- More than sixty percent of workers in our agriculture and allied sectors are women. Our milk co-operatives in Gujarat and the Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad, are examples of highly successful and globally acclaimed women-led co-operative movements.
- At the GES, more than 50 per cent of the delegates are women, who have dared to be different, in their own walks of life. They now inspire a new generation of women entrepreneurs. The deliberations in the summit would focus on how women entrepreneurship can be further supported.





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Kurukshetra seeks to carry the message of Rural Development to all people. It serves as a forum for free, frank and serious discussion on the problems of Rural Development with special focus on Rural Uplift.

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# Editorial

“It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.” said Swami Vivekananda emphasising that the world would progress only when the condition of women improved. Confirming this, experience over the years shows that women, despite facing many socio-economic barriers have been making invaluable contributions to the society.

This also holds true for Indian rural women. They are no longer restricted to behind the curtains doing domestic duties. Today, rural women contribute to almost 70-80 per cent of the farming activities and close to 66 per cent of farm labour in India. But in general perception they are still not recognised as farmers and their role in decision making such as marketing or selection of their livestock or crop is also limited.

To address this and to equip rural women for new age challenges, education has to be the foremost priority. With this in mind, the Government has launched a number of initiatives for their education and well being, most notably of these being – **Beti Bachao - Beti Padhao** campaign. This campaign has positively impacted the mindset of society towards girl child and the Government has decided to expand it in all districts of the country.

In addition to formal education, rural women need to be trained in new skills and latest digital tools so as to enable them to migrate from agriculture to more diversified occupations. It is heartening to note that more than 50 per cent certificates under **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana** have been awarded to the women. Similarly, **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan** will go a long way in spreading digital literacy in far flung and remote areas of the country. And digital literacy will empower rural women by raising social and political awareness, improving educational and employment opportunities.

To unlock women’s full potential in economic field, a number of initiatives have been launched. **Deen Dayal Upadhyay Antyodaya Yojana** is one such project to empower poor rural women through network of Self Help Groups. **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana** is encouraging women to become entrepreneurs by providing loan facilities.

As women have to balance dual responsibilities of work and home, maternity leave has been increased from 12 to 26 weeks. In addition, a host of programmes have been launched for better health of rural women such as **PM Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan and PM Matru Vandana Yojana**. When talking about women’s health, **PM Ujjwala Yojana** deserves a special mention as the scheme has made smokeless kitchens a reality for poor households by providing free LPG connections.

Full potential of the women – whether economic or social, can not be realised unless environment is safe and secure for them. To ensure women safety, the Government has taken several innovative steps such as **Universalisation of Women Helpline** and appointing one **Mahila Police Volunteer** in every Gram Panchayat. These Mahila Police Volunteers would act as a link between rural women and the police, setting a good example of community volunteerism.

For the women in difficult circumstances facing physical, emotional and economic abuse, the Government has created **One Stop Centers** and **Swadhar Greh** across the country which would provide integrated support and assistance to the distressed women.

Though all these efforts are laudable, real empowerment will happen only when women themselves participate effectively in governance and political processes. A nationwide training programme has been launched in this regard to prepare **Elected Women Representative** for leadership roles in their villages.

In the end we need to remind ourselves that for holistic empowerment of rural women, convergence among the various schemes implemented by various Ministries needs to happen. Recently launched **Mahila Shakti Kendras** are a right step in this direction. If implemented in right spirit, all these steps will definitely take us towards “a society in which women attain their full potential in all spheres of life and influence the process of social change” - a vision enshrined in **National Policy for Women, 2016**.



# EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN: THE WAY FORWARD

Rakesh Srivastava

For holistic empowerment of rural women to happen, an effective convergence of all aspects impacting a women's life is needed – be it social, economic or political. The process of empowering rural women is a continuous process. The need of the hour is to make women realise their potential, make them aware of the bright future that awaits them, guide them and nurture them.

The Rural women constitute a large proportion of population in rural India. Poverty is particularly acute for women living in rural households. Women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy. Poor access to economic resources, education and support services results in their low participation in the decision-making processes. Rural women are not a homogenous category and thus, have different location specific needs. Goal of inclusive and sustainable development cannot be reached without addressing these diverse needs. Rural women experience inequalities in healthcare and nutrition, have lower access to employment, lack ownership of property and are also victims of domestic violence. Yet, they take disproportionate responsibility for housework and child-care as compared to men. This asymmetrical division of labor, rights and assets renders them more vulnerable. It makes them more susceptible to stress and deprivation brought through disasters. Rural women who constitute 66 per cent of total labour in farm production and livestock related activities have little role in marketing or selection of either livestock or their crop. Market economy trends in the era of globalization have further widened

the gap between educational and technological opportunities available for rural women.

There also exists a large divide between rural and urban women. Though, work participation rate of rural women is higher than their urban counterparts, higher work participation rates *per se* do not indicate a higher level of welfare such as higher educational capabilities and/or asset and income. In fact, the situation is quite dismal for rural women especially for women belonging to SCs/STs and other vulnerable/marginal categories. Work participation rate of female workers in rural areas was higher which stood at 30 per cent as compared to the work participation rate of only 15.4 per cent in urban areas as per Census, 2011. Most of the rural women are engaged in the unorganized sector, agriculture & allied activities, microenterprises etc. These activities are drudgery-based and low income. Digital technologies have further deepened this gap due to poor digital literacy among rural women as compared to urban women.

Rural women in India are concentrated in agriculture to a much larger extent than men. With around 60 per cent of India's population engaged in farming, women contribute to almost 70-80 per cent

of farming activities but are neither legally, nor socially recognized as farmers. There is significant gender segmentation of operations in agriculture. While men predominate in activities such as ploughing and harvesting which have largely become mechanized these







days, women predominate in activities like, weeding, transplanting and inter-cropping that involve more drudgery. Technological implements are either not available, or women have little access to them.

There has been a general decline in the proportion of men as well as women in agriculture; this decline is not as sharp for women as it is for men, indicating the lack of work opportunities for women. Men have entered into more diversified occupations in non-agricultural sectors, while women have largely tended to remain in agriculture indicating the need for creating opportunities outside agriculture in rural areas. Women are seen as principal support in agriculture but they do not have ownership or control over the assets on which they work.

While, more than 18 per cent of farm families in India are headed by women, they face problems of access to *pattas* or titles to land. Only 12.78 per cent women have operational land holdings (Agriculture Census 2011-12). Women are only de facto heads of the farms and are often without any transfer of legal titles. As a result, they remain excluded from many government opportunities such as access to insurance, markets, credits etc. Lack of recognition of their rights hampers Indian women's possibilities not only to become more successful and productive farmers, but also gain self-sufficiency and decision making power that can improve the livelihoods of their families and the community at large. Majority of women farmers are small and subsistence workers with limited land rights. Efforts are required to support women farmers in their land ownership, livelihoods, visibility and identity, entitlements over agricultural services, social protection cover and equal participation in user associations and decision-making bodies.

Outside agriculture, women work as casual workers with lower wages across all industry groups. This is due to undervaluation of work & skills in the activities in which women predominate. Besides, there are fewer opportunities for women due to segmentation of women workers for limited activities. Nearly 80 per cent of the rural enterprises are of women. Most of these enterprises in rural areas are home based subcontracted works and are at the lowest end of the value chain. Regular women workers in rural areas form a very small part of workforce and are concentrated in education, manufacturing, health & social work.

The divide between rural and urban women is quite evident. Higher work participation rates of rural women per se do not indicate a higher level of welfare. Only when higher work participation rates are accompanied by higher educational capabilities, skills, assets or incomes do higher work participation rates become meaningful for rural women. The overall picture depicts that women in rural areas are at great disadvantage. There are several challenges that limit the livelihoods opportunities and thus, empowerment of women in rural areas.

### Challenges for rural women

Some other key challenges faced by these rural women include:

- **Poor education:** Major attribute of rural women is their low level of educational attainment. Rural women often suffer from high illiteracy rates and high drop-out rates from schools. Lack of education impedes their participation in other development processes of the country. Poor knowledge on legal rights hampers the social and political empowerment of rural women. Illiteracy also impedes their access to skill up-gradation and capacity building programs, access to credit, access to subsidies on inputs provided by government programs, access to technologies and related training modules offered by the agriculture extension system and their decision making power. For example, women are engaged in all types of farm activities and do more work as compared to male workers, but their participation in decision making related to farm and income generating activities is low. They do not enjoy autonomy in decision making in the family or matters relating to children's education and occupation in spite of their significant contribution to economic



activities. Poor access to safe spaces in rural areas specifically due to lack of good roads, transport and lighting facilities at night also hampers their access to education despite the presence of schools/colleges.

- **Digital literacy:** Poor access to Information Technology (IT) by rural women intensifies existing inequalities between women and men and also creates new forms of inequalities in education and health. This also leads to emergence of new forms of violence against women and widen the existing gender digital divide. Digital literacy has the capacity to empower rural women by raising social and political awareness, improving educational and employment opportunities.
- **Poor access to technologies:** Access to women friendly technologies/implements and services by the government schemes/agricultural extension is poor. The studies carried out so far in the field of agriculture indicate that despite the key role of women in crop husbandry, animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry and post-harvest technology, those in charge of formulating packages of technologies, services and public policies for rural areas have often tended to neglect the productive role of women. There is inadequate development with respect to technologies specifically tailored to women-specific occupations. Besides, involvement of women in technology development and transfer has also received poor attention from both scientific and administrative wings of the government.
- **Poor livelihoods opportunities outside agriculture:** Agriculture is seen as subsistence strategy for rural women's livelihoods. With agriculture becoming a non-profitable proposition for economic sustenance of rural households, importance of non-farm activities for income generation activities is growing. Women are rarely involved in the backward and forward production linkages with agriculture. Poor linkages between the non-farm activities and farm activities further hampers opportunities for value addition & market linkages for economic empowerment /livelihoods promotion of women. Though women's participation in agricultural production is consistently expanding, they lack access to input supplies, extension advice, credit and



the most important agricultural resource-land. They continue to face constraints, which could be social, legal, and cultural in nature. Their poor access to all these resources hampers their decisions on various agricultural aspects.

- **Lack of skills:** While rural women are involved in micro/small enterprises or manufacturing, most training programmes hardly have any female participation. There is often less involvement of women in opportunities related to construction, trade, transport, storage, and services due to lack of skills.
- **Vulnerability to climate change:** Rural women are affected differently, and often more severely by climate change and its associated natural disasters such as floods, droughts, cyclones and storms. The effect of climate change drives rural women into dangerous situations/risks and vulnerabilities.
- **Lack of convergence between various Government programmes:** Substantial public investments have been made for strengthening of the rural economy and the livelihood base of women. There are number of programmes/schemes /incentives by various Government departments/Ministries for farm women.





Due to lack of adequate convergence among the various schemes implemented by various Ministries, particularly, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Women and Child Development, empowerment of rural women remains scattered and isolated. Lack of convergence among these government programmes /schemes not only impedes entitlements to reach the needy rural women, but also impedes optimization of efforts and resources of the government.

### Government efforts

**Deen Dayal Upadhyay Antyodaya Yojana (DAY- NRLM): Ajeevika** is a major project of Ministry of Rural Development. It focuses on rural women and aims to achieve universal social mobilization by involving rural women. At least one woman member from each identified poor rural household, is to be brought under the Self Help Group (SHG) network in a time bound manner. NRLM has devised special strategies to reach out to these all vulnerable communities and help them graduate out of poverty.

There are other two important components of *Ajeevika*, relevant for improvement of livelihoods of rural women. **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)** aims to skill rural youth who are poor and provide them with jobs having regular monthly wages or above the minimum wages. It is one of the clusters of initiatives and full social inclusion of the candidates is ensured by the mandatory coverage of socially disadvantaged group, where-one third of the persons covered

should be women. **Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana(MKSP)** is another component that aims to improve the present status of women in Agriculture and to enhance the opportunities for empowerment.

Ministry of Women & Child Development has launched an extensive training programme with an objective of **empowering Elected Women Representative (EWRs)** and to help them assume the leadership roles expected of them and guide their villages for a more prosperous future. Past experience at the grassroots level has led to the realisation that

capacity building of EWRs is critical to empower women to participate effectively in governance processes. An empowered EWRs can ensure that the same can be translated among women in her community. This percolation of knowledge, awareness and legal empowerment will help safeguard their basic rights and entitlements. Women's representation in local governments can actually make a difference with her prime focus on development issues like health, education and livelihood which are mostly overlooked by male members.

Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), of Ministry of Women & Child Development, extends micro-credit to the women in the informal sector through a client friendly, without collateral and in a hassle-free manner for income generation activities. RMK has taken a number of promotional measures to popularize the concept of micro financing, enterprise development, thrift and credit, formation and strengthening of Women-SHG's through intermediary organizations. Education of credit management has been integrated with the provision of credit, along with literacy and skill training for individual women, leadership training among groups for self management.

In order to support rural women and provide them with convergent support, Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India approved a new scheme namely **Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK)** as a sub scheme under the **Umbrella Scheme of Mission for Protection and**





**Empowerment for Women** for implementation during 2017-18 upto 2019-20 to empower rural women through community participation. MSK Scheme is envisaged to provide an interface for rural women to approach the government for availing their entitlements and for empowering them through training and capacity building. Convergent support is being proposed for equal access to healthcare, quality education, career and vocational guidance, employment, health and safety, social security and digital literacy at Gram Panchayats level in selected districts/blocks across the country with a view to create an environment in which women realize their full potential. The scheme is committed to play an important role for empowerment of rural women especially in the most backward 115 districts of the country.

Community engagement through **College Student Volunteers** is envisioned in 115 most backward districts as part of the MSK Block level initiatives. Student volunteers will play an instrumental role in awareness generation regarding various important government schemes/programmes as well as social issue and association with NSS/NCC cadre students will also be an option. The scheme at the block level will provide an opportunity to Student Volunteers to participate in the development process by bringing change in their own communities and ensuring that women are not left behind and are equal partners in India's progress. At the national, state, block level, website/IT tools will be made available for monitoring and feedback. Web based/online feedback mechanism will be developed for submission of queries, feedback and grievance redressal.

Ministry of Women & Child Development, has also prepared a portal namely **National Repository of Information for Women (NARI)** that will provide citizens easy access to information on government schemes and initiatives for women. Rural women can access these schemes on their own or with the help of various frontline workers associated with government schemes at the ground level. The portal summarizes over 350 government schemes and other important information for the benefit of women, with more being added every day. Portal also provides information to women on issues affecting their lives – for example, there are tips on good nutrition, suggestions for health check-ups, information on major diseases, tips for job search and interview, investment and savings advice, information on crimes and against women and reporting procedures, contacts of legal aid cells and much more. All the information on various schemes/programmes relevant for women will be updated on a regular basis. This will be used by MSK staff to improve access and utilization of government schemes by rural women at the ground level.

Empowered rural women can play an important role in linking other women and girls to their entitlements such as access to nutritious food and supplements, equality in participation of women in government programs such as **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)**, **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)**, **PM Aawas Yojna (PMAY)**, and crèches for women at working sites etc. They can also play an important role in bringing about a mindset change towards the value of girl child by actively associating themselves with programmes such as **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)**, **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan** etc.

For holistic empowerment of rural women to happen, an effective convergence of all aspects impacting a women's life is needed – be it social, economic or political. The process of empowering rural women is a continuous process. The need of the hour is to make women realise their potential, make them aware of the bright future that awaits them, guide them and nurture them.

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## Cabinet Approves 'Scheme for Capacity Building in Textiles Sector (SCBTS)'

**As large number of women work in textile sector, they will be hugely benefited by the Scheme**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for a new skill development scheme covering the entire value chain of the textile sector excluding Spinning & Weaving in organized Sector, titled "Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector (SCBTS)" from 2017-18 to 2019-20 with an outlay of Rs. 1300 crore. The scheme will have National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) compliant training courses with funding norms as per the Common Norms notified by Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).



**The objectives of the scheme** are to provide demand driven, placement oriented skilling programme to incentivize the efforts of the industry in creating jobs in the organized textile and related sectors; to promote skilling and skill up-gradation in the traditional sectors through respective Sectoral Divisions/organizations of Ministry of Textiles; and to provide livelihood to all sections of the society across the country.

**The skilling programmes would be implemented through:**

- i. Textile Industry /Units in order to meet the in-house requirement of manpower.
- ii. Reputed training institutions relevant to textile sector having placement tie-ups with textile industry.
- iii. Institutions of Ministry of Textiles /State Governments having placement tie-ups with textile industry.

**The scheme will broadly adopt the following strategy:**

- (a) Job role wise skilling targets will be based on skill gap identified for various levels i.e. Entry level courses, Up-skilling/ Re-skilling (supervisor, managerial training, advanced courses for adapting technology etc.), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Training of Trainers, Entrepreneurship Development.
- (b) Segment Wise/ Job role wise requirement of skill needs will be assessed from time to time in consultation with the industry.
- (c) Web-based monitoring will be adopted for steering every aspect of implementation.
- (d) Skilling requirement in the traditional sectors such as handlooms, handicrafts, jute, silk etc. will be considered as special projects through respective Sectoral Divisions/organizations. Skill upgradation will be supported further for entrepreneurial development through provision of MUDRA loans.
- (e) With a view to make outcomes measurable, successful trainees will be assessed and certified by an accredited Assessment Agency.
- (f) Atleast 70 per cent of the certified trainees are to be placed in the wage employment. Post Placement tracking will be mandatory under the scheme.
- (g) Acknowledging the high levels of employment of women in the sector post training, all partner institutions will be required to comply with the guidelines regarding Internal Complaints Committee to be constituted under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition & Redressal) Act, 2013 to become eligible for funding under the scheme.



The scheme will be implemented for the benefit of all sections of the society across the country including rural, remote, LWE affected, North East, J&K by imparting skills in the identified job roles. Preference will be given to various social groups, SC, ST, differently abled, minorities and other vulnerable groups. Under previous scheme of skill development implemented by the Ministry of Textiles in the XII Plan period, more than 10 lakh people have been trained of which more than 70 per cent were women. Considering that the apparel industry, a major segment to be covered under the scheme, employs majorly women (about 70%), the trend is likely to be continued in the new scheme.

10 lakh people are expected to be skilled and certified in various segments of Textile Sector through the scheme, out of which 1 lakh will be in traditional sectors.

## Cabinet approves setting up of National Nutrition Mission

The Union Cabinet chaired has approved setting up of National Nutrition Mission (NNM) with a three year budget of Rs.9046.17 crore commencing from 2017-18. The Mission has been conceived keeping in mind the fact that despite a large number of schemes, malnutrition levels continue to be high as there is lack of synergy among the schemes with each other to achieve common goal. NNM through robust convergence mechanism and other components would strive to create the synergy.



### Features:

1. The NNM, as an apex body, will monitor, supervise, fix targets and guide the nutrition related interventions across the Ministries.

### 2. The proposal consists of-

- mapping of various Schemes contributing towards addressing malnutrition
- introducing a very robust convergence mechanism
- ICT based Real Time Monitoring system
- incentivizing States/UTs for meeting the targets
- incentivizing Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) for using IT based tools
- eliminating registers used by AWWs
- introducing measurement of height of children at the Anganwadi Centres (AWCs)
- Social Audits
- setting-up Nutrition Resource Centres, involving masses through *Jan Andolan* for their participation on nutrition through various activities, among others.

**Major impact:** The programme through the targets will strive to reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anemia and low birth weight babies. It will create synergy, ensure better monitoring, issue alerts for timely action, and encourage States/UTs to perform, guide and supervise the line Ministries and States/UTs to achieve the targeted goals.

**Benefits & coverage:** More than 10 crore people will be benefitted by this programme. All the States and districts will be covered in a phased manner i.e. 315 districts in 2017-18, 235 districts in 2018-19 and remaining districts in 2019-20.

**Financial outlay:** An amount of Rs. 9046.17 crore will be expended for three years commencing from 2017-18. This will be funded by Government Budgetary Support (50%) and 50 per cent by IBRD or other MDB. Government budgetary support would be 60:40 between Centre and States/UTs, 90:10 for NER and Himalayan States and 100% for UTs without legislature.

**Implementation strategy and targets:** Implementation strategy would be based on intense monitoring and Convergence Action Plan right upto the grass root level. NNM will be rolled out in three phases from 2017-18 to 2019-20. NNM targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively. Although the target to reduce Stunting is at least 2% p.a.

# ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN

Sameera Saurabh

Rural women are the key agents for development. They play a catalytic role towards achievement of transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. But limited access to credit, health care and education are among the many challenges they face. These are further aggravated by the global food and economic crises and climate change. Empowering them is essential, not only for the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities, but also for overall economic productivity, given women's large presence in the agricultural workforce worldwide.

**D**elivering multiple roles every single day, women are undoubtedly the backbone of any society. However, they have also been an ignored fraction of the society in many parts of the world. To restore their rightful and dignified status, empowerment programmes need to be initiated to provide a solid foundation to nurture the inner strength and self-esteem for the rural women. Education is a potent tool to progress in life serving as a catalyst that has unsettled centuries of restrictions and given women the much deserved platform to set themselves free and rise as equals.

The systematic focus on women's awakening, galvanised over the last couple of decades, has been consolidated into a more holistic, sharper mission under the Centre, via the appropriately named Mission Purna Shakti, which provides a single window for all women centric programmes run by various ministries. The internet and the social media have fuelled online women activism in a big way. Projects like Digital India promise to provide opportunities for e-learning and to open earning avenues for women. Meanwhile, in the hinterlands, there's the real-life version of Gulaab Gang (a 2013 film in which a woman protagonist battles social

injustice and creates a platform for abused women), with women in one of the most backward regions of Uttar Pradesh getting together to build a historic movement to battle multiple forms of social biases and exploitation. It has expanded to include girls' education on its agenda.

Rural women still remain a disadvantaged segment of Indian society. Statistics show that whereas 86.1 per cent females are engaged in agriculture, the figure of males is 74 per cent. But there are hardly any special programmes for enhancing women's agricultural skills. While 7.1 per cent rural females are engaged in manufacturing, the percentage for rural males is 7 i.e. less than that of females. Most of the training programmes have less female participation. While rural males have opportunities in construction, trade, transport, storage, and services, these are mostly denied to rural females. Obviously, opportunities must be created to enable them to acquire the skills necessary for entering these newly emerging occupations. Majority of rural women suffer not only from economic poverty but also from 'information poverty'. Rural women are vital and productive workers in India's national economy. There is statistical bias in under estimating the role of rural women in development. Though women work for longer hours than men and contribute substantially to family income, but they are not perceived as productive workers. (Pankajam and Lalitha, 2005).

Equal pay for equal work is one of the cornerstones of the gender equality movement the world over. Wage disparities have always existed in rural parts of the country, but in some spheres of activity, the divide has widened. So while men were paid 70 per cent higher wages than women for ploughing work at the end of 2004-05, the difference





rose to 80.4 per cent in end March 2012 and stood at 93.6 per cent at the start of 2013-14. While men were paid 75 per cent more than women for well-digging work in March 2005, the difference stood at nearly 80 per cent in 2013-14. The data indicates that daily wage disparities have, by and large, remained constant since 1999, though they did rise in the early 2000s. In 2013, the discrimination in wages paid to women was higher in physically intensive activities (such as ploughing and well-digging), but lower in the case of work such as sowing and harvesting. In rural India, very few women have ownership over land or productive assets which proves to be a road block in institutional credit. Majority of the agricultural labourers are women and they are mainly assigned manual labour. Men perform operations involving machinery. (Kurukshetra, 2003). Women's economic empowerment Women's 'Self-help and Savings Groups' are on the increase and their efficiency is noteworthy. No external financial assistance has been given to them to start and conduct the operations of these groups. Deposit amounts have grown and are credited to the nearby rural banks. The banks have praised their regularity and clear accounting. Women-members restrict their withdrawals to purposes which are productive of more funds.

### **Role of education in empowering women**

Mahatma Gandhi once said: "If you educate a man, you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman, you educate a whole family. Free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6 and 14 is a fundamental right of citizens under the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India. The government, through its various initiatives such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (aimed at providing primary education especially to girl children from disadvantaged rural areas), attempts to improve the education of women, the barrier to educating women is not always monetary and within the purview of the state. Education is considered as a milestone for women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their lives. Increasing access to education notwithstanding, gender discrimination still persists in India and a lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. Women have so much unexplored potential which has never been tapped. As education is both an input and output

of human development, educational equity will ensure enabling and entrepreneurial development. The female literacy levels according to the Literacy Rate 2011 Census are 65.46 per cent where the male literacy rate is over 80 per cent. Although substantial progress has been achieved since India won its independence when less than 8 per cent of females were literate, the gains have not been rapid enough to keep pace with population growth. In the rural areas, nearly 4.5 per cent of males and 2.2 per cent of females completed education level of graduation and above, while in the urban areas, 17 per cent of males and 13 per cent of females completed this level of education. The details are part of a survey on 'Social Consumption: Education' during the National Sample Survey (NSS) 71st Round, January to June 2014, conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The survey covered entire country with samples taken from 36,479 households in rural areas and 29,447 in urban areas from 4,577 villages and 3,720 urban blocks, it said. According to its findings, literacy rate among age group of seven years and above in the country was 75 per cent. In rural areas, it was 71 per cent compared to 86 per cent in urban areas. Even beyond literacy, there is much that education can do for women's rights, dignity and security. Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom for development.

The concept of Women empowerment is a recent one. The first year of New Millennium 2001 was declared as "WOMEN EMPOWERMENT YEAR". Education of a woman leads to a better family and ultimately an ideal society to a progressive nation. New UNESCO data proves education transforms development. It says:

- If all children enjoyed equal access to education, per capita income would increase by 23 per cent over 40 years.
- If all women had a primary education, child marriages and child mortality could fall by a sixth, and maternal deaths by two-thirds. UNESCO's new analysis proves that:-
- Education empowers women. Educated girls and young women are more likely to know their rights and to have the confidence to claim them.

- Education promotes tolerance: Education helps people to understand democracy, promotes the tolerance and trust that underpin it, and motivates people to participate in the political life of their societies.
- Education equality improves job opportunities and increases economic growth: If all children had equal access to education, productivity gains would boost economic growth. Over 40 years, per capita income would be 23 per cent higher in a country with equality in education.

### Constitutional provisions and laws

The importance of women as an important human resource was recognized by the Constitution of India which not only accorded equality to women, but also empowered the State. A number of Articles of the Constitution repeated towards the socio-economic development of women and participation decision making. These are:

- **Article 14** Men and women to have equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic and social spheres.
- **Article 15(1)** Prohibits discrimination against any citizens on the grounds of religion, race, sex, caste etc.
- **Article 16** Equality of opportunities in matter of public appointments for all citizens.
- **Article 39(d)** Equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- **Article 42** The state to make provision for ensuring first and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

Government has also enacted specific laws to safeguard the interests of women and for up gradation of their status. These are,

- **The Hindu Succession Act, 1956** which provides for women the right to parental property.
- **The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961** which declares the taking of dowry an unlawful activity and thereby prevents the exploitation of women.
- **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976** which provides payment of remuneration equal with men for work of equal value.
- **The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971** which legalizes abortion conceding the

right of a women to go for abortion on the ground of physical and mental health.

- **The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983** which seeks to stop various types of crimes against women. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 which prohibits the Vulgar presentation of women in the media such as- newspapers, cinema, T.V. etc.
- **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.

Few initiatives to encourage empowerment of women by Government of India include:

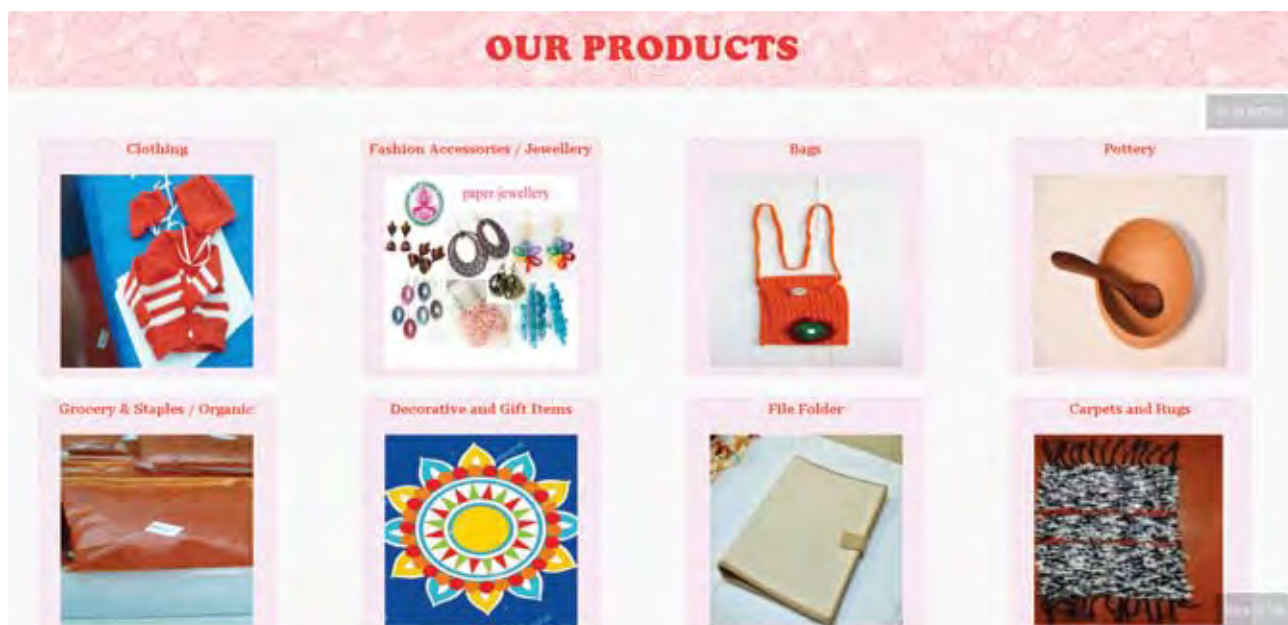
**Aajeevika Skills : Making Rural Poor Youth Employable** National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) is an initiative launched by Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India in June 2011. The Aajeevika Skill Development Programme (ASDP) is a sub-mission under NRLM. It has evolved out of the need to cater to the occupational aspirations of the rural youth who are poor and also to diversify their incomes.

ASDP gives young people from poor communities an opportunity to upgrade their skills and enter the skilled work force in growing sectors of the economy. Training and placement schemes are run in partnership with public, private, non-government and community organizations. Strong relationships are being built with industry associations and employers'. The target is to skill and place 50 lakhs youth in the formal sector by 2017.

### Key features

- Provides customized residential and non residential training.
- Minimum 624 hours of training with modules on trade specific skills, IT and soft skills.
- Special programs for Jammu and Kashmir, Minorities and Most critical Left wing Extremist Districts.
- Implemented under the supervision of the central and state governments.





Screenshot of Mahila E- Haat portal displaying the items for online sale

- 75per cent assured placement above minimum wages.
- Post placement support.
- Food and transport support during training

### Mahila e-Haat

**Digital marketing portal Mahila e-Haat launched for women entrepreneurs:** Launched by the Women and Child Development Ministry, over 125,000 beneficiaries under 10,000 self-help groups have registered on the portal. The portal has been set up with an investment of under Rs.10 lakh from the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh—an autonomous body under the WCD ministry for the socio-economic empowerment of women—and sellers can register their products on the platform without having to pay any listing fee. The only eligibility criteria to register is that the sellers—any women or women members of a self-help group—have to be above 18 years of age to eliminate the problem of child labour. In addition to this, all the sellers are required to show the Mahila e-Haat logo on their products. The tie-up with India Post will help women selling products on the forum locate the nearest post office for shipping purposes. The entrepreneurs can also enter a vendor agreement with India Post, which will help them get a discount on bulk consignments.

### Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)

‘Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) Scheme’ is intended to benefit women who are in the age group of 16 years and above across the country. The grant under the Scheme is given to an institution/ organisation including NGOs directly and not the States/UTs. The assistance under STEP Scheme will be available in any sector for imparting skills related to employability and entrepreneurship, including but not limited to the Agriculture, Horticulture, Food Processing, Handlooms, Tailoring, Stitching, Embroidery, Zari etc, Handicrafts, Computer & IT enable services along with soft skills and skills for the work place such as spoken English, Gems & Jewellery, Travel & Tourism, Hospitality.

### Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers

The Government’s sustained initiative on education and employment of women has resulted in increased opportunities for their employment, and more and more women are now in gainful employment, working within or outside their homes. The growing industrialization and urban development has led to increased migration into the cities. The past few decades have shown a rapid increase in nuclear families and breaking up

of the joint family system. Thus, the children of these women, who were earlier getting support from relatives and friends while their mothers were at work, are now in need of day care services which provide quality care and protection for the children.

Effective day care for young children is essential and a cost effective investment as it provides support to both mothers and young children. Lack of proper day-care services is, often, a deterrent for women to go out and work. Hence, there is an urgent need for improved quality and reach of day care services/crèches for working women amongst all socio-economic groups both in the organized and unorganized sectors.

Women working in the organized sector can avail day care facilities for their children which their employers are obliged to provide under various legislations, (Factories Act 1948, Mines Act 1952, Plantation Act, 1951, Inter-State Migrant Workers Act, 1980 and NREGA 2005 make provision of day care mandatory). On the other hand, the need of the children of the women working in the un-organised sector still remains largely unaddressed.

The need for child care services has been emphasized in the National Policy for Children, 1974, National Policy for Education, 1986, National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001 and the National Plan of Action for Children, 2005. The Steering Committee on Women's Agency and

Child Rights for the **Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17)** has recommended that upgrading AWCs to AWC-cum-creches and/or revision of norms, option of different flexible models, and procedures of RGNCs would therefore be the options that may be examined and taken forward in the next Plan period so that children can be provided community based safe and nurturing spaces for their growth and development. The revised scheme aims to make a significant impact on the Early Childhood Care Services for children up to 6 years of age in the country.

### Conclusion

Rural women are the key agents for development. They play a catalytic role towards achievement of transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. But limited access to credit, health care and education are among the many challenges they face. These are further aggravated by the global food and economic crises and climate change. Empowering them is essential, not only for the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities, but also for overall economic productivity, given women's large presence in the agricultural workforce worldwide.

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### Nirbhaya Fund : 22 proposals of Rs. 2200 Cr. appraised and recommended

Government of India has set up a dedicated fund called Nirbhaya Fund for implementation of initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security of women in the country. As per the guidelines of Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Women and Child Development is the nodal authority for appraisal of the schemes/proposals received under Nirbhaya Fund.

Nirbhaya Fund was set up with a corpus of Rs. 1000 Cr. during 2013-14. Further, an amount of Rs 1000 Cr. was provided in 2014-15 and for the financial years 2016-17 and 2017-18, an amount of Rs. 550 cr. (each financial year) was provided under the Nirbhaya Fund. The corpus transferred to the Public Account for the Nirbhaya fund upto 2017-18 is Rs. 3100 Cr.

Under the Nirbhaya fund, 22 proposals on women's safety and security from Central Ministries and State Governments amounting to Rs.2209.19 Crores have been appraised and recommended by the Empowered Committee as on 21 July, 2017.

Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing following three schemes under Nirbhaya Fund - i. **One Stop Centre**, ii. **Women Helpline**, iii. **Mahila Police Volunteer**.



## Manushi Chhillar: Miss World-2017

**M**anushi Chhillar from India was recently crowned as the Miss World 2017, winning the title 17 years after Priyanka Chopra won it in 2000.

Daughter of a DRDO scientist, Manushi is a medical student from Bhagat Phool Singh Government Medical College for Women in Sonapat, Haryana. Her mother is an associate professor and department head of neurochemistry.

During the 'Question and Answer' round of the beauty contest, Ms Chhillar was asked which profession she thought deserved the highest salary and why. Her reply was.

"I think a mother deserves the highest respect and when you talk about salary it's not always about cash but I feel it's the love and respect that you give to someone. My mother has always been the biggest inspiration in my life. All mothers sacrifice so much for their kids. So, I think it is the job of a mother that deserves the highest salary."

To win the title of Miss World, Manushi worked hard with absolute commitment. She had to balance both her MBBS studies and physical workouts. Talking about the months preceding the contest in an interview, she said-

"During those days, other students in the hostel would be sleeping and I would get up early to work out, and then return to attend classes. So, while preparing, I tried my best to not miss too many classes. When other students would study after classes, I would go out again to work out and then study in the night."

Ms Chhillar is the sixth Indian woman to win the coveted title of Miss World. Reita Faria was the first Indian woman to win the title in 1966, followed by Aishwarya Rai Bachchan in 1994, Diana Hayden in 1997, Yukta Mookhey in 1999 and Priyanka Chopra in 2000.



## World Champion Saikhom Mirabai Chanu

**S**aikhom Mirabai Chanu became the first Indian in over two decades to claim a gold medal at the World Weightlifting Championships in Anaheim, USA. She lifted 85kg in snatch and 109kg in clean and jerk to total an impressive 194kg in the women's 48kg, in the process setting a new national record and ended India's 22-year-long wait for a World Championship gold. She is only the Second Indian, after Karnam Malleswari, to win a gold in World Weightlifting Championship. She also broke the Commonwealth record in snatch event by lifting 85-kg and bettered her own record by one kilogram. She is now working hard and eyeing the medals in CWG and Asian Games next year and Tokyo Olympics.

Chanu is 23-year-old and is employed with the Indian Railways. She was born in Imphal East, Manipur, and began weightlifting in 2007 at Khuman Lampak Sports Complex in Imphal. She has earlier won Gold in South Asian Games in 2016, Silver in Commonwealth Games in 2014, and another Gold in International Youth Championship in 2011.





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# NATIONAL POLICY FOR WOMEN 2016

Neetha N

The acknowledgement of women's unpaid work and the need for its recognition and valuation, resonating the concerns raised in the SDGs is surely an important landmark of the policy. To reduce the burden on women thereby freeing women to take up paid work, provision of crèches and other facilities are outlined. But, the fact that many of the governmental schemes, such as ICDS, are built upon the devalued work of women who are framed as 'voluntary' workers needs to be accounted and addressed if any substantial change is to occur in the larger perspective of women's unpaid work and its valuation.

The vision of the National Policy for Women, 2016 as given in the document is to create “a society in which women attain their full potential in all spheres of life and influence the process of social change” (Draft National Policy for Women, 2016). This policy which came after a gap of about 15 years, like most other policy document is a hopeful as well as a disquieting one. While it is hopeful for its comprehensive listing of issues, acknowledging the multiple facets of women's life, it is disturbing as it does not recognise women as active agents and only reiterates many measures that are mostly directed at managing the manifestations of the larger structural issues. One is also mystified by the objectives listed in the policy which are reproductions of many earlier documents, especially the 2001 policy. Drawing from the body of knowledge on women, the 24 page document has listed seven priority areas namely; 1. Health; including food security and nutrition; 2. Education; 3. Economy; 4. Governance

and Decision Making; 5. Violence against Women; 6. Enabling Environment and 7. Environment and Climate Change.

The different sections which discuss the specific areas provide an outline of the major challenges and proposed interventions, which would act as a framework and road map for intervention for the next 15-20 years. There are overlapping issues across these areas which are acknowledged and elaborated, though not integrated well in terms of intervention strategies. Apart from nutrition and reproductive health which is normally the thrust of all policies, the current policy outlines the issues of the elderly, women at menopausal age and other physical health conditions of women. Though, the list is promising, the solution suggested are directed towards the health insurance model which could only worsen some of the structural issues. Given that many women are outside the paid economy and have poor control over household resources, contributory health schemes are bound to affect women adversely. Further, women are also given the additional responsibility of ensuring safe food and nutrition to different members of the community through formation of women SHGs. This not only makes this group of women accountable for community's nutritional insecurities, but also would increase the burden of unpaid work. Retention of girls in schools, providing for their gender specific needs including issues of sexual harassment are the core concern in the education section. Here



again, the solution does not take into account the diversities of the different regions and sections and the emerging complexities.

The economy section, is the most extensive one. The elaborate flagging of issues on women's work, both paid and unpaid work (especially the work done at home) is an appreciable one, given the crisis in women's employment. The document acknowledges the segregation of women into the informal sector, the need for expanding new work opportunities for an increasing number of educated women. The specific aspects of women's economic issues, especially in rural areas would be elaborated later in the next section. Issues of adverse sex ratio, trafficking of women and girls, monitoring and managing violence against women including sexual harassment at the workplace marks the section on violence against women. These concerns which have been in the mainstream discussions for a many years now highlight the failure of various attempts in the past and it needs to be seen whether the suggested measures which largely replicate of the earlier years would yield any change in the future (Bapna, 2016). Other sections put together a number of aspects ranging from provisioning of basic utilities to natural resource management and climate change. The policy also promises comprehensive social protection mechanism for vulnerable women such as single women, widows, deserted, separated and divorced women. The need for extending existing laws to domestic workers or the need for a new legislation in the sector which has been the demand of domestic workers, however, needs to be included in the document.

Gender inequality in governance structures and forums are also outlined, the solutions of which are limited to gender sensitive training and reservations for women ignoring the deep rooted nature of such issues. It is time to take an account of the effectiveness of this approach, with newer challenges. The most important commitment which can have large scale implications in terms of assessing and monitoring women's status is the promise of gender disaggregated data across all important dimensions of women's life. Given that adequate data has been a major issue in terms of capturing and analysing the interlinkages across



issues, this commitment is really a welcoming one.

### **Work and employment issues**

Economic participation of women, their presence in the workforce is important not only for lowering the disproportionate levels of poverty among women, raising household income, encouraging economic development, but also for empowering women towards a gender equal society. Many women work in semi-marketised, semi monetised and non-contractual subsistence activities either in agriculture, petty production or services, which are outside the organised sector. One of the most important challenge that has close association with the overall decline in the status of women in our society is the economic participation of women because it intersects with other structural issues. The long run decline in women's workforce participation rate, evident even during the most distinctive phase of accelerated rates of economic growth (Table 1) still remains a large puzzle that needs to be addressed.

The decline in women's employment which is marked by an absolute fall in the number of women workers in rural areas at a time when employment opportunities in urban areas are stagnating have limited the possibilities of women's economic independence. The national policy acknowledges the importance of economic participation of women, and one of the objectives of the policy is to increase and incentivise work force participation of women in the economy. The issues of women's economic participation across sectors are discussed under three specific sectors; agriculture, industry and service detailing



the specific contexts and measures that requires to be undertaken.

Given that more than 60 per cent of women workers are in the agriculture sector, any policy which addresses the interests of women cannot ignore the issues of the rural economy. A large number of women in agriculture are self-employed workers. One of the most striking features of self-employment is the extremely high share of unpaid work by women in rural areas accounting for 73 per cent of all self-employed and there has been very little decline in its proportion across years (Neetha, 2014). Economic contributions of unpaid workers though sometimes are recognized for accounting purposes are no better than housewives in terms of their social or economic situation. Apart from these market oriented activities, women are also involved in subsistence activities for self- consumption such as family farming, processing of primary products which remain invisible. The extension and close link with household domestic work have not only resulted in invisibilising women's contribution, but also in their categorisation as 'unproductive' and 'inactive' labour.

Agriculture since it constitutes for the bulk of women workers is the most important in terms of its implications. The document borrows from some of the existing literature and base its understanding within the feminisation of agriculture discourse. However, it is now well acknowledged that women are burdened by the responsibility of sustaining agriculture which is in crisis (Mishra, 2007). Further, as has been evident from both the 2011 Census data and the 2011-12 NSSO survey, there has been a drop in women's share in agriculture. NSSO data showed a fall in the share of women in the agricultural workforce from the all-time high of 42 per cent in 2004-05 to 35 per cent in 2011-12. Despite small variations, both census and NSSO figures show is a similar pattern; increasing shares of women in the agricultural workforce followed by a reduction. Within agriculture women's role vary depending upon whether they work as self-employed or wage workers. A large number of women are unpaid family workers and many unpaid workers are cultivators themselves. What is striking from the Census figure is the decline in the number of women cultivators leading to a



decline in the share of women as cultivators - from 33 per cent to 30 per cent. Further, though the number of women agricultural workers increased, the proportion of women among agricultural workers also fell from 46 per cent to 43 per cent. The reasons and implications of these vary across regions depending upon the nature of agricultural production and social and cultural specificities, which needs to be acknowledged. The decline in women's share in agriculture and the shift from cultivator status to agricultural labour as well as to non-agricultural worker marks important changes in labour as well as gender relations which needs to be taken into account while framing policies for women in the sector.

Lack of property rights for women especially, agricultural land has affected women's decision making in agriculture. Access to credits as well as extension services which are based on ownership rights on land have also been issues for women cultivators (Agarwal, 2002). Gender segregated statistics on land ownership and other productive resources are not available and the thrust on data generation in the policy document is thus a welcoming assurance.

The promising and expanding experiences of women's collective in agricultural farming needs further hand holding. The challenges associated with small scale cultivation arising from large scale fragmentation of agricultural land to some extent has been and can be addressed through collective farming. There is a need to acknowledge and learn from the varied experiences of women's collective to make it replicable and sustainable. Further, there is a need to push it beyond

subsistence farming and improve its economic viability for women to move out of poverty. The possibility of linking it up with entrepreneurial possibilities in food processing industries is yet another aspect that needs attention. The aversion to agricultural work among the youth and the educated is yet another challenge. This can be addressed only if agricultural productivity and incomes are improved which demand large scale public investment in the form of irrigation, land development, extension services and so on. Further, possibilities for alternative employment in rural areas needs to be taken up seriously which should include employment generation through public investment in secondary and tertiary sectors, apart from skill development and entrepreneurial initiatives which are mostly directed towards self-employment. This would also address the distress migration of women from rural to urban areas, and their segregation into low paid and highly exploitative informal employments such as paid domestic work.

The acknowledgement of women's unpaid work and the need for its recognition and valuation, resonating the concerns raised in the SDGs is surely an important landmark of the policy. To reduce the burden on women thereby freeing women to take up paid work, provision of crèches and other facilities are outlined. But, the fact that many of the governmental schemes, such as ICDS, are built upon the devalued work of women who are framed as 'voluntary' workers needs to be accounted and addressed if any substantial change is to occur in the larger perspective of women's unpaid work and its valuation.

Overall, the policy ably captures the different dimensions of women's life and promises interventions at different levels. The policy, though it starts with acknowledging the need for a rights based approach is a repeat of the dominant welfare approach. Delink between the specificity and complexity of the issues with the policy measures listed in the document is an important issue. The assumption that women's participation in workforce can be addressed through need-based training, as well as the skill development of women in traditional, new and emerging areas and by creating entrepreneurial opportunities for women (through schemes like E-haats), effective implementation of the legal provisions to ensure



rights of women to immovable properties are not rooted in the glaring reality of our social and economic situations. Surprisingly, issues of child care and the need to create facilities for addressing child care which has been a long standing demand appear in the section on emerging concerns. Finally, it is important to note that a policy document is only the first step and may be the easiest. It needs to be followed up with strict implementation plans that demand coordination among various ministries which will finally decide the failure or success of the larger policy.

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## Mahila Shakti Kendra to Empower Rural Women

Cabinet has given nod for introduction of a new Scheme Mahila Shakti Kendra. Mahila Shakti Kendra will converge all Govt schemes for women at National, State, District and Block level. It will work to empower rural women to reach their full potential. Under the scheme 3 lakh student volunteers are to be mobilized to reach out to rural women. These Student Volunteers will facilitate opportunities for –

- (i) Skill development
- (ii) Employment
- (iii) Digital Literacy
- (iv) Health and Nutrition

Other aspects of the scheme are-

- 115 most backward districts to be reached with 920 Mahila Shakti Kendra
- District Level Centres for Women (DLCW) to be set up in 640 districts.
- It will also give foothold to Beti Bachao Beti Padhao.



## SHe-Box Online Complaint Management System for working women

Government has launched a comprehensive SHe-Box online complaint Management System for women working in both public and private organizations to lodge complaints of sexual harassment at workplace. The SHe-Box is launched to ensure the effective implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (the SH Act), 2013.

The new SHe-Box portal offers the facility of making online complaints of sexual harassment at workplace to all women employees in the country including government and private employees. Those who have already filed a written complaint with the concerned Internal Complaint Committee (ICC) or Local Complaint Committee (LCC) constituted under the SH Act are also eligible to file their complaint through this portal.

SHe-Box portal is an effort to provide speedier remedy to women facing sexual harassment at workplace. Once a complaint is submitted to the portal, it will be directly sent to the ICC/LCC of the concerned employer. Through this portal, WCD as well as complainant can monitor the progress of inquiry conducted by the ICC/LCC. This is a proactive step taken by MWCD in the wake of the worldwide social media campaign #MeToo, where women have related their experience of facing sexual harassment and abuse. The portal can be accessed at the link - <http://shebox.nic.in>



## One Stop Centers: For Women in Crisis

One Stop Centres (OSC) are intended to support women affected by violence, in private and public spaces, within the family, community and at the workplace. Women facing physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic abuse, irrespective of age, class, caste, education status, marital status, race and culture will be facilitated with support and redressal.

**The objectives of the Scheme** are to provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces under one roof and to facilitate immediate, emergency and non-emergency access to a range of services including medical, legal, psychological and counselling support under one roof to fight against any forms of violence against women.



**Target Group:** The OSC will support all women (including girls below 18 years of age) affected by violence. For girls below 18 years of age, institutions and authorities established under Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 will be linked with the OSC.

**Location of OSCs:** The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) will provide support to the State Governments/UT Administrations for the establishment of OSC. In the first phase, one OSC envisaged to be established in every State/UT on a pilot basis. Now, 150 more One Stop Centre shall be established in second phase.

**The OSC will facilitate access to following services:**

- (i) **Emergency Response and Rescue Services** -OSC will provide rescue and referral services to the women affected by violence. For this, linkages will be developed with existing mechanisms such as National Health Mission, 108 service, police (PCR Van) so that the woman affected by violence can either be rescued from the location and referred to the nearest medical facility (Public/ Private) or shelter home.
- (ii) **Medical assistance** -Women affected by violence would be referred to the nearest Hospital for medical aid/examination which would be undertaken as per the guidelines and protocols developed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- (iii) **Assistance to women in lodging FIR/ NCR/DIR**
- (iv) **Psycho-social support/ counselling**- A skilled counsellor providing psycho-social counselling services would be available on call. This counselling process will give women confidence and support to address violence or to seek justice for the violence perpetuated.
- (v) **Legal aid and counselling**- To facilitate access to justice for women affected by violence, legal aid and counselling would be provided at OSC through empanelled Lawyers or National/State/District Legal Service Authority. The aggrieved woman would be provided with an advocate of her choice in case she wants to engage the same to assist the State Prosecutors in trying her case.
- (vi) **Shelter**- The OSC will provide temporary shelter facility to aggrieved women for a maximum of 5 days. For long term shelter requirements, arrangements will be made with *Swadhar Greh*/Short Stay Homes (managed/affiliated with government/NGO).
- (vii) **Video Conferencing Facility**- To facilitate speedy and hassle free police and court proceedings the OSC will provide video conferencing facility (through Skype, Google Conferencing etc.).

# PM UJJWALA YOJANA: MAKING WOMEN HEALTHIER AND HAPPIER

Rajnath Ram, Shafqat Mobarak

In rural areas cooking is one of the chores that capture day to day life majorly, people do not get time to look beyond these chores and contribute in a productive manner. Nearly 121 million households are still using the inefficient chulhas as per the Census 2011. As per a WHO report, smoke inhaled by women from unclean fuel is equivalent to burning 400 cigarettes in an hour.

It has been stated that almost 38 per cent of the world's population is still dependent on traditional biomass for cooking. As rural women play an important role in a family because of their central responsibility for managing household and cooking needs, exposure to indoor air pollution primarily affects their health along with other members. Their vulnerability to health hazards increases due to the pollution generated from inefficient burning of biomass and use of traditional biomass cook stoves. The pollution does not confine to household but also affect the nearby atmosphere. In rural areas cooking is one of the chores that capture day to day life majorly, people do not get time to look beyond these chores and contribute in a productive manner. Nearly 121 million households are still using the inefficient chulhas as per the Census 2011. As per a WHO report, smoke inhaled by women from unclean fuel is equivalent to burning 400 cigarettes in an hour.

The **Sustainable Development Goal – 7** sets an objective to provide access to an affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy services by 2030. To ensure access to reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all, clean energy at an affordable price by 2030 set direction to all. All nations must stride for meeting these objectives as the absence of universal energy access may lead to a failure of the world's energy system –

- To increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix;
- Double the global rate of

improvement in energy efficiency;

- Enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology;
- Advance and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology.

In India, nearly 40 per cent of the population is deprived of clean energy for cooking. Recognizing LPG as a major component of the clean cooking solution, India has taken lead to provide a clean solution to BPL families through about 80 million LPG connections by 2020 under the major program of **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)**. The scheme was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister in May 2016 in District Ballia of Uttar Pradesh initially targeting the provision of 2 of 50 million LPG connections to the rural women. The focus was given to the States/ UTs having LPG coverage less than the National average of 61 per cent as on 01.01.2016. The connections are released in the name of the adult woman member of a BPL family having no LPG connection either in the name of the beneficiary or any other family member and based on Socio-Economic Caste Census Data. The government has now taken an initiative to upscale that target up to 80 million connections by 2020.

## Achievements of PMUY:

Use of LPG as a cooking fuel has helped in a big way to rural women, empowering their livelihood in terms of improvement in health, and the increased economic productivity by saving time spent on arranging





cooking needs. As of November 2017, about 32 million LPG connections in about 712 districts have been released under PMUY.

To make the LPG shift easier for its consumers, the ministry and Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) joined hands to actively promote the transition. Firstly, by using electronic bank accounts, Aadhaar, and mobile phones to shift the payment of subsidy amount to user's bank account directly. Secondly, an appeal—**Give-it up** was made to forego the subsidies of middle-class households in favour of the needy, resulting in 13 million people releasing their subsidies.

As claimed by MoPNG the scheme has brought down the upfront LPG cost. Earlier, Rs 4,500 to Rs 5,000 used to be the amount spent for an LPG connection, but the bulk purchase has reduced it to Rs 3,200. Under PMUY, half of the money is provided to the users as a one-time grant by the government. The user needs to bear the cost of a hot plate and the first refill totalling to Rs 1600, however, OMCs are offering an option of EMI for the same. The loan availed by the households is recovered from approximately seven to eight refilling. Once the amount is recovered, the subsidy continues and is transferred to the customer's account. State Governments have also come forward to provide support by funding either stove or regulators. It is a perfect example of cooperative federalism where Centre and States have joined hands to resolve a common issue of cooking.

When one looks at how PMUY has progressed, one sees the promotional changes – linking bank accounts and giving up subsidies. In the first year, against the target of 15 million connections, 22 million LPG connections were distributed. As per a study done by Council for Energy and Environment and 3 Water (CEEW) and GIZ, Germany, the Uttar Pradesh has benefitted the most with 5.8 million LPG connections by now, followed by West Bengal with 3.9 million connections.

There are many questions raised about the PMUY scheme that the rural LPG users do not go for frequent refills due to insufficient funds. Many think-tanks are carrying out research and field studies to look beyond what numbers highlight in terms of provided connections; hence, one must



*Smokeless kitchens have become a reality with poor women getting LPG connections*

not overlook the broad goal set behind the scheme. The cost people incur on medicine on account of health hazard due to inefficient burning of biomass is not comparable with the incurred cost of LPG cylinder refill. Similarly, the time spent by rural women in arranging fuel woods and carrying water is also significant, which can be utilised for other productive output. It should also be noted

### **Pradhan Mantri LPG Panchayat Scheme**

The LPG Panchayat scheme aims at spreading awareness among LPG users about how to properly use clean fuel and its useful benefits. It will provide platform to trigger discussion through sharing of personal experiences on benefits of use of clean fuel compared to traditional fuels like cowdung, charcoal or wood.

It also aims to connect with beneficiaries of Ujjwala Yojana to resolve issues and wrong traditional beliefs among people through officials of oil PSUs, NGOs, ASHA workers and social workers. Under it, one lakh LPG Panchayats will be activated across country to deal with issue of safe use of LPG as well as discuss its various benefits on environment, health and how it empowers women.

LPG Panchayat will serve as an interactive platform between those who received LPG cylinders under PMUY. One panchayat will have around 100 LPG customers of nearby areas. The Panchayats discuss issues such as safe practices, quality of service provided by distributors and availability of refill cylinders.



*LPG connections have brought much needed relief for rural women by reducing the effort and time they spend on fuelwood collection*

that a behavioural change will take some time to happen; people accustomed to the traditional cooking system may need some time to change their cooking practice. This is the beginning; people will certainly change their mindset and switch to cleaner fuel at the end of the day. Fuel stacking is also practiced in many parts of our country. In rural areas, the fuel stacking varies from cow dung cake, wood to LPG whereas, in urban areas it is in the form of LPG, and the electric cooking system (microwave, induction plates). Thus, it is pertinent to say that behavioural changes may also impact the success of the PMUY scheme.

PMUY is a sincere effort to make Indian rural women feel empowered along with reducing the health effects of household air pollution. Although not complete in itself, it started with a systematic approach. And, a lot more is needed from the affordability, accessibility, and behavioural aspects. The scheme is a transformation in the livelihoods of rural women, but requires a more considerate and planned hustle. Maybe an effort from the privileged ones, private companies, and communities would bring the change. Therefore, awareness also has a major role to play.

The PMUY is likely to result in an additional employment of around 1 Lakh and provide a business opportunity of at least Rs. 10,000 Cr. over the next 3 years to the Indian industry. This scheme has provided great opportunities under the 'Make in India' campaign for all the manufacturers of cylinders, gas stoves, regulators, and gas hose.

## Way forward

- a. As far as clean cooking energy access is concerned, another possible alternative for cooking is using electricity for clean cooking in rural areas. Village electrification program of the Ministry of Power, Government of India aims to provide universal access to electricity by extending the grid to remote areas. Electricity will definitely become a reality for cooking needs in the rural areas in the form of induction stoves. Hon'ble Prime Minister of India being a great believer in technology and innovations has directed one of our leading oil & gas major ONGC to work towards making an "efficient electric chulha (stove)", which would enable cooking using the solar power. India as uniquely placed on the globe, observes about 300 sunny days – that means a huge potential to generate abundant solar energy and the unique advantage may resolve the issue of clean cooking to a larger extent.
- b. Rural households form bulk of the problem and need a specialized strategy for their varied cooking needs, including water heating and fodder preparation. Stacking of fuels is the norm and is acknowledged. Hence, every home will have more than one cooking fuel.
- c. A National Mission on Clean Cooking (NMCC) needs to be pursued to coordinate efforts on cooking fuels, efficient cookstoves and related R&D with an aim to achieve full clean cooking fuel coverage by 2022. This aims at creating an ecosystem of a mass market for cookstoves, electric cooking appliances, bottled LPG in various refill sizes, setting up of fuel distributorships across the country. This should also strengthen city gas distribution networks in urban areas to provide piped natural gas, and LPG connections on the account people in the urban areas can be diverted to rural areas. The clean cooking is a vast market, which need to be tapped with its economic spin-offs.

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# WOMEN'S SAFETY: TOP PRIORITY

Ankita Yadav

Combating harassment and violence in urban and rural spaces with different cultural and social set-ups requires a dynamic approach and no single mechanism can have the same effect across regions that make up a diverse society as India. Challenges, issues, and definitions of women empowerment change as we move from one region to another and hence introducing certain specific elements into the larger framework of these schemes, that work to address the specifics of that region, would make them much more effective and handy for women. Above all, it is extremely important that the agency is put back into the woman about the decisions that affect her life due to harassment, and rigorous outreach is undertaken so as to connect to rural as well as remote areas as a support mechanism.

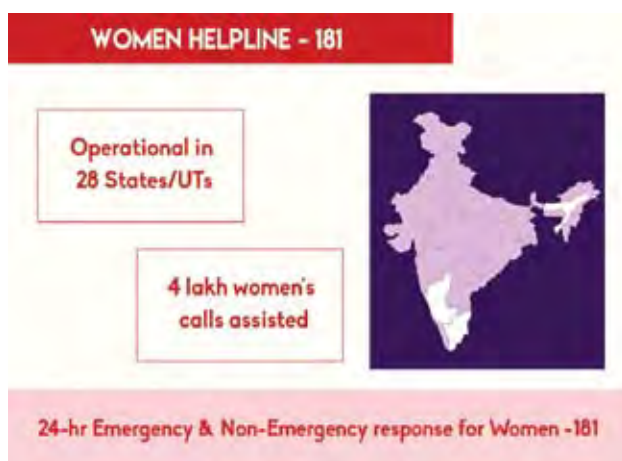
Violence against women (VAW) has been a worldwide phenomenon, inviting concerns and debates nationally and internationally. Millions of women are subjected to overt and latent violence as they are trafficked for sex tourism, fall prey to 'kitchen accidents', face sexual war crimes like rape, succumb to hostility at work place, face intimate partner violence, lack the agency to determine sexual and reproductive choices, honour killings, among others. The World Health Organization (WHO), in its research on VAW, categorized it as occurring through five stages of the life cycle: "1) pre-birth, 2) infancy, 3) girlhood, 4) adolescence and adulthood and 5) elderly".<sup>1</sup>

The WHO Global Campaign for Violence Prevention, notes, "The number of the 'missing' women, killed for gender-related reasons, is of the same order of magnitude as the estimated 191 million human beings who have lost their lives directly or indirectly as a result of all the conflicts and wars of the 20th century—which was, with two world wars and numerous other murderous conflicts, the most violent period in human history

so far."<sup>2</sup> Not only does this estimate bring to surface the stark realities of 'domestic terrorism', it also raises concerns about the responses and sense of urgency which different modes of violence have generated in terms of global debate, emergency response, policy action, and implementation around the world as feminist movements around the world continue to fight and strive for legislations, better policing systems, equality and maternity benefits at workplace, safe abortions and contraception, forced sex trade, just to list a few, in the face of a patriarchal socio-political set up. The growing body of literature has often argued how gender violence is not just a legal crime but a violation of human rights directed against the female human population.<sup>3</sup>

VAW has been an issue of the women's liberation movement in India since the beginning of the movement during 1974–75. The Patna Conference of February 1988 further identified the various social and economic forms of VAW, which take various forms and shape like 'purdah', sati, dowry deaths, female infanticide, selective abortions, and rapes.<sup>4</sup>

In India, VAW has acquired a central place in the debates of the functioning democracy and become a matter of great political-legal-administrative action and deliberation as consciousness among the masses about gender has heightened, specially post the Nirbhaya case of December 2012, which was followed by a huge public outcry against the general apathy and inaction towards addressing gender violence. Analysis of data from the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), Ministry of Home Affairs, GOI, shows that out of the total IPC crimes committed in India during 2013, 11.7 per cent were crimes committed against women and the rate of crime against women stood at 52.2. The Commission





on the Status of Women, in its 57<sup>th</sup> session, held at United Nations Headquarter in New York in March 2013, had “Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls”, as its priority theme<sup>1</sup> and aims at putting an end to all kinds of violence against women and girls.<sup>5</sup>

The issue gets compounded in areas where exposure and literacy rates among women are low, they are not financially independent to break out of the dependence barrier to speak out against violence, or have internalized oppressive and violent structures as a part of their existence due to social and cultural conditioning. Further, a limited penetration of ideas that see women as agencies in themselves and not an appendage alone, presence of a relatively more conservative atmosphere about social and familial prestige attached to crimes against women, lack of awareness etc. add to the hostility.

### **Universalisation of Women Helpline**

Universalisation of Women Helpline was approved on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2015 with a total project cost of Rs. 69.49 crore under the Nirbhaya Fund for implementation through States/UTs from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. The Helpline number 181, as allocated by the Department of Telecommunication (Government of India) provides 24 hours response, both for emergency and non-emergency situations, where women may be affected by violence including sexual offences and harassment both in public and private sphere, including in the family, community, workplace, etc. The helpline can be reached using various modes of telecommunication like landlines, mobile phone through calls or SMS, fax, emails, web-posts, social networking, etc.

The complaints that are registered/reported on the helpline are referred to the appropriate authority such as police, counsellor, hospital, protection officer etc. as per the requirement explained by the caller. In case the woman is in need of a rescue from a violent situation or in need of urgent medical help then a PCR van from the nearest police station or an ambulance from the nearest hospital or via the 108 service is dispatched for instant help. Additionally, the helpline number also provides information about other relevant support services and schemes offered by the government, available to the woman affected by violence, within the local area in which she resides or is employed.

The model of the helpline is sensitive towards the needs of women who might be disabled, are sick, are unable to specify their location, or are interrupted during the call for any reason. It can then trace the number from which the call has been received and initiate an emergency response via the nearest police station or hospital as the case may be.



### **Panic button on mobile phones**

This initiative was launched keeping in view the need for women to reach out for help urgently in a situation of violence/sexual attack. The Department of Telecommunications notified the “Panic Button and Global Positioning System in Mobile Phone Handsets Rules 2016” issued under section 10 of the Indian Wireless Telegraph Act 1933. Further, from 1 January 2018, all mobile phones will be required to have the facility of identifying the location through satellite based GPS. On 23 November 2017, the Ministry of Communication amended the “Panic Button and Global Positioning System in Mobile Phone Handsets Rules 2016” whereby from 1 January 2018, no smart phone handset manufacturing company shall sell the new smart mobile phone handset in India without the facility of identifying the location through Satellite based GPS.

### **Mahila Police Volunteer**

The mahila police volunteer initiative is based on the principle of community volunteerism. It was envisaged in collaboration with Ministry of Home Affairs in order to facilitate a positive link between police and community and to help women in distress. Every Gram Panchayat across the county would have one Mahila Police Volunteer who would act as a link between rural women and the police with a view to balance preventive and curative aspects, proper implementation of various laws and provisions available for safety of women and act as an enabler for victims of harassment/violence who may not find it comfortable to directly approach the police or the authorities to seek help due to various socio-cultural impediments in the society which inhibit women from speaking up or further victimize

women. These volunteers act as a two way channel between the police and the civil society and act as a bridge for both ends—the police and the society—to usher in a positive partnership between the two by undertaking community outreach, reporting matters related to domestic violence, child marriage, dowry, etc. and acting as a support or point of contact specially for women in the rural milieu who do not have an easy access to state machinery given their social set up.

According to the Ministry of Women and Child Development,<sup>6</sup> the MPV is entrusted with the following duties:

- i. Create awareness of the existing services available for women and children like, One Stop Centers (OSC), Short Stay Homes, Police Helpline 100, Women’s Helpline 181, Childline 1098, Mobile Application for Emergency (**Himmat App**).
- ii. Inform the police about any unpleasant behaviour or untoward incidences against women.
- iii. Act as an additional intelligence collection unit of the area for gender issues.
- iv. Report incidences of missing children (to 1098 or police), VAW such as domestic violence, child-marriage, dowry-harassment, trafficking, etc.
- v. Mobilize and facilitate Mahila aur **Shishu Rakshak Dal** (MASRD) preferably of 10–12 members.
- vi. Mandatory visit of the local Anganwadi Centre once in a week and facilitate building partnerships.
- vii. Familiarize herself with the existing awareness generating websites/portals.
- viii. Conduct one-to-one-meetings, home-visits, community-meetings, etc. to build confidence among women, peers, and families to approach the police, Women Helpline, and One Stop Center in times of need.
- ix. Establish linkages with Protection Officers under “The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005” at district/ block level for convergence and coordination.
- x. Tie-up and be in constant touch with the other stakeholders.

### Gender Champions Scheme

In order to move towards a gender just society that treats women equally, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), in collaboration with the Ministry of Human Resource Development, have envisaged Gender Champions as responsible leaders who will facilitate an enabling environment within their schools/colleges/academic institutions where girls are treated with dignity and respect. Gender Champions aim to make young boys and girls gender sensitive and create positive social norms which value the rights of women and girls. UGC has already notified the guidelines prepared by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and has issued notifications to Colleges and Universities to appoint Champions. As per report of the UGC, 150 Universities and 230 colleges have initiated implementation of the Scheme (as on 03 August, 2017).

- xi. Participate in meetings on Village Health Nutrition Day (VHND), Village Health Sanitation Nutrition Committee (VHSNC), Gram Sabhas, Special Gram Sabha, Mahila Gram Sabha on regular basis.
- xii. Engage and provide suggestions and feedback.

In December 2016, Haryana became the first state in the country to launch the MPV initiative in the districts—Karnal and Mahendargarh. It is important to note that MPVs do not belong to any political party; have completed education upto class 12; are at least 21 years of age; belong to the same geographical area; and do not have any criminal records against them.

### 33 per cent reservation for women in police

With a view to increase the representation of women in police forces of all UTs and Delhi Police, the Union Cabinet in 2015, approved a 33 per cent reservation for women in direct recruitment for non-gazetted posts—from constables to sub-inspector—in police forces of all Union Territories, including Delhi Police, for all categories i.e. SC/ST/OBC/others. According to the data records from 2016, available with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), women comprise only 2.04 per cent of the paramilitary forces like the CRPF, BSF, ITBP, CISF, SSB, and Assam Rifles.<sup>7</sup> As part of the Criminal Law (Amendment)

Act, 2013, it has been mandated that reports of crimes against women and their statements in this regard would be collected by women police officers or women officers only. This reservation policy to enable greater recruitment and presence of women in the police force would thus work towards effective implementation of Section 154 and 161 of the Indian Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, and the Indian Evidence Act for crimes against women.

### **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013**

In 1997, the Supreme Court of India recognized sexual harassment at workplace as a violation of human rights and a personal injury to the affected woman and laid down Vishakha Guidelines as part of the landmark case of Vishakha and others vs. State of Rajasthan. Until these guidelines, derived from the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) came into force, there was no law in India which governed this matter directly and women had to take recourse to lodging a complaint under Sections 354 and 509 of the IPC. Even after the guidelines came into force, implementation was not carried out as deftly.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 came into effect on 9 December 2013. It lays down detailed definitions of what constitutes sexual harassment, defines the employee and the employer, defines what constitutes as a workplace, and takes into account both the organized and the unorganized sector, thereby covering all women working in offices, factories, or even as domestic help in homes irrespective of the age of the woman.

The Act further makes it mandatory for employers to constitute an 'Internal Complaints Committee' if there are more than 10 employees, to handle cases of sexual harassment at the workplace. After the inquiry, the Committee is supposed to send a report of its findings and recommendations to the employer or to the District Officer within 10 days and it is mandatory for the employer to implement these recommendations within 60 days and submit a report to this effect.

It is important to note here that while the Act allows provision for conciliation under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act 1996, it does not



allow for a demand for monetary compensation from the victim thereby working as a deterrent towards false complaints to extort money. It forbids sharing of the identity of the victim, of the offender and of the witnesses, or the proceedings of the Committee and its recommendations with the media and allows further appeals to specific industrial tribunal and labour courts.

The Act has, however, received criticism from various quarters on the grounds that the Internal Committee has the power to decide differently and as such discriminate between the compensation paid by different perpetrators based on their income and financial stability. Further, it does not cover agricultural-workers and armed-forces nor recognizes sexual harassment faced by men in certain situations. Some women activists and NGOs are also of the view that the provision to penalize a woman in case of false complaint would also negatively affect those women who might be not be able to sufficiently prove an instance of harassment for lack of evidence, even though the case might be genuine.

### **Inclusion of acid attack victims in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act**

A spate of incidents have been recorded where acid attacks have been used as a tool to derogate the identity of a woman in the society by deforming her, used as a mode of vengeance in cases of unwanted sexual advances. Acid attacks have also come to light in the context of disputes other than sexual offences and are being used increasingly as a tool to inflict physical and mental trauma on women as well as lifelong scars, disability in some cases, and social stigma. In 2013, the Supreme Court banned the sale of acid to the public in order to curb these attacks



however during the year 2016 number of victims subjected to acid attacks went up by 23.3 per cent from 249(in 2015) to 307.<sup>8</sup>

Recognizing the horror of these kinds of crimes and the related injuries that they inflict on women, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act was passed by both Houses of the Parliament in December 2016. It would replace the PwD Act from 1995 that originally had 7 disabilities listed under its ambit and expand it to recognizing 21 disabilities, of which acid attack is one. The recognition of acid attack victims under this Act would help them with education and occupational provisions and allow them to avail of 3 per cent reservation for jobs earmarked for the disabled. With the coming of this Act, India would also fulfill its obligations towards the United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to which India is a signatory.

### **UJJAWALA : A comprehensive scheme for prevention of trafficking and rescue, rehabilitation and re-integration of victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation**

India faces trafficking, both within the country and as cross-border phenomenon. With a view to curb trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation, the government launched a multi-pronged approach that comprises of social mobilization and participation of local communities, awareness generation through public discourse so as to enable rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration of the trafficked victims. Making use of the local community resource groups along with the government agencies, it encourages Social welfare/women and child welfare department of state governments, Women's Development Corporations, Women's Development Centres, Urban-Local bodies, credible Public and Private Trusts, and Voluntary organizations to aid the government in effective implementation. The scheme is made up of 5 components which aim at making the victims financially independent and improve their health, social status, and living conditions. It works on the principles of: Prevention; Rescue; Rehabilitation; Reintegration; and Repatriation.

### **Women Power Line 1090**

Women Power Line 1090 was introduced in the state of Uttar Pradesh in November 2012 by the then state government. As the name suggests,

this initiative sought to empower women and not just help them. It caters to complaints related to harassment on social media, lewd telephone calls and SMS-es/MMS-s, stalking, and harassment in public places. 1090 can be reached by dialing 1-0-9-0 from any phone within the state, via the website, and through emails.

1090 works on the following 5 guiding principles:

- (i) The identity of the victim is never disclosed;
- (ii) The victim is never called to a police station;
- (iii) The calls of the victims are necessarily taken by women police officers only;
- (iv) One number across the state;
- (v) The officers keep in touch with the victim until the resolution of the complaint and until 3 months after the resolution as well so as to instil a sense of confidence further.

Since its inception, 1090 has received more than 8.44 lakh complaints (in an urban-rural ratio of 68:32) and has successfully resolved 8.34 lakh complaints, until October 2017, out of which about 87 per cent of the complaints pertain to harassment on phone, 9 per cent to harassment in public places, 2 per cent for social-media websites, 1.9 per cent to domestic violence, and 0.1 per cent pertain to other issues. An analysis of the data at 1090 reveals that between 1 January 2017 and 31 October 2017, an average of 620 calls have been registered every day. This number indicates that 1090 has been able to get women to speak up and feel safe and confident in reporting crimes.

1090 also appoints school and college-going girls as Special Police Officers called, Power Angels, for a period of 5 years. They act as a bridge between the police and the civil society and as peer support system for victimized girls and instils confidence in them, while they are still young, that they can fight harassment. One of the most empowering features of this initiative is that the action on a complaint is initiated within 24 hours and then onwards the onus of following-up on the status of the complaint is shifted from the victim to the police. 1090 makes follow-up call/update the victim about the status of her complaint in phases, wherein the first call is made within 24 hours, the next in 7 days, and so on until successful resolution and until 3 months after resolution so as to keep women confident and secure. All calls are recorded into the system to ensure transparency and efficiency and an active database of offenders is maintained to check for repeat offense. It not only focusses on resolution

through conviction, but also undertakes measures that act as a deterrent for offenders. By using social tools like denying access to government facilities, barring driving licenses and character certificates, and undertaking active counselling sessions of offenders and their peer groups it helps to generate an atmosphere where the onus of 'good conduct' is shifted from the shoulders of the victim to the offender. Therefore, while actively addressing complaints and providing relief to women and girls it also puts into place measures that would work towards 'preventing' crimes rather than just solving them.

All of the above schemes and initiatives are aimed at empowering women and have been innovative steps in their own ways. However, it is important to note that combating harassment and violence in urban and rural spaces with different cultural and social set-ups requires a dynamic approach and no one mechanism can have the same effect across regions that make up a diverse society as India. Challenges, issues, and definitions of women empowerment change as we move from one region to another and hence introducing certain specific elements into the larger framework of these schemes, that work to address the specifics of that region, would make them much more effective and handy for women. Above all, it is extremely important that the agency is put back into the woman about the decisions that affect her life due to harassment, and rigorous outreach is undertaken so as to connect to rural as well as remote areas as a support mechanism. Unless women start looking at these initiatives as peers, it would be a half-achieved aim—if their perceptions of self and voices challenging violence continue to be controlled by other members of the society, oppressive practices, and lack of confidence in the state machinery. One way of achieving this is to supplement multiple avenues of seeking help with a time bound redress mechanism and swift decision in the court of law. Secondary victimization on account of prolonged court cases, costs involved in fighting the case for years, and the associated trauma of prolonged time-periods of stress due to slow pace/rate of conviction act become a part of their various life stages—at the time of the incident and then during the wait for investigations and case proceedings—and thus the closure is slow and stress related disorders prevail.

Therefore, the approach to addressing VAW needs to come in a holistic multi-pronged way,

designed by putting various arms of the governance mechanism into a structural whole so as to address these associated concerns that inhibit women from speaking up.

### Endnotes

1. See more at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw57-stop-violence-against-women#sthash.3kBs3SbL.dpuf>

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## SWADHAR GREH-A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances

Recognizing the need to prevent women from exploitation and to support their survival and rehabilitation, Swadhar –A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances was launched by the Department of Women and Child Development in 2001-02. The scheme through the provisions of shelter, food, clothing, counseling, training, clinical and legal aid aims to rehabilitate such women in difficult circumstance.

### Objectives:

Under the Scheme, Swadhar Greh will be set up in every district with capacity of 30 women with the following objectives:

- To cater to the primary need of shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment and care of the women in distress and who are without any social and economic support.
- To enable them to regain their emotional strength that gets hampered due to their encounter with unfortunate circumstances.
- To provide them with legal aid and guidance to enable them to take steps for their readjustment in family/society.
- To rehabilitate them economically and emotionally.
- To act as a support system that understands and meets various requirements of women in distress.
- To enable them to start their life afresh with dignity and conviction.

For big cities and other districts having more than 40 lakh population or those districts where there is a need for additional support to the women, more than one Swadhar Greh could be established. The capacity of Swadhar Greh could be expanded up to 50 or 100 on the basis of need assessment and other important parameters.

### Strategies:

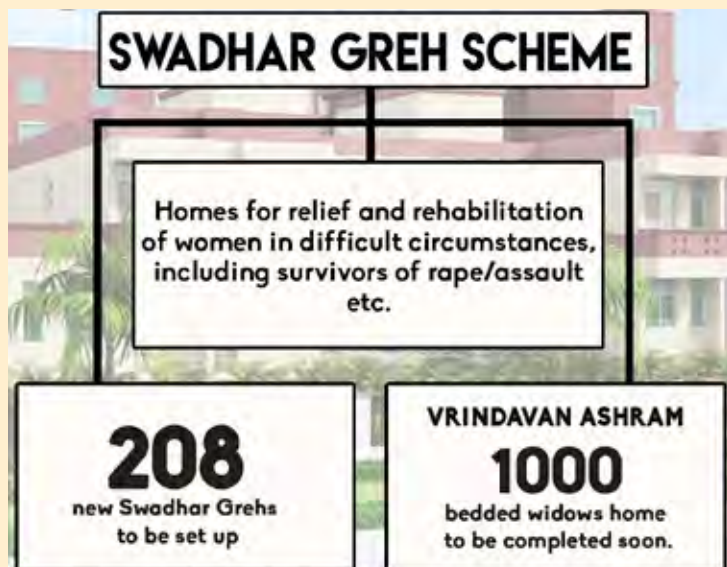
The objectives cited above would be pursued adopting the following strategies:

- Temporary residential accommodation with the provision of food, clothing, medical facilities etc.
- Vocational and skill up gradation trainings for economic rehabilitation of such women
- Counseling, awareness generation and behavioral trainings
- Legal aid and Guidance
- Counseling through telephone.

### Beneficiaries:

The benefit of the component could be availed by women above 18 years of age of the following categories:

- Women who are deserted and are without any social and economic support;
- Women survivors of natural disasters who have been rendered homeless and are without any social and economic support;
- Women prisoners released from jail and are without family, social and economic support;





- d) Women victims of domestic violence, family tension or discord, who are made to leave their homes without any means of subsistence and have no special protection from exploitation and/or facing litigation on account of marital disputes; and
- e) Trafficked women/girls rescued or runaway from brothels or other places where they face exploitation and Women affected by HIV/AIDS who do not have any social or economic support. However such women/ girls should first seek assistance under UJJAWALA Scheme in areas where it is in operation.

Women affected by domestic violence could stay up to one year. For other categories of women, the maximum period of stay could be up to 3 years. The older women above the 55 years of age may be accommodated for maximum period of 5 years after which they will have to shift to old age homes or similar institutions.

Swadhar Greh facilities could also be availed by the children accompanying women in the above categories. Girls up to the age of 18 years and boys up to the age of 8 years would be allowed to stay in the Swadhar Greh with their mothers. (Boys of more than 8 years of age need to be shifted to the Children Homes run under JJ Act/ICPS.)

#### Implementing agencies and eligibility criteria:

- (i) Any of the following agencies/organizations can seek assistance under the Scheme:
  - a) State Government agencies including Women Development Corporations established by the State Governments
  - b) Central or State autonomous bodies, Municipal Bodies, Cantonment Boards, Panchayati Raj Institutions and Co-operative institutions
  - c) Departments of Women and Child Development/Social Welfare of the State Governments
  - d) Public Trusts registered under any law for the time being in force
  - e) Civil Society Organizations such as NGOs etc. having proven track record

### Nari Shakti Puraskar

Government of India confers the “Highest Civilian Honor for Women” on International Women’s Day, 8<sup>th</sup> March, every year by presenting “Nari Shakti Puraskars”. Instituted in 1999, the objective of the award is to acknowledge and recognize the services of individuals and institutions who have made a lasting contribution to women’s empowerment. The awards are also an effort to recognize role models who act as torch bearers for the younger generation and catalysts of change in the lives of women and society at large. Through *Nari Shakti Puraskar*, Government of India reaffirms its commitment towards strengthening women’s position in the society.

## Nari Shakti Puraskar 2017

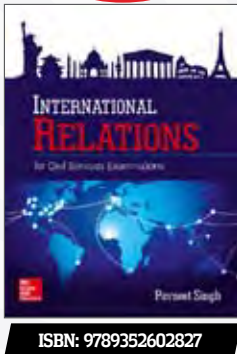
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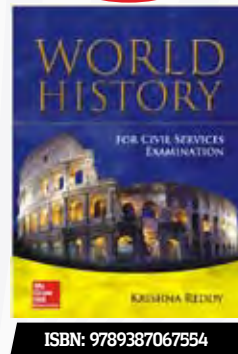
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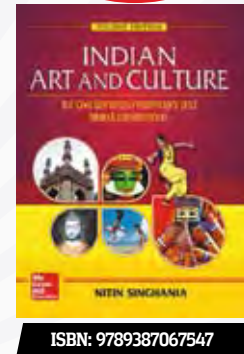
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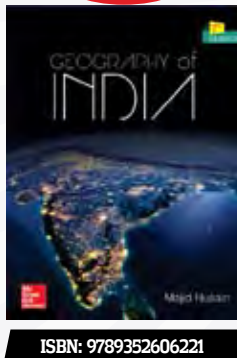
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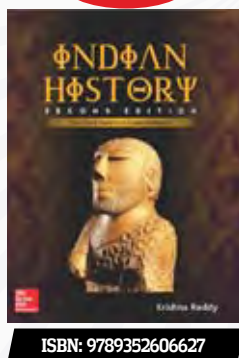
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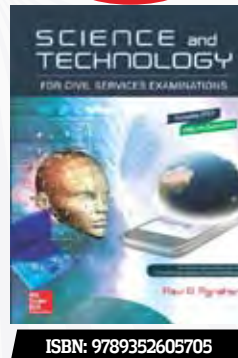
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## PM inaugurates Dr. Ambedkar International Centre

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi dedicated Dr. Ambedkar International Centre to the nation in New Delhi on 07 December, 2017. He had laid the foundation stone of this Institute in April 2015. He expressed his confidence that the Centre would play a key role in the dissemination of Dr. Ambedkar's teachings and vision. This will be an important centre for research on social and economic issues; and the centre would function as a think-tank for inclusive growth and related socio-economic matters.

PM said that his call of "New India", is the India which Dr. Ambedkar envisioned, where everyone has equal opportunity and rights, free from caste oppression and progressing through the strength of technology. He exhorted everyone to work towards fulfilling the vision of Babasaheb Ambedkar.



*The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi unveiling the plaque to dedicate Dr. Ambedkar International Centre to the Nation at 15 Janpath in New Delhi on December 07, 2017.*

## Navika Sagar Parikrama: All women team of Indian Navy circumnavigating the globe

*Navika Sagar Parikrama* is the first-ever Indian circumnavigation of the globe by an all-women crew and shall attempt to circumnavigate the globe on Indian Navy's sailing vessel INSV Tarini. The vessel was flagged-off by the Defence Minister from Goa on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2017 and the crew is expected to return to Goa in April 2018.

*Navika Sagar Parikrama* would be covered in five legs with stop-over at four ports for replenishment of ration and repairs as necessary. The project is considered essential towards promoting Ocean Sailing activities in the Navy while depicting Government of India's thrust for '**Nari Shakti**'.

INSV Tarini is a 55-foot sailing vessel, which has been built indigenously, thus showcasing the 'Make in India' initiative on the World forum. INSV Tarini is being skippered by Lt. Commander Vartika Joshi.

During the voyage, the crew would monitor and report marine pollution on the high seas and would also collate and update Meteorological/ Ocean/ Wave data on a regular basis for subsequent analysis by research and development organisations.

The expedition titled '*Navika Sagar Parikrama*', is in consonance with the National policy to empower women to attain their full potential. It also aims to help discard the societal attitudes and mindset towards women in India by raising visibility of their participation in challenging environment.

Sailing encourages the use of environment friendly non-conventional renewable energy resources and this expedition therefore aims at harnessing the renewable energy.



*Navika Sagar Parikrama team onboard INS Tarini.*



## WOMEN AND PANCHAYATS

**P**anchayati Raj System of India is a unique and innovative example of grassroots democracy in world. It decentralises decision making and lets village communities decide their own needs and developmental priorities. Women, constituting almost half of village population, are an important stakeholder in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). However, the truth is that despite 33 per cent reservation, their genuine participation in Panchayats remains an unfulfilled goal. Mindful of this lacuna, Government has launched a nationwide programme to train women *sarpanch* to enable them take leadership positions in their villages. In following paragraphs, we'll discuss legal framework of Panchayati Raj in India and women's place in it.

**Article 40 of the Constitution:** It enshrines one of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) and lays down that the State shall take steps to organise village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.

In pursuance to this PRIs were formed in a number of states but many shortcomings were observed in their functioning. Their elections were irregular and Panchayats were generally devoid of any real powers or developmental roles. So it was considered that there was an imperative need to enshrine in the Constitution certain basic and essential features of Panchayati Raj Institutions to impart certainty, continuity and strength to them. Thus, Constitution 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act, 1992 came into existence.



### Constitution 73rd Amendment and Panchayati Raj in India

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment 1992 added a new Part IX to the constitution titled "The Panchayats" covering provisions from Article 243 to 243(O); and a new Eleventh Schedule covering 29 subjects within the functions of the Panchayats.

This amendment implements the article 40 of the DPSP. However, states have been given enough freedom to take their geographical, politico-administrative and others conditions into account while adopting the Panchayati Raj System.

### Reservations for women

While the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution mandate that at least one third of the seats in the Panchayats must be reserved for women, at least five states have increased the proportion of reserved seats to 50 percent. Bihar was the first state to do so in 2006 and was followed by Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. All these states have raised their reservation quota to 50 per cent. Sikkim has raised it to 40 per cent.

Other Features of 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act

- A three-tier Panchayat system. (states with populations upto 20 lakhs could dispense with the intermediate level and have a two-tier system).
- The Panchayat will enjoy a five-year term
- The *gram sabha* (village assembly) will consist of all persons registered on the electoral rolls.
- In the directly elected seats of members in all Panchayat, there will be reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), in proportion to their total population in a Panchayat area, and one-third of these seats will be reserved for women belonging to these groups.
- The Governor of the State will appoint a State Finance Commission to review the financial position of the Panchayat and make recommendations.

### Need for capacity building of Elected Women Representatives (EWR)

There has been a growing realisation in the country that despite 33 per cent reservation for

women in the Panchayat bodies, the EWRs continue to remain ineffective since they do not have appropriate knowledge and skill to administer the village, and the show continues to be run by their husbands.

So a strong need was being felt for a programme to build capacities of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) and other women leaders.

### Training programme for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayats

A comprehensive module for capacity building of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayats and a training program for Trainers of women Panchayat leaders across the country was launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj on 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2017. The training program seeks to empower EWRs of Panchayats by enhancing their capacity, capability and skill in governance and administration of villages.

**Areas of training:** These women representatives are being trained in order to ensure that they take up the responsibility of all the tasks entrusted upon them on being elected. The WCD Ministry has initiated this countrywide program of training the women *sarpanches* and other women representatives at the grassroots level in various areas like engineering (building of roads, drains, latrines etc.), finance, social development, education, health, and environment among others. The training will help the women *sarpanches* in taking the schemes launched for the benefit of the common man especially those in distress and the under privileged. These schemes include **Fasal Beema Yojana, Pradhanmantri Awas Yojana, Suraksha Bima Yojana, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana**, maternity benefits schemes among others. Apart from this, the training programme will help to raise these women to the next level of leadership.

It is pertinent to note that safety of women, education of the girl child, health of women, creation of assets under MGNREGA, immunization and ensuring nutrition through lakhs of *Anganwadis* of the country have become important issues at the grassroots level in which the women *sarpanches* can play a pivotal role in effective delivery. The women *sarpanches* are also being encouraged to form a whatsapp group and share their good practices as



well as assist one another in finding solutions to common problems.

**Transparency:** Under the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission, the Panchayats will get Rs 2 Lakh crore in 5 years as against the earlier amount of Rs 30,000 crore for the overall development of the villages. Thus there is a need for greater accountability, honesty and transparency in the execution of the developmental projects like building of roads, drainage system, toilets, farm ponds and dwelling units. It is hoped that newly trained women representatives will be able to ensure this.

Starting with Jharkhand, the training programs will be organised in different states throughout the country with the help of National Institute of Rural Development, State Institutes of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Departments of the States to train EWRs throughout the county. There are currently around 13 lakhs EWRs in panchayats across the nation. Training women *sarpanches* across the country will help bring following important changes:

1. It will help to create model villages.
2. It will help prepare women as political leaders of the future.

The training module has been prepared by the National Commission for Women of the WCD Ministry in collaboration with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). The training is participatory with group discussions, brainstorming lectures, demonstrations, field visits, case studies, games, exercise, role play, small workshops and individual assignments. The module discusses various topics like 'What is an ideal Panchayat', development schemes, resources of Panchayats and their utilisation, laws for protection of the vulnerable sections among others.

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# EDUCATING THE GIRL CHILD FOR BETTER TOMORROW

Tanu Kathuria

Education opens a whole new world of opportunities for a girl, it gives her the confidence to tackle different problems of life, become economically independent, make better choices, resolve family or community issues satisfactorily, stand for her rights and guide her children. The journey to become a successful nation begins with Universal Education for Women. India can reach its true potential as a nation only when its women population are equipped with the power of education.

Educating a boy is educating a person...Educating a girl is educating a nation', this statement is well justified. Many surveys and studies worldwide have demonstrated that educating women is the single most profitable investment in terms of well-being of children health, community welfare and building long-term success of developing countries. Education opens a whole new world of opportunities for a girl, it gives her the confidence to tackle different problems of life, become economically independent, make better choices, resolve family or community issues satisfactorily, stand for her rights and guide her children. The journey to become a successful nation begins with Universal Education for Women. India can reach its true potential as a nation only when its women population are equipped with the power of education.

Free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6 and 14 is a fundamental right of citizens under the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India. Yet, the state of education of women in India is far from 'free' or as totalising and encompassing as the right appears to guarantee.

Post independence, there has been a concerted attempt to improve literacy levels of the population in India. Many schemes have been introduced to increase the access, expand coverage and improve the quality of education. Amongst them, the universalization of elementary education, incentive schemes for retention and non-formal education for adults are noteworthy for their scope and intent. Although over the years, India's literacy rate has improved manifold, from 12 per cent in 1947 to 74.4 per cent in 2011, but if we look at the percentage of educated people, there is a huge gap

between male (82.14 per cent, in 2011) and female (65.46 per cent, in 2011) literacy rates in India. Low women literacy rate has a huge negative impact on the overall growth and development of the society. We can summarise the reasons as to why the education is indispensable for women as follows:

**Social development:** Kothari Commission of 1968 recommended education as a tool for social development. By pacing woman education in India, the country can achieve the goal of social development as it will help to solve many issues faced by society.

**Gender Equality:** It is perceived that woman is part of unprivileged section of society in India. Education is the only tool which can prevent the society from this myth and will help to close a gender gap in society.

**Economic Productivity:** Educated women can bring in more productive linkage, backward and forward both, which can bring in fruits in multiple amounts. An educated woman means an educated foundation and hence generation of more productive resources. It will not only bring economic gains to woman, but will also raise GDP of a nation.

**Reduction in Infant Mortality:** A well educated woman will have more chances of making better decisions for her family's health. Studies have shown that increased literacy among woman will bring down infant mortality rate, maternal mortality rate and higher the life expectancy.

**Improved Living Standard:** Education will improve chances of employment for women and hence they can contribute to their family income. This in turn results in better living standards for the entire family.



**Woman Empowerment:** Education is powerful tool for woman emancipation and empowerment. It's been for long that woman has been deprived of her rights in society. By educating herself, she can achieve a place in society also they are less likely to be taken advantage of and lower exposure to domestic abuse.

**Better Future Prospects:** Women who are educated are able to take charge of their future and also play an important role in shaping the future of their family by bringing up their children in a far better way by making them aware and accessible to better opportunities and prospects which are, by and large, ignored by the uneducated women / mothers.

**Holistic and Inclusive Development of the Society:** When women are included in key decision-making positions, they take holistic decisions for the development of the society

**Women's education in India is hampered at different stages :**

In most of the developing world around the globe including India, women are often denied of education opportunities. Even though, women constitute 48 per cent of the total population in India – the women literacy rate in urban area is 79.11 per cent as against 88.76 per cent males, and the figures are even lower in the rural scenario where 57.93 per cent women are literate as against 77.15 per cent literate males. India's GDP growth percentage can be drastically improved if women are educated and

start contributing equally in the economy.

Why do the statistics reflecting women's literacy, their enrolment in primary, secondary and higher education or their dropout rates read so poorly? What do they tell us about women's access to education? What systemic errors have aided in this and what can be done to remedy the situation? This section highlights some of the barriers to women's education.

Some of the barriers to women's education are sociological, rooted in gender stereotyping and gender stagnation and other are driven by economic concerns and constraints.

A consequence of gender profiling and stereotyping is that when the parents cannot afford education for their kids, the son is always given preference over the daughter, if at all they try and send them to school. The daughter / women tend to participate more in programmes that relates to their domestic roles. Therefore, the school dropout rate amongst adolescent girls stands high at 63.5 per cent.

If the daughter wants to go for higher studies, it becomes a matter of discussion among parents, relatives, neighbours. A mindset that views education for girls as unlikely to reap any returns ascribes to the view that investing in the education of the male child is like an investment as the son is likely to be responsible for caring for aging parents, and women with largely a reproductive role in society have little need for education and any gains from it are anyway

**1.1 Level of education with Key Issues:**

Level of education	PRIMARY		SECONDARY		VOCATIONAL & FINISHING SCHOOL		PROFESSIONAL	
Issues	1	Low enrolment - getting the girl child to the school	1	High drop-out rates	1	Gender stereotyping and segregation	1	Gender stereotyping
	2	Sociological and psychological barriers to sending girls to school	2	Inadequate facilities	2	Domestic preferences	2	Self efficacy (own belief and ability to succeed)
	3	Engagement of the girl child in other work	3	Engagement in other work (housework, farms etc.)				

**1.2 Women education hampered at different stages:**

Stages	Early Childhood	Adolescent	Higher Studies	Post Marriage
Issues	Sons get preference over daughters in many rural areas	Female school drop-out rate stands at 63.5%	Women's marriage is given priority over education	Women takes care of the family and puts back studies or career

likely to accrue to the homes they go to after marriage. Hence, educating the girl child is sometimes viewed as an unnecessary and extravagant indulgence.

We live in a society where the upbringing of children still depends largely on the mother. What good are we going to pass on to the next generation if that mother is illiterate? The chances are that her own daughter might become an illiterate mother one day, thus continuing the vicious cycle.

### Progress so far

There are many reforms and strategies by the government towards the betterment of women education in India.

- 1. Sakshar Bharat mission for Female Literacy:** This programme was formulated with the objective of achieving 80 per cent literacy level at national level, by focusing on adult women literacy seeking - to reduce the gap between male and female literacy to not more than 10 percentage points. It works on four broader objectives, namely imparting functional literacy and numeracy to non-literates, acquiring equivalency to formal educational system, imparting relevant skill development programmes and promote a learning society by providing opportunities for continuing education.
- 2. Right to Education (RTE):** RTE considers education as a fundamental right which will provide free and compulsory education to every child aged between 6 to 14 years. The right to education is legally guaranteed for all without any discrimination. States have the obligation to protect, respect and fulfil the right to education.
- 3. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya:** Gender disparities still persist in rural areas and among disadvantaged communities. To overcome such disparity, the said programme was launched with the aim to ensure that the quality education is feasible and accessible to the girls of disadvantaged groups of society by setting up residential schools with boarding facilities at elementary level.
- 4. National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level:** The NPEGEL, is a focussed intervention of Government of India, to reach the "Hardest to Reach" girls, especially those not in school. It is for reduction in the school dropouts by giving special attention to weak girls. In villages, women's group are formed to follow up/supervision on girl's enrolment,

### National Women Entrepreneurship Council to promote women entrepreneurs

The Ministry of Women & Child Development intends to set up National Women Entrepreneurship Council (NVEC). NVEC will promote entrepreneurship as it would be the umbrella organization for socio-economic gender parity, financial inclusion and economic empowerment of women in India. However, no final decision has been taken as yet.

- attendance. The scheme is being implemented in educationally backward blocks (EBBs) where the level of rural female literacy is less than the national average and the gender gap is above the national average.
- 5. Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan:** The scheme was launched with the objective to enhance access to secondary education and to improve its quality. It is envisaged to achieve an enrolment rate of 75 per cent at secondary stage of implementation by providing a secondary school within the reasonable distance of any habitation. Infrastructure facilities, such as additional class rooms, laboratories, libraries, art and craft rooms, toilet blocks, drinking water provisions and residential hostels for girls and teachers in remote areas, were given top priority under this scheme.
  - 6. Dhanlakshmi scheme:** To promote awareness and importance of education of girl child, government has launched a special conditional money transfer scheme for Girl Child following 3 conditions.
    - a) At birth and Registration of Birth.
    - b) Progress of Immunization and Completion of Immunization.
    - c) Enrollment and Retention in School.
  - 7. SABLA-Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls:** It enables the adolescent girls for self development and empowerment. It aims to upgrade home based skills, life skills and integrate with the National Skill Development Programme (NSDP) for vocational skills. It helps in spreading the awareness to the mainstream out of school adolescent girls for getting into formal non formal education. It also promotes awareness about health, hygiene, nutrition, adolescent reproductive and sexual health (ARSH) and family and child care.



## The way forward

Although much work has been done to improve the state of education for women and girl children in India, we are still a long way off from attaining standards comparable even to other developing nations. Below are some recommendations and suggestions for improving access to education for woman of the country. The recommendations can be categorised as those related to the following three subheads:

### I. Grassroot level improvements/interventions

- **Sensitisation and awareness building for women's education:** One of the foremost requirements for ensuring increased participation of women in education is effecting a mindset change in society. Unless parents of the girl child see value and merit in sending the girl child to school, they will resist doing so and instead prefer to use her help in household chores.

### II. Strategic initiatives:

- **Target Segment and Approaches:** We need to move towards a segment-based and sector-wise approach to tackle the problem of poor access to education for women. In rural areas, where enrolment of women in education is rather low, mechanisms need to evolve such that the schools are more accessible for the girl child as well as the psychological and sociological barriers to sending the girl child to school are overcome.
- **Incentivisation for Education of the Girl Child:** The primary problem is that of attracting the girl child to the school. To facilitate this process, education of the girl child must become an attractive proposition for the parents of the girl child, who might otherwise prioritise sending the male child only to school.

### III. Legislative initiatives:

- **Reservation for women in Education:** The role of legislation and government intervention is one of the most powerful and effective tools to remedy systemic errors and imbalances prevalent in any society, which continue to be sustained over a period of time. Government intervention has benefited a section of the population and has been instrumental in correcting social imbalances. Extending the

same logic, necessitating a certain percentage of women participation across various levels through required legislation and reservation will not only ensure fair representation, but also encourage schools and institutes to actively devise means and programmes to attract women to their portals.

## Conclusion

One may ask why education of women is even important, or why the state ought to focus on it, beyond improving the numbers and statistics to reflect figures at par with the rest of the developed world.

Neglecting the education of women, who constitute nearly half of the population, does auger well for the development of any nation. Beyond the obvious imbalance in the labour pool, education for women is an important determinant of their enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence, helping to build a positive image, developing their ability to think critically, fostering better decision making and helping them make more informed choices about health, employment and even the education of their children. Education will not only ensure more participation in developmental processes, but also enhance awareness of rights and entitlements in society, so that women can enhance their participation in society on an equal footing in all areas. The economic independence that education brings is an added incentive. Economic independence and awareness will help curtail the vicious cycle of reinforcing negative stereotypes and aid women in chartering paths as individuals in their own right, contributing to society, polity and the economy.

It is hundred per cent true in all respects that, "You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women"

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## Beti Bachao Beti Padhao: Expansion of the scheme in all 640 districts of the Country

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for expansion of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao for a Pan India reach covering all the 640 districts (as per census 2011) of the Country to have a deeper positive impact on Child Sex Ratio. Expansion under BBBP has been approved based on the successful implementation in 161 districts.

The Scheme was launched by the Prime Minister on 22nd January, 2015 at Panipat, Haryana

as a comprehensive programme to address the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of empowerment of women over a life-cycle continuum. The CSR, defined as number of girls per 1000 boys in the age group of 0-6 years, declined sharply from 976 in 1961 to 918 in Census 2011. However there was no systematic response or comprehensive advocacy strategy to arrest and curb this disturbing trend. The Government recognized the challenge of declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR), as a telling indicator of gender discrimination towards girl child, requiring immediate attention and action and launched BBBP scheme in 2015.

Currently (as on 22 November, 2017) the scheme is being implemented as a tri-ministerial, convergent effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development with focus on awareness and advocacy campaign, multi-sectoral action in select 161 districts, enabling girls' education and effective enforcement of Pre-Conception & Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC&PNDT) Act. The specific objectives of the scheme include preventing gender biased sex selective elimination; ensuring survival and protection of the girl child and ensuring education and participation of the girl child. At the Central level, Ministry of Women and Child Development is the nodal ministry for the programme. At the State level, Chief Secretaries heads the State Task Force (STF) with representation of Department of WCD, Health and Education to monitor the implementation of the scheme. The District Collectors/Deputy Commissioners (DCs) lead and coordinate action of all departments for implementation of BBBP at the District level.

The programme will be completing 3 years shortly and in this short duration, BBBP has been well-received and favourable trends are visible in many of the districts. The latest reports as per HMIS data of MoHFW for 161 BBBP districts indicate that for the time period between April-March, 2015-16 & 2016-17, an improving trend in Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) is visible in 104 districts, 119 districts have reported progress in first trimester registration against the reported Anti Natal Care registrations and 146 districts have reported improvement in institutional deliveries.

Looking at the encouraging results of implementation in 161 districts and magnitude/criticality of the problem and its spread across the country, it has been realized that no district can be left out of BBBP ambit if a real dent is to be made on overall CSR. Accordingly, the Cabinet has approved the expansion for Pan India Coverage with a proposed outlay of Rs. 1132.5 Crore from 2017-18 to 2019-20, to be funded 100 per cent by the Central Government. Out of 640 districts, BBBP is currently getting implemented in 161 districts. The expansion would include Multi sectoral intervention in 244 districts in addition to existing 161 districts. 235 districts are to be covered through Alert District Media, Advocacy and Outreach, thus covering all the 640 districts of the Country.



## GENDER EQUALITY FOR A PROGRESSIVE SOCIETY

Dr. Jyoti Atwal

There has been no dearth of good policies and schemes to uplift the status of women in rural India. It is largely seen that implementation of empowerment schemes is more challenging in rural areas than in urban areas in India. The main issue is a differently construed mindset in the socio-economic structure of the rural areas where traditional hierarchies play a major role.

According to the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Index 2014, India registered a significant decline in its performance. Its ranking is 114 in the 142 countries list, far below, as far as the status of women is concerned. On the health front, India stood at 141 out of 142, only ahead of Armenia. There is a long established linkage of national development with issues such as lack of nutrition and inadequate education of women. However, the State is increasingly focused on removal of gender injustice and discrimination within the rural and urban areas. Safeguarding girls/women against sexual violence within and outside the home has been a priority area for the State. The monitoring target of the Twelfth Plan for Women and Children was laid down in 2015. It was noticed that poorer young girls in villages suffer from malnutrition and forced labour inside homes. Out of 46 per cent children affected by malnutrition in the country, about 70 per cent are girl children. There is a simultaneous exploitation of *Shram* and *Sharir* i.e. "labour" and "body". Women and girls are lured for the purpose of marriage due to poor sex ratio in some states thereby violating basic rights of women and children. Gender based violence is a global health, human rights and development issue that transcends

geography, class, culture, age, race and religion to affect every community and country in every corner of the world. The Article 1 of UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence 1993 provides a definition of gender-based abuse, calling it "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".

There has been no dearth of good policies and schemes to uplift the status of women in rural India. It is largely seen that implementation of empowerment schemes is more challenging in rural areas than in urban areas in India. The main issue is a differently construed mind set in the socio-economic structure of the rural areas where traditional hierarchies play a major role. Over the past twenty years, the role of the traditional *aanganwadi* (courtyard/shelter home) schemes have undergone change to some extent.

**Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)** scheme, launched by PM on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2015 at Panipat, is a response to the falling child sex ratio (CSR). CSR is defined as the number of girls per 1000 boys between 0-6 years of age. From 976 in 1961, the CSR fell to 918 in 2011. This indicated societal discrimination at birth or at the pre natal stage. The scheme is aimed at protecting baby girls by celebrating their birth and taking pride in them; by imposing a strict ban on sex determination tests; by countering the tradition of calling girls '*paraya dhan*' (someone's property); by opposing dowry, child marriage and gender stereo types; preventing violence against girls in public places and at home and most importantly, ensuring that girls secure admission in schools and do not drop out. To enhance public information on sex ratio, **Guddi Gudda** Boards are put up at district level to display data on Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB).





As a focused multi sectoral action, BBBP is a countryside campaign, in 100 selected districts covering all States and Union Territories. It is a joint initiative of Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Human Resource and Development.

BBBP since its launch in 2015, has been largely dependent on scaling of other services. Nutrition and education have largely been dispensed in the rural areas through Aanganwadi programmes and other local village level schemes.

### Schemes for nutrition and health

Certain schemes have been very successful. Introduction of acceptable fortified Take Home Ration (THR) for the children of 7 months to 3 years old with an increased nutritive value, by addition of milk protein which is being produced at the State-run manufacturing unit. Supervised feeding of malnourished children - identification of malnourished child is based on measurement of weight for age as well as weight for height along with medical check-up of malnourished children. The curative aspect was the entry point in the village, which focussed on 12 days of supervised feeding and demonstration of local nutritious recipes using learning by doing methodology, followed by 18 days of home visits to observe the learnt behaviours. Some components of **SuPoshan Abhiyan** include: effective micro planning; active involvement of sectors such as health, Agriculture and Food, involvement of community, *Poshan Sahayogini*, *Poshan Mitra* team, *Gram Sabha Taderth Samiti* for mobilising the community for reaching out to the disadvantaged and excluded in education, quality training etc.

Introduction of one wholesome meal in the afternoon in place of THR for pregnant and lactating mothers has also been successful. This also provided opportunity for establishing regular contact with the mothers and counselling them regularly. This effort also helped in increasing fetal weight and hence better outcome at birth. In Tamil Nadu 25 Women Food Cooperative Societies are engaged in providing complementary food (registered under FSSAI) to all 32 districts in the State. It is provided to pregnant and lactating women and children of 6 months to 3 years and to adolescent girls enrolled under SABLA programme. The initiative has also helped to reach out to the vulnerable sections and excluded population.

### Child marriages show a declining trend

As per census 2011, the percentage of child marriage in 2011 is 31.6 Per cent which was 52 per cent in 2001 which shows a decreasing trend. As per National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-4(2015-16), the percentage of Women age 15-19 years who were already mothers or pregnant is 6.3 per cent which was 16 per cent in National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-3(2005-06).

The Government of India has enacted the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 in order to prohibit child marriages rather than only restraining them. The States/UTs from time to time are being regularly pursued for effective implementation of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. The practice of Child Marriages is a social evil promoted by social customs, tradition, illiteracy, poverty, low status of women in society and lack of awareness. Government also undertakes media campaigns and outreach programmes to address this.

Another interesting state scheme initiated on pilot basis is being implemented in synergy with **Indira Gandhi Mathritva Sahayog Yojana (IGMSY)** in Erode and Cuddalore districts. Three installments of Rs 4000/-per mother are provided to combat wage loss and improve nutritional status. About 6.5 lakh mothers are benefitted every year under this Scheme. Local NGOs and MGNREGA are joining hands with Aanganwadi centres for developing Kitchen Garden.

States where there was no shortage of Aanganwadi workers have fared better. One of the schemes provides special crèches for children of women working as daily labourers for 8-9 hours of work. Here they are given special attention.

General malnutrition amongst rural females is another area of major concern. Anaemia is prevalent in all age groups – over 50 per cent men and 70 per cent women in India are anaemic. Anaemia antedates pregnancy and gets aggravated during pregnancy and is one of the major causes of child anaemia. Example of a local level successful example comes from Nasik where 1.35 lakh girls (14 to 18 years) (Tribal / Rural / Urban) were reached out through weekly supplementation of 100 mg of elemental iron & 500 mcg of Folic Acid, 6 monthly de-worming along with life skills training and monitoring through a self-compliance card.

*Nari Gaurav Niti* was launched in 2006 as a State level policy initiative of the Government of Gujarat with the multipronged strategy –education, quality of life, health and nutrition, *Chiranjeevi Yojana* benefitted 9.97 lakh pregnant women. 531 emergency ambulance vans were operational –more than 17 lakh pregnancy-related problems have been handled through these vans. In addition, *Khilkhilat* was an ambulance for safe home coming of infants and mothers post-delivery.

### Challenges to education

In the rural areas, most girls drop out of the school due to burden of household work; taking care of younger siblings, weak economic condition of the family who were not able to afford school expenses, social/ family restrictions on girl education and non-availability of schools in the area.

Discontinuing school during the menstrual time is also quite common as there is non-availability of sanitary napkins and disposal system in schools. 90 per cent of violence on adolescent girls is from internal factors (known people) and the external factors contribute to only 10-15 per cent.

Government schemes such as **SABLA, SAKSHAM, ARSH, Adolescent Education and the Mission Convergence (Gender Resource Centres)**, etc are well planned and well thought out, but there is a greater need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

There is a need for organising women's collectives for advocating and fostering increased enrolment in girl child education. Jagjagi Kendra is a good example from Bihar. This non-formal centre conducted gender-based studies for girls from 9 to 14 years of age with three hours specially assigned for sensitizing mothers of girl children.

Government of Haryana schemes have stressed on the right to safety of girls in all environment. On 26 January 2015 the State launched ATM like machines in various institutions where adolescent girls could purchase three sanitary napkins for Rs10.

Rural areas have weak infrastructure to support girls' education. There is a lack of basic amenities such as water and no means of livelihood. In some villages the school offers only Hindi Literature, Sanskrit Literature and Geography to 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Lack of incentives to go to school is relational to the rise in crime and suicides. There has been a suggestion to strengthen the National

Commission of Women and make 33 per cent reservation for women in the police force.

### Protection against gender discrimination, sexual abuse and social security

#### One Stop Centre Scheme

The Ministry of Finance, Government of India established a 'Nirbhaya Fund' in 2013 with an initial corpus of Rs. 1000 crore. This is intended to provide women safety pertaining to the strategic areas of prevention, protection and rehabilitation. The 12th Plan Working Group on Women's Agency and Empowerment had recommended setting up of One Stop Crisis Centres, on pilot basis, for providing shelter, police desk, legal, medical and counselling services to victims of violence under one roof integrated with a 24 hour Helpline.

Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), has formulated a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for setting up One Stop Centre, a sub-scheme of Umbrella Scheme for **National Mission for Empowerment of women** including *Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyaog Yojana*. These Centres will be established across the country to provide integrated support and assistance under one roof to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces in phased manner. In the first phase, one Centre shall be established in every State/UT on a pilot basis.

For establishing a Centre, the first preference would be to obtain suitable and adequate accommodation having carpet area of at least 132 sq.m. within a hospital/medical facility. In case it is not possible to locate accommodation within a hospital or medical facility, then an existing Government/Semi Government institutions located within 2 km radius of the hospital/medical facility in the district headquarter having adequate accommodation will be used for operating the Centre. A provision of Rs.7.54 crore has been kept for the construction purpose.

In order to run these centres, there have been good results from a strengthened cooperation by National Commission for Women (NCW) with State Commissions for Women (SCW). In Assam, efficient service providers have been identified by the Social Welfare Department in collaboration with the North East Network. There is collaboration and convergence of the Assam and Meghalaya Police along with the One Stop Crisis Centre. In Nagaland,

the Village Council and Village Development Board of Chizami village announced equal wages for men and women in 2014.

There is a need to increase allocation on rescue of trafficked victims and also strengthen welfare fund of Acid attack victims/ survivors. Sale of acid should also be regulated in order to avert crime against younger women.

Government of Rajasthan has implemented **Rajasthan Samuhik Vivah Niyaman Evum Anudan Niyam 2009** with the objective to curb heavy expenditures in marriages and social ill practices like child marriage, dowry etc. and to encourage community marriages and marriage registration. To counter sexual violence and sex selective abortions, women help line, Aparajita – One Stop Crisis Centre, Sneh Aangan, PC-PNDT Bureau of Investigation, Mahila Help Desks in police stations, Mahila Suraksha Evam Salah Kendra, Special Women Security Cell and notification of Girl Child Policy 2013 have been implemented. Till 2014, **Mahila Suraksha Evam Salah Kendras** were provided help to 21,013 women. To combat the growing menace of sex-selective abortion in addition to establishing PC-PNDT Bureau of Investigation, the State Government is also tracking through online Form F submission, toll free complaint number and *Mukhbir Yojana* (Informer Scheme).

In Haryana, local level initiatives have been crucial in making government schemes successful. Shri Jaglan, the Sarpanch of village Bibipur created awareness on the issue of negative fallout of skewed child sex ratio. He started discussions through special Gram Sabhas with women and asked them to take lead in preventing sex-selective abortions. As a Sarpanch, he had also decided to recognise those women in his village who gives birth to girl child and empower the women. On Republic day, the right to hoist flag was given to mothers who were mother of only girl child.

Other measures to ensure empowerment of women in rural areas include financial empowerment in the form of Sakhi Mandals/ Mission Mangalam or freedom from shackles of debt and financial problems. Nearly 2.21 lakh 'Sakhi Mandals' have been created, with nearly 24.94 lakh members. *Mahila Pashupalak Protsaahan Yojna* was intended to increase the number of *Dudh mandali* run by women. *Mata Yashoda Gaurav Nidhi* Insurance scheme for Anganwadi workers and helpers attempts

to provide social security to them and their families.

The section of rural population dependent on the State are the widows. Most of the widows from rural parts of India flock to Vrindavan and depend largely on the State, Bhajan Ashrams and pilgrim economy. There are six stay homes for women at Vrindavan. Two of these are run by the Government of India called **Swadhar Yojna** and two under *Meera Sehbhagini Yojna* of Government of UP. Others are run by non governmental bodies. For each four hour shift of bhajans at the ashrams, the widows get Rs 3 and 100 gm dal and rice. Department of Women and Child Welfare, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Department of Food and Supply, the Municipal Corporation of Vrindavan, the Mathura and Vrindavan Development Authority and the District Magistrate are significant role players in management of widows. Widows receive State old age and widow pensions through banks. There are various unresolved issues pertaining to the ration cards and pensions. The widows are vulnerable to cheating as most of them are over 60 of age and most are illiterate and physically weak.

To sum up, the Central and State government has launched several schemes for women's empowerment in rural areas but the challenges of implementation are greater and require enormous support of the village heads and village population in general. The schemes have proved to be success wherever the localised support and resources were in abundance.

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# HEALTH OF RURAL WOMEN - WEALTH OF NATION

Manisha Verma

The basket of services for health of all women, with special focus on the rural areas, is aimed for providing affordable and accessible health services, to advance the agenda of Universal Health Coverage in the country. This shall contribute significantly to meeting targets set under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to which India is committed.

*“Communities and countries and ultimately the world are only as strong as the health of their women.”*

- Michelle Obama

The above sentence signifies the importance of women's health, simply and precisely. It's our women which form the roots of our families and thereby the society and ultimately the country. The most recent research too supports the claim that investment in the health of women and children, besides saving lives and preventing avoidable tragedies, secures high social and economic returns for the country. Increasing health expenditure by just \$5 per person per year up to 2035 could yield up to nine times that value in economic and social benefits, according to a study published in Lancet in 2014. These returns include greater growth in gross domestic product (GDP) through improved productivity and prevention of the needless deaths and disease. The priority accorded to health of women is evident from the primacy given to RCH (Reproductive and Child Health) in the health agenda and programmes of the government. As a result of the efforts put in through these focussed programmes, we have come far and achieved a lot i.e. the country's MMR (Maternal Mortality Rate) stands at 167 (from 560 in 1990), U5MR (Under 5 Mortality Rate) at 43 (from 126 in 1990), and the IMR (Infant Mortality Rate) at 34 (from 88 in 1990). India was validated for elimination of Maternal & Neonatal Tetanus in April 2015 much ahead of the global target of December 2015. We have been successful in controlling the incidence of new HIV cases in new borns with the dedicated **Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission (PPTCT)** program under NACO. While much has been achieved, there are several new and innovative interventions being implemented.

The reports and studies of programs of the Health Ministry have shown that women in general, and particularly in the rural areas, still face several barriers towards accessing health services and are subsequently unable to practise good health behaviours and thereby unable to inculcate the

same in the next generation. A significant proportion of women in the rural area still are unable to get access to all the health services. Keeping this in mind and the fact that child and maternal survival is a mirror that reflects the entire spectrum of social development, addressing these social determinants through developmental action of all sectors is the topmost priority of the Government.

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has many interventions and initiatives focussed on health of woman in general and for women in rural areas. The Ministry follows a life-cycle approach for designing the various health initiatives i.e. **RMNCH+A (Reproductive Maternal Neonatal and Child Health)** strategy wherein the +A stands for adolescents. If we take care of our teenage girls, we will surely have healthy women who will be capable of bearing healthy children. **Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK)** thus was started in 2014 as a comprehensive programme focussing on Sexual Reproductive Health, Nutrition, Injuries and violence (including gender based violence), Non-Communicable Diseases, Mental Health and Substance Misuse with a promotive and preventive approach for adolescents. The interventions are



carried out through the health facilities, community, and schools as platforms. **Weekly Iron Folic Acid Supplementation to all adolescents (WIFS programme)** – Up to second quarter of 2017-18, 3.9 crore beneficiaries (adolescent boys & girls) have benefitted), sanitary napkins under Menstrual Hygiene scheme (this year Rs. 42.9 Crores have been allocated under the **National Health Mission (NHM)** to 16 States for decentralised procurement of sanitary napkins through the process of competitive bidding. 8 states are implementing the scheme through the State funds) and counselling (including gender based violence issue) through establishment of **Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics (AFHCs)** at various levels of health facilities, are the components of RSKS. The AFHCs act as the first level of contact of primary health care services with adolescents and till date 7632 AFHCs have been established across the country and around 29.5 lakh adolescent clients availed services during second quarter of 2017-18. Under the Peer Education Programme, four peer educators (**Saathiya**) - two male and two female - are selected per 1000 population to orient the adolescents on various health issues. The Peer Education (PE) programme is being implemented in 211 districts and till date 1.94 Lakh Peer Educators (PEs) have been selected and training of ANMs and PEs is under process.

From adolescence we move onto family planning. The ASHAs (accredited social health activists) and ANMs (auxiliary nurse midwives) are trained for identification of newly married couples and provide them with a basket of choices for family planning including provision of condoms and Oral Contraceptive Pills (OCPs) (including Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs)) right at the doorsteps of the beneficiary. The Mission Parivar Vikas (MPV) program has been launched recently to focus on seven states with the highest Total fertility Rate (TFR). MPV has not only expanded the basket of choice of contraceptives for women including injectables, the awareness campaign focuses around promoting male participation towards family planning as well as including the mother-in-laws (acknowledged as one of the primary influencers) in the ambit of responsibility of family planning. There is also provision of Post Partum Intra Uterine Contraceptive Devices (PPIUCDs) at the facilities to ensure accessibility of service to the woman before she leaves for home after delivery.

The next stage in the life cycle is pregnancy. Starting with early registration (in the first trimester) of the pregnant women till she delivers, there are

multiple programs to ensure a healthy mother and child. Under the new **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)**, the 9<sup>th</sup> of each month is dedicated to special ante-natal check-up of pregnant women at Government facility where private sector doctors and gynaecologists are contributing their services along with Government doctors. This has led to identification of more than 5 Lakh high risk pregnancies. As part of the **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)** - a safe motherhood scheme, conditional cash assistance is provided to eligible pregnant women for delivering in public health institutions. This scheme aims to encourage institutional deliveries to reduce maternal and child mortality. The scheme has been

### Maternity leave increased from 12 to 26 weeks

Keeping in mind the welfare of working women, the Parliament has passed the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill, 2016 on 09 March, 2017. This bill has amended the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 and incorporated a number of measures for the welfare of working women.

Following amendments have been made through this bill-

- (i) Maternity leave available to the working women to be increased from 12 weeks to 26 weeks for the first two children.
- (ii) Maternity leave for children beyond the first two will continue to be 12 weeks.
- (iii) Maternity leave of 12 weeks to be available to mothers adopting a child below the age of three months as well as to the “commissioning mothers”. The commissioning mother has been defined as biological mother who uses her egg to create an embryo planted in any other woman.
- (iv) Every establishment with more than 50 employees to provide for crèche facilities for working mothers and such mothers will be permitted to make four visits during working hours to look after and feed the child in the crèche.
- (v) The employer may permit a woman to work from home if it is possible to do so.
- (vi) Every establishment will be required to make these benefits available to the women from the time of her appointment.



a success along with our other efforts as the current institutional delivery rate of the country stands at 78.9 per cent (NFHS 4). From a modest figure of 7.39 lakhs beneficiaries in 2005-06, the scheme currently provides benefit to more than one crore beneficiaries every year. In 2017-18, till September 2017, more than 45.94 lakhs beneficiaries have been reported under JSY. Also, **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** has been rolled out under the JSY which entitles eligible pregnant women to get JSY benefit directly into their Aadhaar-linked bank accounts. As per reports received from States, Rs. 373.12 crores has been transferred through DBT mode to JSY beneficiaries in 2017-18 till 5.12.2017. An extension of this is the **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK)** which ensures absolutely free services to pregnant women including transport, caesarean delivery and diet to women and their new borns. Till date, 1.2 crore women have received free drugs, 1.3 crore women have received free diagnostic services, 70 lakhs received free diet during delivery in public health facilities, more than 70 Lakh women availed of free transport from home to facility and 64 Lakhs availed of free drop back from facility to home.

A key intervention towards safe pregnancy and motherhood is immunisation. Tetanus injection, free of cost, are provided to pregnant women under the routine immunisation (RI) programme and also under the special scheme-Mission Indradhanush, which aims to cover all those pregnant women who have been left out of the RI rounds. So far, under Mission Indradhanush, 68.71 lakh pregnant women have been vaccinated against tetanus. Further, under the recently launched Intensified Mission Indradhanush, during the two rounds held in October and November, a total of 6.46 lakh pregnant women have been vaccinated in 190 districts/urban areas.

The Health Ministry is catering to the HIV positive women through the National AIDS Control Program. The NACO Technical Estimate Report (2015) estimated that out of 29 million annual pregnancies in India, 35,255 occur in HIV positive pregnant women. The PPTCT programme aims to prevent the peri-natal transmission of HIV from an HIV infected pregnant mother to her newborn baby. The programme entails counselling and testing of pregnant women in the Integrated Counselling and Testing Centres (ICTCs). With effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014, pregnant women who are found to be HIV positive are initiated on lifelong Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) irrespective of CD4 count and WHO clinical staging; their newborns who are exposed to HIV exposed babies are initiated

on six weeks of Syrup Nevirapine immediately after birth so as to prevent transmission of HIV from mother to child and is extended to 12 weeks of Syrup Nevirapine if the duration of the ART of mother is less than 24 weeks. In the year 2015-16, 127 lakh pregnant women accessed this service. Of these, 11,918 pregnant women were HIV positive. In order to provide universal access to these services, further scale up is planned up to the level of Community Health Centre and the Primary Health Centre through NHM integration, as well as through public-private partnerships.

With the growing burden of Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in the country, cancers and particularly breast and cervical cancers, affect women across all sections of society. The Ministry has rolled out the population-based screening for Diabetes, Hypertension and Common Cancer (Oral, Breast, and Cervical). It is a recent programme and represents a massive step in identifying and addressing the risk factors at the community level itself. Guidelines have been released for implementing the population level screening to cover the whole country in a phased manner. More than 150 districts are being taken up during 2017-18. The plan is to leverage services of the frontline workers (ASHA and Nurses/ ANM) in screening of NCD risk factors among the entire population above 30 years of age, and early detection and referral of NCDs. The ASHAs and the capacity developed at Primary Health Centres and Sub Centres will be used to carry out population level screening of common NCDs. They have been entrusted with the responsibility to create family folders for each household for all above 30 years of age, to develop their risk profile for NCDs and to screen them for diabetes, hypertension and common cancers. They will also be involved in assessment of risk and dissemination of messages for awareness generation on healthy lifestyles to prevent NCDs. As on September 2017, over 20 lakh people have been screened in 165 districts across the country.

The basket of services for health of all women, with special focus on the rural areas, is aimed for providing affordable and accessible health services, to advance the agenda of **Universal Health Coverage** in the country. This shall contribute significantly to meeting targets set under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to which India is committed.

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## Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

Under-nutrition continues to adversely affect majority of women in India. In India, every third woman is undernourished and every second woman is anaemic. An undernourished mother almost inevitably gives birth to a low birth weight baby. When poor nutrition starts in-utero, it extends throughout the life cycle since the changes are largely irreversible. Owing to economic and social distress many women continue to work to earn a living for their family right up to the last days of their pregnancy. Furthermore, they resume working soon after childbirth, even though their bodies might not permit it, thus preventing their bodies from fully recovering on one hand, and also impeding their ability to exclusively breastfeed their young infant in the first six months.



Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana' (PMMVY) is being implemented from 01 January, 2017 in all the districts of the country. Under PMMVY, a cash incentive of Rs. 5000/- is provided directly in the account of Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers (PW&LM) for first living child of the family subject to their fulfilling specific conditions relating to Maternal and Child Health. The eligible beneficiaries would receive the remaining cash incentives as per approved norms towards maternity benefit under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) after institutional delivery so that on an average, a woman will get Rs 6000/- .

**Objectives of PMMVY:** Providing partial compensation for the wage loss in terms of cash incentives so that the woman can take adequate rest before and after delivery of the first living child. The cash incentive provided would lead to improved health seeking behaviour amongst the Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers (PW&LM).

**Target beneficiaries:** All Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers, excluding those who are in regular employment with the Central Government or the State Governments or PSUs or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force. All eligible Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers who have their pregnancy on or after 01.01.2017 for first child in family. A beneficiary is eligible to receive benefits under the scheme only once.

### Benefits under the scheme

Cash incentive of Rs 5000 in three instalments i.e. first instalment of Rs 1000/ - on early registration of pregnancy at the Anganwadi Centre (AWC) / approved Health facility as may be identified by the respective administering State / UT, second instalment of Rs 2000/ - after six months of pregnancy on receiving at least one ante-natal check-up (ANC) and third instalment of Rs 2000/ - after child birth is registered and the child has received the first cycle of BCG, OPV, DPT and Hepatitis - B, or its equivalent/ substitute.



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# EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS: NEEDS AND CONCERNS

Dr. Jitendra Nagpal

As a powerful socializing agent, the school plays a crucial role in the transformation of cognitive, linguistic and psychosocial competencies and creating happy, healthy and harmonious schools for mental health wellness of children, who are crucial demographic dividend and the most important national asset.

It has been stated by, WHO (2016), that nearly 20 per cent of children and adolescents suffer from a disabling mental illness worldwide. Suicide rates in Indian adolescents appear to be several-fold higher than anywhere else in world, accounting for 25 per cent of deaths in boys and 50-75 per cent of deaths in girls aged 10-19 years. Most mental health problems, though manageable, are not identified or formally diagnosed at an appropriate time of child development. Therefore, as parents, teachers, educators and professionals dealing with the future of tomorrow, it is imperative to consider child and adolescent mental health as a necessary priority for the healthy development of societies.

Education holds the power to transform fortunes within the human lifespan. Education is progressively seen with an inclusive perspective, symbolizing a strong emphasis on integrated learning, especially in the context of RTE guidelines in place. Schools must recognize and respond to the diverse mental health & wellbeing needs of the students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning thereby ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curriculum, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies and resource support. Children with learning difficulties or poor academic performance should not be labeled as per preconceived notion.

In this context, schools have an unprecedented opportunity to improve the lives of young people. Progressively, schools are finding it necessary to expand their role in providing services for overall child development and wellbeing. As a powerful socializing agent, the school plays a crucial role in the transformation of cognitive, linguistic and psychosocial competencies and creating happy, healthy and harmonious schools for mental

health wellness of children, who are crucial demographic dividend and the most important national asset.

Here are some facts from WHO:

- \* Depression alone accounts for 4.3 per cent of the global burden of disease and is among the largest single causes of disability worldwide.
  - \* Suicide is the second most common cause of death among young people worldwide.
  - \* Between 76 per cent and 85 per cent of people with severe mental disorders receive no treatment for their disorder in low-income and middle-income countries.
  - \* 20 per cent of children and adolescents suffer from a disabling mental illness worldwide
- ICMR Statistics reveal:
- \* 12.8 per cent Children suffer from Mental & Behavioural Disorders

The alarming statistics by WHO and ICMR are in sync with the objectives of Global Mental Health Action Plan, which are as follows (2013 - 2020):

1. To strengthen effective leadership and governance for mental health;
2. To provide comprehensive, integrated and responsive mental health and social care services in community-based settings;
3. To implement strategies for promotion and prevention in mental health;
4. To strengthen information systems, evidence and research for mental health.

Integrating the Crucial aspects of Mental Health in the Global Vision of a "Health Promoting School"

- One that is constantly strengthening its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working.

- It focuses on creating health and presenting important causes of death, disease and disability by helping school children, staff, family and community to care for themselves.
- It equips school children to take informed decisions over circumstances that affect their health and create conditions that are conducive to health. (WHO - 2008)

### Counseling skills as a tool for change

While counseling as a skill has been thought to involve basic communication and talking, it is more than that. According to American Counseling Association, Professional counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals. Thus, it is essential that professionals and educators willing

to help children and adolescents are trained professionally and have the necessary skills that equip them with both theoretical and practical information to bring positive changes with regards to mental health in the children community.

### Perspective policy approach

India yet does not have a comprehensive approach to school mental health promotion. The child mental health policy is nonexistent and behavioral and emotional aspects of special needs children are a completely ignored area. The five year plans, until recently, have set aside only a few crores for mental health of the entire country with the child's mental health promotion receiving a very low priority. Lot of complexities exist in multiplicities of laws related to child mental health or associated disabilities.

### SABLA: Scheme for Adolescent Girls

Sabla – a Centrally Sponsored Scheme aims at empowering Adolescent Girls (AGs) (11-18 years) through nutrition, health care and life skills education. The scheme has two major components viz. Nutrition and Non Nutrition. Nearly 100 lakh adolescent girls per annum are expected to be benefitted under the scheme.

#### The objectives of the Scheme are to

- Enable the AGs for self-development and empowerment
- Improve their nutrition and health status
- Promote awareness about health, hygiene, nutrition, Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH) and family and child care
- Upgrade their home-based skills, life skills and tie up with National Skill Development Program (NSDP) for vocational skills
- Mainstream out of school AGs into formal/non formal education
- Provide information/guidance about existing public services such as PHC, CHC, Post Office, Bank, Police Station, etc

#### Services to be provided under Sabla

- Nutrition provision
- Iron and Folic Acid (IFA) supplementation
- Health check-up and Referral services
- Nutrition & Health Education (NHE)
- Counseling/Guidance on family welfare, ARSH, child care practices and home management
- Life Skill Education and accessing public services
- Vocational training for girls aged 16 and above under National Skill Development Program (NSDP)



Schools play a large role in development of children and adolescents and provide a room and scope for interventions at all levels of the schooling span. There is a need to train manpower in child and adolescent mental health at various levels of schooling especially the role of teachers and student peer group as first aid counselors, mentors and peer educators. The existing counselors need constant up gradation in their role and responsibility for school mental health promotion and special education for the disability group of children. Child and adolescent research has not received the deserved attention so far. There is a great need to coordinate our efforts. The non-governmental organizations have an important role to play in advocacy, awareness and comprehensive and continuous training of manpower.

### How gender affects adolescent's mental health

Gender socialization of both boys and girls begins early, and it is important to initiate change processes at a young age to shape attitudes and transform behaviors. Schools and colleges play a major role in this regard, because students spend large amounts of time engaged with peers in such settings. Creating positive social norms in educational institutions that value girls and their rights is important to improve the well-being of girls and achieve long-term and sustainable social change.

“Differences between women and men in roles and responsibilities, status and power, interact with biological differences between the sexes to contribute to differences in the nature of mental health problems suffered, health seeking behavior of those affected and responses of the health sector and society as a whole. During adolescence, girls have a much higher prevalence of depression and eating disorders, and engage more in suicidal ideation and suicide attempts than boys. Boys experience more problems with anger, engage in high risk behaviours and commit suicide more frequently than girls. In general, adolescent girls are more prone to symptoms that are directed inwardly, while adolescent boys are more prone to act out”. (Petersen, Poul Erik 2003).

In order to promote gender equality, guaranteed by the Indian Constitution, we need to change the mode of interaction at all levels - home, school, workplace and so on. This can be done in following ways-

- ❖ Organize awareness programmes on various gender issues including legislations to influence behavior change. This could be facilitated through workshops, theme based plays, films, painting competition, etc.
- ❖ School Annual Function or the college fest on theme of gender equality and women's empowerment and encourage students to sign up and express their support for gender justice and equality.





- ❖ Arrange for providing necessary life skill education and information/guidance about existing public services to their fellow students.
- ❖ Demonstrate knowledge of important Government schemes, events, legislation, and court rulings which has a major impact on the treatment and experiences of diverse groups.
- ❖ Document best practices to measure the extent of behavior change and display the same through exhibitions, fests, annual magazines etc.

### Promoting mental wellbeing of students

1. Mental Health & Life skills as abilities for adaptive and positive behaviors need to be mandated for helping children and adolescents to effectively deal with demands & challenges of everyday life. Integration of age appropriate life skills throughout the schooling period of 12-13 years, imbibes a rounded development of children as a lifelong human resource for self and the environment and the nation at large.
2. The Policy should encourage ongoing Comprehensive Curriculum for sensitization of Principals, Teachers & Managers and all Students towards Gender Issues, Substance Abuse Prevention, Understanding and Management of Aggression and Violence, Promotion of Emotional Health, Safety & Positive Citizenship. School systems must organize sequential age appropriate programs and campaigns to spread awareness and responsibility about all dimensions of health.
3. Peer Educators (the Adolescent Students of the Schools, play a vital role in becoming the Life Skills and Wellbeing Ambassadors of the School and the Nation at Large). Teacher supported and Peer Educators driven Life Skills, Health, Values and Wellbeing Programs should be implemented for all groups of students in schools so that they feel Aware, Responsible & Empowered for all aspects of their Personality Development and well integrated with the Paradigm of Health and Wellbeing.
4. School Counselor and Special Educators and/or Trained Teacher Counselors should be appointed for every school to facilitate effective Guidance and Counseling for students and their families,

across the entire span of schooling. This to help them cope-up better and plan the choices in academics and co-academic areas effectively.

5. The components of the School Mental Health Programme must be an integral part of 'Health and Physical Education'. In fact health and nutrition programmes should form the basis for health and nutrition education rather than just focusing on 'Creating Awareness' in children about what they should eat, especially when a large percentage of children do not have access to adequate food.
6. Make all Early Childhood Education and Care Programmes from 0–6 years) sensitive and responsive to the Special Needs of Children, including Training of Community Teachers, Family Volunteers and Anganwadi Workers in the identification of the needs of the children with disabilities, use of age-appropriate play and learning materials and the Counseling of Parents and Teachers.
7. Removing physical barriers & reviewing barriers created by admission procedures (screening, identification, parental interaction, selection and evaluation), this should include private schools. Making the curriculum flexible and appropriate to accommodate the diversity of school children including those with Disability in both Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Areas and all types of Slow Learners.
8. Gear all Teacher Education Programmes (both pre-service and in-service) to developing the Pedagogical Skills required for Mental Health & Inclusive Classrooms for integrating the EWS (Economically Weaker Sections) and the complete range of CWD's (Children with Disabilities) and SEN (Special Educational Needs) children.
9. All teacher education courses must include Health, esp. Mental Health, Yoga and Physical Education as a compulsory subject. For effective implementation of this subject advocacy is required at different levels of the Education and Health Systems Primary, Secondary & Tertiary Care. It is strongly recommends that the appropriateness of the design, materials and pedagogy be looked into for Health Programmes as interventions in the School Curriculum.

10. For special needs children and slow learners

- ❖ Early detection and intervention of common developmental problems and disorders is imperative as part of the specialized support to these children. The majority of schools find co-morbidity of learning problems of school children such as conduct disorders, childhood depression, autism, attention deficit disorders, slow learners etc.
- ❖ Focus should also increase on the adolescent group with concerted programs of Life Skills, Stress Management, Drug Abuse Prevention, Reproductive Health and allied areas.
- ❖ Coordinated efforts of Mental Health Professionals, Educationists, School Counselors and Employees from Government, Voluntary and Self-Help Groups are urgently required for this massive task.
- ❖ Individualized home and education plans for Behavioral Modification, Occupational Therapy and Sensory Integration, Speech Therapy and Remedial Education esp. in the Semi-Urban and Rural Setting with the help of local educational and health care providers.

11. Positive Parenting sessions in the Context of Child Mental Health and Resilience and Responsible Child Care. Capacity Building for Teachers and Non Teaching Staff, ensuring entire school awareness and sensitivity for child abuse (including the POCSO act 2012) and all the other legal instruments important for the schooling systems.

12. Encourage Government & Non Government Organizations working in these fields to develop State and National Level Trainers & Master Trainers for Positive School Mental Health Promotion and Coaching of School Leadership for all Principals, Teachers, Senior Students & Education Leaders of the Community.

13. To position a Measurable & Sustainable Monitoring and Evaluation system (MES) for effective implementation of the Life Skills, School Mental Health, Values, Behavioral & Wellbeing Programs with markers and indicators that are dynamic in nature and in the context of the changing scenario of the society, culture & Educational needs of the country.

14. Mental health services should be included in individualized educational programs (IEPs) for child clients enrolled in a special education program.

15. Outcomes-based research should be performed on the effectiveness of various school-based mental health models that are designed to improve psychosocial and academic outcomes.

..... Many of the things we need, can wait. The children cannot..... Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made and his senses are being developed to him we cannot answer "Tomorrow". His name is "Today". Gabriela Mistral, 1948

*(Dr. Jitendra Nagpal is MD, DNB and Program Director 'Expressions India' -The National Life Skills, Values, Community and School Wellness Programme New Delhi. Email- jnagpal10@gmail.com)*

## Help Me WCD !..... #HelpMeWCD

Women commuters have been expressing their concern via social media to the Government regarding their safety. The Women and Child Development Ministry (WCD) has launched a hashtag, #HelpMeWCD, where any woman or child facing harassment/ violence can directly report their cases by tweeting.



## WOMEN CHAMPIONS: KALABURAGI FOCUSES ON HEALTH & HYGIENE OF PREGNANT WOMEN

Following the traditional Indian custom of honouring pregnant women during the latter half of their pregnancy, the district administration of Kalaburagi has started a new initiative that while celebrating motherhood, promotes hygiene practices among women.

On the new initiative called *Koosu* meaning 'child' organized in collaboration with the local Primary Health Centres (PHCs), CEO of Zilla Panchayat in Kalaburagi District of Karnataka, Hephisiba Rani Korlapati explained that the 'baby showers' are particularly meant for pregnant ladies owning toilets.

"Breaking barriers, and taking advantage of cultural practices, we have devised a small programme wherein after ante-natal checkup, we check if pregnant women have access to toilets and build one if they don't. We also educate pregnant women about health, hygiene, sanitation and nutrition; and also sensitize them about breastfeeding and newborn care," she said.



Thereafter, women of the Gram Panchayat (GP) organise a baby shower, a ceremony that celebrates the baby bump and honours the pregnant woman. In the process, the most respectable tasks are given to women representatives. This engagement between them and PHCs ensures that they develop a good rapport with the health department to maximize institutional deliveries. Later, follow up is done by health and Women and Child Department (WCD) functionaries.

The *Koosu* initiative is a brain child of Korlapati, who has put in place a scheme whereby Zilla Panchayat officials organize baby showers post-delivery in homes of families who build toilets for their daughters or daughters-in-law who are soon to be mothers.



"We were inspired to start such a programme after we heard about the ASHA worker, Indira Bhai from Gundagurthi village who built a toilet for her pregnant daughter Bhagyashree in a matter of two days.

During the first baby shower (seemantha) that the CEO organized, she announced that such programmes will be organized by the panchayat in all homes of pregnant women who build toilets.

The CEO believes that it is vital for ASHA workers to spread awareness on building toilets for pregnant women and inform them about the need to breastfeed, each time they visit homes. After delivery, the new mothers would also be advised about food and nutrition practices.

"In the absence of toilets, women tend to reduce food and water intake during pregnancy which leads to malnutrition," Korlapati explained.



## USHA campaign

Earlier, the former CEO of Chamarajanagar had launched USHA campaign that catered to all girl students with a view to providing awareness about menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and other pertinent issues.

An acronym for 'Understand, Sensitize, Help and Achieve,' USHA was an intensive campaign held from 25<sup>th</sup> November to 24<sup>th</sup> January, to ensure that no girl child was left behind, according to the CEO.

Considering that the district is among the most backward in the country in terms of literacy and other human development indicators; with child marriage, teenage pregnancies and malnutrition prevalent, the campaign was intended to address a pressing need.

The main objectives of the campaign were to enable an equitable and decent life for every girl child in the district; to restore her rights and dignity; and to give her identity and space. In the process, access to toilets and menstrual hygiene management were given substantial focus.

In this context, teachers across the district volunteered to be mentors and worked beyond the call of their normal duty, alongside functionaries of the Zilla Panchayat, participating in a gamut of activities that converged with various government schemes.

## Toilet building campaign

More recently, the CEO organized a toilet building campaign started on World Environment Day with the aim of constructing 10,000 toilets in a period two weeks. The individual household latrines were meant for the rural poor and priority was being given to families that have pregnant and lactating mothers. It also included a plantation drive.



The CEO's work with women and children has also inspired 11-year-old Suchitra KP from Kamarahalli village of Gundlupet taluk in Chamarajanagar district to convince more than 20 families in her district to build toilets. In that sense, the child was the face of the USHA campaign in her district. She was the youngest to be awarded on International Women's Day by the Delhi Commission for Women.

# Kurukshetra

**FORTHCOMING ISSUE**

February 2018

:

Agriculture

# FOLK ARTS AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT

Gannath Jha

Around 200 local artists worked continuously for 12 days to change Madhubani station into an open art gallery. Majority of these artists were women. When asked about their working experience they say-

“Earlier it was difficult for us to come out of our houses and work in front of a man, our hands would shiver. But now the scenario has completely changed. Railways gave us a good opportunity and we did not find any difficulty in working in presence of the male passerby. We have now become confident enough to work in front of anyone.”

India has a rich heritage of art & culture. Innumerable folk and tribal arts spread across its vast length and breadth, give Indian culture a unique and vibrant colour. It was this richness of Indian heritage and traditions that led Mark Twain to say-

“India is the cradle of human race, the birthplace of human speech, mother of history, grandmother of legend, and great grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most constructive material in the history of man are treasured up in India only”

Folk arts are special in the sense that they truly represent the long preserved Indian customs and traditions. Many of these arts are practiced by the women in rural India. And if we could effectively promote and market these, it may save these arts from extinction at one hand and provide sustainable livelihood options for the rural women on the other. In this article, author, through the example of Madhubani paintings has analysed how folk arts may become the source of sustainable income generation for the rural women in India and thus contribute to their economic and social empowerment.



An artist drawing Madhubani painting on the walls of Madhubani Railway station. The painting depicts birth of Krishna.

Before proceeding to case specific study of Madhubani paintings, we first need to analyse the main challenges faced by folk arts/traditional crafts in India today. In brief, some of these challenges are :

- (i) **Awareness:** Whereas a particular folk art form may be hugely popular in one region but there is generally very less awareness about it outside the region. This limits its marketing scope. Even among the local artists, there is often a lack of awareness about the income generation potential of their arts.
- (ii) **Market:** Marketing of traditional arts/crafts is major impediment in realizing their full economic potential. Generally, folk artists come from rural areas and are not well versed in modern marketing techniques. Market linkage is also an issue due to poor infrastructure in remote areas where many of these artists live.
- (iii) **Production :** Most of the artists are also engaged in agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood, so production of traditional crafts is suspended during harvest season. This makes these arts/crafts a seasonal activity. Challenges also arise due to similar cheaper machine made products available in market.
- (iv) **Organisation:** Traditional artisans usually work in informal groups which may not be very well organized structurally.
- (v) **Dwindling Interest:** New generation is focusing more on careers in engineering, medicine, corporate sector and is showing disinclination towards further continuation of the arts/crafts practiced by their families.

If a platform is provided to the local artists, if the resources are made available and the market is developed, these art forms will gain huge popularity at national and international level. Additionally, it will also provide livelihood and save them from getting extinct.

This will also create employment opportunities, thus eradicating the poverty to some extent.

As these arts and crafts are generally practiced by women, this can prove to be an important measure to empower the women. According to the famous author Steve Maraboli, “The empowered woman is powerful beyond measures and beautiful beyond description”. To empower a woman is to empower a nation. This is even more true for rural women as they are more likely to suffer from social injustice, lack of freedom and domestic violence. To bring out their hidden potential and to give them a commercial and social identity, it is very important to empower them with the art they possess.

### **Madhubani paintings at Railway Station: A new initiative**

Indian Railways always lays much emphasis on its social responsibility in addition to being prime mover of the nation. So an effort has been made by the Indian Railways by promoting Madhubani painting at Madhubani Railway Station. It is an effort for empowering women as well as for beautification of Madhubani station which was listed as one of the dirtiest Railway stations according to a survey.

### **Madhubani art:**

This unique style of art is used by the women to decorate their house walls and doors in order to seek God’s blessings in the forms of prosperity and peace. Before 1930, no one outside Madhubani region knew about this rare decorative traditional art. In 1934, Bihar suffered a major earthquake. British officer William G. Archer who was very fond



Painting showing **Chhath Puja**: It is dedicated to the Sun and his wife Usha in order to thank them for bestowing the bounties of life on earth and to request the granting of certain wishes. During this people observe fast and take bath at a river or pond.

of Indian art and culture noticed this unique art on damaged walls of Madhubani during his inspection.

The painting is done with fingers, nib-pens, twigs and matchsticks, generally using natural dyes and pigments, and is characterized by eye-catching geometrical patterns. Most of the Madhubani paintings depict man and his association with nature, and scenes and deities from ancient epics. Natural objects, plants, social events are also represented in these paintings. There are paintings for each occasion and festival. Folklores say that on the occasion of Sita’s marriage, her father Raja Janaka arranged large number of artists to decorate entire kingdom with this unique art.

This ancient painting came to the lime light again in 2015 when the Prime Minister of India gifted a Madhubani painting to the Lord Mayor of Hannover.

### **Madhubani Railway Station: Story of the transformation**

Once the idea was finalized to beautify Madhubani railway station with the help of local artists, implementation process was started. Challenges were faced with regard to the finance, manpower and other resources. Being a government organisation, Railways could not afford a big amount of money for some art work so it was decided to get the work done on *shramdaan* (voluntary work)



**Sama Chakeva**: Young girls assemble near pond/river with a basket containing small idols of Sama and Chakeva for immersion. It is a major festival of young brothers and sisters in Bihar. It tells the story of Sama, who had been falsely accused of wrongdoing. Her father punished her by turning her into a bird, but the love and sacrifice of her brother Chakeva eventually allowed her to regain human form.





*A Madhubani painting depicting various stages of life, association with nature, as also the interconnected nature of life on Earth. This painting was presented by the Prime Minister to the Lord Mayor of Hannover on 12 April, 2015.*

basis. Though it was not completely voluntary in the sense that Railways provided the artists t-shirt (with Railway's logo), refreshments and some cash that was promised for lunch.

The first step towards the execution of this project was the advertisement. It was clearly communicated that the artists will be allowed to write their names and telephone numbers along with their paintings, thus giving them commercial and individual identity. All artists were given an open platform to showcase their talent. While national and state awardees got direct entry, other artists were asked to show their paintings.

Soon this initiative took the shape of people's movement with around 200 artists coming forward for the work. Many groups and

subgroups were formed and different themes were allocated to each group so that deadlock could be avoided. Paint, painting brush, *machaan* and all other required equipments and accessories were provided by the Railways. One big issue that sprang up before us was that of women's safety and for this RPF's help was taken. For those working at night hours, efforts were made to arrange some vehicles.

### Some unexpected challenges

While work on beautification of Madhubani Railway station was going on smoothly, some vested interests at local level started their ingenuine demands which ranged from asking for railway contracts in their name, demanding that ponds owned by railway be assigned to them for beautification, demands for advertisement space etc. When they didn't succeed in their motives, a smear campaign was started against railway authorities with accusations of corruption, eve teasing of female artists, trolling on social media etc.

Despite all the smear campaign, all targets of the project were achieved on time with due measures. This became possible due to tactful handling of the situation and building a relationship of mutual trust with the local artists engaged in the work. This folk art has been painted at an area of about 9,414 sq. feet, which is a world record in itself.

### Lessons learnt

Folk arts/crafts are the heritage of a nation and reflect imagination and wisdom of its successive generations. Many of these art forms are on the



*Madhubani paintings by folk artist on the walls of the Madhubani Railway station, Bihar*



*The indigenous Gond art of India is making a mark on the global cultural stage*

verge of extinction. Hence their protection and preservation is need of the hour. This small measure taken by the Railways at Madhubani station did wonders for the artist, art and beautification to name a few. Even some unknown artists without any recognition came to the fore and did wonderful job.

Some of the measures that will be helpful in promotion and preservation of the traditional arts and crafts are listed below-

- (i) **Commercialisation-** Taking it on mass scale will generate employment opportunities as well as make the artists financially sound.
- (ii) **Skill Development and Training-** Since these art forms have huge potential, they are likely to have high demand in future. So providing right skills will be helpful in this regard.
- (iii) **Promoting art at public places-** Public places are highly beneficial for drawing one's attention so as to make it popular and to showcase the beauty of art.
- (iv) **Digitisation of artwork-** It will give make it easier for an artist to reach national and international audience.

*(The author is Indian Railways Accounts Service officer, Samastipur Division. Email: gannathjhairas2013@gmail.com)*

### **C-Section surgeries: Measures by Government to check the rising numbers**

The Government has taken several steps to ensure that the unwarranted increase in C-Section surgeries can be kept in check. A cesarean section (more commonly known as C-section) is the surgical delivery of a baby.

While the recommendation of WHO suggests that deliveries through C-Section should normally be in the range of 10-15 per cent of the total deliveries, some States in India are reporting extremely high percentages of C-Section deliveries. Tamil Nadu reported this to be 34 per cent and Telangana 54 per cent. It is even more worrisome that the percentage of C-sections is higher for the private nursing homes across the States.

Union Health Ministry is taking a series of measures to control this increasing trend. As a first step, all the private hospitals empanelled under Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) have been directed by the Health Ministry to prominently display the data of deliveries through C-Section vis-à-vis normal deliveries in the hospital, at the reception area.

A report titled "Deciphering the Determination and Impacts of Rising Rate of C-Sections and offering Potential Solutions" has been disseminated to all State Governments and UT Administrations to effectively get them to provide C-Sections only to those women who actually require it. Federation of Obstetric and Gynecological Societies of India (FOGSI) has also been sounded off about the harmful effects of unwarranted C-Sections. In addition, the States have been directed to conduct periodical prescription audit of the health facilities specifically on this issue.

It is hoped that these measures would help in bringing out the rate of C-Section deliveries back to the realistic levels.



## Welfare of Tribal Women

Government has adopted Tribal Sub-Plan (now called as 'Scheduled Tribe Component') strategy for ensuring overall development of tribal areas across the country while ensuring inclusive growth of STs including tribal women. While the major schemes/programmes for providing infrastructural facilities and other amenities like roads, electricity, water, education, health etc. in the tribal areas are implemented by the concerned Central Ministries/Department and State Governments, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs implements schemes/programmes which are primarily aimed at filling critical gaps in these sectors for tribal population. Ministry of Tribal Affairs while trying to ensure that women benefit equally from general schemes also has some special schemes meant for the benefit of ST women and girls as given below:



- (i) **Scheme of Girls & Boys Hostels for STs:** Under the scheme, Central assistance is given to States / UTs / Universities for construction of new hostel buildings and/or extension of existing hostels. State Governments are eligible for 100% central share for construction of all Girls' hostel and also for construction of Boys' hostel in naxal affected areas. The funding pattern for other Boys' Hostel to State Governments is on 50:50 basis.
- (ii) **Scheme of Ashram Schools in tribal areas:** The objective of the scheme is to provide residential schools for STs to increase the literacy rate among the tribal students and to bring them at par with other population of the country. Under the scheme, State Governments are eligible for 100% central share for construction of all Girls' Ashram Schools and also for construction of Boys' Ashram Schools in naxal affected areas. The funding pattern for the other Boys' Ashram Schools is on 50:50 basis.
- (iii) **Scheme for Strengthening Education among ST Girls in Low Literacy Districts:** This scheme is being implemented in 54 identified low literacy Districts where the ST population is 25% or more, and ST female literacy rate is below 35%, or its fractions, as per 2001 Census.
- (v) **Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub Scheme (SCA to TSS) (hitherto known as SCA to Tribal Sub Plan (TSP)):** It is 100% grant from Government of India. Its objective is to bridge the gap between Scheduled Tribes (ST) population and others by providing support for education, health, sanitation, water supply, livelihood, skill development, minor infrastructure etc. It is a flexible scheme and supplements the efforts of the line Ministries/Departments.
- (iv) **Grants under Article 275(1) of the Constitution:** It is 100 per cent grant from Government of India. Funding under this programme is to enable the State to meet the cost of such schemes of development as may be undertaken by the State for the purpose of promoting the welfare of Scheduled Tribes in that State or raising the level of administration of Scheduled Areas therein to that of the administration of the rest of the areas of that State.
- (v) **Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana:** National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC), an apex organization under Ministry of Tribal Affairs is implementing this exclusive scheme for tribal women. Under the scheme, Scheduled Tribes women can undertake any income generation activity. Loans upto 90 per cent for scheme costing upto Rs.1 lakh are provided at a concessional rate of interest of 4 per cent per annum.



# WOMEN AS PART OF RURAL WORKFORCE

Dr. K. Gulam Dasthagir, Alif C.S. and Dr. Naseer Hussain

In contrast to urban women workers, who are offered with technological and infrastructural advancement, rural working women constitute vast majority (81.29) of the female working force in India. Quantitatively, rural women workers (121.8 million) outnumber their (105.5 million) male counterparts in urban settings. With empirical evidences establishing the preponderance of work participation of rural women, analysis is directed into examine women rural work force.

One third of the Indian population comprising of rural women had been vested with the care and nurture of the household within many socio-cultural restrictions under the aegis of male hegemony anchored on the historicity of rural patriarchy. Conversely, contradicting the consensus of Women-in-Development and Gender-and-Development framework that structural adjustment increase intra household inequalities neoliberal paradigm with its deregulation of labor markets lead to the emergence of the phenomenon of “feminization of labour”, denoting increasing participation of women in low-wage industrial and service jobs. Against the scenario of feminization of industrial labour, this article endeavors to analyse the increasing participation of rural women in agriculture and national rural employment to portray the phenomenon of “feminization of rural labor”, in India.

Premised on the hypothesis that rural women’s significantly contribution to India’s development through their participation in productive roles besides their reproductive, domestic and community roles, a gender analysis of rural and

urban workforce is presented in the Table-1 to highlight the distinctive position occupied by rural women in Indian workforce.

The table highlights the significance of rural working women in the working population of India. In contrast to urban women workers, who are offered with technological and infrastructural advancement, rural working women constitute vast majority (81.29) of the female working force in India. Quantitatively, rural women workers (121.8 million) outnumber their (105.5 million) male counterparts in urban settings. With empirical evidences establishing the preponderance of work participation of rural women, analysis is directed into examine women rural work force.

Gender analysis of rural labour force in India presented in Table-2 indicates the emerging scenario of gender equality in rural labour comprising with female labour force (48.6%) vis-à-vis (51.4%) rural male labour force. Contradictorily, the persistence of gender inequality is manifested in the rural work force including female work force (74.2%) vs. (83.8%) rural male work force. Further, the gender order is apparent in the gender wise distribution of rural main worker and marginal workers. While there is male preponderance in the category of rural main workers with male (72.4%) and (27.6%) females, among the marginal workers, the gender gap is brought down to (59%) males and (40.5%) females. Thus, gender gap within the category of rural male workers is to a greater extent, accountable for the persistence of gender inequality in the rural work force.

On the contrary, the emerging phenomena of feminization of rural labour is discernable through a gender analysis of rural people seeking work in which, 25.8% of rural women labourers are seeking work in contrast to 16.2% rural male labourers.



Moreover, rural women (228 Millions) outnumber rural men (153 Millions) among the marginal work seekers. These evidences reiterate the growing willingness among rural women seeking work and reporting their consent to work, forming a significant proportion of female labour force in rural India. In this regard, social science literature brought to bear facts about complementation of women's income, feminization of poverty, female headed household etc that lend credence to the phenomena of feminization of rural labour in India. Hence, further analysis to probe into the factors facilitating this phenomenon is examined through the analysis of women participation in agriculture and rural employment under MGNREGA.

### Feminisation of agriculture in India :

A pervasive phenomenon of contemporary rural society of developing nations around the world is the conspicuous and consistent increase in the number of women engaging in farming activities. Such feminization of global farming is not only about increasing number of women on farm, But Women work roughly twice as many hours as men as well as Women's contribution to agriculture - whether

it be subsistence farming or commercial agriculture - when measured in terms of the number of tasks performed and time spent, is greater than men.

The chart-1 portrays the decadal increase in the number of women engaged in agricultural work, with consistent increase in the number of women cultivators from 148 Million in 1981 to 351 million in 2011 as well as a perceptible growth in the number of women agricultural labourers from 208 Million in 1981 to 591 Million in 2011, denoting the doubling of female workforce in Indian agriculture. Such increasing participation of women in agriculture not only signifies the phenomena of feminization of agriculture, but also discovers the prevalence of "female proxy participation" in Indian agriculture.

### Feminisation of rural employment in India:

The architecture of **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** - as a social security measure providing 100 days of work to rural adults who have completed 18 years of age in each financial year with its bottom-up, people-centered, demand-driven, self-selecting, rights-based designs, is globally celebrated. The

**Table 1: Gender Wise Distribution of work force in India:**

Gender	Work force in million		
	Rural	Urban	Total
Female	121.834467 (81.29) [35.3]	28.042914 (18.71) [21.5]	149.877381
Male	226.763068 (68.33) [64.7]	105.102862 (31.67) [78.5]	331.865930
<b>Total</b>	<b>348.597535 (72.36)</b>	<b>133.145776 (27.64)</b>	<b>481.743311</b>

Index: Percentage in ( ) refers to row percentage

Percentage in [ ] refers to column percentage

(Source: Statistical Profile on Women Labour, 2012-2013, Labour Bureau, Government of India.)

**Table 2: Gender wise distribution of Rural Labour in India:**

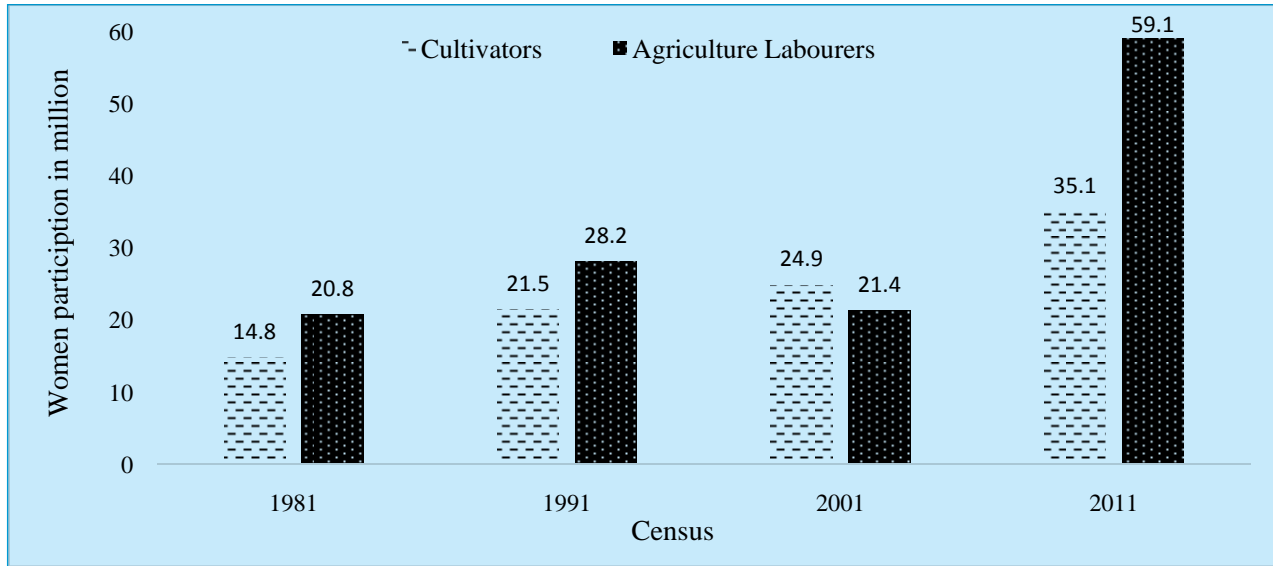
Gender	Labour force in million				Total
	Main workers	Marginal workers	Main workers Seeking	Marginal workers Seeking	
Female	67.773091 (41.3) [27.6]	54.132988 (32.9) [52.6]	195.30039 (11.9) [40.5]	22.883195(13.9) [59.9]	164.319313 [48.6]
Male	178.095330(65.7) [72.4]	48.741683(17.9) [47.4]	28.802771(10.6) [59.5]	15.370813(5.67) [40.1]	271.010597 [51.4]
Total	245.868421	102.874671	48.332810	38.254008	833.748852

Index: Percentage in ( ) refers to row percentage

Percentage in [ ] refers to column percentage

(Source: Census, 2011)

**Chart-1:  
Longitudinal Analysis of Women participation in Agriculture**



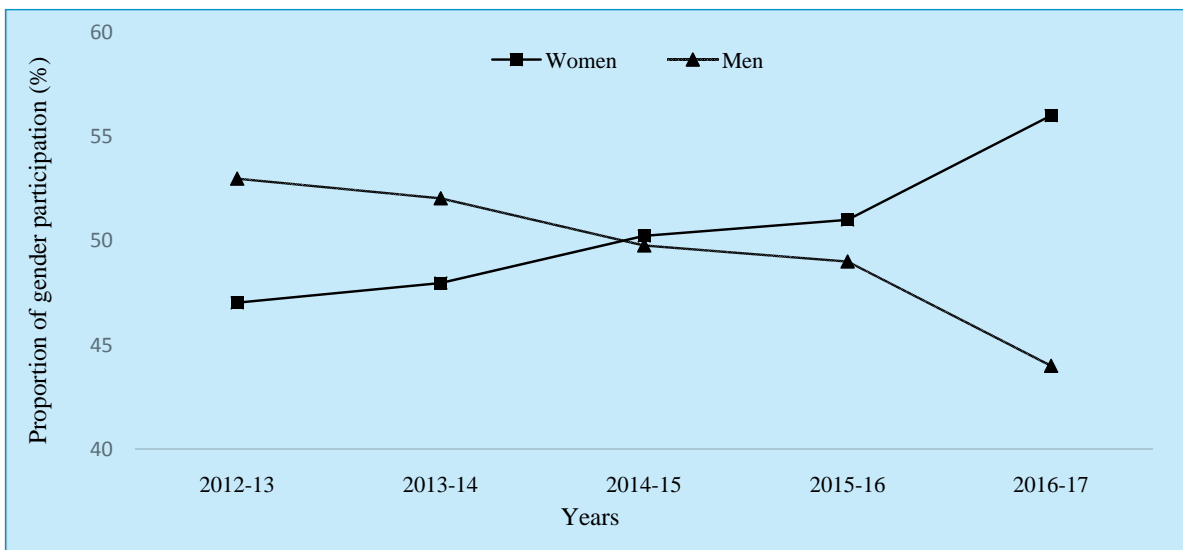
(Source: Registrar general of India, New Delhi, 2001)

assumption that decentralization brings governance closer home greater proximity to people and especially greater benefits to women perhaps is largely realized through the MGNREGA as the grass-root initiative inviting greater participation of women awarding 33 per cent per cent gender quota and incorporation of gender needs with flexibility of work part and provision of crèches to take care of children. The process of Recruitment of workers is also gender sensitive involving survey within village with women representatives, offering priority to single women-headed households to work on

worksites nearer to their residence, transportation facility for Pregnant women travelling more than 1km to reach the worksite and ensure 100 days of work to Widowed women, deserted women and destitute women.

Graphical representation (Graph II) of women and men participation in rural employment reveals changing gender equation in rural employment under MGNREGA with a steady increase in proportion of women participation as against a consistent decline in the proportion of men participation from 2012

**Chart 2: Gender Analysis of Rural Employment in India**





to 2017 across India. Although, the act mandates one-third reservation for women participation in these works, the national average in this regard has gradually improved from 47 per cent in 2012-2013 to 56 per cent females in 2016-2017. It is highly significant to note that 56 per cent of women participation in 2016-17 registers highest proportion of women participation, outnumbering their male counterparts in the 5 year period from 2012-2017. Concomitantly, even those states which did not have much of women's participation have been reporting a greater proportion of women's participation through the MGNREGA.

Mavoorpanchayath is one of the successful panchayats in Kozhikode district under Kunnamangalam block in Kerala. Being the largest village in Kozhikode district, it has a population of 29,781 (Census 2011) out of which 15350 are women. The important works undertaken by this panchayat includes house construction, water conservation and the development of infrastructure like road, footpath, ponds etc under MGNREGA. It has registered a distinction of 'all women' constructed Cheroopa Mini Stadium created with Rs. 50 lakhs invested by the Government of Kerala during 2014-15, which period also registered the highest participation of women (94.54%) in the scheme. This work with 1523 women labourers won Mahatma Gandhi award by Kerala state as well as the National Award by the Central Government for high participation of women and proper utilization of funds allotted in MGNREGA.

### **Synergy between feminisation of agriculture and feminization of rural employment:**

The assumptions of diametrical relationship of MGNREGA with agriculture centers around the issue of sustainability vs. dialectics. As a source of sustainability, MGNREGA lends improvement in agricultural production through soil and water conservation efforts on the lands of the small and marginal farmers that increases agricultural productivity and enhances farm income as reported by Indian Institute of Science, Indian Institute of Forest Management, Administrative Staff College of India, and University of Agricultural Sciences. On the contrary, as source of dialectics, increases in wages of rural workers brought forth by MGNREGA not only magnetize agricultural labourers but also the small and marginal farmers. Nevertheless,



women participation largely engenders synergy between agriculture and MGNREGA works, in so far as landed women labourers' amongst small and marginal farmers and landless women labourers' serve in rural employment during off seasons while the infrastructural improvement and irrigation development brought through MGNREGA works lends credence to the sustainability of agriculture. Moreover, feminization of agriculture as well as MGNREGA is largely anticipated as the remedy for feminization of poverty.

### **Challenges of rural women at work:**

- **Gender discrimination in land ownership:** Contradictory to feminization of global farming, women cultivators lack access to fertilizer, seeds, credit, membership in cooperatives and unions, and technical assistance that are bestowed upon the men holding title to the agricultural land of the household (Chowdhry, 2009).
- **Feminisation of rural poverty:** Lack of access to credits, capital, decent work in addition to dependent children succumb rural women to the vicious cycle of poverty, which is deeper than that of men due to the gender equality in the control and use their own income, household resources etc. to the same degree as men.
- **Malnutrition:** Triple role of Women labourers saps their energy and time that renders them weak and undernourished.
- **Poor Health:** Consequently, they lack immunity and become vulnerable to ill health and diseases that adversely affect their work participation temporarily or permanently.

## RECOGNIZING WOMEN FARMERS

OVER 33 LAKH WOMEN FARMERS SUPPORTED THROUGH MAHILA KISAN SASHAKTIKARAN PARIYOJANA (MKSP)



in so far as landed women labourers' amongst small and marginal farmers and landless women labourers' serve in rural employment during off seasons while the infrastructural improvement and irrigation development brought through MGNREGA works lends credence to the sustainability of agriculture offering the potential for being the remedy for feminization of poverty.

- **Lack of Education:** Both the option of and being in physical labour precludes the possibility of women to engage in further education.
- **Overwork:** By the nature of tasks assigned and the extent of time augmented from women labourers by masculine hegemony, women labourers are succumbed to over work.
- **Unskilled:** Routinised tasks and absence of training renders rural women labourers unskilled for their life-time.
- **Mistreatment:** In addition to physical hardship, rural women are subjected to ill treatment, verbal abuse and sometimes even physical violence and abuse which go largely unreported.
- **Powerlessness:** Under rural patriarchy operating at home and work place, the women's work is pervasively undervalued, underrepresented and exploitatively extracted due to women's lack of knowledge about safeguards, inadequate voice in public forums and coercion beneath symbolic violence.

### Conclusion:

Analysis of statistical evidences on rural women labour force in India largely establishes the emergence of the phenomenon of 'Feminization of Rural Labour' facilitated through feminization of agriculture and feminization of rural employment in India. While the phenomena of feminization of agriculture is manifested through the increasing participation of women and the prevalence of "female proxy participation" in Indian agriculture, feminization of rural employment is intelligible from consistent increase in the proportion of rural women participating in MGNREGA works across India. Besides, women participation largely engenders synergy between agriculture and MGNREGA works

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## Women of India Organic Festival 2017

The Women of India Organic Festival was organized by the Ministry of Women & Child Development at Dilli Haat, INA, New Delhi as the largest festival of organic products by women farmers and producers, and successfully concluded on 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2017. The event was inaugurated at Dilli Haat, INA by the Union Minister of Women and Child Development, Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi and Minister of State, Dr. Virender Kumar on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2017.

The main objective of the Festival was to support and encourage women and women-led groups that promote organic farming, thus supporting their local community's economy, creating jobs and keeping farmers thriving, in addition to spreading proper awareness about the benefits of organic products.

The Women of India Organic Festival has now become an annual event and exhibits/offers for sale, a varied range of organic products including food, kitchen products, spices, pure fabric to wellness, personal care among others. This year, the festival saw a footfall of around 2.35 lakhs visitors. The total sales by the women farmers and entrepreneurs who came from 25 States was Rs.1.84 Crores this year. Women participated from as far as Ladakh, Manipur, Sikkim and Puducherry alongwith other states of the country.

According to Ms. Damyanti Devi, a farmer from Uttarakhand, "We are so happy that the Ministry has given us the opportunity to sell our merchandise in Delhi. We had to procure merchandise twice over as we sold our initial goods in less than a week. This monetary benefit would certainly help in my daughter's further education." According to Ms. Thokcham Sonalika Devi, a farmer from Manipur, "We would like to thank the Ministry of Women and Child Development for organizing the Women of India Organic Festival and also giving us the chance to display our Chakhao black rice of Manipur, which was a total novelty for the people of Delhi. We also got many bulk orders for our products and hope to participate in many such festivals organized by the Ministry in the future too."

The participants of Women of India Organic Festival 2017 also enrolled themselves in Mahila E-Haat, another initiative of the Ministry of Women & Child Development to meet the aspirations and needs of women entrepreneurs. This unique e-platform exponentially strengthens the socio-economic empowerment of women beyond the Festival.







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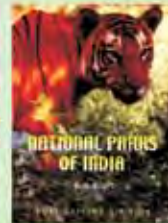
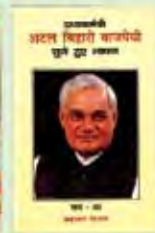
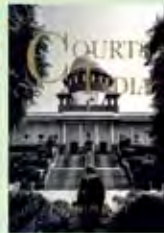
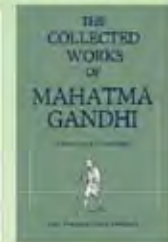
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# Global Entrepreneurship Summit 2017 Held in Hyderabad



*The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi and the Advisor to the President of United States, Ms. Ivanka Trump at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit-2017, in Hyderabad on November 28, 2017.*

India hosted the eighth annual Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) – 2017 in Hyderabad on 28-30 November, 2017. The summit was inaugurated by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Advisor to the President of United States, Ms Ivanka Trump, who led the U.S. delegation. This was the first time GES was hosted in South Asia, and the event highlighted India's enabling environment for innovation and entrepreneurship.

The Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) is a pre-eminent annual gathering of emerging entrepreneurs, investors, and business leaders from around the world. Through networking, mentoring, and workshops, the GES empowers entrepreneurs to pitch their ideas, build partnerships, secure funding, and create innovative goods and services that will transform societies.

This year's summit was themed on **“Women First, Prosperity for All”** to celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit in all its strengths and diversity. The women represent tremendous promise for economic growth and prosperity, but in both developing and developed countries, they face tremendous barriers to building businesses. The Summit provided a platform, with an environment that empowers innovators, particularly women, to take their ideas to the next level and primarily focused on four thematic sectors: Energy & Infrastructure, Healthcare & Life Sciences, Financial Technology & Digital Economy, and Media & Entertainment sectors.

The agenda of GES 2017 consisted of breakout sessions, master classes, and workshops. In Breakout Sessions panellists discussed the key themes, innovative industries, and other aspects of entrepreneurship. Master Classes were immersive, and focused on certain topics in depth. Workshops were more hands-on, interactive conversations on a chosen topic between the panelists and the audience. Three networking sessions were also conducted to enhance opportunities to interact with other GES 2017 participants.

GES 2017 was attended by over 1600 delegates including the entrepreneurs, investors and CEOs of major knowledge-based industries from 160 countries across the world. Through its various initiatives, GES serves as a vital link between governments and the private sector, and convenes global participants to showcase projects, exchange ideas, and champion new opportunities for investment. Relationships formed at past GES Summits have transcended industries and sectors and transformed ideas into enterprises.

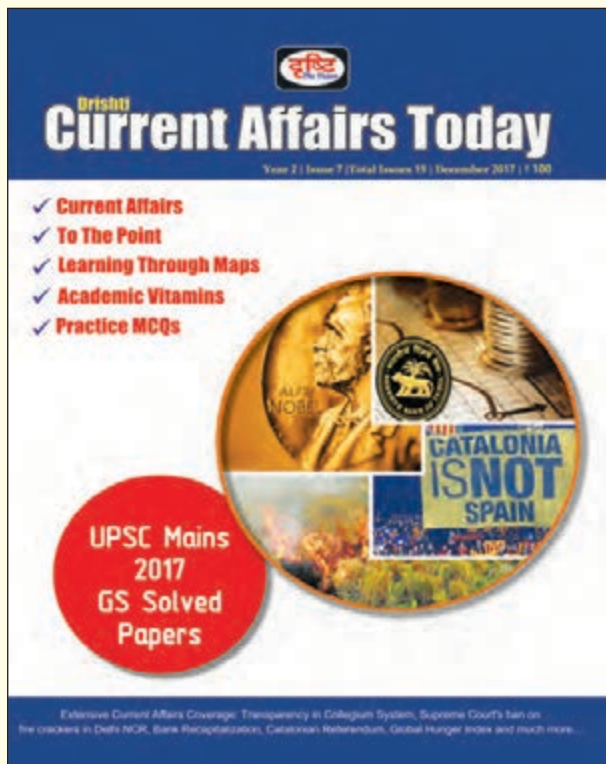




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