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# WOMEN AND POLICIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

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# Introduction:

Development is a universal phenomenon; it is a worldwide concept which means about freedom of thought and speech, freedom to participate in decision – making, and freedom to work without social bondage. The Brandt Commission rightly observed 'Development never will be, and never can be, defined to universal satisfaction.' For some, development means increase in national economy, for others, it implies social development, for still others, it is another name of modernization.

However, development is a multi – dimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes, and institutions as well as it also demands equality of opportunity, that is, equal access to economic, social, political, and cultural opportunities to all citizens. It is different from the conventional economic model of equating progress and development with per capita income or growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). While income and economic growth are necessary conditions, for improving the quality of people's lives, they are not always sufficient. It is also important to focus on the condition of women and their share of equity vis a vis men3; as well as acceleration of economic growth, reduction of inequality and eradication of poverty.

1. The development means capacity building, expanding one's ability and energy to bring about desired (as far as possible) change at individual, community, national or global level. It addresses equity or distributional issues so that increasing development and increasing productive capacity mean broadening levels of well – being for many people, not just a few (Barbara Thomas Slayter, 1955).

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The broad objective of the development programme is to improve the quality of life of the people. But the development4 can only be sustained when the people will build their own capacity to solve the problems and take decision in the management of their own resources. In a society people are managing their own resources according to their norm. But unless this management is not conducted in a planned sustainable manner, the scarcity of the resources will become an issue. For sustainable development5 two things are important – one is the systematic utilization of natural resources and the other is the systematic utilization of human resources.

In Simple words, development means improving the conditions of life. In development, all the modern advances in science, technology, democracy, values, ethics, and social organisation fit into the single humanitarian project of producing a far better world. In its strong sense, development means using the productive resources of society to improve the living conditions of the poorest people. Development means more of everything for everyone in the context of a lot more for a few.

Development can be understood in terms of empowerment. Empowerment can be understood by "recognizing the capacities of such groups (the marginalized and oppressed) to take action and to play an active role in development initiatives"6. Oakley identifies five key uses of the term empowerment in development studies. These are: empowerment as participation, empowerment as democratization, empowerment as capacity building, empowerment as capacity building, empowerment through economic improvement and empowerment at the individual level.

Naila Kabeer refers empowerment as the "process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such ability"8. This definition makes clear that only those previously denied such abilities can be considered to be empowered and also that the choices in question are strategic.

Sustainable development refers not only to economic development based on sustained yield of renewable resources, but also to a process of social change which secures human welfare while maintaining the natural resource base.

Kabeer defines strategic choices as ones "which are critical for people to live the lives they want (such as choice of livelihood, whether and who to marry, whether to have children etc)" as opposed to "less consequential choices which may be important for the quality of one's life but do not constitute its defining parameters"9.

Naila Kabeer (1994) subscribes not so much to 'power over' but to 'power within' that needs to be strengthened; power within needs recognition by experience and analysis of the subordination of women. According to Kabeer, such power cannot be given; it has to be self – generated and taken. Empowerment is a process where women are able to change from a state of powerlessness ('I cannot') to a state of collective self – confidence ('we can')10.Development of women, safeguarding their interest is to ensure that they are brought into the mainstream to take advantage of the general development activities. The various efforts and activities for the development of women are based on the empowerment strategy and policy making.

#### Women and Development:

The right to lead a long and healthy life irrespective of gender is fundamental to the idea of human development. The denial of access to productive resources, basic education, health care facilities to the women, is in effect, is the denial of the basic freedom to build a better future. Since 1995, UNDP has been measuring the gender disparities in human development to identify the extent of its variation across various regions, social groups and communities. In fact, while studying the

3 Sen, Kalyani Menon and Ak Shiva Kumar (2001), 'Women in India How Free? How Equal?,' Mensa Computers Pvt.Ltd.

4 The development means capacity building, expanding one's ability and energy to bring about desired (as far as possible) change at individual, community, national or global level. It addresses equity or distributional issues so that increasing development and increasing productive capacity mean broadening levels of well – being for many people, not just a few (Barbara Thomas Slayter, 1955).

5 Sustainable development refers not only to economic development based on sustained yield of renewable resources, but also to a process of social change which secures human welfare while maintaining the natural resource base.

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level of development of a region, it is essential that one takes into account the fact that the development outcomes should spread evenly across all sections of the society. It is almost a well accepted notion that nowhere in the world do women enjoys equal opportunities compared to men. However, along with the progress of socio-economic development in some spheres and in many countries significant progress has been made towards achieving gender equality in development. Still, it is often observed that women, particularly, lag behind their male counterparts in many aspects.

The latest Human Development Index (HDI) 2015 report themed on how access to work in a digital era labour market can improve lives termed India's National Rural Employment Guarantee act a 'milestone' that has ensured 'greater social protection'. Despite the progress, India's 2014 HDI score was 0.609, which is below the average of the medium development nations (0.630), according to the report published by the Human Development Report office of the United Nations Development Programme. Although India, the world's ninth richest country, look to be scaling up the rankings rather quickly, the picture is not all rosy. When adjusted for equality, the country's actual improvement is just one rank since last year.

This means that development has been highly skewed, and causes an overall human development 'loss' of 28.6% under scoring the need for policies that will enable wider, more secure and sustainable employment. The findings show gender inequality is a growing risk. For every 1000, live births, 190 women die from pregnancy – related causes every year in India. The figure for Bangladesh and

6 Siwal, B.R. (2010) 'Empowerment of Women: Conceptual Framework' in Archana Sinha ed Sustaining Communities Strategies for Sustainable Community Development, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 202.

7 Ibid.

8Kabeer, 1999, 'Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment' in Development and Change, Vol. 30, 437.

9 Ibid.

10 Siwal, B.R., 2010, 'Empowerment of Women: Conceptual Framework' in Archana Sinha ed Sustaining Communities Strategies for Sustainable Community Development, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 214.

Pakistan is lower at 170. Only 27% of adult women reach at least a secondary level of education in contrast to 56.6% of their male counterparts in India. In India, the world's largest democracy by size and population, 12.2% seats in Parliament are held by women, while 20% parliamentary seats are held by women in Pakistan. The maternal mortality ratio of women in war torn Syria is better at 49 then India. Iraq too, despite a lower rank, tops India on maternal deaths (67 per 1000 births against India's 190).

The HDI report calls upon countries to increase access to employment in a labour market transformed by digital technology and globalization. Indian farmers and fisher folk who compare wholesale prices and track weather on mobile phones increased profits 8%. Better interest access will enable more people to work from home increasing living standards.

Given globalization and technological changes, employment terms tend to be skewed against workers, 46% of them are vulnerable in India. The HDI report says newer forms of trade unionism and worker organizations, such as India's Self Employed Women's Association of India, widely known as SEWA, strengthen social protection and need to be supportedll.According to the Gender Development Index (GDI) 2014, female HDI value for India is 0.525 in contrast to 0.660 for males and Gender inequality Index (GII) value is 0.563.

# **Developmental Policies for Women:**

Policy making for women involves the usual formal or informal channels of planning, as in the case of other areas of national development, which concern government. The formal channels are the legislative, the executive, both political and bureaucratic, and the Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog). The informal and very influential groups of policy making are the political parties and non – governmental organizations. In the case of policy for women, the voluntary organisations for women, eminent women in different walks of life and women activists do play a very important role in policy formation12.

<sup>11</sup>Haq, Zia, Dec 15, 2015,00.09 IST, 'India at 130 among 188 countries in human development, up 5 slots', Hindustan Times, New Delhi.

Although women has been given rights under the Hindu Succession Act, 195613, for inheriting an equal share of their husband's property along with their mother – in – law and children. They also inherit an equal share of their fathers' property as also their sons'. In fact, there is no country in the world which gives women better inheritance legislation. Under the Hindu Marriage, 1955, a woman has the right to monogamous marriage and to divorce.

The National Commission for Women Act, 1991, sets up a statutory body to act as an advocate of women's interests. Finally, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, 1993, provides for reservation of seats for women in Panchayat Raj institutions.

## Constitution of India and Women's rights:

The Constitution of India, which came into force on 26 January 1950, is amongst the most comprehensive constitutions in the world. It contains 447 Articles divided into 26 parts and 12 schedules. The Preamble, Part III of the Constitution consisting of Fundamental Rights, Part IV (A) containing Fundamental Duties, constitute the human rights framework in our constitution14.The Constitution granted equality to women and empowering the state to adopt measures of affirmative discrimination in favour of women.

#### The Constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women:

- a. Equality before the law. Article 14
- b. No discrimination by the state on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of these. Article 15(1)
- c. Special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children. Article 15(3)
- d. Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state. Article 16

12 Seth, Mira (2001), Women and Development The Indian Experience, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 52.

13 The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted to amend and codify the law relating to unwilled succession among Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs. According to the law, any property possessed by a Hindu female is to be held by her absolute property.

- e. State policy to be directed to securing for men and women equally, the right to an adequate means of livelihood. Article 39(a)
- f. Equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Article 39(d)
- g. Provisions to be made by the state for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. Article 42
- h. To promote harmony and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. Article 51(A)(e)15.

Drawing the strength from the constitutional commitments, the Government of India has been engaged in the continuous endeavour of concretely translating all the rights, commitments and safeguards incorporated in the Indian Constitution for women.

## Evolution in the Approach of Five Year Plans for development of Women:

The approach on women development changed from viewing women as beneficiaries of social services to contributors of social and economic development process in nation building. Development approach has attempted to address not only women's immediate needs but also their strategic gender interests addressing inequalities in employment, political participation and cultural and legal status. In the last few decades a significant shift has been apparent in the planning process of country. Approaches towards empowering women which was started with 'welfare' in the fifties, shifted to 'development' in the seventies and has been successfully continued under different Five Year Plans.

A review of Five Year Plans will reflect that by framing different approaches and strategies, the Government has tried to create an enabling environment with various affirmative developmental policies and programmes for women

14 South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre (2006) Introducing Human Rights An Overview Including Issues of Gender Justice, Environmental, and Consumer Law, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 66.

15 Sen, Kalyani Menon and Ak Shiva Kumar (2001), 'Women in India How Free? How Equal?,' Mensa Computers Pvt. Ltd.Sen, Kalyani Menon and Ak Shiva Kumar (2001), 'Women in India How Free? How Equal?,' Mensa Computers Pvt. Ltd. empowerment, besides providing them easy and equal access to all the basic minimum services.

From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974 – 79) there was a marked shift from welfare to development, recognising women as participants in the process of development. In the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980 – 85) a multi – disciplinary approach, with a special thrust on three core sectors – health, education and employment had been affected. The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) stated, for the first time, that confidence building and awareness of their rights among women must be accelerated so that women realize their own potential for development and their rights to a share from this process. It also spoke, for the first time, of the need for initiating integrated development projects for women covering health, education, nutrition, application of technology and science and creation of employment16.

In the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) the emphasis was on training and skill development programmes to make women economically independent and self – reliant. Empowerment of women was recognized and accepted as a distinct strategy. In the Ninth Plan, which runs from 1997 to 2002, the empowerment of women is one of its nine primary objectives. Also, the Plan attempted convergence of services available in both women – specific and women – related sectors. This was the first plan which involved women's groups from around the country in a consultative process. However, the Ninth Five Year Plan refrained from making any commitment for achieving any specific goal or target. This was overcome to some extent in the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007), which emphasized on empowerment of women and also views development of children as the most desirable societal investment with a rights – based approach to their development17.The Eleventh Plan (2007-12) has also laid great emphasis on

16Seth, Mira (2001), Women and Development The Indian Experience, Sage Publication, New Delhi,63.

17 Raju, Saraswati (2006) 'Locating Women in Social Development', in India Social Development Report, Council for Social Development, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 80.

18 Somasekhar, K. (2014) 'Empowerment of Women Need for New Initiatives', in Nagaraju Battu (ed) Empowerment of Women in India New Strategies, Regal Publications, New Delhi, 64-65.

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removing gender disparities by ensuring access to basic physical infrastructure as well as health and education services to all. It has recognized gender as a crosscutting theme across all sectors and commit to respect and promote the rights of the common people18.

## The National Commission for Women:

Owing to the overwhelmingly patriarchal structure of Indian society, women have been relegated to a secondary status and have been subject to various legal and social discriminations. The framers of the Constitution recognized the need to remove such inequalities, and made special provisions to redress the same. The need was felt for a structure to uphold the rights and implement the provisions of beneficial legislations in an organized and institutionalized manner. The National Commission for Women (NCW) is a statutorily constituted body under the National Commission for Women Act, 199019.The Commission highlighted the problems and position of disadvantaged groups like Scheduled Castes and Tribes, widows, prostitutes and women living in slum areas20.

## Measures for Improving Health Standard:

Sustainable socio – economic development is possible only if the health and education are given top priority in the process of planning. The issue of health and the right to health is considered in all developing countries and developed countries as an issue of fundamental importance. As per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) everyone has the right to adequate health and well being. The article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UDHR) encapsulated the 'Right to Health' in the following words:

1. 'Everyone has a right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and of his family including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of

19 South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre (2006) Introducing Human Rights An Overview Including Issues of Gender Justice, Environmental, and Consumer Law, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 145.

20 National Commission for Women (1996), Annual Report, 1992 – 93 to 1996, National Commission for Women, New Delhi. unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Viewing women in a much larger role, there has to be a swing back to planning and policies. Also, preventive, curative, and promotional health services have to converge. More importantly, women's health has to be seen as a social issue closely interlinked with other spheres of their existence framed by patriarchal structures.

In the case of the many developing nations, the basic indicators of health are found to be unsatisfactory. People live below the standards expected to maintain good health. When the target was fixed as the 'Health for all by 2000 AD', all nations planned to achieve it as targeted.. Of the three areas of health, the promotive, the preventive and curative, the promotive aspect was given the priority21.

Promotion of health would assure a high quality life, active participation, good habits, and high input of work, healthy mind, sound thought and happy interpersonal relationship leading to a healthy society. To work on health promotion, education of the masses and spreading of health information among them is very much essential. Health information could be disseminated in the community fast with the help of media. But this is feasible in the case of developed nation where the educational and economic statuses are high. But the situation in the traditional/ developing societies is different. These societies require active participation of human resources than the application of mechanical media. Interpersonal contacts, awareness campaigns, persuasion through persistent contact only will help in disproving the existing traditional mode of health practices22.

Health is one of the central elements of human security because it refers to the welfare of individuals and present at the core of their survival. Women's health is

21 Nalini, B. And S. Elango, 2005, in Narayana Reddy, V. et.al eds Women in Development Challenges and Achievements, Serial Publications, New Delhi,231.

the foundation of a healthy nation. A healthy women as Martha Nussbaum's Capability Approach, who is able to lead a complete healthy life in healthy circumstances till the end of life.23. A woman's sociological, economic and health implications are affected by the malnourishment and long working hours. Government of India has taken various steps for improving the condition of women's health, especially for the women who belong to the marginalized communities of the society. Some of them are –

# National Health Policies:

National Health Policy which was adopted in 1983 was to attain the goal of Health for All by the year 2000 by establishing an effective and efficient health care system for all citizens, in particular vulnerable groups like women, children and underprivileged. Other major priority areas were: close coordination of healthrelated services and activities like drinking water supply, sanitation, and nutrition, the active involvement and participation of voluntary organizations and provision of essential drugs and vaccines. The target was attained more or less in all states.

In the year 2002, a new National Health Policy was again formulated. The major concerns were the determinants of health- water, food, sanitation, and environment. There are 137,271 sub-centres functioning in the country of which the Centre finances 97,757 and the states the balance.

The Public Health Centre (PHC) is the first contact point between the village community and the medical officer, and there are 22,975 PHCs operational in the country. The PHC, as the name suggest, has facilities mainly for primary out – patient care with minimal arrangements for in – patients, while the Community Health Centre (CHC) has facilities for secondary care, with specialists and in – patients beds. There are 2935 functioning CHCs24.

These developments imply major challenges for the reproductive health agenda. The following issues need to be addressed: 1) affordable cost and access

22 Ibid.

23 Williams, M.J., S.B. Williams and P.S.Choo (2014), 'From Women in Fisheries to gender and fisheries' in SPC Women in Fisheries Information Bulletin, 24 – July 2014, 6-9.

to services, 2) decentralization and devolution to panchayat raj institutions (PRIs), 3) community need based planning, 4) sustainability of infrastructure and workforce, and 5) improved quality of services. There is growing consensus in the country over the need to acknowledge the rights to and needs of adolescents, girls and boys, married and unmarried, to education, health, empowerment, livelihood, and social mobilization.

# National Urban Health Mission (NHUM):

National Urban Health Mission (NHUM) encourages the participation of the community in the planning and management of the health care services. It would promote an urban poor settlements (USHA) (one USHA for 1000 – 2500 urban poor population covering about 200 to 500 households), ensure the participation by creation of community based institutions like Mahila Arogya Samiti (20 –1000 Households) and Rogi Kalyan Samitis. It would proactively reach out to urban poor settlements by way of regular outreach sessions and monthly health and nutrition day. It mandates special attention for reaching out to other vulnerable sections like construction workers, rag pickers, sex workers, brick kin workers, rickshaw pullers, boat man communities, fishing communities, etc.

The NHUM would promote community health risk. Health insurance, as measures for protecting the poor from impoverishing effect of out of the pocket expenditures. For promoting community risk pooling mechanism slum women would be organised into Mahila Arogya Samiti. The members of the MAS would be encouraged to save money on monthly basis for meeting the health emergencies. The group members themselves would decide the lending norms and rate of interest. The NHUM would provide seed money of Rs. 2500 to the MAS (@Rs. 25/- per household represented by the MAS). The NHUM also proposes incentives to the group on the basis of the targets achieved for strengthening the savings.

The NUHM would promote an urban health insurance model which provides for the cost of accessing health care for surgery and hospitalisation needs for the

24Nanda A.R. and Almas Ali (2006), 'Health Sector Issues and Challenges', in India Social Development Report, Council for Social Development, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 26.

urban population at reasonable cost and assured quality, while subsidizing the insurance premium for the urban slum and vulnerable population. The mission recognizes that state specific, community oriented innovative and flexible insurance policies need to be developed.

# The Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY):

This is a maternity benefit programme introduced in 2010 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. This is a conditional cash transfer programme for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above for first two live births. In 2013, the scheme has been brought under National Food Security Act, 2013,25for implementing the provision of cash maternity benefit of Rs. 6000. Presently 200 'high burden districts' are under consideration for this scheme.

## **Conclusion:**

Gender equality in society implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. Despite many developmental efforts, women are still much more likely to be poor and illiterate than men. They usually have less access to medical care, property ownership, credit, and training and in employment. They are far less likely to be politically active and far more likely to be victims of domestic violence compared to men. The discourse of development is incomplete without the overall development of women in all fields including healthcare, economic independence and education. There are several measures for addressing the problems of marginalized sections of the society especially for women at international, national and local levels but still there are lacunae in the policies and their implementation for the women.

For institutionalizing the issues, it is essential that both men and women are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Only the government orders cannot bridge this lack of awareness, leaving open the possibility that the gender roles can

25The National Food Security Act 2013, passed by the parliament of India, to provide subsidized food grains to two third of the Indian population. It includes the Midday Meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services Scheme and the Public Distribution System. become a controversial issue, which affects the sustenance of the total programme. A comprehensive campaign is therefore, required to overcome this lack of awareness. Here, Non – Government Organisations can play an important role by organising workshops and seminars to make people, especially women, aware of their

potentialities and catalyse them in taking greater role jointly in development work so that development can be of the people, for the people and by the people26.

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26 Tyagi and Chatterjee,2005, 'Women in Development', in Narayana Reddy, V. et.al eds Women in Development Challenges and Achievements, Serial Publications, New Delhi,42-43.

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