

A Mixed Method Approach to a Study on the Contribution and Role of Women in Livelihood
and Sustainable Development Goals

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Track 1: Integrating Gender Perspectives into SDG Implementation

A Mixed Method Approach to a Study on the Contribution and Role of Women in Livelihood
and Sustainable Development Goals.

by

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ABSTRACT

Kofi Annan once rightly said, "Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development, and building good governance. " As the world strives to work towards equal participation, there are several issues that need to be addressed, especially women related problems. Women are generally considered a weaker section of society. The idea behind gender equality is to break the prejudices and stereotypes behind women being called the weaker sex. To implement this drastic transformation, nations need to initiate better policies, quicker justice, and easier transactions.

The sustainable development goals aim at improving the quality of life in general for every human being and collectively as a nation. The study here focuses on the prominence and inexorableness of the role of women in economic development and sustainable livelihood. This paper examines the different measures and schemes formulated by the government of India and voluntary organisations for the benefit of women, ensuring that they align with the sustainable development goals. The case studies mentioned specifically are the contributions of women to family income. It is a descriptive study with a mixed method approach of both qualitative and quantitative analysis of women self-help groups (SHG) and the impetus of micro financing schemes for a better and sustainable livelihood for women, especially in the agricultural sector. The study also aims to understand the benefits of welfare measures, thereby enabling women to lead a hassle-free and dignified life. This research paper also analyses the role and contribution of women in sustainable development goals. The success stories also reflect the turmoil and mayhem confronted by these women, yet they have engaged in sustainable livelihoods, contributing to family income and also participating in achieving the Sustainable Development goals for the nation

Keywords: SHG-Self Help Groups, SDG-Sustainable Development Goals, Economic independence, Sustainable Livelihood.

METHODOLOGY:

This study is an analysis based on the secondary data and various articles and newspaper material from different journals and government portals. Various schemes and policies initiated by the government of India and articles based on Women empowerment are referred. Seminars and Webinars on Sustainable Livelihood has been analysed and opinions from different personalities have been mentioned wherever needed. The study observes a qualitative approach towards the development of women population in the country and also an analysis of the statistical data available in the development index.

NEED FOR STUDY:

This study enlists, evaluates and explains the role of women and their empowerment in making India sustainable and self-reliant. The study appreciates the current trends and policies laid down by the government and also analyses the need for more research into creating better opportunities, training and guidance for women from different strata of the society and raise awareness such that women step forward to pursue their goals, thereby helping the nation.

The study calls for further research on better policy making to include women as a significant asset to develop the economic situation. The study identifies successful women who have led their people towards betterment and this idea must be communicated in order to create awareness in other like-minded women. A detailed study can be probed on identifying more prominent women who are successfully self-reliant and understood their situation and difficulties thereby tapping the potential of women workforce for a sustainable India.

AIM OF THE STUDY:

- ✓ To identify the current success stories of women and their empowerment in contributing towards a Sustainable India.
- ✓ To evaluate the schemes and opportunities provided for women by the government of India in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- ✓ To analyse the gaps in communication and implementation of effective empowerment programmes throughout the country.
- ✓ To suggest measures based on the analysis for women empowerment towards sustainable livelihood.

Sustainable Development Goals and Gender Issues

The government of India strongly believes that the women population can definitely contribute to a significant growth in the GDP and economic development of the nation if they contribute to the workforce.

“...The rationality of the focus on youth and women is premised on the role this segment plays in pushing the country’s agenda for sustainable development by 2030 and its ambition of a \$5 trillion GDP by 2025. Women, in particular, have the potential to generate 150–170 million jobs by 2030 and add \$700 billion to the GDP by 2025 through workforce participation.”¹

¹ Smile Foundation. <https://www.smilefoundationindia.org/article-realising-the-vision-of-a-women-led-atma-nirbhar-bharat.html>

The article states that women have the potential to substantially increase the economic performance of the nation by improving employment opportunities. Women-led small businesses help in generating more number of jobs that increase the numbers in the economy.

Among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, 7 goals in particular are focussed and strongly dedicated towards gender issues and amplifying the voice of the unheard section of the society, Women. They are as follows:

1. No Poverty
2. Good Health and Well Being
3. Gender Equality
4. Decent work and Economic growth
5. Reduced Inequality
6. Peace and Justice strong Institutions
7. Partnerships to achieve Goals

Women who contribute to the Sustainable development

1. Sita Devi, a farmer from Tehri in Uttarakhand, popularly known as the “kiwi-queen” has been growing kiwis in her land after being faced by severe disturbances from people and monkeys that spoil her original crops. Sita Devi has been supported by Self-help groups and by the Horticulture department to cultivate kiwis in her land which aren't spoiled by the monkeys. She owns several trees and is now selling kilos of the fruit to nearby towns and villages.²
2. Saka Shailaja, a Dalit woman from Telengana, has empowered and encouraged over 10000 women from under-privileged castes and backgrounds, by teaching them beauty courses for free and helped them set up their own businesses. She has also started her own brand of cosmetics, SYNNOVE, which has reached a turnover of more than 50 lakh rupees. Saka Shailaja believes that there needs to be a proper guidance for women and hence she has started this initiative of training women in need. She stands out to be a perfect role model for aspiring women entrepreneurs.³
3. Dr.Rakhi Agarwal, the founder of Sakhi Welfare Society, from Bijnor district of Uttar Pradesh, has been sincerely dedicating the efforts of the organization to uplift women and make them capable of starting their own businesses, through several workshops such as pickle making, sanitary napkin making and making face masks during covid-19. She has empowered several women, from different walks of life and encouraged them to start their own enterprises. She also holds workshops on self-defence training and health and hygiene awareness.⁴
4. Smriti Lamech, an entrepreneur, along with the self-help group Prowess in Kodaikanal, Tamilnadu, initiated the idea of making dolls using fabric and these dolls were to inspire women and children. The dolls were based on iconic women such as Kalpana Chawla, Maya Angelou and Savitri Phule. The women in the self-help groups have been able to create these dolls after training and they used old fabric to

²Gupta, Ria. 2021. “Defying Disapproval, Tehri’s Kiwi Queen Reaps Sweet Success With Innovative Farming” <https://www.thebetterindia.com/259581/uttarakhand-woman-farmer-kiwi-queen-sita-devi-success-story-india/> The Better India.

³Saka Shailaja, 2021. “Meet Saka Shailaja – A Dalit Woman Entrepreneur Who Has Uplifted 10,000+ Underprivileged Women in Telangana” <https://velivada.com/2021/07/10/meet-saka-shailaja-a-dalit-woman-entrepreneur-who-has-uplifted-10000-underprivileged-women-in-telangana/>. Velivada.

⁴ <http://sakhiwelfare.com/>

create them. Smriti has generated employment for so many women who help her out in making these ragdolls.⁵

5. Awaz Social Welfare Society, an NGO from Chattisgarh, provides for Cake making classes for over 100 women to empower them to start their own baking units or institutes.⁶
6. Dr. Priyadarshini Karve, a well-known scientist from Pune, has contributed majorly in the prevention of air pollution by creating biochar briquettes and steam stoves that are made from agricultural waste. Dr. Karve has developed into making soaps as well from biochar briquettes. The biochar is environment friendly and can be used for several purposes without emitting smoke. Dr. Karve is the founder of her social enterprise Samvuchit Enviro Tech which is also working on climate change and the strategies to curb that. (<https://www.thebetterindia.com/256444/karve-pune-biochar-samuchit-enviro-tech-steam-cooker-stove-buy-now-dr-priyadarshini-renewable-energy-carbon-footprint-environment-him16/>)
7. Amma Baghi, an entrepreneur from Arunachal Pradesh has been empowering women in making dolls and handicrafts in order to encourage them to attain financial independence during the pandemic stricken times. She has conducted several free training classes for women from different strata and motivated them towards a secure future. Her determination has brought her a long way in making herself and other women self-reliant.⁷
8. Devipatan Welfare organization from Gonda of Uttar Pradesh aims at training women from different villages in stitching, cutting and sewing and making women independent and self-reliant. The interested women are gathered and given continuous training and also provided with enough material to pursue their desires. The aim of the organization is to “help the helpless”.⁸
9. Many districts in Maharashtra suffer from darkness and no power supply. The women of Manyachiwadi village have come together as a 12member Self-help group and contributed to a major source of money to install solar plants all over the village. This has enabled the villagers to have power supply throughout the day and children can study as per their needs. This is a classic example of how women empowerment can make a difference in the lives of so many.⁹
10. In 2018, a similar situation was portrayed in the Vellore district where women of the villages in the district of Vellore have come together and worked towards the rejuvenation of a river, River Naganadhi, which had become dry over the years. The women together along with the Art of Living foundation and MGNREGA schemes were employed to make the rings for the wells and they dug out wells to help restore water.¹⁰

⁵ Norzom, Tenzin. “This woman entrepreneur is hand-crafting dolls of women icons to inspire the younger generation” <https://yourstory.com/herstory/2021/01/woman-entrepreneur-feminist-doll-kalpana-chawla-maya-angelou/amp> January, 2021

⁶ <https://aatmanirbharbharat.mygov.in/activity/professional-cake-training/>

⁷ <https://aatmanirbharbharat.mygov.in/activity/amma-baghi-an-entrepreneur-empowering-women-in-arunachal-pradesh/>

⁸ <https://aatmanirbharbharat.mygov.in/activity/mahila-swarojgar-abhiyan/>

⁹ Chaturvedi, Tulika. “How Women Turned A Tiny Village Struggling With Darkness Into A Solar Gram” <https://www.thebetterindia.com/268152/maharashtra-village-manyachiwadi-solar-gram-electricity-sustainable-women-success/>. December 2021.

¹⁰ <https://www.iahv.org/in-en/women-of-naganadhi-unite-for-rivers-life/>

SCHEMES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

The government of India has given separate attention towards the empowerment of women and their growth for a better India.

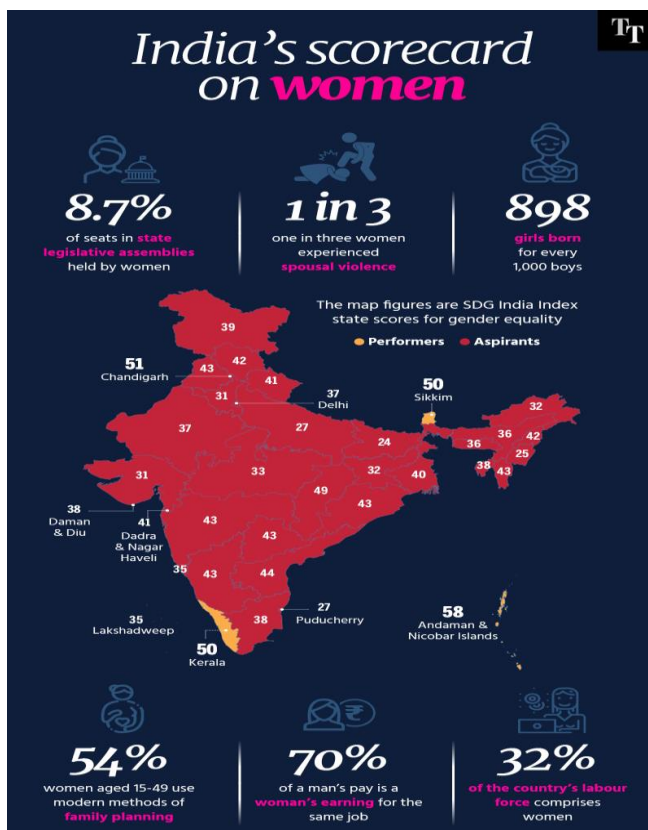
- Women Entrepreneurship platform by NITI Aayog- The platform initiated by the Niti Aayog, is said to have been formed for the welfare of women with an idea to start up or even are running a business and provides for several programmes that include networking, tax assistance, skill development and act as guiding force to realize their dream in the right path.
- Self-help groups- these groups were initiated by the government for women to come together and share their ideas, brainstorm and device plans to effectively implement their ideas. SHG are general a group of 18-25 members who are like-minded and work towards a common goal such as finance, empowerment, training, skill and much more.
- Vocal for Local- Despite the pandemic situation, women entrepreneurs have stepped up in front and sincerely made efforts to start up their brands and realize the dream of the nation which is to be self-reliant. The government of India has been very supportive of such women and is not able to give financial support and welcoming them into the industry.
- Project Her and Now- The German federal Ministry for Economic cooperation and the Indian ministry for skill development have teamed up for supporting women entrepreneurs economically, morally and socially for them to grow their business and inspire more women to participate in the nation's goal. The project is very popular among female leaders and business oriented women and provides for their growth.
- She The People TV- popularly called as "the Women's channel", it is a website and a form of digital media that reaches success stories, businesses, women-related events and videos, to all inspiring and struggling women. The digital media has a faster reach and better updation than the normal print media and hence women from every walk of the society can know. The website is available in both English and Hindi, and shares news about women from all over the globe.
- Bank of Baroda- Women Gold Scheme – the Bank of Baroda in Bangalore has initiated a gold loan at very subsidised and low loan rates exclusively for women with the sole motive to help women to be self-reliant. These loans help women to borrow money for gold at low interest rates and help set up their business. The scheme is named after the major idea of Atmanirbhar Bharat.¹¹
- National Mission for empowerment of Women- the mission was launched way back in 2010 but the values have always been very supportive of women and their dreams to pursue their dreams and also enable women on overall development of women on various levels.
- Cent Kalyani Scheme- this scheme was initiated by the Central Bank of India in order to encourage and support women entrepreneurs to set up their start-up and small businesses. The scheme provides low interests at concession rates for loans and helps women financially. The scheme also covers cost of machinery and material in specific.
- MUDRA Yojana- this scheme was also launched by the Government of India to support women in starting up small units of business.
- Bharatiya Mahila Bank- the Bharatiya Mahila Bank was initiated in 2013. The bank is run completely by women and provides for exclusive schemes for women to help support them financially and also helps them take ownership of assets which provides them with security emotionally.

¹¹ The Hindu Business Line "BoB launches Atmanirbhar Women Gold Scheme"
<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/bob-launches-atmanirbhar-women-gold-scheme/article33272257.ece> December 2020.

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- The Prime Minister Rojgar Yojana- the main aim of this scheme is to provide job opportunities for women and youth and also create a financial security for employment, such that they do not deviate themselves into anti-social activities.
- NABARD's SHG-Bank Linkage programme- this programme is a joint venture between NABARD and SHGs, where financial assistance is given and savings accounts are allowed to be held. Due to this link, women are able to earn and save enough money without losing it to irresponsible people.

These schemes and programmes and several other encouraging measures taken by the government has helped women and will continue to support their ideas. This is a positive sign that the women and girls of the country are not only for "Beti Bachao, Beti padao" but she will now become an "Atmanirbhar Beti"¹²



<https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/indian-women-and-the-aspiration-of-equality-a-niti-aayog-report/cid/1681191>

The above figure, which is a report by the niti aayog, portrays that almost all states except the states of Kerala and Sikkim are still struggling and aspiring for a better development index with respect to Gender equality. The 32% women workforce suggests that there is still a lot more women potential to be tapped in the country. Equal pay is still an alarming concern due to which most women drop out of jobs. Beyond the usual scenario of domestic violence, mortality rate and female infanticide rates, women are still coming up to the fore and this talent must be rightly used.

SUGGESTIVE MEASURES

¹² Thakur, Jyoti. "Atmanirbhar Bharat & Women's Economic Empowerment Through The Lens Of Gender Equity". <https://feminisminindia.com/2020/11/18/atmanirbhar-bharat-women-in-labour-force/> Feminism India, 2020

The Government of India has taken several steps to meet the needs of every individual and address every issue through schemes and welfare measures, however there are a few suggestive measures that can help bridge the gap between the needs and the power that provides for it.

1. The reach of Women Self-Help Groups must cover more women population and remote villages such that women are aware that they can be of more benefit to the country's development and be of significant economic importance. Programmes like the Women Entrepreneurship programme should be popularized in more villages such that women understand the need to start small businesses in order to create awareness that the government of India supports such ideas of women, financially and mentally.
2. "Only 32 per cent of India's workforce is female and they earn 30 per cent less than men on average."¹³ This clearly suggests that the women workforce even when tapped and brought to the front, are experiencing inequality and injustice of unequal pay. The government of India must bring in strict measures of legally implementing equal pay for all genders be it in whatever class of work or labour.
3. A recent report by the International Finance Corporation said

"... the estimated credit demand by women-owned very small businesses (WVSEs) in India was worth Rs 83,000 crore. The report noted about 15 million women-owned MSMEs facing challenges such as inadequate access to capital, technology and information, and infrastructure gaps..."¹⁴

This clearly suggests the gaps in implementation of welfare measures that women are not provided with enough access to technology and infrastructure which serves as the basis for development in today's fast moving world.

4. One of the most important and pressing issue even today is the gender bias. More men need to be educated on the need for women to work and be empowered such that they are not subjugated to domestic violence and suppression.

CONCLUSION

Women in India are capable of running businesses and taking risks for a better world. This potential needs to be harnessed in the right manner. The Government of India has been taking several measures in making its women self-reliant yet there needs to be acceptance from the citizens to let women stand in the front and lead the nation. Dr. Ishita Agarwar, co-founder of the Atal Innovation Mission, says that "women are already leading in the country in the senior management levels and when compared to the global situation of 31% of women in corporate leadership India has already surpassed it at 39%. This is a positive sign yet we must safeguard this and help this grow and not fall..".

Technology is a major source of empowerment for women and women should be able to access it in order to come out of the limitations one is in. Ms. Poonam Kaul, Apple CMO, says that "women should be given employment opportunities such as flexi timings,

¹³ Data cited from report between 2011-2018

¹⁴ MSME Desk. "Women MSMEs: Key govt schemes see more women takers as beneficiary count jumps in FY22 from previous year"

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-eodb-women-msmes-key-govt-schemes-see-more-women-takers-as-beneficiary-count-jumps-in-fy22-from-previous-year/2601994/> July 2022.

work from home and the like so that there are no more drop outs due to the work itself as women are already multitasking”. This particular study shows that women are currently in a better position from what they were few years back and this graph should be on the steady increase trend and not drop. So there needs to be more participation and more women need to enter the sphere to improve our GDP despite the cruel pandemic situation.

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