

Women Empowerment in the Five Year Plans of India

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Abstract: Empowerment, as a means and an end of human development, is related to the vulnerable or disadvantaged sections of the society like women. The paper aims at examining the provisions for women empowerment in the five year plans of India. Uncertainty or problems arise when moving theory to practice. In the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) the development of women has been treated as subject of 'Welfare.' Later on in the subsequent five year plans, the term as an approach has changed from 'Welfare' to 'Development' and to 'Empowerment.' Like other previous five year plans, the twelfth five year Plan also sought to end gender based inequities, discrimination and violence faced by girls and women. It is recommended that governments and voluntary sectors have to make policies of empowerment for women and translate strategies in to actions removing inequalities in access to and control over resources, in economic opportunities, in power, rights and political voice.

Key Words: Constitutional Provisions, Five Year Plans, Women empowerment, India.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Empowerment is seen as a means to poverty reduction or as an end in itself. Empowerment often means redressing imbalances of power between those who have it and those who do not. Uncertainty or problems arise when moving beyond rhetoric and into operationalization. Empowerment is related to the weaker or marginalized target groups or sections of the Society. They includes the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs), the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and the Minorities; women, Persons with Disability (PwDs), the Senior citizens, Victims of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse etc. The paper aims at examining the provisions for women empowerment in the Five Year Plans of India.

2. FIVE YEAR PLANS OF INDIA AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

2.1 From 'Welfare' to 'Development' to 'Empowerment' Approaches

In the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) the development of Women has been treated as subject of 'Welfare' and clubbed together with the welfare of the under-privileged groups (such as, ST, SC, and OBC including criminal tribes) and the disadvantaged groups like destitute, disables, aged etc. The words 'Social Welfare' in the Chapter: 29 of Second Five Year Plan, meant 'the well-being of the entire Community, not only of particular sections of population which may be handicapped in one way or another.' Thus, the First to Fifth Five Year Plans treated the uplift of vulnerable and marginalized groups as 'Welfare'. For examples, 'Social Welfare' (chapter: 36 in 1st FYP), 'Social Welfare Services' (chapter: 29 in 2nd FYP), 'Welfare Programmes of Social Welfare' (chapter:35 in 3rd FYP) & 'Social Welfare' (chapter:20 in 4th FYP). In the 6th Plan, the approach was shifted from 'welfare' to 'development' with the inclusion of new chapter named 'Women and Development' (chapter:27). In the 7th Plan, the long-run objective of the 'Development Programmes for Women' was to raise their economic and social status in order to bring them into the mainstream of national development. Hence, the 7th Plan kept a chapter entitled 'Socio-Economic Programmes for Women'. The 8th Plan included a sub-theme 'Development of Women' in the chapter 'Social Welfare' and thus tried to shift in the 'Development' approach. The Ninth Five Year Plan (Vol-2) in the Chapter 3: Human and Social Development consists of two sub-themes entitled "Empowerment of Women and Development of Children" and "Empowerment of the Socially Disadvantaged Groups" respectively. In the 9th Plan, women was considered as a separate target group and as an agent of social change and development, and the approach had shifted from 'Development' to 'Empowerment of Women.' In the context of adopting human development as the ultimate goal of all our developmental efforts, empowerment of women gained priority in the development agenda of Tenth Five Year Plan. The tenth Five Year Plan (Vol. 2) in the Chapter 2 entitled 'Human and Social Development' included a sub-theme entitled 'Women and Child' where 'Empowerment of Women' was analysed. In the Eleventh Plan, for the first time, women are recognized not just as equal citizens but agents of economic and social growth. Therefore, the Eleventh Five Year Plan in the 'Volume II : Social Sector' included the 'Chapter 6: Towards Women's Agency and Child Rights' and expressed Empowerment of disadvantaged and hitherto marginalized groups as an essential part of any vision of inclusive growth.

2.2 Transition of approaches of India's Five year Plans and programmes undertaken for Women Empowerment

The transition of approaches of India's Five year Plan and programmes undertaken related to empowerment of women are mentioned below:

First Five Year Plan (1951- 1956)

The First Five Year Plan (1951- 1956) the Central Government set up a Central Social Welfare Board with the object especially of assisting voluntary agencies in organising welfare programmes for women and children and the handicapped groups. The Board has, in turn, in collaboration with State Governments, organised State Social Welfare Boards throughout the country in 1954. National Family Planning Programme was launched in 1951 that later on converted to as National Family Welfare Programme. Community Development Programme was commenced in 1952.

Third Five Year Plan (1966-67 to 1968-69)

Prohibition was regarded as an integral part of the Second Five Year Plan and recommends that the Planning Commission should formulate the necessary programme to bring about nation-wide Prohibition speedily and effectively." The development of the Dandakaranya project was taken up in the Second Plan with the object primarily of settling families of displaced persons from East Pakistan who were still in 'camps' in West Bengal and, along with this, for promoting the welfare of the local population, specially the adivasis. . In respect of displaced persons from West Pakistan, provisions in the Third Plan are limited mainly to residual requirements for housing schemes and assistance for educational and health services.

Fifth Five-Year Plan (1974-1978)

In 1976, the Women's Welfare and Development Bureau was set up under the Ministry of Social Welfare to act as a nodal point within the Govt. of India and to co-ordinate policies, programmes and initiate measures for women's development. The Fifth Plan made shift in the approach for women's upliftment from welfare to development to cope up with several problems of the family and the role of women aiming at an integration of welfare with development services. The National Plan of Action for Women adopted in 1976 which became a guiding document for development of women till 1988 when a National perspective Plan for women (1988-2000) was formulated.

Sixth Five-Year Plan (1980 – 1985)

During the 6th Five Year Plan, there was a shift of women approach from 'welfare' to 'development' of women. The Sixth Five Year Plan was regarded as landmark for women's development. The plan included for the first time a chapter entitled "Women and Development" (Chapter: 27) by adopting family as a unit of development and adopted a multi-disciplinary approach with a three pronged thrust on three core sectors viz. health, education and employment (of women). Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was set up in September 1982 to provide suitable opportunities of self-employment to the women belonging to the Rural families who are living below the poverty line.

Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-1990)

The Department of Women and Child Development was set up in 1985 as a part of the Ministry of Human Resource Development to give the much needed impetus to the holistic development of women and children. With effect from 30.01.06, the Department has been upgraded to a Ministry. The 7th five year plan the aimed at integrating women into the mainstream of national development. A significant step in 7th plan was to identity (or promote) 27 Beneficiary Oriented Schemes (BOS) (1986) having direct benefits for women in different Ministries/Departments. National Perspective Plan for Women (NPPW) (1988-2000) was issued by GOI in 1988. The purpose of this document is to access the extent to which women has been integrated into India's development and makes recommendations towards the equity and social justice for all women. The NPPW places great emphasis on reservations for women in various fields.

Eight Five Year Plan (1992- 1997)

Women, in deed, are not benefited from Women's development programme of India's Five Year Plan; rather, they were excluded from the benefits. In the UN questionnaire undertaken during women's Decade; instead of benefiting women, development leads to further marginalisation of women. The New Economic Policy (in the name of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation) benefited the urban rich and harmful to both rural poor including men and women.

The approach of 8th Plan marked a shift from 'development' to 'empowerment' of women. Some major initiatives in approach to women development schemes are

- i) Setting up of the National Commission for Women (NCW) in 1992 to safeguard the rights and interest of women.

- ii) Setting up of Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) in 1993 to meet the micro-credit needs of poor and asset less women.
- iii) Adoption of National Nutrition Policy (NNP) in 1993 in conformity with the constitutional commitment to improve nutritional status of the people in general and in particular that of children, adolescent girls, expectant and nursing mother.
- iv) Launching of the Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) in 1993 to promote thrift activities amongst women.
- v) Setting up of National Creche Fund (NCF) in 1994 to provide crèche services to the children of working mothers.
- vi) Launching of Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) in 1995 advocating an integrated approach for women empowerment through women SHGs. [IMY was renamed as Integrated Women's Empowerment Programme (Swayamidha) in 1999 and Mahila Samridhi Yojana was merged with it"(Eleventh Five Year Plan, GOI)].

The 8th Plan made 73rd and 74th Amendment Act of 1993 to the constitution of India which have provided for $\frac{1}{3}$ reserved of women seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women. Kasturba Gandhi Education Scheme (Aug. 15, 1997) was set up to establish girls' school in districts having low female literacy rate.

The 8th Plan (1992-97) with human development as its major focus played a very important role in the development of women. It promised to ensure that benefits of development from different sectors do not bypass women, implement special programmes to complement the general development programmes and to monitor the flow of benefits to women from other development sectors and enable women to function as equal partners and participants in the development process (10th FYP, Plan Comm. GOI, p.218). For economic empowerment & to provide "Near full-employment," the government has reset its priorities to accord special emphasis to keep women gainfully engaged through employment cum income generation activities. The ultimate objective of all these efforts is to make women economically independent and self-reliant. Some of the important initiative thus undertaken in this direction include launching of programmes viz., 'Work and Wage', 'Learn while you earn', 'Credit for Entrepreneurial/Self Employment Ventures', Employment Guaranty (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas), STEP (Support for Training and Employment), TEPC(Training cum Employment cum Production Centres) popularly known as NORAD are some of the important women-specific employment cum training programmes. There exist a few more programmes like, IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme), TRYSEM (Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment Programmes), JRY (Jawahar Rozgar Yojana), NRY (Nehru Rozgar Yojana), PMRY (Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana) which extend 30 to 40% reservation of benefits for women.

The schemes of Hostels for Working Women, Crèches for Children of Working/ Ailing Mothers, National Crèche Fund and Short Stay Homes for Women and Girls extend support services for women. The scheme of Hostels for Working Women provides safe and cheap accommodation to working women/girls who come to cities/ towns in search of employment.

Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002)

The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) made two significant changes in the conventional strategy of planning for women. 'Empowerment of women' became one of the 9 primary objections of the 9th plan. Women were considered to be empowerment as the agents of social change and development. The plan attempted 'convergence of existing services' available in both women-specific and women related sectors with a special strategy of 'women component Plan' (WCP) (10th FYP, Plan Comm. GOI).

The Govt adopted Bhagya Shree Bal Kalyan Policy (Oct. 19, 1998) to uplift the girls conditions and Rajrajeswari Mahila Kalyan Yojana (Oct. 19, 1998) to Provide insurance protection to women.

"The 9th plan emphasised on the strategies of:

- i) Reservation of $\frac{1}{3}$ rd seats for women in parliament and state Lagislative Assemblies.
- ii) Convergence of existing services, resources, infrastructure and manpower in women specific and women-related sections.
- iii) Adoption of special strategy of women component plan (WCP) to ensure that not less than 30% of funds/ benefits flow to women from other development sectors.
- iv) Organising women SHGs as a major process of empowering women.
- v) High priority to reproductive child health care.
- vi) Universalizing on-going supplementary feeding programme- Special Nutrition Programme (SNP) and Mid-Day Meals (MDM).
- vii) Ensuring easy and equal access to education for women and girls through special action Plan of 1998
- viii) Elimination of gender bias in all educational programmes

- ix) Free education for girls up to college level including professional courses.
- x) Promoting skill development amongst women in modern upcoming trades etc.
- xi) Adoption of “National Policy for Empowerment of Women”.

Special initiative / achievements for the empowerment of women during the ninth plan (1997-2002).

- Adoption of Women’s Component Plan (WCP) to ensure that benefits from other development sectors do not by pass women and not less than 30 percent of funds/benefits flow to them from all the women-related sectors.
- Launching of Swa-Shakti to create an enabling environment for empowerment of women through setting up of self-reliant Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and developing linkages with lending institutions to ensure women’s access to credit facilities for income-generation activities; (1998).
- Stree Shakti Puraskars instituted for the first time in the history of women’s development to honour 5 distinguished women annually for their outstanding contribution to the uplift and empowerment of women; (1999).
- Setting up of a Task Force on Women to review the existing women-specific and women-related legislations and suggest enactment of new legislations or amendments wherever necessary.
- Introduction of Gender Budgeting to attain more effective targeting of public expenditure and to offset any undesirable gender-specific consequences of previous budgetary measures; (2000-01).
- Adoption of National Policy for Empowerment of Women to eliminate all types of discrimination against women and to ensure gender justice, besides empowering women both socially and economically; (2001).
- Celebration of the Year 2001 as Women’s Empowerment Year to create awareness generation, remove negative thinking, besides building up confidence in women through the processes of conscientization so that they can take their rightful place in the mainstream of the nation’s social, Political and economic life, 2001
- Recasting of India Mahila Yojana as Swayamsidha - an integrated programme for empowerment of women through a major strategy of covering the services available in all the women-related programmes besides organising women into SHGs for undertaking various entrepreneurial ventures; (2001)
- Launching of Sadhar to extend rehabilitation services for ‘Women in Difficult Circumstances’; (2001)
- Introduction of a Bill on Domestic Violence against Women (prevention) to eliminate all forms of domestic violence against women and the girl child; (2002). (Tenth Five Year Plan,2002:222)
- Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SJGSY) (1999) for eliminating rural poverty and unemployment and promoting self-employment. With this IRDP, TRYSEM, DWCRA, Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY) and Million wells Scheme (MWS) are no longer in operation.

Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007)

The Approach the Tenth Five Year Plan to Empowerment Women:

To continue with the major strategy of ‘Empowering Women’ as Agents of Social Change and Development Strategies:

To adopt a Sector-specific 3-Fold Strategy for empowering women based on the prescriptions of the National Policy for Empowerment of Women. They include:

- Social Empowerment - to create an enabling environment through various affirmative developmental policies and programmes for development of women besides providing them easy and equal access to all the basic minimum services so as to enable them to realise their full potentials.
- Economic Empowerment - to ensure provision of training, employment and income-generation activities with both ‘forward’ and ‘backward’ linkages with the ultimate objective of making all potential women economically independent and self-reliant; and
- Gender Justice - to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination and thus, allow women to enjoy not only the de-jure but also the de-facto rights and fundamental freedom on par with men in all spheres, viz. political, economic, social, civil, cultural etc. (Tenth Five Year Plan 2002: 241).

Schemes adopted were-

- i) Swayamsidha
- ii) Swashakti
- iii) Support for Training and Employment Programme (STEP) (1987)
- iv) Training cum Centres for Women (Swawlamban previously known as NORAD’s women economic Programme) (1982-85).
- v) Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) etc.

To provide support service the schemes implemented were

- i) Hostels for Working Women

- ii) Short Stay Homes (1969-70)
- iii) Swadhar or scheme for women in Different Circumstances (2001-02)

Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012)

In the 11th FYP, for the first time, women are recognised not just as equal citizens but as agents of economic and social growth. The approach to gender equity is based on the recognition that interventions in favour of women must be multi-pronged and they must:

- i) Provide women with basic entitlements
- ii) Ensure an environment free from all forms of violence against women (VAW)-physical, economic, social, psychological etc
- iii) Ensure the participation and adequate representation of women at the highest policy levels, particularly in Parliament and State assemblies
- iv) Strengthen existing institutional mechanism and create new ones for gender mainstreaming and effective policy implementation .

Existing Schemes to be continued-

1. Swayamsidha (2001)
2. Swawlamban and STEP
3. Working Women Hostels for constructing/renting of buildings for hostels to provide safe and affordable accommodations to working women
4. Swadhar to provide holistic services for women including legal services, trauma counselling, psychological services and training in life skills and livelihood.
5. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), to provide micro-credit in a quasi-formal manner to poor women for income generating production, skill development and housing activities in order to make them economically independent.

New Programmes were setting up a Gender Budgeting Cell, prevention of training Manuals for Gender Budgeting & capacity Building Workshop. Women are recognised as agents of socio-economic growth with autonomy of decision-making and the rights of children are respected". 27 targets at the national level fall in six major categories- 1) Income and poverty, 2) Education 3) Health 4) Women and Children 5) Infrastructure and 6) Environment

The essence of the Eleventh Plan strategy for Women Agency and Child Rights is

- Recognition of the right of every woman and child to develop to her/his full potential
- Recognition of the differential needs of different groups of women and children.
- Need for intersectional convergence as well as focused women and child specific measures through MOWCD
- Partnership with civil society to create permanent institutional mechanisms that incorporate the experiences, capacities and knowledge of VOs and women's groups in the process of development planning.

The challenges for gender equity and the roadmap for the Eleventh Five Year Plan can be clubbed under a five-fold agenda.

- (i) Ensuring economic empowerment.
- (ii) Engineering social empowerment.
- (iii) Enabling political empowerment.
- (iv) Effective implementation of women-related legislations.
- (v) Creating institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and strengthening delivery mechanisms.

Ensuring economic empowerment the 11th FYP adopts the following

1. Employment of Women in the unorganised sector and agriculture
2. Land
Land rights not only empower women economically but strengthen their ability to challenge social and political inequities. The Eleventh Plan will carry out a range of initiatives to enhance women's land access.
3. Impact of globalisation and 11th Plan strategy
The Eleventh Plan will examine the impact of globalization on women, especially poor women including gender differentials in wage rates, exploitation of women in the unorganized sector, lack of skill training, technology, and marketing support, etc.
4. Women in the services sector
The challenge in the Eleventh Plan is to promote women's participation, especially in areas where there is a poor gender ratio. This will entail special tax incentives for women headed enterprises, women employees, firms employing more women, and women entrepreneurial ventures. The Plan will encourage public-private

partnerships and corporate social responsibility programmes for women's training, capacity building and empowerment.

5. Skill development
6. Making employment and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) gender responsive
7. Access to resources and economic assets
8. Amenities for Urban Poor Women
9. Homes and Homesteads for Poor Women
10. Ensuring food security
11. Self-help Groups (SHGs): While strengthening SHG initiatives, policies and schemes the Eleventh Plan will simultaneously increase women's awareness, bargaining power, literacy, health, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills.

Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017)

According to the 2011 census, women account for 48.46 per cent of the total population of the country and the overall sex ratio increased by 7 points from 933 in 2001 to 940 in 2011. The Twelfth Plan has focused on certain key strategies for women's agency. These are

(i) Economic Empowerment; (ii) Social and Physical Infrastructure; (iii) Enabling Legislations; (iv) Women's Participation in Governance; (v) Inclusiveness of all categories of vulnerable women, (vi) Engendering National Policies/ Programmes.

3. CONCLUSION:

The ultimate goal of all development is human development and human development focuses on empowerment that depends on the expansion of people's capabilities, enlargement of choices and thus an increase in freedom. Thus, empowerment is both a means and an end of human development. Like other previous five year plans, the twelfth five year Plan also sought to end gender based inequities, discrimination and violence faced by girls and women. It is recommended that governments and voluntary sectors have to make policies of empowerment for women and translate strategies in to actions removing inequalities in access to and control over resources, in economic opportunities, in power, rights and political voice. Now a day, the NGOs are wooed to involve in empowerment of rural women through the successive five-year plans, mainly because, the govt machineries have proved to be failure in implementing and achieve their goals. The tie-knot/marriage of NGOs to empowerment of rural women may, in result, produce either hideous pregnancy or bonny babies to be proud of. All depend only on accountability, transparency and principles of the NGOs.

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