

Gender Equality and Inclusive Growth

Editors

Dr. K.C. Leelavathy

Dr. U. Jerinabi

Dr. R. Annapoorani



Centre for Women's Studies

Equal Opportunity Cell

and

Dr. Ambedkar Studies Centre

Avinashilingam Deemed University for Women

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Gender Equality and Inclusive Growth in Developing India

Dr. M. Manonmani

Associate Professor in Economics, Avinashilingam Deemed University for Women, Coimbatore-641043

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive growth refers to the pace and pattern of growth, which are considered interlinked and therefore it need to be addressed through equity of opportunity and protection in market and employment transition. It entails responsible and sustainable creation as well as just distribution of both wealth and welfare. Social cohesion and human dignity lie at its core. Inclusive growth seeks to redirect and broaden the flows of globalisation in order toward its intended beneficiaries the excluded. It requires extending access to opportunities more widely. It is a key response to the rising inequalities under mining the sustainability of the global market economy, growth and development (ADB2008).

The importance of pursuing gender equality has been recognized across the world, including the Asia and Pacific region. Virtually all countries in the region are parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, and gender equality is explicitly guaranteed in many constitutions and statutes. Indeed the region has made impressive progress in reducing gender inequality over the last few decades. Nevertheless, women remain disadvantaged in access to economic opportunities and resources, basic human rights, and political voice (World Bank 2007). Gender discrimination directly affects the well-being of women. Thus gender equality is a legitimate policy goal in its own right. At the same time, development partners of developing countries increasingly acknowledge the role of gender equality and women's empowerment as a powerful means to foster development and poverty reduction.

When assessing the role of gender equality in promoting inclusive growth, its intrinsic value and instrumental value may be distinguished. The intrinsic value is based on the belief that equal access to opportunity is a basic right of human being, and it is unethical and immoral to treat individuals differently in access to opportunity. Gender equality should thus be considered as a development goal in its own rights, as evidenced by the existence of the Third Millennium Development Goal (MDG3) on gender equality and women's empowerment. The instrument value comes from the recognition in access to opportunity diminished growth potential and its sustainability. Gender equality can also undermine other development goals which, in turn, affect growth.

This paper reviews the recent progress toward gender equality in developing India by examining a number of indicators proposed under the Millennium Development Goal 3 plus approach, focusing on gender inequalities in education and health outcomes (capabilities) and in labor market and political participation (access to resources and opportunities). Achieving gender equality in capabilities such as education and health is a viable avenue to improving women's access to opportunity and children's well-being, and eventually to economic growth.

CAPABILITIES

Education

In recent years, India has reportedly shown considerable improvement at each level of education for boys as well as for girls. Drawing on data from the National Census, many studies and reports have indicated that there has been significant improvement in literacy levels, and particularly in the reduction of female illiteracy. (Swarna.S.vepa, 2007). Trends in literacy rates in India based on different sources is presented in table -1

Table 1: Trends in Literacy Rates in India (Percentage)

Year	Source of Data	Male			Female		
		Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
1981	Census	49.6	76.7	56.4	21.7	56.3	29.7
1987-88	NSS (43rd)	48.4	72.3	-	25.9	55.9	-
1991	Census	57.8	81.1	64.1	30.6	64.1	39.3
1992-03	NFHS I	62.9	84.1	68.8	34.5	67.5	43.3
1993-04	NSS (50th)	63.7	85.3	74.5	36.6	68.7	52.7
1998-99	NFHS-II	69.5	87.5	74.5	43.7	72.2	51.4
2001	Census (all ages)	71.2	75.6	86.4	46.6	73.0	54.0
2001	Census (7+ & above)	-	-	75.9	-	-	54.2
2004-05	NSS (61st)	64	81	-	45	69	-
2004-05	NSS (61st) (7+above)	73	89	77	50.4	75.9	57

Table -1 indicates that, in spite of the considerable improvement in general literacy rates, a big gap between male and female literacy rates, although the data suggests that there has been a significant increase in male as well as female literacy levels, at present only three quarters of the male population is functionally literate, while about half of the female population remains illiterate. Between the National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) I and II i.e. 1993 and 1998, there was a significant increase in male as well as female literacy levels. In NFHS I, 57 percent of females and 31 percent of males aged six and above were illiterate, while in NFHS II this had decreased to 49 percent of females and 26 percent of males. According to the 61st National Sample Survey (NSS) 2004-05, 81 percent urban men and 69 percent of urban women were found to be literate, which suggests substantial gender gaps in literacy rates according to location. Literacy levels are higher for younger population groups than older population groups. For example, while only 21 percent of women over the age of 50 were literate, nearly 75 percent of girls 6-14 years were literate at the time of 61st survey conducted by NSSO. This suggests two important points. First, improvements in literacy levels can be attributed to the expansion of primary education during the 1990s; and secondly, increasing female literacy rates, have helped more demand for the primary education of all children and have had a particular influence on girl's education.

Health

Quantity and quality are the two important dimensions of human population in any country. In general, all the countries are committed to improving quality of population a better welfare standard measure. (Ramachandran et.al,2008) Health an important element of human capability - enables women to access opportunity and to take better care of their children. Indeed, good health is a basic human right. Life expectancy at birth has been increasing continuously due to health system performance -various changes in normative health seeking behavior. Life expectancy at birth for males was 61 years and for females 61.7 years during 1996-2000 which has increased to 62.6 years for males and 64.7 years for females respectively during 2002-06. Quantity and quality are the two important dimensions of human population in any country. In general, all the countries are committed to improving quality of population a better welfare standard measure. Health condition of India's population has been improving and females are at advantageous position in terms of certain mortality indicator. Gender gap is narrowing down resulting from mortality decline for females and life expectancy is expected to increase over the rate for males. Therefore, India could join with other developed countries so as to achieve gender equity in health status. According to the Office of the Registrar General, the estimated life expectancy for males and females would be 67.0 years and 69.2 during 2011-2016 respectively. Besides a serious concern about maternal mortality, high prevalence of HIV infection among females and easy transmission of this virus from mothers to children will lead to an incidence of orphanage of children and child mortality. Biological differences and women's and men's exposure to social, economic and cultural milieu induces planned institutional services for the general well-being exposes women to specific health care and associated risks. High MMR is the evidence of puerperal risks prevailing in the country. As per the SRS based studies, MMR has declined from 301 per one lakh live births to 254 per one lakh live births during 2004-06. This sharp decline in MMR may be due to better performance of overall health system and institutional delivery. Also, the improvement in the coverage of ANC received by the mother also

contributed to decline in MMR. Health of the women is an important indicator depicting overall operationalisation of social and gender norms in the society. More the infant and child mortality, more is the fertility which adds to the extra expenditure on the exchequer of the country for fertility related care and related losses due to productive work by women. However, infant and child mortality is continuously declining. IMR for female in 2001 was 68 which declined to 55 in 2008. Similarly IMR for male was 64 in 2001 which has come down to 52 in 2008.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Even if countries advance in achieving gender in basic human capabilities, the instrumental effects of gender equality on economic development would be limited unless women have as much access as men to economic and political opportunity to apply their capabilities.

Access to Resources- Employment

Gender equity assumes greater importance in macroeconomic policies and programmes, if the link between gender equity and the economic development is established. The theories of economic development have some specific implications to increased women's participation in the labour force. The theory of Arthur Lewis' about development with unlimited supply of labour, acknowledges women's untapped potential labour supply for growth. In his own words, "The transfer of women's work from the household to commercial employment is one of the most notable features of economic development. It is not by all means all gain, but the gain is substantial because what women otherwise do in the household can in fact be done much better and cheaply outside, due to the scale economies and specialization and also use of capital and drudgery reducing machinery. One of the surest ways of increasing national income therefore is to create new sources of employment for women outside the home".

Type of Employment

The status of women in terms of type employment in rural and urban area is shown in table -2

Table 2: All India – Per Thousand Distribution of the Employed Usually Employed- Principal Status +Subsidiary Status

Year	Self employed (F-M)			Regular employees (F-M)			Casual labour (F-M)		
	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
Rural									
1993-94	577	586	9	85	27	-58	338	387	49
2004-05	581	637	56	90	37	-53	329	326	-3
Urban									
1993-94	417	448	31	422	292	-130	161	260	99
2004-05	448	477	29	406	356	-50	146	167	21

Source: National Sample Survey, 61st round.

The type of employment pursued by men and women has also undergone a change over the past decade. The recent report of the National Sample Survey of the 61st round provides some insights in to this aspect. As per the report among rural women self-employment increased faster than the self-employment among rural men. In 2004-2005, higher percentage of women are self-employed than men both rural and urban areas.

Wages

The next important issue for women is wage discrimination in casual labour employment in casual labour employment as well as regular employment. National Sample Survey also provides some insights in to the situation

Average wage/salary earnings rupees/day for regular wage and salaried employees of age 15-59 year for different general education levels at all- India level is shown in table- 3

Table 3: Wage Differentials Across Gender Education

Gender Education Level	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Not Literate	72.47	35.74	98.79	48.7
Literate and up to Primary	98.59	47.75	111.44	64.79
Secondary & Higher Secondary	158.04	100.09	182.58	150.41
Diploma /Certificate	214.38	200.4	274.87	237.02
Graduate and Above	270.02	172.7	366.76	269.17
All	144.93	85.53	203.28	153.19

Source: National University of Educational Planning and Administration, 2008

As per the survey results, gender gap is highest among the illiterates. The gap declines as the educational level improves up to higher secondary and diploma and a certificate course. For graduates and above, the gender gap again widens. The reason could be occasional withdrawal of women from the labour force for child bearing and child rearing and re-entering the labour force with a break. But what is interesting to note is that the gender gap in earning for regular wage and salaried workers is the lowest for the diploma and certificate holders both in rural and urban areas. Women get 86-93 per cent of the men's salaries.

Access to Opportunities –Political Participation

Women's participation in public decision making is an important indicator of their empowerment. This is often measured in terms of the percentage of seats held by women in national parliaments.

The constitution of India is based on the principle of equality and guarantees equality before law and equal protection to all its citizens. It not only guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, but also prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth. However, these rights have remained de-jure and have not been translated in to de facto rights. As such, women have been denied social, economic, civil and political rights in many spheres.

Women's participation in formal politics can be gauged by examining them in relating to the following indicator: women's participation in general election and Lok Sabha election. Table-4 and Table-5 presents facts regarding them.

Table 4: Participation of Women Voters as Compared to Men Voters in Lok Sabha Election

General Election Periods	Women Electors (Millions)	Percentage of Women Participation to the total Women Electors	Percentage of Men Participation to the Total Electors	Difference between Women Participation and Men Participation
1	2	3	4	5
First 1952-57	77.9	38.1	80.0	41.9
Second 1957-62	91.4	38.7	86.1	47.9
Third 1962-67	102.4	46.63	63.3	16.7
Fourth 1967-71	119.4	55.48	66.7	11.2
Fifth 1971-77	130.6	49.11	60.9	11.8
Sixth 1977-80	154.2	54.91	65.6	10.7
Seventh 1980-84	170.3	51.22	62.2	11.0
Eighth 1984-89	192.3	58.6	68.5	9.3
Ninth 1989-91	236.9	57.3	66.1	8.8
Tenth 1991-96	234.5	52.3	61.8	9.5
Eleventh 1996-97	282.8	53.4	62.0	8.6
Twelfth 1997-99	289.2	57.9	65.7	7.8
Thirteenth 1999-2004	295.7	55.6	64.0	8.4
Fourteenth 2004-2009	322.0	53.6	62.0	8.4
Fifteenth 2009-2014	342	55.9	60.0	4.1

Source: Election Commission of India Data for Fifteenth Elections Based on Different Sources.

It is observed that there is a rising trend of women participation in every and subsequent general election of lok sabha their continued bondage, illiteracy, social obstracisation, social taboo, frequent child births, maternity deaths, molestation, dowry deaths and torture by their husbands and in laws. Their rate of participation has been on the increase for every subsequent lok sabha election which works out to 2.12 per cent in the case of females as against the rate of – (1.4) in respect of males during the last 15 lok sabha elections. This is again supported by the fact that difference between women's participation and men's participation is getting narrowed down from a level of 41.9 in the first lok sabha election to 4.1 in the 15 lok sabha election showing a substantial reduction in the gap.

It logically concludes that given an opportunity women do not lag behind their male counterparts in political participation. Let us examine the progressive representation of women winners since the first.

Table 5: The Progressive Representation of Women Winners in Lok Sabha Election Periods

Lok Sabha Election Periods	Total Number of Seats Filled	Total Number of men and women contested	Total Number Women Contested	Total Number of Women Winners	Percentage of Women Winners Among Total Women	Percentage of Women Winners out of Total Seats	Percentage of Men Winners Among Total Men
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
First 1952-57	489	1874	43	22	32.5	2.9	25.9
Second 1957-62	494	1519	45	27	60	5.4	31.7
Third 1962-67	494	1985	70	34	50	7.0	24.0
Fourth 1967-71	494	2369	67	31	44.8	5.8	21.3
Fifth 1971-77	520	2784	86	22	24.4	4.0	18.5
Sixth 1977-80	520	2439	70	19	27.1	3.5	22.1
Seventh 1980-84	542	4620	142	28	19.7	5.2	11.5
Eighth 1984-89	542	5495	164	44	25.6	7.7	9.2
Ninth 1989-91	542	6160	198	27	13.6	5.1	8.4
Tenth 1991-96	529	7579	325	39	11.1	6.9	5.8
Eleventh 1996-97	521	13962	599	40	6.37	7.4	3.8
Twelfth 1997-99	543	4750	274	43	15.7	7.9	11.2
Thirteenth 1999-2004	543	4448	284	49	17.3	9.0	10.2
Fourteenth 2004-2009	543	5435	355	45	12.7	8.3	9.6
Fifteenth 2009-2014	543	8070	556	59	10.6	10.9	6.4

Source: Election Commission of India Data for Fifteenth Elections Based on Different Sources.

It is observed how political parties and their leaders who talk about gender equalities on the eve of election periods, cheated the women candidates. Despite their fragile number, their performance is far better than their male counterparts in terms of winnability. Thus the probability of women candidate winning is more than that of man.

The issue of proper representation of women in lok sabha and state assemblies and their involvement in decision making process was felt genuinely by all. But vested interests pulled out the rug at crucial times and even snatched the papers from Minister and Chair man of Rajya Sabha. In every presidential address to the Parliament by President of India and political manifestoes of Congress party and BJP the reservation issue was mentioned. Vested interests argue on lame excuses by male counterparts fearing that contest for one third seats will make them deprived and argue that reservation is not ripe.

CONCLUSION

Despite the improvement observed in education, health, employment, wages and political participation of women, it is found that women's improved capabilities do not seem to have been translated into an equal participation between men and women in economic and political activities. Further, it finds that gender gaps in almost all aspects reviewed remain significant, with some exceptions. Hence efforts must be strengthened to remove cultural, Social and institutional obstacles by educating the public and enforcing anti-discrimination legislations, promoting economic development to generate economic opportunities and improving women's capabilities and access to the opportunities.

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