

# SDGs and their role in minimizing the gender inequality and empowering women in the present modern world

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their influence in minimizing the gender inequality in modern world. This can be achieved by the empowerment of women by giving awareness on the women rights, child rights and ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities, economic stability, for all the women. And for the empowerment of women and girls to be realized through sustainable development, there needs to be more than a commitment to these goals. There must be concerted action across all nations and communities - dedicated resources should be provisioned to empower women of all ages and girls as part of the SDGs. Approaching gender equality as a crosscutting issue in the SDGs requires that gender is included at all stages of policy development, means of implementation, monitoring and accountability. The Sustainable Development Goals aim to build on the empowering women by quality education, good health and well-being, gender equality and achievements to ensure that there is an end to discrimination against women and girls everywhere. The very innate nature of women such as gentleness, patience, and perseverance, strongness, easily adoptable to the favorable and unfavorable conditions etc. makes them more suitable for the changing world through SDGs. This paper concludes by highlighting SDGs and their influence in minimizing the gender inequality and empowering women in the present modern world.

## 1. Introduction

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large. Women and girls represent half of the world's population and therefore also half of its potential. But, today gender inequality persists everywhere and declines social progress. With the help of Millennium Development Goals, the world has achieved progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment (including equal access to primary education between girls and boys), but still even today women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in every part of the world.

If we go through the Global Gender Gap Index which was first introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006 as a framework for capturing the magnitude of gender-based disparities and tracking their progress over time, 143 countries have guaranteed equality between men and women in their constitutions but 52 have yet to take this step as of 2014 data. Disadvantages in education translate into lack of access to skills and limited opportunities in the labour market.

But if we see the same in 2017 report, it benchmarks 144 countries on their progress towards gender parity on a scale from 0 (imparity) to 1 (parity) across four thematic dimensions—Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political

Empowerment— and provides country rankings that allow for effective comparisons across regions and income groups.

The 2017 report's key finding is:

On average, the 144 countries covered in the report have closed 96% of the gap in health outcomes between women and men, unchanged since last year, and more than 95% of the gap in educational attainment, a slight decrease compared to last year. However, the gaps between women and men on economic participation and political empowerment remain wide: only 58% of the economic participation gap has been closed—a second consecutive year of reversed progress and the lowest value measured by the Index since 2008—and about 23% of the political gap, unchanged since last year against a long-term trend of slow but steady improvement.

To expand economic growth and promote social development, women and girls' empowerment is essential. The complete participation of women in labour forces would add percentage points to most national growth rates—double digits in many cases. Regardless of where you live in, gender equality is a fundamental human right. Advancing gender equality is critical to all areas of a healthy society, from minimizing poverty to promoting the health, education, protection and the well-being of girls and boys.

## 2. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) focused on ending extreme poverty, hunger and preventable disease. They have been the most important global development goals in the UN's history, where as Sustainable Development Goals (

SDGs) will continue the fight against extreme poverty, but also add the challenges of ensuring more equitable economic growth and environmental sustainability, especially the key goal of curbing the dangers of human-induced climate change. (World Economic Forum)

The concept of the SDGs was born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012. The SDGs replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which in September 2000 rallied the world around a common 15-year agenda to tackle the indignity of poverty. Each of these goals contains specific targets and actions, and requires indicators to assess levels of success and failure.

The objective was to produce a set of universally applicable goals that balances the three dimensions of sustainable development: environmental, social, and economic. The MDGs established measurable, universally-agreed objectives for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, preventing deadly but treatable disease, and expanding educational opportunities to all children, among other development imperatives.

As defined by the Brundtland report (WCED, 1987) Sustainable Development as “development that meets the needs of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. In simple terms, Sustainable Development refers to maintaining development over time. SDGs are viewed as extensions of MDGs with sustainability parameter added to each MDG to be implemented in the post-2015 era along with a set of all new goals which were ignored in the MDGs. The SDGs are a set of 17 specific goals offering special focus on important areas related to sustainable development that require urgent and extensive attention at present and in the near future. The SDG framework undertakes to provide systematic solutions to the obstacles identified in case of the MDGs like inequality, sustainability, institutional resourcefulness, implementation efficacy, environmental deterioration, etc., (UN 2014).

### 3. Women Education and Empowerment

“Education for girls has a catalytic effect on every dimension of development: lower child and maternal mortality rates; increased educational attainment by daughters and sons; higher productivity; and improved environmental management. Together, these can mean faster economic growth and, equally important, wider distribution of the fruits of growth.... More education for girls will also enable more and more women to attain leadership positions at all levels of society: from health clinics in the villages to parliaments in the capitals. This, in turn, will change the way societies will deal with problems and raise the quality of global decision-making” as said by Former World Bank President, James Wolfensohn, addressing the Fourth UN Conference on Women.

Wolfenson even continued to say that education of girls would change outcomes for their children and the rest of us. Education could have an effect, for example, by improving their understanding of how to raise children, use contraception, and manage their homes. He claims that empowerment of women in a narrower sense (power or the ability to influence decision-

making) would also change outcomes and these changes would be positive. Increasing decision making of women would indeed lead to different (and better) outcomes that are what policy instruments are available to policy makers to achieve these changes.

### 4. Development of Women Entrepreneurship in India

Entrepreneurship amongst women has been a recent concern in India and the development of women entrepreneurship here is very low. Indian women are striking a balance between traditional and progressive values of the society in transition through playing dual responsibility at home and at the work place. Though women have realized their existence and their rights and increased their involvement in economic activities, only women of upper classes in urban cities do reach their goal in this field and women of middle class are not very much ready to alter their role in fright of social retaliation.

### 5. Socio-Economic Environment And Its Influence On Women Entrepreneurs

The economic development of any country can be achieved with the planned and persevering business activities facilitated. Entrepreneurship grasps all the opportunities for commercial exploitation through creating employment on one hand and earning profits on the other. In every business enterprise, different environmental variables exist internally and externally.

Thus the business environment consists of two sub-environments viz., internal (micro) environment and external (macro) environment including market environment. The business environment is the product of various dynamic factors, i.e., economic, social, political, geographical, religious and technological. Usually, business decisions are taken in the presence of these environmental factors and the business operations include the conditions, events, factors that influence the working of business. These environmental variables have either a positive or negative influence on the enterprise.

Despite the fact that women’s contribution towards the economic growth of the nation is explicit, their association remained unnoticed and unaccounted. Till recently women were kept away from holding decision making positions. Even now, when majority of the industry is managed by women, they do face sarcasm from the male society. And our development policies and programs tend not to view women as integral to the economic development process. Indian women no longer remain satisfied as housewives and they have entered into both traditional and non-traditional industries. In spite of the increasing number of women entrepreneurs, their participation remains inconsiderable and their share in the growth of national economy is significantly low, reason being the influence of rigid social attitudes and discriminating treatment towards women. Low mobility, high cost of production, low rate of achievement, shortage of finance, insufficient marketing facilities, shortage of raw materials and majorly the fulfillment of dual role at home and work place.

### 6. Gender and Policy Making

Gender policies emphasize a greater participation of women in the labour market. But mere increase in Female Work Participation Rates do not ensure women's empowered status, quality of work involved is also an important determinant. For empowerment in true sense, it must start at woman's individual consciousness and should be externalized through greater physical mobility, raised awareness levels, increased autonomy in decision making i.e., a strong role in the household, greater self esteem and, eventually, meaningful participation in the larger community. Development policies should focus on women's active role for more efficient development by greater self-reliance with enhancement of women's economic role. Hence, development agencies should act as facilitators by providing appropriate external support and intervention, which can be important to foster and support the process of empowerment.

To understand and evaluate accountability of gender equality in education we have to consider different approaches. This task has a number of facets and complexities, because 'gender' is not a simple set of relationships, and the notion of gender equality in education can be read in a number of different ways. Thus developing adequate conceptualizations for the key terms (accountability, and gender equality and education) needs to take account of gender as a particularly fluid and contested idea that signals the processes, which link with different formulations of policy and practice to enhance gender equality and accountability in education as well. In order to reach the gender equality in different areas there need to implement the policy formations to reach the set goals and targets of SDGs.

## 7. Targets to Reach Gender Equality through UN SDGs

United Nations with the help of SDGs

- To put an end to all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
- To eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- To eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- To recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.
- To ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.
- To ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.
- To undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

- To enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
- To adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

## 8. Measurement of Gender Equality

In the investigation done by Richards and Gelleny, (2007) the influence of economic globalization on women's status using a dataset that contains 130 countries over 1982-2003. Women's status is measured by five indicators: the Gender-related Development Index (GDI), the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), and the CIRI economic, political and social rights indicator (Cingranelli and Richards 2005). The GDI and the GEM focus on gender inequality in outcomes: longevity, knowledge, standard of living, economic participation, political participation, and power over resources.

The GDI and GEM have been criticized: Klasen and Schüler (2011) suggest improvements in the two indices. The CIRI shows outcomes in so far as the indexed rights are enforced. If, however, the basic human rights remain unenforced, as it is often the case in developing countries, it is not clear what the CIRI actually measures. Richards and Gelleny have measured Economic globalization by foreign direct investment, trade openness, portfolio investment, and structural adjustment policy implementation (IMF and World Bank). The results show that especially trade openness has had a positive influence on the status of women as measured by these five indicators.

In the developing countries, the impact of globalization on gender equality and govern female chain by social institutions was focused by Niklas Potrafke and Heinrich W. Ursprung (2012). The advancement of globalization has been observed for ten years in one hundred developing countries. The conclusion comes that in long run there is gender equality is result of globalization. In development process there is the expectation of the globalization on women.

Sarah Harper, Dirk Zeller, Melissa Hauzer, Daniel Pauly and Ussif Rashid Sumaila (2013) taken up the concept of Women's participation in marine fisheries globally and how much contributed in the pacific. Women's contribution is to 56% of small scale catches and it is also concluded that in the wider society and to families, women provide seafood on a consistent basis. Also, there is some management and recommendations to make better utilization of women's knowledge in fishery management.

B. Sudhakara Reddy and Hippu Salk Kristle Nathan (2013) inspect about the center among gender- energy-poverty, which highlights the area of gender concern. Author analyze that women are stakeholders in universalizing the modern energy services and how these women's from rural and low income households are at the receiving ends of energy poverty. These women badly affect their health and living standard which creates hindrances in the gender development. Author concluded that with the implementation of

different schemes the economic efficiency and rural growth is achieved which results to provide sufficient energy to poor at low cost. By, these small changes women's lives gets improved and in turn benefits to the families and communities.

Ramya Subrahmanian (2005) is talking about the gender equality in education, with the help of two goals "Education for all" and "Millennium development goals" we come to know about the differences in participation of girls and boys in education. Here, author considered that there is a need to understand the right to education, rights within education and rights through education to create gender justice. With the processing of goals there is elimination of gender disparities in education by 2005 and by 2015 achieving equality in education.

Aruna Rao saw a change through daily activities about the gender equality. Author is not totally satisfied and argues that we have to widen the range for women in services by giving knowledge for agricultural, land, property and safety services. Author talks about the stereotyping people working inside/outside the organization who underestimates the potential of both men/women instead she concluded that they have to satisfy them, support them and encourage them to complement them as a change agents.

Rene Veron focused on the lessons for participatory; community based sustainable development in India. Author talked about "Old Kerala Model" which is not an appropriate example for the sustainable development. In Old Kerala model the environment is mixed and it threatened the sustainability of the social progress. New Kerala Model is also not appropriate to conclude the result, but new model provides many lessons to the planners for experiment in development countries. New Kerala Model also need further research to create environment awareness through decentralization process.

### 9. The role of women as policy makers

As it happens to see that women and men have different preferences, and that the household does not efficiently bargain to choose the actions that maximize the household's utility, suggesting that women and men will have different policy preferences. Women prefer policies about child health and nutrition, and policies that improve their situation in cases of divorce, which increase their productivity in everyday work or improve their chances to access the labor market. As studied by Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004), different types of complaints brought by both men and women to the local village councils of West Bengal and Rajasthan, India, women complained about drinking water and much less about education and irrigation West Bengal. But, men complained most about roads and irrigation and less about drinking water. In Rajasthan, women complained most about drinking water, while very few complained about education. Men complained much more than women about roads and education. Drinking water was also a big concern for men in Rajasthan, but it was not as predominant an issue as for women. This implies that giving women the right to vote makes a difference. Miller (2008) showed that the introduction of women suffrage in the United States was associated with a decline in infant mortality. To understand the effect of having women as policy makers,

Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) study the reservation policy for women in India. A constitutional amendment required states to both develop powers over expenditure for local public goods to rural village councils, and to reserve a third of all council seats and council presidencies for women. As a result, the political representation and participation of women has increased. A world run by women would look decidedly different. Women leaders do seem to better represent the needs of women.

"To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then, indeed, woman is less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior: Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman?" -Mahatma Gandhi.

### 10. Conclusion

The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017 uses the latest available data on selected indicators of the global SDG indicator framework and finds that the pace of progress is insufficient to fully meet the SDGs and their targets by 2030. The report explains that tracking SDG progress requires accessible, reliable, timely and disaggregated data to measure progress and inform decision-making, which is a challenge to national and international statistical systems as statistical capacity continues to require strengthening.

According to the report, progress has not always been equitable, with uneven advances across regions, between urban and rural populations, and depending on gender, age and wealth. For example, women spend almost triple the amount of time on unpaid domestic work as men, and youth are three times as likely as adults to be unemployed. In rural communities, only 55% of the population use safely managed drinking water services while small and vulnerable countries suffer economic losses from natural hazards of up to US\$300 billion a year. In sub-Saharan Africa, more than half of urban dwellers live in slum conditions.

As per the analysis of many studies, it is to be concluded that gender equality plays a vital role in the sustainable development. There are many areas where women badly affects their health and living standard just to provide the proper facilities to family and these things create hindrances in the gender development. With the help of some recommendations and management we can easily better utilize the women's knowledge for the development purpose because there are many areas for women to come up with by having proper knowledge of each of them and empowering women in the present modern world. Therefore, it is very much important to give equal opportunities to women gender to let them enjoy their and live a fulfilled life. This can be achieved only when women gender can get quality education, good health and knowledge over nutrition, awareness on health and disease, equal job opportunities, role in decision making, access to law and all legal rights, labour market etc and overall through

empowering women . When all these are attained successfully there comes the respect for women in the society which leads to gender equality nation and worlds wide. The SDGs plans are now government targeting for 2030 if we achieve the plans

then gender equality and women empowerment gives the best result in the sustainable development of the country as a whole.

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