

## **POLICY REPORT**

### **ACHIEVING WOMEN'S EQUALITY IN INDIA THROUGH SCHOOL EDUCATION THE STATUS OF SDG 4 AND 5 IN INDIA**

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# Introduction

*“The best thermometer for the progress of a nation is its treatment of women.”*

Swami Vivekanand

## What are SDGs?

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.<sup>1</sup>

The 17 SDGs are integrated—they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Out of these 17 goals, we will focus on SDG 4 and SDG 5, especially in the context of improving gender equality in India. SDG 4 concerns quality education and ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. A quality education is the foundation of sustainable development, and therefore of the Sustainable Development Goals. As a policy intervention, education is a force multiplier which enables self-reliance, boosts economic growth by enhancing skills, and improves people's lives by opening up opportunities for better livelihoods.<sup>2</sup> SDG 5 concerns gender equality and aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. By investing in the empowerment of women, we not only make progress on Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, we also make gains on the alleviation of poverty and fuel sustainable economic growth.

## Need for Education of Women in India

Education of women in India is becoming difficult in conditions of violence against women, including wife beating, rape, trafficking of women, bigamy, sexual abuse, and dowry deaths.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Sustainable Development Goals: United Nations Development Programme.” UNDP. Accessed August 23, 2022. <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>

<sup>2</sup> [quality-education-in-india-sdg-4](#)

<sup>3</sup> Sahni, Urvashi. “Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Empowerment Education in Post-Primary Schools in India. Policy Brief.” Center for Universal Education at The Brookings Institution. Center for Universal Education at The Brookings Institution. November 30, 2018. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED592768>

But the education of women is necessary in a country like India. Besides reducing gender inequality and encouraging knowledge in women, it facilitates them to procure a job and supplement the income of their family and achieve social status.

Poverty also decreases when more women and girls are educated. This is because with basic education, a woman is more likely to obtain a job and earn a higher wage since one percentage point increase in female education raises the average level of GDP by 0.37 percentage points.<sup>4</sup>

Essentially, a complete, high-quality secondary school education for girls is seen as a vital pathway to achieving gender equality.<sup>5</sup> Education of women has a major impact on health and nutrition as an instrument of developing a sustainable strategy for population control. Moreover, educated women can play an equally important role as men in nation building. If the complete education of women is well connected to the situations she will be facing outside the walls of the institution. Thus, there is no denying the fact that education empowers women.

## The need for gender equality in India

Women education is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. No single factor or cause can be held responsible for the very low literacy rate of women in India. Subsequently, it is associated with a combination of many factors including social, cultural, economic, educational, demographic, political and administrative and so on. Nearly half of Indian women are illiterate, and they have limited access to educational opportunities. Women must acquire education, a profession, and independence as a result of this empowerment. They can really only combat injustices, gender discrimination, and ingrained practises that impede their development in this way.

Gender inequality has an impact on development goals as it reduces economic growth and also hampers the overall well-being because blocking women from participation in social, political and economic activities can adversely affect the whole community. India has witnessed gender inequality from its early history due to its socio-economic and religious practices that resulted in an extensive gap between the position of male and female in the

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<sup>4</sup> Abdi, Aisha. "Women Are the Key to Economic Development in Third-World CountriesAisha Abdi." King's College London. King's College London, August 28, 2019. <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/women-are-the-key-to-economic-development-in-third-world-countries>.

<sup>5</sup> Sahni, Urvashi. "Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Empowerment Education in Post-Primary Schools in India. Policy Brief." Center for Universal Education at The Brookings Institution. Center for Universal Education at The Brookings Institution. November 30, 2018. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED592768>

society.<sup>6</sup> And India will not fully develop unless both girls and boys are equally supported to reach their full potential.<sup>7</sup>

Researchers and social scientists have recognized that powerlessness, voicelessness and lack of freedom affects the social injustice and inequity which can only be avoided with strong determination to activate adequate education and training of women and girls.<sup>8</sup>

With the prevalence of gender discrimination, and social norms and practices, girls become exposed to the possibility of endless social problems such as child marriage, teenage pregnancy, child domestic work, poor education and health, sexual abuse, exploitation, violence and much more. Many of these social practices will not change unless girls are educated.

## Current Scenario Of Gender Discrimination In India

Deep gender discrimination still exists in India and the gap in the male - female literacy rate is just a simple indicator. The Male literacy rate is 82.14% and Female literacy rate is 65.46% according to Census 2021. Sen provides an explanation that there is a high connection of female literacy with female age at marriage.<sup>9</sup> 4.3% of girls between 10 and 14 and 35.3% of women between 15 and 19 are married. The data supports Sen's theory. In rural areas, education assumes that a woman lacks domestic skills and will be a bad wife. On the other hand, an educated girl should be married off to a more educated man. The more educated a girl is, the more difficult and expensive it is to find her a fiancé.

Another metric shows that globally girls have higher survival rates at birth, are more likely to be developmentally on track, and just as likely to participate in preschool, but India is the only large country where more girls die than boys.<sup>10</sup>

Women who have higher education are better able to enhance their personal and their family's well being. They are better able to create new possibilities, roles, and support systems as well as maximize the value of already available services and opportunities. Women's education has a number of empowering consequences, including higher economic potential, the capacity to negotiate for resources within the household,

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<sup>6</sup> Beata Pietkiewicz-Pareek. "EDUCATION FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERING WOMEN IN INDIA," 2019. [https://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.desklight-bce923d2-376c-4494-9c68-2b7dfde77f9d/c/B.\\_Pietkiewicz-Pareek\\_RA\\_2012.pdf](https://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.desklight-bce923d2-376c-4494-9c68-2b7dfde77f9d/c/B._Pietkiewicz-Pareek_RA_2012.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> "Gender Equality." UNICEF India. <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/gender-equality>.

<sup>8</sup> Pietkiewicz-Pareek, Beata. (2019). Education for girls in India.

<sup>9</sup> Siddiq Osmani, Amartya Sen, The hidden penalties of gender inequality: fetal origins of ill-health, Economics & Human Biology, Volume 1, Issue 1, 2003, Pages 105-121, ISSN 1570-677X, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1570-677X\(02\)00006-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1570-677X(02)00006-0).

<sup>10</sup> "Gender Equality." UNICEF India. <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/gender-equality>.

autonomy in decision-making, control over their own fertility, and engagement in public life. It will play a major role in bridging the gap between the gender roles in the Indian community.

## Education of Women in India

*"If you educate a man you educate an individual but if you educate a woman you educate a family (nation)".*

Dr. James Kwegyir Aggrey

### Introduction to SDG 4

*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*

Women's education is an essential need to change their status in society. Educated women can play a very important role in the society for socio-economic development. In India, significant progress had been made in universalising primary education, with improvement in the enrolment and completion rates of girls in both primary and elementary school. The net enrolment ratio in primary education for boys and girls was at 100%, while at the national level, the youth literacy rate was 94% for males and 92% for females.<sup>11</sup> The new national Education Policy and Sustainable Development Goal 4 share the goals of universal quality education and lifelong learning. The flagship government scheme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, is aimed at achieving universal quality education for all Indians, and is complemented in this effort by targeted schemes on nutritional support, higher education, and teacher training.<sup>12</sup>

The relevant targets of this goal are summarized below:

#### **Targets 1, 2:**

Ensure access to quality pre-primary, primary, secondary education and access to quality early childhood development and care.

#### **Targets 3, 4:**

Ensure equal access for all women to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university and substantially increase the number of youth and

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<sup>11</sup> "Sustainable Development Goals in India | Sdgs – UN India."  
<https://in.one.un.org/page/sustainable-development-goals/>.

<sup>12</sup> "Sustainable Development Goals in India | Sdgs – UN India."  
<https://in.one.un.org/page/sustainable-development-goals/>.

adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.<sup>13</sup>

### **Targets 5, 6, 7:**

Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy,<sup>14</sup> and ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.<sup>15</sup>

These targets together will help in ensuring that SDG 5 is implemented correctly and effectively. Additionally, it will be easier to measure progress when broken down into specific targets that are easily trackable.

## **History of education in India**

Women, who initially had access to education in the Vedic period, gradually lost it. Interest in women's education revived in the British period: various socio-religious movements led by eminent persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar emphasized on women's education in India supplemented by initiatives by the leaders of the lower castes like Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Periyar and Baba Saheb Ambedkar.

Women's education got a boost after the country got independence in 1947 and the government took various measures to provide education to all Indian women. As a result women's literacy rate has grown over the three decades and the growth of female literacy has in fact been higher than that of male literacy rate.<sup>16</sup> While in 1971 only 22% of Indian women were literate, by the end of 2001, 54.16% females were literate.<sup>17</sup> But while India has improved a lot on women's education since independence, a lot remains to be covered.

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<sup>13</sup> "Education - United Nations Sustainable Development." United Nations. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>.

<sup>14</sup> "Education - United Nations Sustainable Development." United Nations. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>.

<sup>15</sup> "Education - United Nations Sustainable Development." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed 2022. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>.

<sup>16</sup> Chandra, Tanushree. "Literacy in India: The Gender and Age Dimension." ORF, March 6, 2021. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/literacy-in-india-the-gender-and-age-dimension-57150/>.

<sup>17</sup> Dane, Kane. "What Is the Status of Women Education in India?" Owlgen, March 28, 2020. <https://www.owlgen.in/what-is-the-status-of-women-education-in-india/>.  
<https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-health-and-well-being>

Currently the overall literacy ratio is 74.04%. The male literacy rate of India is 84.7% and female it is 70.3%.<sup>18</sup> The gap between the literacy rates of males and females remains grave. Further divisions are depicted below:

Literacy Rate in Urban Areas of India	87.7%
Literacy Rate in Rural Areas of India	73.5%

## Present state of education in India

According to the 2011 Census, 74 percent of Indians are literate. By looking at the data it can be seen that males are more likely to be literate (82.1%) than females (65.5%).

The rankings are headed by Kerala, with Delhi, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu following. State-wise, Bihar ranks last, followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, etc., albeit they are making progress.

The literacy rate in Bihar is 63.8 percent, and 53.3 percent of women are literate. Although the percentage of adults and young people who are literate has improved, the total number of illiterates in India equals the country's population at the time of independence.

The gender gap varies significantly by state. However, between 2001 and 2011, the female literacy rate climbed by about 12 percentage points, compared to a 6 percentage point gain for men. The increase in female literacy in Bihar from 33 percent in 2001 to 53 percent in 2011 is notable. Despite this, India's literacy rate is still below the global average of 86.3 percent (UNESCO 2015). A sizable portion of the states are in the average position, or just over the national average of 64.8%.

## Importance of education in India

A good quality education is the foundation of health and well-being. Education is a catalyst for development and a health intervention in its own right.

For people to lead healthy and productive lives, they need knowledge to prevent sickness and disease. For children and adolescents to learn, they need to be well nourished and healthy. Statistics from UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report show that the attainment of higher levels of education among mothers improves children's nutrition and

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<sup>18</sup> "Literacy." Know India: National Portal of India. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://knowindia.india.gov.in/profile/literacy.php>.



vaccination rates, while reducing preventable child deaths, maternal mortality and HIV.<sup>19</sup>

The 2015 incheon declaration confirms that education develops the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions, and respond to local and global challenges.<sup>20</sup>

And the education that women get can further their financial and social independence; women with higher levels of education are better able to support their families financially. They also benefit from financial security and freedom as a result of this. Women who have received education are less susceptible to the horrors of domestic abuse and human trafficking. They feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas for advancing society. Women who have completed their education are able to care for their immediate and extended families. India loses a significant portion of its human resources by not educating girls and women. By educating women, India will progress at an exponential growth.

Women education not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside.<sup>21</sup> Improving girls' educational levels has been demonstrated to have clear impacts on the health and economic future of young women, which in turn improves the prospects of their entire community. The Indian Education system has two important structures, one is formal and another one is non-formal education. Some other educational programmes are also formulated to motivate women education such as online education and distance education. The main objective of the entire educational programme is to educate every girl child.

There are an estimated 3.85 crore Indians enrolled in higher education courses in India, according to the Human Resource Development Ministry's All India Survey on Higher education report for 2019-20.<sup>22</sup> But although this is the case, there are low literacy levels of girls and women in India. The current low level of literacy not only shows a negative impact on women's lives but also on their families and country's economic development. Hence it is of utmost importance to raise the level of education amongst women.

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<sup>19</sup>“Education for Health and Well-Being.” UNESCO, April 12, 2021.

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-health-and-well-being>.

<sup>20</sup> “Education for Health and Well-Being.” UNESCO, April 12, 2021.

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-health-and-well-being>

<sup>21</sup> “Women Education in India: An Analysis.” Research on Humanities and Social Sciences ISSN 2224-5766 (Paper) ISSN 2225-0484 (Online) Vol.8, No.13, 2018.

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/234676365.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> PIB Delhi. “Union Education Minister Announces Release of Report of All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20.” Press Information Bureau, June 10, 2021.

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1725914>.

Fundamental Rights of women are equality, freedom to religion, educational rights, cultural and educational, against exploitation, freedom. After the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Basic education is more than an end in itself; it is the foundation for lifelong learning and human development.<sup>23</sup>

## Gender Equality

*Every child deserves to reach her or his full potential, but gender inequalities in their lives and in the lives of those who care for them hinder this reality.*

UNICEF

Wherever they live in India, girls and boys see gender inequality in their homes and communities every day – in textbooks, in movies, in the media and among the men and women who provide their care and support.<sup>24</sup>

## Gender Equality as a Driver of Growth

Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right, but is also crucial to accelerating sustainable development. It has been proven time and again that empowering women has a multiplier effect, it helps to drive economic development and growth throughout the board.<sup>25</sup> Continuous growth has been seen in various areas of gender equality. More girls are now schooled than compared to those 15 years ago, and most regions have reached gender parity in primary education. Women now make up to 41% of the paid workers outside of agriculture, compared to 35% in 1990.<sup>26</sup> There are still huge inequalities in the labor market in some regions, with women systematically denied access to jobs. Sexual violence and exploitation, the unequal division of unpaid care and domestic work, and discrimination in public office, all remain huge barriers. Affording women equal rights to economic resources such as land and property are vital targets to realizing this goal. So is universal access to sexual and reproductive health. Today there are more women in public office than ever before, but encouraging women leaders will help strengthen policies and legislation for greater gender equality.

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<sup>23</sup> “What You Need to Know about the Right to Education.” UNESCO, December 10, 2021.

<https://en.unesco.org/news/what-you-need-know-about-right-education>.

<sup>24</sup> “Gender Equality.” UNICEF India. Accessed September 14, 2022.

<https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/gender-equality>.

<sup>25</sup> Revenga, Ana, and Sudhir Shetty. “Finance and Development.” Finance and Development | F&D, 2012. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2012/03/revenga.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> “Goal 5: Gender Equality.” SociSDG. Accessed September 14, 2022.

<http://www.socisdg.com/en/sdgs/goal-5-gender-equality/>.

There are various targets that are underlined in the SDG 5. Each of these will need to be worked upon for an improvement of gender equality in India.

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Target 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

Target 5.2: 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:

Target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation :

Target 5.4: 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

Target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

Target 5.6: 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

Target 5.a: 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:

Target 5.b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

Target 5.c: 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

To assess the success of gender equality schemes implemented by various stakeholders, it's necessary to measure its progress. One way to do so is to examine government policies and laws promoting gender equality. A second and more efficient way is to examine gender-based statistics. In fact, statistical indexes are the most common empirical method for assessing differences between men and women. The two best-known indexes are the UN Development Programme's (UNDP's) Global Inequality Index (GII), available since 2010, and the World Economic Forum's (WEF's) Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), available since 2006.

India ranks 135 among a total of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index 2022 and is the worst performer in the world in the “health and survival” sub-index where it is ranked 146.<sup>27</sup> The Global Gender Report 2022, which includes the Gender Gap Index, says it will now take 132 years to reach gender parity, with the gap reducing only by four years from 2021 and the gender gap closing by 68.1%.<sup>28</sup> India has been ranked low on various other indices that measure gender equality – including economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; political empowerment; and legal protection – due to multiple factors such as high levels of women discrimination in India as well as various discriminatory social norms, laws and cultural practices.<sup>29</sup>

## Gender Equality in India

Even though India has gender parity at the elementary education level and will achieve parity at all educational levels, there were only 11% of Lok Sabha seats held by women. India is also dealing with the issue of violence against women. For instance, a baseline research in New Delhi found that 92% of women have encountered sexual violence of some kind in a public setting. Nearly a third of all crimes against women in India in 2016 involved cruelty or physical assault committed by the victim's husband or a member of his family.<sup>30</sup>

The Government of India has identified ending violence against women as a key national priority, which resonates with the Sustainable Development targets of the United Nations on gender equality. The prime minister's Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative aims at equal opportunity and education for girls in India. In addition, specific interventions on female employment, programmes on the empowerment of adolescent girls, the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana on girl child prosperity and the Janani Suraksha Yojana for mothers continue to advance India's commitment to gender equality, and the targets of Goal 4.<sup>31</sup>

Despite a constitution that guarantees equal rights for men and women and decades of legislation, some deep-rooted gender discrimination in India takes a brutal toll on women's

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<sup>27</sup>Correspondent, Special. “India Ranks 135 out of 146 in Global Gender Gap Index.” The Hindu. The Hindu, July 14, 2022. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-ranks-135-out-of-146-in-global-gender-gap-index/article65636167.ece>.

<sup>28</sup>Correspondent, Special. “India Ranks 135 out of 146 in Global Gender Gap Index.” The Hindu. The Hindu, July 14, 2022. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-ranks-135-out-of-146-in-global-gender-gap-index/article65636167.ece>.

<sup>29</sup>“Gender Inequality in Indian Society: Causes & Awareness of Gender Inequality in India.” CARE India, May 30, 2022. <https://www.careindia.org/blog/gender-in-inequality/>.

<sup>30</sup>Chandramaulishwar, Dr. “WOMEN'S SAFETY FROM SEXUAL ASSAULT AT PUBLIC SPACES IN NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION,” 2017.

<sup>31</sup>“Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.” United Nations. United Nations. <https://pacific.un.org/en/sdgs/5>.

lives.<sup>32</sup> Across India, gender inequality results in unequal opportunities, and while it impacts on the lives of both genders, statistically it is girls that are the most disadvantaged.<sup>33</sup> Globally girls have higher survival rates at birth, are more likely to be developmentally on track, and just as likely to participate in preschool, but India is the only large country where more girl babies die than boy babies.<sup>34</sup> Girls are also more likely to drop out of school due to a host of reasons, from family pressure to lack of support.

In India, girls and boys experience adolescence differently. While boys tend to experience greater freedom, girls tend to face extensive limitations on their ability to move freely and to make decisions affecting their work, education, marriage and social relationships. As girls and boys age, the gender barriers continue to expand and continue into adulthood where we see only a quarter of women in the formal workplace.<sup>35</sup> Current estimates place India's rate of female participation in the formal labor force at only 24 percent — among the lowest in developing nations.<sup>36</sup> While some Indian women are global leaders and powerful voices in diverse fields, most women and girls in India do not fully enjoy many of their rights due to deeply embedded patriarchal views, norms, traditions and structures.<sup>37</sup>

## Causes for Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is a pervasive issue in India, impacting Indian women and girls in a variety of ways. While there are many causes of gender inequality, some of the most common include:

### Poverty

India is still one of the poorest countries in the world, and it is one of the biggest reasons that lead to gender inequality in India. Despite the availability of education in rural areas, families prefer sending their boys to school rather than the girls of the family, which is one of the biggest disadvantages.

### Patriarchal Setup in our Indian Society

Since time immemorial, India has been an extremely patriarchal society. The patriarchal setup in Indian society contributed to the fundamental inequality between men and

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<sup>32</sup>“Gender Inequality in Indian Society: Causes & Awareness of Gender Inequality in India.” CARE India, May 30, 2022. <https://www.careindia.org/blog/gender-in-inequality/>.

<sup>33</sup>“Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.” United Nations. United Nations. <https://pacific.un.org/en/sdgs/5>.

<sup>34</sup>“Key Data.” UNICEF India. <https://www.unicef.org/india/key-data>.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/gender-equality>

<sup>36</sup> [Spotlight on India: Growing Economies Through Gender Parityhttps://www.cfr.org/case-studies/india](https://www.cfr.org/case-studies/india/Spotlight-on-India-Growing-Economies-Through-Gender-Parity)

<sup>37</sup>“Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed September 14, 2022. <https://pacific.un.org/en/sdgs/5>.

women. As women were considered a part of the household belonging to their father or husband, they were unable to get a say in any matters concerning their own development or that of the community at large.

#### Lack of Education or Illiteracy

The disparity between the literacy rates of men and women in India is a known issue. Some regional states have higher disparity, while some other states have better disparity. The problem is not that there are few literate women in India, but rather the problem is the lack of awareness among women to use their rights.

#### Lack of Awareness Among Women

One of the major causes of gender inequality is the lack of awareness among women about their rights and their ability to achieve equality. This lack of awareness is often due to the prevailing cultural and social norms, which dictate that women should be subservient to men. It is important to break down these barriers and help women become more aware of their rights so that they can demand equality.

#### Social Customs, Beliefs and Practices

The views of society, customs and cultural practices play a big role in keeping women at lower places in the society – refusing them opportunities, which are generally provided to men, who are considered the dominant ones in India.

Addressing these causes is critical to achieving gender equality in India.

## **Recommendations**

It is critical to enhance the value of girls by empowering them, with education, life skills, sport and much more. Changing the value of girls has to include men, women and boys. It has to mobilize many sectors in society. Only when society's perception changes, will the rights of all the girls and all the women in India be fulfilled.

Women Empowerment can help in decreasing gender inequality through a major ratio because once a woman has achieved empowerment, she has the tools to move ahead in society and grow through the various challenges presented to her. Not only will she empower herself, but the whole community is impacted through her actions. Following are the ways to empower women who can help in achieving gender equality. They are divided into various sections to better implement and understand the different aspects of the policy.

## Social

There are risks, violations and vulnerabilities girls and women face just because of their gender. Most of these risks are directly linked to the social and cultural disadvantages girls and women deal with in their daily lives. With the prevalence of gender discrimination, and social norms and practices, they become exposed to the possibility of child marriage, teenage pregnancy, child domestic work, poor education and health, sexual abuse, exploitation and violence. Many of these manifestations will not change unless conscious effort is being made by the society.

### **I. Coordination between local, national and international organizations**

Many local and international organizations have introduced programmes to reduce gender inequality and discrimination through education. The result is an extremely fractured landscape of public and private stakeholders. These organizations have common objectives and overlapping methods, yet they work separately and sometimes in competition with one another. To tackle this, steps can be taken at national and local level for proper coordination between them. This coordination would further help with international cooperation.

#### **At national level:**

The government should oversee the various projects they have implemented. The measures should be quantifiable and its progress should be measured by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

#### **At individual state level:**

Leadership by the Department of Education in UP has the potential to transform stakeholders into a cohesive network to address gender discrimination systematically across communities. By establishing a unified approach to foster synergy, UP could set an example for states across the country in reducing the discrepancy between ideals and realities for women.<sup>38</sup>

Policies should be executed in collaboration with the state Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) office, and a nonprofit that has experience in mainstreaming gender conversations in the classrooms, such as SHEF due to the following advantages:

- Due to 60 percent of the state education budget being sponsored by the SSA, the State Project Director is an important influencer in the state's education priorities.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Sahni, Urvashi. "Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Empowerment Education in Post-Primary Schools in India," 2018.

<sup>39</sup> Sahni, Urvashi. "Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Empowerment Education in Post-Primary Schools in India," 2018.

- SSA offices have positions exclusively dedicated to working on gender-based issues, e.g., there are SSA Educational Officers for girls' education at the state-level, as well as District Coordinators for gender in all districts. Their intensive work with Kasturba Gandhi Bal Vidyalaya (KGBV) schools, institutional experience for working on gender issues, development of a 17-session module on Inclusive Education in collaboration with UNICEF on masculinity, health, nutrition, etc. makes them strong candidates.<sup>40</sup>
- As SSA is centrally sponsored and has similar objectives and institutions across the country, working with them allows for easier replication of the program in other states.<sup>41</sup>

## **II. Child Marriage**

Estimates suggest that at least 1.5 million girls under 18 get married in India every year.<sup>42</sup> Early marriage can lead to serious consequences such as school drop-out, early pregnancy, maternal morbidity, mortality and a host of other health problems.

Intervention strategies such as Youth information centers (YIC)<sup>43</sup> and exposure to mass media, showed an effect in reducing early marriage, early pregnancy and improving school retention. Peer education conducted through the YIC proved to be an effective model. This would help the girls be more comfortable with their educator.

It should be maintained by the stakeholders such as NGOs. NGOs will provide an existing framework and their training would help them to easily integrate this model into their style of work. This multi-component community based intervention can be a potential model for reducing the number of early marriages and its related consequences in other districts of India with similar socio-economic and cultural settings. It can be looked over by the respective departments and further decentralization can be done to the local governments and district management.

## **III. Labor Force participation**

Improvements in labor market prospects have the potential to empower women. An influential randomisation study found that job recruiter visits to villages to provide

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<sup>40</sup>Sahni, Urvashi. "Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Empowerment Education in Post-Primary Schools in India," 2018.

<sup>41</sup>Sahni, Urvashi. "Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Empowerment Education in Post-Primary Schools in India," 2018.

<sup>42</sup>UNICEF. "Ending Child Marriage and Adolescent Empowerment." UNICEF India.

<https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/end-child-marriage>.

<sup>43</sup> Effectiveness of a community based intervention to delay early marriage, early pregnancy and improve school retention among adolescents in India Devika Mehra, Archana Sarkar, Priyanka Sreenath, Jagannath Behera & Sunil Mehra [Effectiveness of a community based intervention to delay early marriage, early pregnancy and improve school retention among adolescents in India](#)



information to young women led to positive effects on their labor market participation and enrolment in professional training.<sup>44</sup>

This also led to an increase in age at marriage and childbearing, a drop in desired number of children, and an increase in school enrolment of younger girls not exposed to the programme.<sup>45</sup>

This can be further improved for each section of India. For rural women, due to lower access, they will need to be made aware of the various schemes that exist for their benefit. For urban women on the other hand, the means of access should be made easier and more available at stations that they congregate. For example, if they are housewives, then grocery markets or stalls can act as awareness centers.

#### **IV. Violence Against Women**

Violence against women is a social, economic, developmental, legal, educational, human rights, and health (physical and mental) issue.<sup>46</sup> Violence takes place in many forms, from domestic violence to the workplace, from dowry to marriage. No Indian woman is safe even after the multitude of schemes and laws are put in place. India's rape-related crime rate rose 70.7% over the last two decades from 11.6 per 100,000 women and girls in 2001 to 19.8 in 2018, according to a report by Public Health Foundation of India.

Cases of violence against women are steadily increasing in the country. According to the National Crime Record Bureau, India, there is one dowry death in the country every 78 hours, one act of sexual harassment every 59 minute, one rape every 34 minute, one act of torture every 12 minute and almost one in every three married women experienced domestic violence.

Training elected local government representatives to work to reduce the incidence of violence in communities and to become vocal opponents of violence against women and girls and alcohol abuse.

Training health workers to look for signs of violence, ask screening questions of women in the community who are pregnant or have children age 6 and younger, and refer those who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing violence to support services.

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<sup>44</sup>Sharma , Smriti. "Achieving Gender Equality in India: What Works, and What Doesn't." United Nations University, 2016.  
<https://unu.edu/publications/articles/achieving-gender-equality-in-india-what-works-and-what-doesnt.html>.

<sup>45</sup>Sharma , Smriti. "Achieving Gender Equality in India: What Works, and What Doesn't." United Nations University, 2016.  
<https://unu.edu/publications/articles/achieving-gender-equality-in-india-what-works-and-what-doesnt.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Sharma I. Violence against women: Where are the solutions? Indian J Psychiatry. 2015 Apr-Jun;57(2):131-9. doi: 10.4103/0019-5545.158133. PMID: 26124518; PMCID: PMC4462781.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4462781/>

Assessing the perspectives and experiences of women seeking help from and the providers at the government's services for female victims of violence, including helplines, crisis centers, and government-run shelters.

**Alcohol:**

Alcohol should be prohibited in large crowds in institutions and public areas such as trains and buses. The number of alcohol establishments should be reduced. Breath analyzers are advised for special examinations during celebratory events.<sup>47</sup>

**Control on media:**

Concepts that condemn violence and glorify victim healing should be projected.

**Law enforcement:**

Law enforcement machinery that is efficient and responsible at all levels (administration, government, police, and judiciary) is required.

**New Legislations:**

New law is required to allow a victim of severe sexual assault to receive "Interim Relief" (a large sum of money paid by the perpetrator). The funds could be used for the victim's rehabilitation. The rehabilitation of victims of heinous sexual assaults should be the responsibility of the state. Violence against women with mental illnesses should be punished more severely under the law.

**Education**

Many girls and women are denied the right to educate themselves because of one reason or the other. It can range from one not being allowed by her parents, or her family not having enough financials to support, or child marriage.

And while many do receive their education, their contributions beyond the walls of the educational institutions remain limited because of longstanding patriarchal structures, distrust in women's professional expertise and unchanged systemic constraints. Bringing women's empowerment through education will mean more than just clearing exams. It will be empowering only when she is able to apply this in the real India and gather opportunities for herself to grow.

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<sup>47</sup> Sharma I. Violence against women: Where are the solutions? Indian J Psychiatry. 2015 Apr-Jun;57(2):131-9. doi: 10.4103/0019-5545.158133. PMID: 26124518; PMCID: PMC4462781. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4462781/>

## **I. Effective implementation of New Education Policy**

It remains unknown exactly how the government will incorporate and implement these policies within the existing education system. It will need to go a step further and describe what an empowerment-focused education would look like and recommend relevant changes in curricular content, pedagogical practices, institutionalized processes, and organizational structures (Patel 1998; Sahni 2017). Further, processes are outlined as to how to improve the overall framework of this new policy.

Resource Availability: The effectiveness of the programme is influenced by resource availability. These resources may be both human and material. The curriculum must take into account changes in the quality and accessibility of resources because these factors have an impact on their success, and the government must take this into account by putting in place appropriate laws. There must be sufficient human and physical resources for curriculum implementation in a specific institution. The success of curriculum creation is influenced by factors such as the accessibility of trained teachers, proper infrastructure, and resources like textbooks.

Pedagogical Practices: School systems, and the overall Indian Council, must make sure that their curricula are up-to-date and flexible enough to meet the demands of various learners and social and economic groups. They must guarantee that school facilities are in good shape. Good instruction is a necessary factor in determining the reach and impact of the curricula.

## **II. Improving the state of teachers**

The facilitator of this entire process is the teacher. Teachers' motivation levels, their engagement with the curriculum and with their students inform all dimensions of formal education. In order for the education process to take on a transformative character, teachers must progress beyond basic academic subjects of literacy and numeracy, and even the integral critical thinking skills emphasized thus far; they need to take on the task of being attentive caregivers who engage with their students as whole persons.

Prioritizing the time for individualized care is central to the empowerment process because teachers, as authority figures and caregivers, have a profound influence on their students' self-confidence, particularly in the formative years of primary and upper-primary education.

How students construct their identity, and whether students see themselves as an equal and respected person are influenced by how they are treated and talked to by their own teachers. Hence all teachers will need to be extremely sensitive to understand the different environments a student is exposed to.

Teachers can further be motivated through various policies like Critical Dialogue. Critical dialogue provides a model for teachers to engage attentively with individual student perspectives and experiences. But, in order to affect these changes in students, teachers first need to examine their own internalized notions of gender. They need to look closely at the processes of gendering in society, homes, and schools, and examine how these processes have constituted their understanding of themselves and of the world. Therefore, to build teachers' capacities to conduct critical dialogues to deconstruct gender norms in the classrooms, it is essential that teachers themselves first learn to examine and understand how gender is constructed and how it affects the lives of women and girls.

Another example that can be followed is from Aarohini. Aarohini believes that to create lasting change, girl students must not only be empowered but the process of empowerment must be accompanied by a critical shift in their home environments. Teachers are trained to become advocates for girls' rights in the community. Teachers also mobilize parents to address gender discrimination within the home and in the community.

This will result in a two fold solution. Not only will the girls who are taught by these teachers be empowered, but also the teacher will be empowered which will act as a catalyst to this process.

### **III. Educating Students about their Rights**

In addition to developing social consciousness through critical thinking skills, socially and economically marginalized students require explicit information about their rights to translate their education into empowered action.

Educators should focus on the translation of the skill rather than the transferability. For instance, rather than focusing only on whether or not a girl successfully applied leadership skills developed in a life skills program to a new real-life situation, a focus on translation would encourage stakeholders to think about how girls learn to activate leadership-relevant networks through action in one context compared to another. This process of translation precedes the transferability, determining whether girls can put to use in one situation compared to another what they have learned in a life skills program.

Greater programmatic attention must be given to mediating factors as life skills at an individual level are not developed as isolated skills but in relation to the connection and activation of dynamic networks over time, life skills development and their translation entail dynamic social processes, too. Life skills are not translated in a vacuum but in relation to the influence of the opportunity structures in her environment and her level of agency, interdependent with her context. Thus, the transformative life outcomes that practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders hold dear are unpredictable.

#### **IV. Vocational Education and training (VET)**

Vocational Training is critical for economic growth and social development. Vocational training is important to reduce poverty by improving employability, productivity and helping sustainable development and inclusive growth. It facilitates a cycle of high productivity, increased employment opportunities, income growth and development (Krishna, 2009). Additionally, it increases women's opportunities to secure decent work, grow their business or increase their productivity and earnings.

Vocational training helps women identify and act on economic opportunities, define, influence and make economic decisions; and challenge and cultural norms.

According to Batliwala (1994); 'education and training' for women's empowerment contain five basic components to be comprehensive;

- i. Creating critical consciousness,
- ii. Access to new knowledge and information,
- iii. Developing new skills,
- iv. Collective organizational building and
- v. Alternative educational opportunities especially for women and girls.

To empower women, it is important to develop knowledge and skills and make women participate in paid employment and in higher-value work. This can be done by increasing access to technical and vocational training, including in non-traditional, higher-value, and emerging sectors. Secondly, it is important to build women's life skills, and create links between education and training programs and employment opportunities to facilitate the transition from education to work.

The Government of India plays a key role in the promotion of vocational education and training. In India vocational training is centralized with the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Ministry of Labor & Employment (MOLE), and the newly created Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). Apart from these, there are around 15 more ministries and departments which provide vocational training programmes in India as per the need of the beneficiaries they cater to. They all need to work in collaboration wherever necessary to bring about an impact that caters to the needs of women and girls.

To prepare students for this task, critical pedagogy connects the societal level to the personal level by grounding the discussion in students' experiences. Acknowledging oppressive power structures is not enough; girl students and other subordinate groups

need to critically examine these social and political conditions as they manifest in their own lived experience. Students learn to engage critically with the world around them by connecting impersonal intellectual concepts and theories to the reality of their lives and asking the question of why?

By asking and answering these questions about their own lived experience, students learn that social and political ideas do not exist in a vacuum.

Make the pedagogy of the curriculum as critical as possible and encourage students to think critically and question the world around them. Incite a sense of curiosity and inquisitiveness in them.

This study focused on the role of international tourism development on women empowerment through mediating a number of financial factors in a panel of 24 selected European countries, over a period of 1990–2015. The results show that financial intermediaries act as a catalyst to empower women through international tourism. More specifically, tourism and financial factors promote (i) gender parity in tertiary enrollment, (ii) gender parity in primary and secondary school enrollment, (iii) female employment, and (iv) women's share in non-agriculture wage employment, while the results further support the (i) growth-led tourism, (ii) finance-led growth, (iii) growth stimulate women empowerment, and (iv) tourism-induced women's empowerment hypothesis across countries.<sup>48</sup>

## **Economic**

Giving women greater economic empowerment means enabling women to increase their right to economic resources and their control over meaningful decisions that benefit themselves, their households and their communities. These include the right to control their own time, their income and access to participation in existing markets equally. Greater empowerment improves their well-being and economic status.<sup>49</sup>

### **1. Role of NGOs**

Women are creative enough to start their own venture, but they are not able to explore the available opportunities because of male dominance, lack of education and proper

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<sup>48</sup>Nassani, Abdelmohsen A., Abdullah Mohammed Aldakhil, Muhammad Moinuddin Qazi Abro, Talat Islam, and Khalid Zaman. "The Impact of Tourism and Finance on Women Empowerment." *Journal of Policy Modeling*. North-Holland, December 12, 2018.  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0161893818301510>.

<sup>49</sup>Abdi, Aisha. "Women Are the Key to Economic Development in Third-World Countries." King's College London. King's College London, August 28, 2019.  
<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/women-are-the-key-to-economic-development-in-third-world-countries>.

government support. Thus, NGOs play a major role in training and empowering women to attain immediate livelihood.

Women empowerment occurs through venture creation and entrepreneurship, which can be attained with proper training and information. Motivation and effective leadership help women in gaining confidence, and they aim to achieve their goals. Proper information about government policies, networking with customers, relationships with self-help groups (SHGs) and NGOs also help them in attaining empowerment.<sup>50</sup>

This study indicates to the government and researchers that, instead of initiating new policies, it is important to work on this to improve the existing practical policies. NGOs or SHGs must focus on providing immediate livelihood through venture creation or entrepreneurial activities.<sup>51</sup>

## **2. Vocational Activities**

Vocational Education helps in uplifting the economic status of many and NGOs are the correct stakeholders for effectively improving upon the societal status of women. They have great grass root touch with women and girls alike and can reach out to them through various methods. Proper administration will need to be set up and the daily progress measured and accounted for.

## **3. Grameen Bank**

Nobel Laureate Professor Mohammad Yunus introduced the concept of Grameen Bank which focuses on providing small loans to poor people especially women in the rural areas of Bangladesh.

With the positive trend equations in most of the aspects this study proves that Grameen Bank has a better scope to grow in the future which will support the social and economic status of rural poor, particularly women.

## **4. Self Help Groups and Credits**

SHGs can help rural household women. There is a lack of opportunity for rural women, owing to the lack of robust credit services; thus they live at subsistence level, and are subservient to household needs. It is further argued that microcredit facilitated through SHGs may help women to engage in income generation activity thereby increasing mobility,

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<sup>50</sup> "Role of NGOs in women empowerment: case studies from Uttarakhand, India", Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 26-41. [Role of NGOs in women empowerment: case studies from Uttarakhand, India](#)

<sup>51</sup> "Role of NGOs in women empowerment: case studies from Uttarakhand, India", Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 26-41. [Role of NGOs in women empowerment: case studies from Uttarakhand, India](#)

confidence, and overall status of women.<sup>52</sup> Economic activity for poorer households is primarily dependent on availability of credit, and credit leverage may help communities to come out of poverty although the money levels for all households will need to be set for each household, on a case to case basis.

Although access to income and credit is a step towards realizing equality, it alone is not a sufficient condition for empowerment. Empowerment needs to be treated like a process rather than an end goal itself.

## **5. Friendly Workplace**

The lack of adequate measures to help women to carry out their reproductive roles (pregnancy, infant care, etc.) discourages women from utilizing these employment opportunities. Therefore, creating women-friendly workplaces is needed to encourage women's work participation.

If women have to continue with the task of carrying out the same level of household chores even when they have jobs, there could be a double burden on them. So, there is a need to reduce their burden of household duties. This may require education of society on the need to share household work. This could be part of a general gender education aimed at both boys and girls. One can see a gradual change in this regard in urban India, but more intentional efforts need to be made in this regard.

## **Infrastructure**

### **1. Proximate Secondary Schooling**

Many students drop out of the formal school system during the transition from primary to secondary, and the lack of proximate secondary schools is one of the most common reasons cited by rural households (Mukhopadhyay & Sahoo 2016).

To tackle this, we can look at the example of Plan International's nine-country study, which sought to identify the reasons why adolescent girls dropped out. The found that girls are identified with their sexual and domestic roles, while boys are seen as providers and household heads. In their research, a girl as a future wife and mother carries little value. She is a demeaned person not seen as worthy of rights. This demeaned identity remains a key barrier to girls accessing their right to education." (Mukhopadhyay, quoted by Plan International 2012). Hence the society's outlook will need to change bit by bit to improve the condition of women in their domestic and work areas.

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<sup>52</sup>Thakur, Sudarshan. "The Problem with 'Women Empowerment' Schemes." India Development Review, August 5, 2021. <https://idronline.org/the-problem-with-women-empowerment-schemes/>.



## 2. Digitalisation

One of the best ways to empower women is through digitalisation. Girls are frequently denied access to technology, leading to a loss of self-esteem, illiteracy, a lack of exposure, and a lack of social awareness. Furthermore, due to poverty and a lack of resources, many cannot afford a computer or internet services.

The IT Sector's CSR has the potential to lead to the evolution of education in India, with several IT businesses creating digital literacy programmes tailored exclusively to female students. The development of smart courses and labs in government schools, as well as the promotion of research-based skills through digital mediums, are two significant examples of CSR programmes that are transforming traditional pedagogy and empowering young ladies.

## Conclusion

In order to improve national integration, national progress, and a sense of shared culture and citizenship, policies must be developed. It should demand an evolution of the educational system, more emphasis on science and technology, the development of moral values, and a tighter connection between education and everyday life.

To bring such a phenomenal shift in society, there will need to be consistent efforts from every stakeholder of the nation. The policies will need to be implemented, reviewed, corrected and implemented again. Only with such a dedicated attitude can women achieve equality in India through education and various other means.

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