



The Big Picture: Women Led Development Model

Why in News?

In charting a new growth story India is transitioning from women's development to 'women-led development'.

Key Points

- **Women as Architects:** In this vision, the women have been reimagined as **architects of India's progress and development**, rather than being passive recipients of the fruits of development.
- **Schemes Empowering Women Indirectly:** Besides various women-centered schemes, other schemes such as [Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana](#) are also empowering women as the house is given in the name of Woman of the Household.
 - A house in the name of a woman means the ownership of her in an asset which makes a woman economically empowered.
 - Also, during the [covid-19 pandemic](#), under the [Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana \(PMJDY\)](#), an amount of Rs. 500/- per month for three months (April' 20 to June' 20), was credited to the accounts of women account holders.

Women at Work

Present Scenario

- **UNDP Findings:** [The UNDP in its latest report for Gender Inequality](#) has noted the following:
 - **Unpaid Labour:** On an average, women spend 2.4 more hours per day than men on unpaid care and domestic work.
 - Among people who participate in the paid economy, women spend an average of four hours more per day than men on paid and unpaid work combined.
 - **Effect of Covid:** Women have been hit harder than men by the [pandemic](#), losing income and leaving the labour market at a greater rate.
 - Women are 25% more likely than men to live in extreme poverty.
 - The global female employment is 19% more at risk than male employment (ILO estimates).
- **WEF Findings for India:** The [Global Gender Gap Report 2021](#) by **World Economic Forum (WEF)** report noted that in terms of economic participation, the **gender gap actually widened in India** by 3% this year.
 - The share of women in **professional and technical roles declined** further to 29.2%.
 - The share of **women in senior and managerial positions also is as low** as 14.6% and **only 8.9% firms in the country have top female managers**.
 - The estimated earned income of women in India is only one-fifth of men's, which puts the country among the bottom 10 globally on this indicator.
 - In Pakistan and Afghanistan, the income of an average woman is below 16% of that of an average man, while in India it is 20.7%.

Government Initiatives for Women Empowerment in Various Fields

- **In Panchayats:**
 - [Mahila Sabhas in Gram Panchayat](#)
 - [Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan \(RGSA\)](#)
 - [Panchayat Mahila Evam Yuva Shakti Abhiyan \(PMEYSA\)](#)
- **In Education:**
 - [Vigyan Jyoti Scheme](#)
 - [GATI Scheme](#)
 - [KIRAN Scheme](#)
 - [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme](#)
- **In Entrepreneurship:**
 - [Mahila e-haat](#)
 - **Mahila Bank**
 - **Mahila Coir Yojana**
 - **Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP)**
 - **Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) Scheme**
- **Other Initiatives:**
 - [National Creche Scheme](#)
 - [One Stop Centre Scheme](#)
 - [Scheme for Adolescent Girls \(SAG\)' across the country](#)

Issues Associated

- **Lesser Labour Force Participation:** Data from the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) has shown that **education and employment have a U-shaped relationship** (a rise and subsequent decline in employment with the rise in education levels).
 - According to the [AISHE Report 2019](#), the female students constituted almost half (48.6%) of the total enrolment in higher education but the participation of women in the [labour force stands as low as 18.6%](#).
- **Women with Families:** A large number of women often drop out of their jobs to get married and have a family and later on find it difficult to come back and continue their job. They are seen as an **'unreliable' member of the company**.
 - Moreover, women with families can not be expected to work 12-14 hours a day (including the commute).
- **Societal Pressure:** Generally there is a fear of women being stigmatized by the community that might see their work as a marker of low status, i.e. the inability of the husband, the main breadwinner, to provide for the family.
 - Further, there is a rise in conservative attitudes that believe a woman's place is inside the home and that if she steps outside the **socially approved threshold**, it would invite a backlash.
- **Prevalence of Informal Work:** In the informal sector in India, most occupations dominated by women are undervalued and underpaid.
 - The poor quality of the paid work often on top of long hours of arduous unpaid domestic chores is one of the main challenges to women empowerment.
 - Further, the **non-availability of white collar jobs**, disproportionate long hours and lesser job security narrow downs the job opportunities for educated women in India.

Steps to be Taken

- **Maintaining the Education v/s Employment Ratio:** It needs to be assured that the women education which is being subsidised very heavily is actually put to use for the country.
 - The remaining share of the women, which is educated and skilled but not participating in the labour force, should also be able to utilise its talent and contribute to the GDP of the country.
- **Encouraging Women Entrepreneurship:** Women shall not only be the seekers but also the creators of job opportunities.
 - Entrepreneurship among women could transform India's economy and society by creating jobs, fuelling innovation, and furthering investment in health and education.
- **Redesigning the Workplaces:** There is a need to rethink the way the workplaces are designed.
 - It needs not to be essentially a 40-hours-a-week job or a two hour commute to keep a

woman in the workforce.

- We can't expect women with home based responsibilities to work 12+ hours but work from home can be redesigned to make women centric workplace.
- **Bringing Women in Leadership Role:** Subdued gender participation emanates from social-economic issues, which can be treated by bringing behavioural change. This can be changed if more women are given leadership positions.
 - Thus, there is a need to ensure equal representation- from company boards to parliaments, from higher education to public institutions -- through special measures and quotas.
- **Changing the Mindset:** Girls, just like male childs, should be asked their dreams, aims, aspirations in family as well as schools.
 - The idea that 'their dreams and career are as important as that of a male' must be instilled in the minds of girls right from the beginning.
 - The society also needs to recognise the role and importance of women in the development of the country.
 - Families must have conversations with women about their choice of work.
- **Recognizing Invisible Work:** There is a need to invest significantly in the care economy and social protection, and redefine Gross Domestic Product to make work in the home visible and counted.
 - The concept of **Temporary Basic Income** introduced by **UNDP** can prove as a headstart to other similar initiatives.
- **Providing Small Necessities is Empowerment too:** Not just education, job and entrepreneurship lead to women empowerment but also providing basic and other small necessities is an empowerment itself.
 - For example; a bank account in their name, a house of their own or even proper hygiene and sanitation facilities at workplaces, educational institutions etc.
 - A woman who is educated and has worked at places with these basic necessities provided is quite likely to ensure these facilities for the future generations she will be in touch with.

Conclusion

- Women empowerment is a starkly long journey but that doesn't imply that it is not worth the efforts.
 - The fruits of women empowerment will require time to ripe and collaborative efforts but all for nothing but a greater good.
- The ripple effects of empowering women are undeniable as an educated and empowered woman will ensure education and empowerment for future generations.