



If Development is not Engendered, It is Endangered

I Measure the Progress of a Community by the Degree of Progress Which Women Have Achieved.

—Bhimrao Ambedkar

The phrase "If development is not engendered, it is endangered" underscores the critical role that gender equality and the inclusion of all genders play in sustainable development. This statement emphasises that development initiatives that fail to consider and integrate gender perspectives are at risk of being ineffective or even harmful. The importance of gender in development is multifaceted, impacting economic growth, social progress, environmental sustainability, and overall human well-being.

Engendered development refers to the **incorporation of gender perspectives** and considerations into all aspects of development policy, planning, implementation, and evaluation. It recognises that men and women experience development differently due to their distinct **roles, responsibilities, and constraints** within societies. This concept aims to address **gender disparities and promote equality** by ensuring that both men's and women's needs, interests, and contributions are acknowledged and valued.

Historically, development policies and programs were often gender-blind, assuming a homogenous population without accounting for gender-specific needs. This oversight led to the **marginalisation of women** and perpetuated existing inequalities. The **feminist movement** and the **recognition of women's rights** in the latter half of the **20th century** brought significant attention to the need for gender-sensitive development. The **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign** (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter), launched in 2015, aims to address the declining child sex ratio and promote the education and empowerment of girls. **Mahila E-Haat**, an initiative of the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**, is an online marketing platform that helps women entrepreneurs, self-help groups, and NGOs to sell their products. It provides a space for women to showcase and sell their products, thereby promoting economic empowerment. **Ujjwala Scheme** aims to provide free **LPG connections to women** from **below poverty line (BPL) households**. It addresses health issues caused by using traditional cooking fuels and promotes women's health and empowerment. **Sukanya Samridhi Yojana**, a government-backed savings scheme, encourages parents to build a fund for the future education and marriage expenses of their female child.

Women's economic empowerment is a critical aspect of engendered development. It involves increasing women's access to economic resources and opportunities, such as **jobs, financial services, and property rights**. Empowering women economically has a ripple effect on families, communities, and economies. Studies have shown that when women earn income, they invest more in their children's education and health, leading to improved human capital and economic growth.

However, the **gender wage gap** is a persistent issue that hinders economic development. Women, on average, earn less than men for similar work, which limits their economic potential and perpetuates poverty. Addressing the wage gap requires policies that promote equal pay for equal work, support work-life balance, and challenge discriminatory practices in the workplace. **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976** mandates **equal pay for men and women** for the same work or work of similar nature. Despite this, enforcement remains a challenge, and disparities persist.

Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 extends the **duration of paid maternity leave** from **12**

weeks to 26 weeks, aiming to support **work-life balance for women**. It also mandates crèche facilities in establishments with 50 or more employees. **Skill India Mission** launched in 2015, aims to provide **skill training** to millions of Indians, including women, to enhance their employability and bridge the gender wage gap. A significant proportion of women work in the informal economy, which lacks social protections and job security. Engendering development involves formalising the informal sector and providing social protections to all workers. This includes measures such as **maternity leave, childcare support, and access to credit and training programs**.

Education is a **fundamental right** and a cornerstone of social development. Gender disparities in education, particularly in developing countries, hinder progress. Engendered development promotes equal access to education for girls and boys, addressing barriers such as **early marriage, gender-based violence, and socio-cultural norms** that devalue girls' education. Educated women are more likely to participate in the labour force, have healthier families, and contribute to societal progress. **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** was launched in 2001, with the aim to achieve **universal primary education**. It places **special emphasis on female education** and the achievement of gender parity in enrollment, retention, and completion rates.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) scheme provides residential schools at the upper primary level for girls from marginalised communities. It aims to reduce the dropout rate among girls and ensure their continued education. Earlier Mid-Day Meal scheme and now **Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman' scheme (PM Poshan Scheme)** provides **free lunches to children** in primary and upper primary schools. It has been instrumental in increasing school attendance and retention rates, particularly among girls.

Gender plays a crucial role in health outcomes. Women and men have different health needs and face distinct health risks. Engendered development involves ensuring that health systems are responsive to these differences. This includes providing **maternal and reproductive health services**, addressing **gender-based violence**, and promoting women's health issues. **Gender-sensitive health policies** contribute to improved health outcomes and overall development. **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)** for safe motherhood under the **National Health Mission** aims to reduce **maternal and neonatal mortality** by promoting institutional deliveries among poor pregnant women. It provides financial incentives to encourage women to give birth in health facilities. **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** provides **cash incentives to pregnant and lactating women** for the first live birth. It aims to improve health-seeking behaviour and compensate for wage loss during childbirth and childcare.

National Health Mission (NHM) includes various programs targeting **maternal and child health, adolescent health, and reproductive health**. It emphasises the importance of gender-sensitive approaches to healthcare delivery. **Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)** is a health insurance scheme that provides coverage for **secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation**. It includes provisions to ensure that women and men have equal access to healthcare services.

Political participation is essential for **inclusive and democratic development**. Women's underrepresentation in political and decision-making processes limits their ability to influence policies that affect their lives. Engendered development promotes women's political empowerment through measures such as **gender quotas, capacity-building programs**, and advocacy for women's rights. Increased political participation by women leads to more inclusive and equitable governance. **Reservation of Seats in Local Governments** by the **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, 1992** mandate the **reservation of one-third of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions** (rural local governments) and **Urban Local Bodies**. This has significantly increased women's representation at the grassroots level. Women **Reservation Act, 2023** also known as the **Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023** reserves **one-third of all seats for women in Lok Sabha, State legislative assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi**, including those reserved for **SCs and STs**.

Climate change disproportionately affects women, particularly in developing countries where they are often responsible for water and food security. Engendered development involves recognizing and addressing these vulnerabilities. Women must be included in climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, leveraging their knowledge and skills in sustainable resource management. Gender-responsive climate policies can enhance resilience and ensure that development gains are not reversed by

environmental degradation.

Women play a significant role in agriculture, particularly in subsistence farming. Engendered development supports women's access to **land, credit, and technology**, enabling them to improve **agricultural productivity** and **food security**. Empowering women farmers contributes to sustainable agricultural practices and rural development.

Deep-rooted socio-cultural norms often perpetuate gender inequality. These norms dictate gender roles and limit women's opportunities and decision-making power. Engendered development requires challenging and changing these norms through education, advocacy, and community engagement.

Engendered development ensures that both men and women benefit from and contribute to development processes. By addressing gender disparities and promoting equality, societies can achieve economic growth, social progress, and environmental sustainability. The integration of gender perspectives into development is not only a matter of justice but also a prerequisite for effective and lasting development outcomes. Without engendered development, efforts to improve human well-being and prosperity will remain incomplete and vulnerable to failure. Therefore, it is imperative that all development initiatives consciously and consistently incorporate gender considerations to ensure their success and sustainability.

Empowerment of Women Leads to Development of a Good Family, Good Society and, Ultimately, a Good Nation.

—Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

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