



INDIA'S MARCH TOWARDS ACHIEVING OF GENDER EQUALITY: AN UN'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 2030

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ABSTRACT: - The process by which any nation improves the economic, political, social and cultural well-being of its people is economic development. This process is related with the expansion of people's entitlements and their corresponding capabilities, nourishment, literacy, education, morbidity and many more other socio-economic indicators. It is very highly complex phenomenon and as much, is influenced by numerous economic, political, social and cultural factors like natural resources, education and human resources development, transportation and communication, health technology, political stability and administrative factors. It includes bringing in a structural change in the economy and improving the standard of living through the improvement of health, education, and workplace conditions. For bringing in development partnership of governments, national and international institutions, private sector, civil society and citizens alike is needed to ensure that we leave a better nation for future generations. The United Nations at the Millennium Summit in 2000, following the adoption of United Nations Millennium Declaration. It established eight international development goals for the year 2015 known as the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs]. These eight goals were measured by eighteen targets and each goal had specific targets and dates for achieving these targets. The United Nations again led the process for Post-2015 Development Agenda from 2012 to 2015 to define the future global development framework that would succeed 2015. The United Nations-led process involved its 193 member states and global society. The resolution is a broad inter-governmental agreement that acts as the Post-2015 Development Agenda. There are one hundred sixty nine targets for the seventeen goals and total two hundred thirty two indicators that will measure compliance. The Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] cover the seventeen social, economic, cultural and environmental development issues: no poverty; zero hunger; good health and well-being for people; quality education; gender equality; clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry; innovation and infra-structure; reducing inequality; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; climate action; life below water; life on land; peace, justice and strong institutions; partnership for goals. India played an important role in the formulation of SDG's. Much of Indian National Development Agenda is mirrored in the SDG's. The government of India mandated NITI AAYOG to implement and monitor, co-ordinate and ensure implementation of the SDGs. NITI AAYOG undertook an extensive exercise of measuring the progress of India and its states' towards the SDG's 2030, culminating in the development of the first SDG India Index- Baseline Report 2018. My this research paper is focused

upon the role of India towards Sustainable Development Goals [SDG's] especially goal five, gender equality.

KEY WORDS: - Sustainable Development Goals, gender equality, hunger, poverty, health, education, global partnership.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY: - The broad objective of the study is to examine the role of India towards Sustainable Development Goal's especially gender equality. There are many questions related by gender equality such as: what is the need to achieve gender equality? What is the importance of gender equality? ; What is gender inequality affect on women? ; Why should their gender equality in any country? 'What can we do to tackle the issues related by gender equality? To search answers of all these questions is the main objective of the study.

INTRODUCTIONS: - The concept of the Sustainable Development Goal's [SDGs] was born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, an ancient Indian phrase meaning "the world is one family", pithily captures the spirit of India's approach to all aspects of life including economic development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are, thus, part and parcel of the country's longstanding tradition and heritage. Indeed, the goals substantially reflect the development agenda of India, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself noted in his speech at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015. To quote him, "Much of India's development agenda is mirrored in the Sustainable Development Goals. Our national plans are ambitious and purposeful; Sustainable development of one-sixth of humanity will be of great consequence to the world and our beautiful planet." Taking cue from the memorable phrase Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, translated as "Collective Effort, Inclusive Development" and enunciated by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stakeholders from various walks of life - central and state governments, industry, civil society, technical experts and academics - are coming together to promote a better future for our country. In the spirit of cooperative federalism, the two levels of the government have joined hands to bring about the change India needs. While the central government has sponsored schemes to provide employment, connect villages to cities through roads, build houses for the poor and offer education in the states. Various sub-groups of Chief Ministers have come forward to give valuable advice to the central government on such important matters such as digital payments, skill development and the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. A multidisciplinary Task Force was constituted to coordinate the review and process documentation. From the sub national level, state and union territory governments reported their progress on the various programmes and initiatives. While reporting about the various facets of the Sustainable Development Goal's [SDGs,] this VNR focuses on the progress made towards achieving Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17. These Goals have been agreed upon in the High Level Political Forum [HLPF] as focus areas for India. The nature of SDGs, however, is such that the advancement of one global goal may lead to progress in other goals as well.

GOAL 1:- End Poverty in all its Forms Everywhere: There is compelling evidence that the rapid growth India has achieved following the economic reforms initiated in 1991 has led to significant reduction in poverty. Poverty has fallen across all economic, social and religious groups nationally and in all states in the post-reform

era. Sustained growth (6.2% from 1993-94 to 2003-04 and 8.3% from 2004-05 to 2011-12) has created gainful employment and helped raise wages thereby directly empowering the poor. It has also brought the government an increased volume of revenues enabling it to sustain a high level of social spending and, thus, doubling the direct effect of growth on poverty. In India several large-scale anti-poverty programmes have been implemented. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, for instance, has generated over two billion person-days of employment during 2016-17 alone, largely for the disadvantaged sections of society. Additionally, initiatives have been launched for providing pension and insurance to workers in the unorganized sector, widows and the differently abled. Over 130 million people have accessed life and accident insurance under these programmes. Further, efforts are underway to universalize access to basic services. In order to achieve the goal of housing for all by 2022, direct financial assistance is being extended to poor households. Nearly 3.21 million houses were constructed last year as part of this initiative in rural areas. Programmes are also being implemented for ensuring access to education, health and nutrition security, with a special focus on vulnerable groups such as women and children. Other priority areas are drinking water and sanitation. Currently, nearly 77.5% of rural habitations are being provided with 40 liters of drinking water per capita on a daily basis. Another 18.9% habitations have been covered partially thus far. Over 63.7% of households in rural areas had access to an improved sanitation facility in 2016-17 as compared to 29.1% in 2005-06. With respect to clean sources of cooking fuel, over 22 million families have been provided with Liquefied Petroleum Gas [LPG] connections under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. Between 2005-06 and 2015-16, households having access to clean fuel have increased from 25.5% to 43.8%.

GOAL 2:- End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture: Significant progress has been made in improving food and nutrition security. For instance, stunting among children less than 5 years has declined from 48% to 38.4% between 2005-06 and 2015-16. During the same period, the percentage of underweight children has declined from 42.5% to 35.7%. The absolute levels of stunted and underweight children, however, remain high in India. To address this, a number of schemes are being implemented. For instance, more than 800 million people are covered in India by providing the food grains at affordable prices through the Public Distribution System. The Mid-Day-Meal VII Programme is providing nutritious cooked meals to 100 million children in primary schools. Additionally, food distribution governance is being strengthened through the digitization of Ration Cards and an online grievance redressal mechanism. Further, sustainable and climate-adaptive agriculture has been boosted by, inter alia, promoting organic farming and issuing of 62 million Soil Health Cards to farmers. A comprehensive plan is also being implemented for doubling farmers' income by 2022.

GOAL 3:- Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages: India has made significant strides in improving various health indicators. The Infant Mortality Rate has declined from 57 in 2005-06 to 41 in 2015-16. Similarly, Under-5 Mortality Rate has fallen from 74 to 50 over the same period. This has been enabled, at least partially, by a significant improvement in vaccination coverage for children between 12-23 months of age. Moreover, institutional deliveries have increased from 38.7% in

2005-06 to 78.9% in 2015-16. The India's strategy in health is focused on providing essential services to the entire population, with a special emphasis on the poor and vulnerable groups. The National Health Policy, 2017 has specified targets for universalizing primary health care, achieving further reductions in infant and under-5 mortality, preventing premature deaths due to non-communicable diseases as well as increasing government expenditure on health. A composite index is being used to monitor and incentivize improvements in health services delivery across states in the country. The government is aiming to immunize all unimmunized and partially immunized children against vaccine preventable diseases by 2020. Towards achieving universal health coverage, a health insurance cover of Indian Rupee [INR] 100,000 United States Dollar (USD 1,563) is being extended to all poor families.

GOAL 5:- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls while much more progress remains to be made, a number of indicators pertaining to the status of women in India have moved in the right direction over the years. For instance, 68.4% of women were literate in 2015-16, as compared to 55.1% in 2005-06. Additionally, 53% of women were independently using a bank or savings account in 2015-16, which is a significant improvement from 15.1% in 2005-06. Numerous measures have been put in place for promoting gender equality. For example, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative focuses on a comprehensive package of interventions for the girl child including those pertaining to education and protection. The Maternity Benefit Programme protects women from wage loss during the first six months after childbirth. Further, several programmes are being implemented for enabling greater participation of women in the work force.

GOAL 9:- Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation all forms of transportation - roads, railways, civil aviation and waterways - are being rapidly expanded. Road connectivity and electricity are being brought to all villages. The Bharat Broadband Network Ltd. initiative is aiming to provide high-speed broadband connectivity to all village councils in the country. Over the last five years, there has been a consistent growth in installed electricity generation capacity. The installed capacity in non-fossil-fuel sectors has grown by 51.3% and more than doubled in the renewable energy sector (solar, wind, bio- and small hydro power). viii Further, India is making efforts to become an Information Technology and manufacturing hub through its 'Make in India' campaign. These efforts have greatly accelerated Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows and helped the country sustain an average growth of 7.5% during the last three financial years (2014-15 to 2016-17). Employment-intensive manufacturing segments are being boosted by providing easy credit to small-scale business entrepreneurs. Additionally, the 'Start-up India' programme promotes entrepreneurship and labour-intensive economic growth.

GOAL 14:- Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources A clear agenda has been formulated for promoting the 'Blue Revolution'. For tracking the levels of marine pollution along the coastline, the country has developed the Coastal Ocean Monitoring and Prediction System. Additionally, an oil spill management system has been put in place for responding to emergencies arising out of oil spills. Further, the Integrated National Fisheries Action Plan, 2016 is being implemented to promote the livelihoods of fishing communities as well as the

ecological integrity of the marine environment. Giving new impetus to port-led development, the Sagarmala programme is improving port connectivity, port-linked industrialization and coastal community development.

GOAL 17:- Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development while working towards revitalizing the global partnership for the achievement of the SDGs, India reaffirms the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Despite significant efforts for domestic resource mobilization, India is unlikely to gather sufficient revenues for achieving the SDGs. Therefore, India reiterates that the developed countries have an essential obligation to provide financial assistance to the developing countries, especially for global public goods such as climate change mitigation and control of pandemics, so that they can fully achieve the SDGs. India also highlights the need for international cooperation for curbing illicit financial flows, defining aid unambiguously and establishing robust systems for monitoring commitments made by donor countries. A path-breaking tax reform agenda is being readied in the country to optimize domestic resource mobilization. This includes direct tax reforms as well as the Goods and Services Tax (GST), a uniform and simplified form of indirect taxation. An innovative tax like the Swachh Bharat Cess has also been levied for mobilizing resources for the Clean India Mission. Additionally, implementation of the budget responsibility legislation is ensuring predictable and sustainable budgeting as well as long-term debt sustainability. Proactive policy reforms have boosted the FDI flows during the last three fiscal years to United States Dollar [USD] one hundred fifty six billion including a record-breaking USD fifty six billion in the latest fiscal year. To enable the implementation of development interventions by sub-national governments, the fiscal devolution to states has been increased substantially (from 32 to 42 % of the central pool of tax proceeds). Initiatives are also being undertaken to enhance development cooperation with neighboring and other countries of the global South. For instance, the South Asia Satellite was launched in May 2017 for sharing data with neighbours. Lastly, efforts are underway at the national-level for finalizing the indicators that will enable monitoring of the progress made on the SDGs. The government is also considering setting up a high-level Committee headed by the Chief Statistician of India to oversee the monitoring framework for SDGs at the national level. While national efforts are paramount, global technical support is important in various areas including developing methodologies for data collection as well as monitoring and evaluation.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5 GENDER EQUALITY: - The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for a new and transformative vision. It establishes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are integrated and indivisible, with gender equality as a central priority. Gender equality and women's empowerment are addressed as explicit priorities through the stand-alone Goal 5 and by mainstreaming gender equality across the SDGs. In recognizing multi-dimensional inequality within and between countries, the 2030 Agenda is committed to "leaving no one behind". To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Why? Women and girls represent half of the world's population and therefore also half of its potential. But, today gender inequality persists everywhere and stagnates social progress. As of 2014, one hundred forty three

countries have guaranteed equality between men and women in their Constitutions but fifty two have yet to take this step.

Inequalities faced by girls can begin right at birth and follow them all their lives. In some countries, girls are deprived of access to health care or proper nutrition, leading to a higher mortality rate. As girls move into adolescence, gender disparities widen. Child marriage affects girls far more than boys. Globally, nearly fifteen million girls under age of eighteen are married every year— or 37,000 each day. Marrying young also affects girls' education. About one third of developing countries have not achieved gender parity in primary education.

Disadvantages in education translate into lack of access to skills and limited opportunities in the labour market. Women's and girls' empowerment is essential to expand economic growth and promote social development. The full participation of women in labor forces would add percentage points to most national growth rates— double digits in many cases. Gender equality is not only fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Unfortunately, the current time , one in five women and girls between the ages of fifteen to forty nine have reported experiencing physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner within a twelve month period and forty nine countries currently have no laws protecting women from domestic violence. Progress is occurring regarding these harmful practices such as Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation [FGM], which has declined by thirty percent in the past decade.

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 reducing poverty to promoting the health, education, protection and the well-being of girls and boys. Investing in education programmes for girls and increasing the age at which they marry can return \$5 for every dollar spent. Investing in programs improving income-generating activities for women can return \$7 dollars for every dollar spent. 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. If you are a girl, you can stay in school, help empower your female classmates to do the same and fight for your right to access sexual and reproductive health services. If you are a woman, you can address unconscious biases and implicit associations that form an unintended and often an invisible barrier to equal opportunity. If you are a man or a boy, you can work alongside women and girls to achieve gender equality and embrace healthy, respectful relationships. You can fund education campaigns to curb cultural practices like female genital mutilation and change harmful laws that limit the rights of women and girls and prevent them from achieving their full potential.

Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls While much more progress remains to be made, a number of indicators pertaining to the status of women in India have moved in the right direction over the years. Addressing discrimination against women The Government of India has implemented several legislations and welfare schemes to curb the practice of female feticide and sex-selective abortion. In addition, the government has launched the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child) movement for catalyzing a change in mind set as well as protecting and educating the girl child. Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojana (Chief

Minister's bicycle initiative for the girl child) the scheme was launched in the state of Bihar for reducing the school dropout rates for girls. Under the scheme, a cycle was provided to every girl in the state who was entering Class 9 or 10. Following the introduction of the scheme, a substantial decrease in the dropout rate of girls from school has been achieved. Women also face other types of discrimination. For instance, a study on Gender and Livelihoods Impacts of Clean Cook Stoves in South Asia reveals that Indian women spend approximately 374 hours every year collecting firewood. This amount of time could otherwise be spent in education or productive work. As a response to this problem, the government launched the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana for providing clean cooking fuel in the form of Liquefied Petroleum Gas connections. The lack of sanitation facilities at home also affects women disproportionately. Additionally, the absence of adequate infrastructure for sanitation and menstrual hygiene management in schools is one of the factors that contribute to girls dropping out of secondary school. This issue is being addressed through the flagship sanitation programme of the government.

'SELFIE WITH DAUGHTERS' CAMPAIGN: - The 'Selfie with Daughters' Campaign began in a small village in Haryana where residents were encouraged by the village leader to take pictures with their daughters. This innovative approach to changing attitudes towards women was promoted by the Indian Prime Minister and subsequently received considerable international acclaim. It has also led to the creation of the world's first online museum with parents from across the globe sharing pictures with their daughters as a symbol of pride. In addition the Central and state government programmes and schemes, several policies are also in place. Recently, the Indian Parliament cleared the Maternity Benefit Bill which will provide 26 weeks' paid leave to working women who are pregnant. The underlying objective of these policies is to empower women, and provide them with legal and constitutional safeguards.

INITIATIVES FOR IMPROVING FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION:-

MAHILA E-HAAT: - Mahila E-HAAT is a bilingual direct online marketing platform leveraging technology for supporting women entrepreneurs and Self-Help Groups for showcasing their products and services. It was adjudged as one of the top 100 projects in India during 2016.

STAND UP INDIA: - Stand up India was launched in 2016 for providing bank loans to woman borrowers for setting up a Greenfield enterprise.

MAHILA SHAKTI KENDRA: - Mahila Shakti Kendra is an initiative that supports establishment of Women Empowerment Centers at the village-level. The Centers aim to converge action in several areas including skill development, employment, digital literacy, health and nutrition to provide a comprehensive package of services.

Women Transforming India is an online contest launched by NITI Aayog, in partnership with United Nations, India and My Gov for crowd sourcing stories of women who are making a difference in their respective fields. The best stories are awarded.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SECURITY: - One Stop Crisis Centers are being established across the country for providing integrated support to women affected by violence, in private and public spaces. The services

include medical assistance, psychosocial counseling, legal aid, shelter as well as a video conferencing facility to facilitate police and court proceedings. The Women Helpline initiative has also been integrated with the One Stop Crisis Centers. It aims to provide an immediate response to women affected by violence through a number that is active 24 hours a day. Another challenge faced by women is trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. The government has launched several initiatives for curbing this problem.

INITIATIVES BY STATE GOVERNMENTS ON WOMEN SAFETY: BHAROSA (trust):- An Initiative of the Hyderabad City Police & Telangana Government to provides in one place a range of support services to women affected by violence. The focus is on enabling women to deal with the challenges they are facing in a confident manner.

HIMMAT (courage) SAFETY SOLUTIONS FOR WOMEN: - Delhi Police Emergency Services for Citizens Is a 24x7 police emergency service, providing free services including legal support. It also provides ambulance assistance to citizens. Further, an application called ‘Himmat’ has been launched for enabling the safety of working women who travel to their homes late at night.

FINDINGS:- India’s progress towards gender equality, measured by its position on rankings such as the Gender Development Index has been disappointing, despite fairly rapid rates of economic growth. In the past decade, while Indian GDP has grown by around 6%, there has been a large decline in female labour force participation from 34% to 27%. The male-female wage gap has been stagnant at 50% (a recent survey finds a 27% gender pay gap in white-collar jobs). Crimes against women show an upward trend, in particular brutal crimes such as rapes, dowry deaths, and honour killings. These trends are disturbing as a natural prediction would be that with growth come education and prosperity, and a possible decline in adherence to traditional institutions and socially prescribed gender roles that hold women back.

A preference for sons: Cultural institutions in India, particularly those of patrilineality (inheritance through male descendants) and patrilocality (married couples living with or near the husband’s parents), play a central role in perpetuating gender inequality and ideas about gender-appropriate behaviour.

A culturally ingrained parental preference for sons - emanating from their importance as caregivers for parents in old age - is linked to poorer consequences for daughters.

The dowry system, involving a cash or in-kind payment from the bride’s family to the groom’s at the time of marriage, is another institution that disembowels women. The incidence of dowry payment, which is often a substantial part of a household’s income, has been steadily rising over time across all regions and socioeconomic classes.

This often results in dowry-related violence against women by their husbands and in-laws if the dowry is considered insufficient or as a way to demand more payments.

These practices create incentives for parents not to have girl children or to invest less in girls’ health and education. Such parental preferences are reflected in increasingly masculine sex ratios in India. In 2011, there were 919 girls under age six per 1000 boys, despite sex determination being outlawed in India.

This reinforces the inferior status of Indian women and puts them at risk of violence in their marital households. According to the National Family and Health Survey of

2005-06, 37% of married women have been victims of physical or sexual violence perpetrated by their spouse. There is clearly a need for policy initiatives to empower women as gender disparities in India persist even against the backdrop of economic growth.

Current literature provides pointers from policy changes that have worked so far. One unique policy experiment in village-level governance that mandated one-third representation for women in positions of local leadership has shown promising results.

Evaluations of this affirmative action policy have found that in villages led by women, the preferences of female residents are better represented, and women are more confident in reporting crimes that earlier they may have considered too stigmatizing to bring to attention. Female leaders also serve as role models and raise educational and career aspirations for adolescent girls and their parents. Behavioral studies find that while in the short run there is backlash by men as traditional gender roles are being challenged, the negative stereotype eventually disappears. This underscores the importance of sustained affirmative action as a way to reduce gender bias. Another policy change aimed at equalizing land inheritance rights between sons and daughters has been met with a more mixed response. While on the one hand, it led to an increase in educational attainment and age at marriage for daughters, on the other hand, it increased spousal conflict leading to more domestic violence.

Improvements in labour market prospects also have the potential to empower women. An influential randomization study found that job recruiter visits to villages to provide information to young women led to positive effects on their labour market participation and enrolment in professional training. 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. Recent on training and recruiting young women from rural areas for factory-based jobs in cities provide economic independence and social autonomy that they were unaccustomed to in their parental homes.

CONCLUSION: - Women and girls, everywhere, must have equal rights and opportunity, and be able to live free of violence and discrimination. Women's equality and empowerment is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, but also integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development. In short, all the SDGs depend on the achievement of Goal 5. India played a prominent role in the formulation of Sustainable Development Goals and much of the country's national development agenda is mirrored in Sustainable Development Goals. However, with seventeen Goals, one hundred sixty nine targets and three hundred and six national indicators, the Sustainable Development Goals might be difficult to grasp and understand. Defining and measuring success pose a challenge as well. Countries around the world have been considering how to implement and measure success Vis-a Vis these goals. Since gender inequality constitutes one of the histories most persistent and widespread forms of injustice, eliminating it will call for one of history's biggest movements for change. While increasing representation of women in the public spheres is important and can potentially be attained through some form of affirmative action, an attitudinal shift is essential for women to be considered as equal within their homes and in broader society. For India to maintain its position as a

global growth leader, more concerted efforts at local and national levels and by the private sector are needed to bring women to parity with men. Educating Indian children from an early age about the importance of gender equality could be a meaningful start in that direction.

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