

EDUCATION AS A PATHWAY OF ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY

Kumari Shipu* & Sheetu Meenia (Research scholars)**

Department of Education

University of Jammu

Gender Equality

“Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression.”

NELSON MANDELA

Abstract

Men and women are born equal but are not treated equally. Women who constitute half of the population of the world still face inequalities in all sphere of life. Although many laws and educational policies were made to bring men and women at par. Among these, the most famous were Millennium Development Goals (MDG) which was signed by 191 united Nation members with the third goal to promote gender equality and empower women (2000-2015) which focus on eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education and also in all levels of education no later than 2015. Improvements had been seen in Gender Equality but the goal of gender equality had not been achieved till 2015. That's why the UNESCO framed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which is also known as transforming our world: the justice. The fourth goal of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all and fifth goal of sustainable development goals is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. This paper will focus on what is the gender equality, obstacles in the way of gender equality, progress made by Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) and progress made because of Sustainable Development Goals from the last two years (2015-17) in the field of gender equality and lastly what role does education play in promoting gender equality in the classroom and in the society.

Keywords: - Education, Gender Equality, Millennium development goals, sustainable development goals.

INTRODUCTION

Higher status and position was given to the women in the past but the status of women was declined with the passage of time, equal positions is not availed by majority of women in the society now a days. The position of women in the family is greatly determined by the level of education obtain by her. Men and women of our county are still not consider equal both in family and social life. Due to male dominate society; women are not treated at par with men in spite of earning equal to them. Although education had made women economically independent, but they still require the desired self confidence. Education is a fundamental human right. Every child has liberty to get it. It assists them to lead a productive and successful future. When we ensure that children have access to a rights-based, quality education that is deep-rooted in gender equality, we create effect of opportunity that impacts generations to come. Educations intensify lives. It will put a full-stop on generational cycles of poverty and disease and will help in achieving the goal of sustainable development.

GENDER EQUALITY:

It stands for providing equal rights and opportunities to both men and women belonging to all sections of society as well as decision making and economic participation, and the needs, aspirations and different behaviors of men and women equally favored and valued. (<http://www.genderequality.ie/en/GE/Pages/WhatisGE>).

Facts and Figures:-

1. There were over [24,000 reported dowry deaths](#) in India from the last three years.
2. In India between 15 to 49 years of age 70% of married women are victims of beatings or rape.
3. A study conducted I On 2011 reveals that from the year 2002 to 2010, 72% of acid attacked cases in India involved at least one female victim.
4. Foetal sex determination by unethical medical professionals has these days grown into a ₹1,000-crore industry in India as reported by [UNICEF](#).
5. Up to 8 million female fetuses [had been aborted](#) in the last decade according to 2011 census.

6. In India almost half of the all women from the age of 20 to 24 years were married before attaining the legal age, even though child marriage is illegal there.
7. India shows "extremely high" levels of gender inequality, with a Gender Parity Score of 0.48, compared to an ideal score of 1 according to [a report](#).
8. The median wage for women in India was 27% lower than what men make a [recent survey](#) revealed.
9. 39.8% of rape victims in India are girls below the age of 18 as reported by National Crime Record Bureau's [2014 report](#).
10. India still ranks an abysmal 127th out of 146 in the United Nation's [Gender Inequality Index](#) despite an improving child sex ratio. (https://www.buzzfeed.com/shayanroy/facts-about-gender-inequality-in-india?utm_term=.yurJY0wl7#.ckZkvgMA5)

PROGRESS MADE BY MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Millennium Development Goals (MDG) which was signed by 191 united Nation members with the third goal to promote gender equality and empower women (2000-2015) which focus on eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education and also in all levels of education no later than 2015.

Trend in some important indicators related to girl's enrolment in education			
Indicator	Level of education	2000-2001	2013-14
Enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment	Primary education (Classes I-V)	43.8%	48.2%
	Upper primary education (Classes VI-VIII)	40.9%	48.6%
	Secondary (IX –X) and higher secondary (XI –XII) education	38.8%	47.1%
Number of girls per 100 boys enrolled	Primary education (Classes I-V)	78	93
	Upper primary education	69	95
	Secondary education	63	90
	Higher education	58	81

A lot of educational schemes were started for the empowerment of women during the tenure of MDGs few among them were :-Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL), KASTURBA Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) scheme, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), Mahila Samakhya (MS) Programme, Saakshar Bharat, Kishori Shakti Yojna and Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG) –‘SABLA’, Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP). Women empowerment and Gender equality plays a vital role in minimizing poverty, endorse development and tackle many other challenges. In this regard, education plays a significant role in bringing awareness among the people towards education of both the gender at all level to give them equality in the society.

(http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/mdg_2july15_1.pdf)

PROGRESS MADE BY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS TILL 2017

In order to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, the SDGs, especially SDG 4 is a welcome step in strengthening national commitments towards them. This report through light on the status of implementation of the RTE Act with reference to the achievement of SDG 4 Targets, 4.1, 4.2. and 4.6. These states:

- **Target 4.1** - By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
- **Target 4.2** - By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.
- **Target 4.6** - By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, and achieve literacy and numeracy.

Millions of children are still out of school in India, although various national and international levels of efforts are made by the Government to achieve universalization of equitable and inclusive education. India failed to achieve adequate universal primary

education Goal of Millennium Development Goal by 2015 but with the help of SDG's it is working hard to complete the unfinished task of MDG'S. The Goal of achieving universal primary education will only be achieve when the Government of India will extend universal education up to secondary level beyond grade 8 with the help of spreading RTE to cover secondary education.

SDGs 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. In India, the root cause of discrimination against women and girls is the roles and responsibilities assigned to women and men, perpetuated and promoted by patriarchal social norms and practices.

As per census data 2011, India's sex ratio is 933 females per 1000 males, with 946 females for rural, 900 for urban and 945 for Dalit women. Kerala has the highest sex ratio of 1084 females juxtaposed with Haryana state having one of the lowest with 879 per 1000 males. Female literacy rate is 53.7% far below the national average of 64.8% with the male literacy rate at 75.3 %. Though literacy rate amongst the Dalit women has improved from 41.9% in 2001 to 56.5% (Census of India 2011), it continues to be below the national average. Literacy rate is lowest in Rajasthan at 52.6% followed by Bihar 53.3%. And while an increase in the enrolment of girls in primary and secondary schools are observed. Safety security, mobility, teacher's attitude, functional sanitation facilities, early marriages, extra household chores etc. lead to lower educational attainment among them

http://www.devalt.org/images/L3_ProjectPdfs/AchievingSDGsinIndia_DA_21Sept.pdf?mid=6&sid=28

CONSTRAINTS TO EDUCATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA

India accounts for 30% of the world's total illiterate population and out of which 70% are women. As per 2011 Census data, women constitute 48% of the total population in India, with a total literacy rate of 53.7% as compared to 75.3% in males. The literacy rate among rural women is 46.1% as compared to 72.9% among urban women; which is still lower than literacy rates among than rural and urban men whom stand at 70.7% and 86.3% respectively.

Some limitations in educating a female are given below-

(i) Violence and Sexual Harassment-

Violence and Sexual Harassment is the major problem which prohibited parents to send their girls in schools freely. Transport facilities for girls, especially in those areas where secondary schools and universities are far away from their hometown is a serious issue on which least attention is being paid. Initiatives like self defense or cycling are taught to girls for gender-sensitive education, but these things are not being promoted through the medium of education.

(ii) Strengthening of gender roles-

Social institutions like family, school, work place and community are strengthening on the role played by male and female in the society based on their gender assign more work to women than men as a result of which the education of women suffered a lot. Though it is well-known that by breaking the cycle of the gender role quality in education for boys and girls will be ensured.

(iii) Reinforcement of gender discrimination in the present education system –

Educational institutions play a central role in the process of both socialization and education. For example, stereotypes thinking relating to roles, responsibility and opportunities, which are being showed in family settings, are being used in educational institutions. Thus, schools are places where the socializing process is reinforced and given legality and genuineness.

(iv) Access and retention in education –

Access to school was greatly affected by gender discrimination and disparity. With the GPI at lower secondary and upper secondary levels dropping to 0.73 and 0.67 respectively, access and retention problems deepen at higher levels of education. No attention is being paid towards social and cultural problems that avert girls and women from entering the education system. Problems like poverty of parents, long distances to school, poor sanitation facilities, and parents prefer to educate boys than girls etc. effect access to education.

(v) Outdated Patriarchal Outlook and discrimination-

Discrimination against girls at all stages of education i.e. primary, secondary and higher education remains an issue. Social and economic privilege also affect access to school of

boys and girls, girls in secondary and higher education mostly drawn from higher income and social groups, are having higher social status. Private school's students do better than the government schools' students not only because of the facilities available to them but socio-economic background. Parental under-investment is a major constraint in education of female. (Oommen & Ramya, 2018)

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

1. Talk to women and girls:

Women and girls' voices are excluded from global and national decision-making is the main reason for not achieving gender equality. We're setting ourselves up to fail as programmes and policies are designed without women's needs central to their foundation. If MDG's are designed seeking the advice of women who are living at grass root level they would definitely be achieved. The major role of women in home chores, caring for younger siblings and fetching water are the major obstacles in the way of girl's education.

2. Let girls use mobile phones:

In India, majority of girls don't have the access to latest technology like computers and mobile phones due to economic conditions of their family as well as infrastructure related challenges. Commonly we see that parents to their home prohibit girls using mobile phones. The majority of girls in India don't have access to using basic technology such as phones and computers because of infrastructure related challenges and economic reasons. Without access to technology can we imagine that girls and women access equal resources, opportunities and rights?

3. Stop child marriage and sexual harassment:

Child marriage is a major problem in the way of girl's education. We have to stop child marriage, if we wish that girls should be able to complete education. Sexual harassment of girl's is another area which has to be taken seriously by the government. Girls are married earlier in our society because of insecurity of their parents. Moreover, girls are at

risk of physical and sexual assault when they have to walk long distance to school. It is a major barrier to girls' full participation in education.

4. Make education gender sensitive:

Although progress is seen in increasing access to education but in improving the gender sensitivity of education system, the progress has been slow including ensuring textbooks promote positive stereotypes. There is a great need that girls should come out of schools as citizens who can make more equal society.

5. Raise aspirations of girls and their parents:

The basic approach to raise the aspirations of girls and their parents is to change how girls can be and can do. We also need parents to see that there are a lot of opportunities for their daughters to become a role model for the others from doing something different from the home chores that their only security is not just to be good wives and mothers.

6. Empower mothers:

If we want to enhance girl's education, we must empower women on community level. The mother's will send their daughters to school, if they were educated.

7. Get women into power:

A woman's voice and her ability to become a leader in her community are fundamental to empowering women. This is a good way to get rid from many systemic barriers to a woman's success has been increased participation by women in local, regional and national legislation as an empowered change agents.

8. Encourage women into non-traditional vocations:

Encourage women into non-traditional vocations is a crucial step in making not only long-lasting change in their lives but also help break social taboos. Women should be

encourage to participate in professions like motorcycle fixing, driving, hospitality, mobile-phone fixing.

9. Stop the violence:

Gender inequality is one of the major factors that permit violence against women. It is found in UN report that one in three women will experience violence in her life globally.

10. Beware the backlash:

Women should beware the backlash when she makes space in that profession that was completely male dominated, as there is also a penalty for that. These backlashes often take the form of sexual harassment, humiliation, violence in education and in the work place. (<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/mar/14/gender-equality-women-girls-rights-education-empowerment-politics>)

Conclusion:

Men and women are born equal but they are not treated equally. With the passage of time, the status of women was declined and majority of them did not enjoy equal status in the society even today. Apart from the above discussed points for bringing gender equality in the society. The points like Give proper value to 'women's work', Work together, Stop the violence against women should also be given due equal attention.

References:

Oommen, N.M., & Ramya.(2018). Education in Gender Sensitization: Valuable Insights.

*International Journal of Informative & Futuristic Research.*2347-1697, 9284-9290.

https://www.buzzfeed.com/shayanroy/factsaboutgenderinequalityinindia?utm_term=.yurJY0wl7#.ckZkvgMA5

http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/mdg_2july15_1.pdf

http://www.devalt.org/images/L3_ProjectPdfs/AchievingSDGsinIndia_DA_21Sept.pdf?mid=6&sid=28

<http://www.genderequality.ie/en/GE/Pages/WhatisGE>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/mar/14/gender-equality-women-girls-rights-education-empowerment-politics>