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REVIEW ARTICLE

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT-AN OVERVIEW OF THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

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ARTICLE DETAILS

ABSTRACT

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Empowering women economically is not only the “right thing” to do to honour the world’s commitments to human rights. It is also the “smart thing” to do for development, economic growth and business’. It is well recognised that societies which discriminate by gender tend to experience less rapid economic growth and poverty reduction than societies which treat men and women more equally. Ending of gender-based inequities, discrimination and all forms of violence against girls and women has been accorded primary priority for catalysing women empowerment for an equalitarian society. This is fundamental to enabling women to participate fully in development processes and in fulfilling their economic, social, civil and political rights, for more inclusive growth. The paper has attempted to find out the importance of women empowerment, effort to identify those loopholes or limitations which are observing the realization of empowerment of women, women economic empowerment in global context and How to secure progress on women’s economic empowerment. Research methodology: The study is carried out based on existing research, and secondary data from various sources. Objectives: The major objectives of this paper are stated: What is women’s economic empowerment?, Why do women’s economic empowerment is important? , Challenges to Women empowerment: An overview of the global context, To provide some suggestions to overcome these issues.

KEYWORDS

Inequality, women, empowerment, economic, Awareness,

1. INTRODUCTION

Women are as essential as men for the continuation of human life and development of society. Any discrimination based on gender is a grave offense. Islam considers it a sin against the Creator and Lawgiver who made men and women equal participants in the human species. The first verse of a lengthy surah (chapter) of the Quran called “The Women”. The Vedas glorified women as the mother, the creator, one who gives life and worshipped her as a ‘Devi’ or Goddess but centuries have passed, the plight of women is not likely to change yet. Time has helplessly watched women suffering in the form of discrimination, oppression, exploitation, degradation, aggression and humiliation. Though woman occupies a vital position and vulnerable role in each & every field, but she has to compete/ fight to prove herself equal to man. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. 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.

1.1 What is women’s economic empowerment?

Although it has gained increased attention amongst policy and development communities in recent years, there is no universally agreed definition of women’s economic empowerment. Women’s individual and collective increased economic advancement, agency and power to access and control economic assets and make economic decisions is core to many understandings [2]. Others highlight that any consideration of Women Economic Empowerment should examine the terms of women’s entry into the labour market, notably poor women, which requires recognising women’s contributions, respecting their dignity, and enabling them to negotiate a fair distribution of the returns to economic growth [3]. Making progress requires change in individuals, communities, institutions, markets and value chains, and in the wider political and legal environment

[4]. Yet this process is not linear and straightforward, and no single intervention or approach can address all of these aspects and be effective for all women [5]. Sustained effort which recognises that women are not a homogenous group is essential. WEE cannot be achieved unless the most marginalised women in society experience transformation in their lives. This means focusing on the intersecting inequalities experienced by women in addition to their gender, for example on the basis of their class, caste, race, ethnicity, age or disability status, and taking action to ensure that nobody is left behind [6].

1.2 Why women’s economic empowerment is important?

It is well recognised that societies which discriminate by gender tend to experience less rapid economic growth and poverty reduction than societies which treat men and women more equally. Ending of gender-based inequities, discrimination and all forms of violence against girls and women has been accorded primary priority for catalysing women empowerment for an equalitarian society. This is fundamental to enabling women to participate fully in development processes and in fulfilling their economic, social, civil and political rights, for more inclusive growth. Achieving women’s economic empowerment will have far-reaching benefits across multiple spheres. As recently recognised by the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment: *Empowering women economically is not only the “right thing” to do to honour the world’s commitments to human rights. It is also the “smart thing” to do for development, economic growth and business’.*

2. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: AN OVERVIEW OF THE GLOBAL CONTEXT- FACTS & FIGURES

Women’s economic empowerment cannot be achieved while significant gender gaps in women’s access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes exist globally. About two thirds of countries in the developing regions have achieved gender parity in primary education. In Southern Asia, only 74

girls were enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys in 1990. By 2012, the enrolment ratios were the same for girls as for boys. In sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and Western Asia, girls still face barriers to entering both primary and secondary school. Women in Northern Africa hold less than one in five paid jobs in the non-agricultural sector. The proportion of women in paid employment outside the agriculture sector has increased from 35 per cent in 1990 to 41 per cent in 2015. In 46 countries, women now hold more than 30 per cent of seats in national parliament in at least one chamber.

3. AN OVERVIEW OF GLOBAL AND REGIONAL TRENDS IN WOMEN AND WORK

3.1 The problem of inequality in employment being one of the most pressing issues today

Despite the positive developments for women increased visibility in the public sphere, presence of women in the labour force across international borders and lower fertility rates--gender discrimination persists all over the world.

3.2 Women are more likely to work shorter hours for pay or profit and more in unpaid and household care

On average, women carry out at least two and a half times more unpaid household and care work than men in countries where the relevant data are available. For example, the Nordic countries average only around 0.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) on such programmes, and spending in southern Europe averages a mere 0.2 per cent of GDP. Overall, the gender gap for part-time employment between women and men in employment is 11 percentage points, with more women working less than 35 hours per week compared to men.

3.3 Women are more likely to work excessive hours

Across 100 surveyed countries, women are more likely to work excessive hours than men. More than one third of men in employment (35.5 per cent) and more than one fourth of women in employment (25.7 per cent) work more than 48 hours a week.

3.4 Gender inequalities at work and at home translate into gender gaps in access to social protection

Globally, the percentage of women in employment who are affiliated to a pension scheme is 1.7 and 2.9 percentage points lower than that of men for wage and salaried workers and self-employed respectively. Worldwide, close to 60 per cent of women workers (nearly 750 million women) do not benefit from a statutory right to maternity leave. Source: Facts compiled from: ILO (2016a)

4. HOW TO SECURE PROGRESS ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT?

In order to further women's economic empowerment we should consider the following actions:

4.1 Strong understanding of the structural barriers to women's economic empowerment

Strong understanding of the structural barriers to women's economic empowerment and transformative, sustained change required to overcome them. This includes *inter alia* addressing critical decent work deficits and exploring means to ensure the necessary financial and political space for the provision of social protection and services essential to improve women's unpaid care and domestic workloads, support women's entry into quality roles in the labour market and protect against economic shocks.

4.2 Increase coherence between international legal and policy frameworks on women's economic empowerment and EU policies and programmes

Reaffirming that women's rights in the EU are firmly rooted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, CEDAW and the Lisbon Treaty as key instruments for the full achievement of women's human rights. Analysing EU initiatives to ensure compliance with women's economic empowerment provisions within the BPfA, CEDAW, ILO standards and the SDGs, and ensuring that monitoring and follow-up of GAP II takes into society where everybody whether men or women get the equal opportunity to express and uplift one's well being and well being of the society as whole. Women represent half the world's population and gender inequality exists in every nation on the planet. Until women are given the same opportunities that men are, entire societies will be

account gaps and progress against these international frameworks. Inviting the leaders of relevant DGs to the FEMM Committee to communicate their plans to further progress women's economic empowerment, with a view to increasing coherence across the EU institutions. Ensure the development of a fully costed, funded and comprehensive strategy for the achievement of women's rights and gender equality within the EU.

4.3 Ensure the monitoring and follow-up of resolutions and other Parliamentary Agreements

Ensure the monitoring and follow-up of resolutions and other Parliamentary Agreements with potential to advance women's economic empowerment, notably those focused on the gender pay gap, pensions and the forthcoming work-life balance package.

4.4 Introduce gender-responsive budgeting in Multiannual Financial Framework

Introduce gender-responsive budgeting in Multiannual Financial Framework and engage in increasingly rigorous scrutiny of EU budget-setting processes and expenditure, including taking steps to improve transparency and reporting around how funds are spent. Improving the tracking of EU structural and external aid funds to ensure that they are allocated to women's rights organisations and institutions, as well as projects primarily focused on the achievement of gender equality objectives, is critical.

4.5 Establishment of laws and bringing practices in conformity thereto is necessarily a long drawn out process

The government, the legislature, the judiciary, the media and civil society has to perform their roles, each in their own areas of competence and in a concerted manner for the process to be speedy and effective. We need communities and individuals to be a part of this change in mindsets, attitudes and beliefs.

4.6 Create healthy environment

Create healthy environment for women and girls everywhere by supporting efforts to end gender inequality, bringing them to the centre of peace building, advancing their political participation and leadership and increasing their economic empowerment.

4.7 Create awareness

Create awareness everywhere about women to end discrimination against women and girl through the education and strong social, moral, and cultural values and make strong laws to punish victim immediately in Present Indian society.

4.8 Women Education

Education is one of the powerful tools in the liberation and the empowerment of women. It is the single utmost factor which can amazingly improve the position of women in any society. In Indian modern society it is very much essential to all women get educated to solve all women issues in any society and circumstance. Only education will give them strength and societal status, in order to live with honour and pride. This will increase the women smooth living in modern society. Every woman has a fundamental right to be safe protesting injustice, if a woman is able to protest herself with the right and education, it should be remembered that the socio-economic empowerment must be ensured by the society to minimize the exploitation which can help to improve the status of women.

5. CONCLUSION

Thus, the attainment in the field of income / employment and in educational front, the scenario of women empowerment seems to be comparatively poor. The need of the hour is to identify those loopholes or limitations which are observing the realization of empowerment of women and this initiative must be started from the women folk itself as well as more importantly policy initiative taken by the state and society. But the Development Goal on gender equality and women's empowerment can be realised only when all will take the oath that we want an egalitarian destined to perform below their true potentials. The greatest need of the hour is change of social attitude to women. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.

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