

## MODULE 2

### Gender & Education

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The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is the apex body for curriculum related matters for school education in India. The NCERT provides support and technical assistance to a number of schools in India and oversees many aspects of enforcement of education policies. In India, the various curriculum bodies governing school education system are: The state government boards, in which the majority of Indian children are enrolled. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (ICSE) board, The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) board. International schools affiliated to the International Baccalaureate Programme and/or the Cambridge International Examinations. Islamic Madrasah schools, whose boards are controlled by local state governments, or autonomous, or affiliated with Darul Uloom Deoband. Autonomous schools like Woodstock School, Auroville, Patha Bhavan and Ananda Marga Gurukula. In addition, NUEPA (National University of Educational Planning and Administration) and NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education) are responsible for the management of the education system and teacher accreditation.

### PRIMARY EDUCATION

The Indian government lays emphasis to primary education up to the age of fourteen years (referred to as Elementary Education in India). The Indian government has also banned child labour in order to ensure that the children do not enter unsafe working conditions. However, both free education and the ban on child labour are difficult to enforce due to economic disparity and social conditions. 80% of all recognized schools at the Elementary Stage are government run or supported, making it the largest provider of education in the Country. However, due to shortage of resources and lack of political will, this system suffers from massive gaps including high pupil teacher ratios, shortage of infrastructure and poor level of teacher training. Education has also been made free for children for 6 to 14 years of age or up to class VIII under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009. There have been several efforts to enhance quality made by the government. The District Education Revitalization Programme (DERP) was launched in 1994 with an aim to universalize primary education in India by reforming and vitalizing the existing primary education system. 85% of the DERP was funded by the central government and the remaining 15 percent was funded by the states. The DERP, which had opened 160000 new schools including 84000 alternative

education schools delivering alternative education to approximately 3.5 million children, was also supported by UNICEF and other international programmes. This primary education scheme has also shown a high Gross Enrollment Ratio of 93–95% for the last three years in some states. Significant improvement in staffing and enrollment of girls has also been made as a part of this scheme. The current scheme for universalization of Education for All is the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan which is one of the largest education initiatives in the world. Enrollment has been enhanced, but the levels of quality remain low.

## SECONDARY EDUCATION

The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, has provided for environment awareness, science and technology education, and introduction of traditional elements such as Yoga into the Indian secondary school system. Secondary education covers children 14–18 which covers 88.5 million children according to the Census. However, enrolment figures show that only 31 million of these children were attending schools in 2001–02, which means that two-third of the population remained out of school. A significant feature of India's secondary school system is the emphasis on inclusion of the disadvantaged sections of the society. Professionals from established institutes are often called to support in vocational training. Another feature of India's secondary school system is its emphasis on profession based vocational training to help students attain skills for finding a vocation of his/her choosing. A significant new feature has been the extension of SSA to secondary education in the form of the Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan A special Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) programme was started in 1974 with a focus on primary education. but which was converted into Inclusive Education at Secondary Stage Another notable special programme, the Kendriya Vidyalaya project, was started for the employees of the central government of India, who are distributed throughout the country. The government started the Kendriya Vidyalaya project in 1965 to provide uniform education in institutions following the same syllabus at the same pace regardless of the location to which the employee's family has been transferred. A multilingual web portal on Primary Education is available with rich multimedia content for children and forums to discuss on the Educational issues. India Development Gateway is a nationwide initiative that seeks to facilitate rural empowerment through provision of responsive information, products and services in local languages.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, after China and the United States The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission (India), which enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps coordinate between the centre and the state. Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by 12 autonomous

institutions established by the University Grants Commission. As of 2009, India has 20 central universities, 215 state universities, 100 deemed universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and 13 institutes which are of national importance. Other institutions include 16000 colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions. The emphasis in the tertiary level of education lies on science and technology. Indian educational institutions by 2004 consisted of a large number of technology institutes. Distance learning is also a feature of the Indian higher education system. Some institutions of India, such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), have been globally acclaimed for their standard of undergraduate education in engineering. The IITs enroll about 8000 students annually and the alumni have contributed to both the growth of the private sector and the public sectors of India. However IITs barely has any contribution in fundamental scientific research and innovation. Some Institute of Basic research like Indian Association for the Cultivation of

Science(IACS), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Tata Institute of Fundamental Research(TFIR) has acclaimed for their standard of research in basic science. However, India has failed to produce world class universities like Harvard or Cambridge.

### LITERACY RATE

According to the Census of 2011, "every person above the age of 7 years who can read and write in any language is said to be literate". According to this criterion, the 2011 survey holds the National Literacy Rate to be around 74%. Government statistics of 2001 also hold that the rate of increase in literacy is more in rural areas than in urban areas. Female literacy was at a national average of 65% whereas the male literacy was 82%. Within the Indian states, Kerala has shown the highest literacy rates of 93% whereas Bihar averaged 63.8% literacy. The 2001 statistics also indicated that the total number of 'absolute non-literates' in the country was 304 million.

Among teachers who were paid to teach, absence rates ranged from 15% in Maharashtra to 30% in Bihar. Only 1 in nearly 3000 public school head teachers had ever dismissed a teacher for repeated absence. A study on teachers by Kremer etc. found that only about half were teaching, during unannounced visits to a nationally representative sample of government primary schools in India. A study of 188 government-run primary schools found that 59% of the schools had no drinking water and 89% had no toilets. 2003–04 data by National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration revealed that only 3.5% of primary schools in

Bihar and Chhattisgarh had toilets for girls. In Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, rates were 12–16%.

Education is a co-current state level subjects and under the Indian Constitution education is made a Fundamental Right and Directive Principles of State Policy further needed free education and other facilities to children. There is no discrimination among the people on the basis of religion, caste or creed/faith etc. However, the minorities are given right to run their own educational institutions with financial aid from Government and they are free to introduce their religion, language in their institution. Education is compulsory and free up to primary standard.

Schools are of different levels. Local Boards run the schools upto Primary, V standard, both in mother tongue and English medium. Thereafter the schools may upgrade themselves upto X known as Secondary schools. They can also be upgraded upto 12, called Senior Secondary schools. The education is a co-current (state level) subject and the Central Government cannot interfere in their functioning. As such schools are pre- primary, pre-nursery, then primary, secondary and senior secondary run both by the private bodies as well as by Government.

Indian schools are not as well organized as they are expected. Private/Public school charge high fee and have control on their institution. They only need the registration by the Centre/State Government or their Bodies and Management. While the Education Department has a loose control over these Private/ Public Schools government has its own schools where the normal fee is charged and the students belong with poor section of society. Overall the condition of government schools is pathetic.

At state level School Education has its own organizational set up. Under this democratic set up Education Department is supported by the Minister of Education who has a Secretary of Education to supervise the Department with the help of Director Education who belongs to I.A.S. cadre of service. The Department is further divided into districts Deputy, Joint Directors to look after the working of schools.

Under the educational system Central Board Secondary Education (C.B.S.E) is set up to maintain, the quality in Education and provide minimum qualification of the teaching staff and other necessary requirement for the school and conduct the Exams 10 and 12 standard. It has a control over both Public Private and Government Schools. After the exam; issues certificates of 10th and 12th class/standard this student who passed the Examination. C B.S.E. has its office in New Delhi.

Under the Education system to keep the high standard of Education and to maintain to quality Education an independent body is set up known N.C.E.R.T. that is National Council of Education Research and Training with its Headquarters at New Delhi. This institution published textbooks for the school on all subjects and has a panel of specialists its list. The

books are to be taught at schools in the country. It also conducts the competitive examination at all India level for the talent search from primary level up to graduation and provides stipend or sponsors to that highly talented students.

Teachers are the backbone of the educational system in India. Government has set up a permanent body for the selection of the teachers known as N.C.T.E i.e. National Council of Teachers Education. It conducts the training and selection of the teachers and provides certificate/degree for the teachers which are an essential qualification for the teachers who seek the employment in teaching schools.

Kendriya Vidyalay Organisation (KVO) was set up under the Education Ministry, Government of India, and New Delhi. It established 10+2 system in schools all over the country for the Government employees who use to effect posted or transferred in the country. It is good for the Central Government employees and schools are run on the medium of English from primary to twelfth standard.

State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) are set up in all the states to look after the training and research work on the lines of NCERT which is at all India level. Its refresher courses, even modifies the curriculum of the schools and textbooks are written for the secondary level standard in the state. It also arranges seminars, discusses and refresher courses for the teaching staff.

There are a number of educational institutions at the District level. A District Officer/ Inspector of schools looks after the educational institutions in his/her district. He/she also coordinates the different activities up to the Commissioner, State level in each district. Under this scheme, a college (Inter) 10+2 on the Government expenses is to be spent in each District and other schools are under his observation. Besides, a training centre for Primary teachers, or other refresher courses also opened in the district. The recruitment institute for the teachers, examination centers and the Boards offices are also on the line, such as Minorities schools.

Local educational institutions play an important role in the area of education. As our country is poor and cannot afford the heavy expenses of Educational institutions, local education bodies are

allowed opening their schools and Government recognizes these institutions at par with the Government institutions. Minority institutions have their own schools with their own expenses or Government grants in-aid. But they fill the gap and help the Government to reduce its burden.

## SCHOOL STRUCTURE

In 1993, the Supreme Court of India declared education up to fourteen years of age to be a fundamental right of children in India. The entire school education can be divided into four parts, namely, primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary levels. The National Policy of Education (1968 & 1986) and its revised formulation (1992) envisaged a uniform pattern of school education (10+2 pattern, 12 years of schooling) across the states. Since education is on the concurrent list, i.e. state subject; the States & UTs are free to evolve their own pattern of school education. Eight years of primary education is envisaged in two stages: a junior stage covering a period of five years and a senior stage covering a period of 3 years. It needs to be mentioned that 8 years of compulsory education was envisaged as one integrated unit, although there were two stages in the cycle. Hence elementary education became the compulsory component of education in India (Varghese and Mehta, 1999). It is this compulsory stage that has been incorporated as a directive principle in the constitution in 1950. The official age (entry) to obtain admission in Grade I is 6 years but a few States & UTs have 5 years as entry-age. The Government has recently decided to re-introduce the Constitutional Amendment Bill, which will make elementary education a fundamental right. This will be implemented as a part of the SIRVA Shish Bahaman. It may however be noted that about 10-12 states have already made elementary education compulsory. But the situation in most of these states is not different than other states with regards to enrolment and retention.

## UNIVERSAL ACCESS

Availability of schooling facilities is measured by a set of indicators concerning to access. As per norms, a habitation is entitled to have a primary school, if it has a total population of 300 & more and has no school within a distance of one kilometre. For upper primary schools, the corresponding norm is total population of 500 & more and a distance of three kilometres. However, the norm is often relaxed in case of hilly and tribal dominated areas, difficult terrains and border districts. A distance of one and three kilometre is treated as the maximum walking distance to which a child is expected to travel from his residence to school. The states have their own norms according to which they provide schooling facilities. Micro planning and school mapping related activities play an important role in making provision for schools and also deciding location where a school is to be opened. Efforts have been made in the recent past to conduct micro planning and school mapping exercises under the DPEP and Lok Jumbish Project.

## PRIVATE VS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

According to current estimates, 80% of all schools are government schools making the government the major provider of education. However, because of poor quality of public

education, 27% of Indian children are privately educated. According to some research, private schools often provide superior results at a fraction of the unit cost of government schools. However, others have suggested that private schools fail to provide education to the poorest families, a selective being only a fifth of the schools and have in the past ignored Court orders

for their regulation. In their favour, it has been pointed out that private schools cover the entire curriculum and offer extra-curricular activities such as science fairs, general knowledge, sports, music and drama. The pupil teacher ratios are much better in private schools (1:31 to 1:37) for government schools and more teachers in private schools are female. There is some disagreement over which system has better educated teachers. According to the latest DISE survey, the percentage of untrained teachers (paratechers) is 54.91% in private, compared to 44.88% in government schools and only 2.32% teachers in unaided schools receive in-service training compared to 43.44% for government schools. The competition in the school market is intense, yet most schools make profit. Even the poorest often go to private schools despite the fact that government schools are free. A study found that 65% of schoolchildren in Hyderabad's slums attend private schools. Private schools are often operating illegally. A 2001 study found that it takes 14 different licenses from four different authorities to open a private school in New Delhi and could take years if done legally. However, operation of unrecognized schools has been made illegal under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act which has also significantly simplified the process of obtaining recognition.

The recently released Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) on rural education in India contains two main findings. First, learning levels among primary school age children in rural India continue to be shockingly low despite a steady increase in education spending under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Right to Education (RTE). Second, there has been a steady increase in the fraction of parents abandoning free government schools in favour of fee-charging private schools, with the share of private school enrolment in rural India increasing from 19% in 2006 to 29% in 2013. While reliable annual data does not exist for urban India, the private school share in urban India was estimated at 58% in 2005 (using the Indian Human Development Survey (IHDS) data), and is likely to be considerably higher in 2015.

The ASER report shows, as do other data sources like IHDS (Desai et al 2009) and Young Lives (Singh 2013), that students of comparable age and standard in private schools score significantly higher than their counterparts in government schools. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that private schools caused the better performance of their students. First, students in private schools are more likely to come from socio-economically and educationally advantaged backgrounds. Second, they also typically have 1-2 years of extra



schooling (Lower Kindergarten (LKG)/ Upper Kindergarten (UKG)) compared to students in government schools. So, the better performance in private schools could simply reflect these other factors and not the actual effectiveness of the schools. Thus, a critical open question for education in India is this: “Are private schools more or less effective than government schools – holding all other factors constant?”

Answering this question is crucial for policy. Clause 12 of the RTE requires private schools to reserve 25% of their seats for students from Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), with the government reimbursing private schools for their fees (up to a maximum of per-child spending in government schools). If public money is going to be used to fund

private schools, we need to understand whether private schools are more (or less) effective than government schools after holding all other factors constant.

## RECENT INITIATIVES

### (a) The Scheme of Operation Blackboard

The scheme of Operation Blackboard (OB) was launched in 1987 to improve facilities in schools by providing for more teachers, rooms and teaching learning equipments. The OB Scheme seeks to bring both the quantitative and qualitative improvements in primary education. The scheme had three components, namely (i) an additional teacher to single teacher primary schools; (ii) providing at least two classrooms in each primary school; and (iii) providing teaching-learning equipment to all primary schools. The scheme is implemented through the State Governments with 100 per cent assistance from the Central Government towards the salary of additional teachers and teaching learning equipments. It was proposed to cover all primary schools under the OB scheme that were in existence as on September 30, 1986.

Construction of school buildings is the responsibility of the State Governments but funds were arranged for this purpose from other Ministries like the Rural Development. However in the revised scheme, assistance is made available to State Governments on 75:25 share basis. For construction of school buildings, an amount of Rs. 2,308 crores (about 550 Million US \$) has been invested on OB scheme. About 185 thousand classrooms are constructed, 1.49 thousand teachers appointed and 520 thousand schools were provided teaching-learning equipments. Recently the OB scheme has been extended to upper primary level and sanction of third teacher to primary school having enrolment more than 100 has also been provided.



During the Ninth Plan, third teacher was provided to more than 22 thousand

schools and about 78 thousand upper primary schools were covered and teaching-learning material supplied.

Despite all these significant achievements, all is not well in schools. Large number of primary schools still has only one teacher and do not have adequate physical facilities and other teaching- learning material. In addition, a few schools do not have buildings and those who have, may not be in good condition and need repairs. The instructional rooms are also not adequate in a good

number of primary schools. Even if the teaching-learning material is available that itself is not a guarantee that teachers are equipped to utilize these aids, which is noticed recently even in a state like Kerala also. The OB support is one time affair and the material provided under the scheme may not even traceable in a good number of schools. Even teachers in schools spread over four states that we visited recently were not aware of such equipments in schools. Teachers in other schools where the OB kits are available are of the view that they are inadequate.

It has also been noticed that teachers appointed under the OB scheme are not efficiently deployed in schools. That is why we still have single-teacher schools. On the other hand, a few schools have got more than adequate number of teachers. This is more so true in case of schools located in urban areas or in rural areas located near to towns and cities. The OB scheme envisaged that one of the two teachers appointed under the scheme would preferably be a female teacher. No doubt, OB interventions have improved number of female teachers but in many locations their share is still poor. On an average we have one female teacher for every 2 & 3 male teachers respectively at primary and upper primary level. Detailed evaluation of the scheme is presently carried out by NIEPA and the report is expected soon.

(b) District Institutes of Education and Training

The scheme to strengthen teacher education by establishing quality training institutions, such as, the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) was initiated in 1987. The scheme proposed to create viable institutional, academic and technical resource base for orientations, training and continuous up-gradation of knowledge, competence and pedagogical skills of school teachers' in the country. The guidelines provided seven academic units with 22 faculty positions that cover different areas such as planning and management, education technology,

material development etc. Since then 433 DIETs have been sanctioned of which 401 are functional. Below the district level, under DPEP, Block Resource and Circle Resource Centers have been established that ensure capacity building at the grassroots level. In non-DPEP districts, such institutions are not in existence. However, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan envisages creating BRC and CRC in non-DPEP districts. The DIETs are now twelve years old but still many of them do not function as was envisaged in its guidelines (Box 3).

(c) Non-Formal Education

The Non-Formal Education (NFE) scheme was initiated in 1979 to cater to the learning needs of working children and children in difficult circumstances and is one of the other important centrally sponsored schemes. The NFE programme is for the children of 6-14 age group who remain outside the formal system due to various reasons. Initially, the focus of the programme was on to Nine Educationally Backward states but at present it is in operation in 25 states. In 1999, there were 297 thousand NFE centers, which had a total enrolment of 7.42 million. The duration of NFE course is two years and a locally recruited and trained instructor is provided to impart education (equivalent to formal system) at a time and place most convenient to learners in smaller groups. A large number of voluntary agencies are also involved in NFE programme. The total number of centers run by voluntary agencies was 59 thousand in 1998-99. An amount of Rs. 1,195 million to States & UTs and Rs. 400 million to voluntary agencies was released in 1998-99 for the implementation of the programme. The scheme is recently revised and named as Scheme

of Alternative and Innovative Education. The scheme envisages that all habitations that do not have an elementary education centre within a radius of one kilometre will have one at the earliest. As a part of the scheme, school-mapping exercise will be conducted to identify school-less habitations, which will help to locate habitations where alternative centres are to be provided.

(d) National Programme for Nutritional Support (Mid-day Meal)

The National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education (launched in 1995)

**Women & Employment**

The study of gender issues in work is complex and complicated because of a variety of reasons. In fact when one looks at work from a gender perspective, the very definition of what constitutes work becomes a contested area. Moreover, it is now widely accepted that work is not a gender-neutral space where qualifications, skills and performance determine an

individual's entry and progress in any occupation/profession. In the real world, gender plays a crucial and critical role in the options available, choices made, wages earned, and opportunities for advancement available. The situation also greatly varies across different parts of the world, different regions, different economic classes and different sectors.

Gender issues in work gain significance, particularly as global economic restructuring due to rapid paced technological progress, internationalism of products and trade, and growing informalization of work have seen an increase in women's participation in the labour force while men's participation has decreased slightly.

Labour force participation is often seen as the prime indicator (and cause) of changes in women's status as employment determines their access to resources and their ability to make independent decisions. Work plays an important part in determining women's and men's relative wealth, power and prestige, and health. It has, however, been segregated by gender, which has in turn, generated gender inequalities in the distribution of resources, benefits and responsibilities. Generally speaking work has been divided in to men's' work and \_women's' work. This segregation of work by gender has been practiced and accepted through the centuries, in all cultures.

Within the labour market, gender segregation is highly complex and is reflected at all levels. However, much of women's work remains unrecognised, uncounted and unpaid, thus invisible: work in the home, in agriculture, food production and the marketing of home-made products, for example. This whole arena of unpaid work is often neglected because first of all, until recently most of it was not considered work; and secondly, because it is much more difficult to quantify in terms of time and value. Since it is women who are doing the major part of all unpaid work, this has led to a severe undervaluation of women's contributions to the society and economy.

### **THE CHANGING GENDER COMPOSITION OF THE WORK FORCE**

Examining work through a gendered lens becomes important with the advent of a new world of work that is trans-bordered and has seen a change in the composition of the labour force. Perhaps it could be said that the most significant change in the relationship of gender and work is numerical—the enormous shift in the gender composition of the labour force. Women comprise an increasing share of the labour force in almost all regions of the world. During the last few decades the proportion of economically active women has also increased in unparalleled numbers with in the global workforce, while men's participation rate has been decreasing slightly.

Labour force participation rates (percentage)

Year

Men (%)

Women (%)

World Total	1980	87.5	57.4
	1995	86.0	60.1
	2000	85.5	60.7
	2010	84.6	61.5

Source: The World’s Women 2000: Trends and Statistics. United Nations

It can be observed from table above that women’s participation in the labour force has been steadily increasing from 57.4% in 1980 to 60.7% in 2000 while there has been a marginal decrease in men’s participation rates during the same years. In what manner this decrease in participation has affected men’s life is an important research area that requires attention as this trend is projected in 2010 as well.

Women have entered every area of the work force, and in unprecedented numbers at every level through all the major professions. The impact has been enormous and has altered women’s labour market status in recent years. According to World Bank estimates, from 1960 to 1997, women have increased their numbers in the global labour force by 126%. 1

The United Nations statistics surveys indicate that wage and salaried work is the predominant form of employment for both women and men in most regions except in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia.2 India is one such country where women’s participation in the workforce continues to remain quite low, both in absolute and relative terms. As per the recent estimates, 28.7 percent of women as against 54.7 percent of men participated in workforce in 2004-05.

### Women Workforce Participation Rates in India, 1971-2005

Census NSSO

Year	%	Year	%
1971	13.9	1972-73	28.2
1981	19.8	1983	21.6
1991	22.3	1993-94	28.6
2001	25.7	2004-05	28.7

Sources: Visaria 1998, p. 24 for Census figures up to 1981, www.Censusindia.net for 2001 provisional figure and NSSO 2006, p. 76 for various years.

The table suggests that a little more than one-fourth of women (28.7 percent) in India participate in workforce at present. This is only marginally higher than the Women Workforce Participation Rates (WWPR) of 28.2 percent in 1972-73. <sup>3</sup> As a consequence of this low participation, Indian women continue to form a majority of the Indian poor

Today, women make up about 42% of the estimated global working population, making them indispensable as contributors to national and global economies. However, they are disproportionately engaged in non-standard forms of work, such as temporary and casual employment, part-time jobs, home-based work, self employment and working in micro-enterprises.

The main factors leading to the rise in women's participation in the labour force have been: the availability of a wider choice for women; an increased pressure on them to contribute to the family income, and often survival; the need of economies for a type of labour that women can provide. However, there are many differences between the industrialized and industrializing regions, especially in the reasons why women work, and the reward they gain from it.

In most industrialized countries, opportunities for women in general were restricted until the Second World War and the two decades of rapid economic growth that followed. The expansion both in services and in part-time employment matched women's needs and experience, thereby encouraging their participation. The pattern of working life has seen a tremendous change: before the 1950s, most women workers were young and unmarried, or were much older with grown up children. In later years, economic activity became more continuous—that is, with fewer, and shorter, breaks for raising a family—and it is no longer unusual (or illegal) for married women to be employed.<sup>4</sup>

In developing countries, industrialization tends to coexist with agriculture, and family businesses. With the exception of some rapidly industrializing Asian countries, the change has been in the nature of women's work, rather than in the number of women working. There has been a significant movement of women from subsistence farming or other unpaid activity to labour in both the formal and informal sectors. For most women in developing countries, a working life has always been longer, and more continuous. Women, especially in rural areas, continuously work until the end of their lives, hardly taking a break from their work routine even to have a baby.

At the same time, pressure has increased on women everywhere to make up or provide the family wage. Women have been at the receiving end of the consequences of debt, inflation, economic stagnation and unemployment. Across the globe, as prices rise and incomes fall, women increase their working hours and diversify their activities to ensure the family's survival. There has been an undeniable 'feminization of poverty'; more and more women are poor, and more of the poor are women. It is estimated that women make up at least 60 per

cent of the world's working poor and as long as there are inequalities in labour markets, women will find it harder than men to escape poverty.

### **GENDERED SEGREGATION OF WORK**

In all cultures, society has traditionally divided work roles for women and men, and even though, in the last few decades, gender work demarcations have, to a marginal extent changed, women and men commonly perform different tasks and work in different sectors.

Gender division of labour occurs because a precedent sanctioned by society exists where women are allotted one set of gender roles and men another. Gender roles exist because communities and societies have created social norms of behaviour, values, and attitudes that are considered appropriate for women and men and the relations between them and are perceptions of sex differences. For example, childbearing is a female sex role because men cannot bear children. Although both men and women can rear children, these duties are socially assigned.

There are numerous theories on why sex differences exist. Those that support biological factors argue that people behave as they do primarily because they are biologically male or female. But especially within the context of work, sex role behaviour clearly follows no logical pattern based on biological differences. For example, men are less likely than women to change diapers, even though they possess the necessary skills. Similarly, it is

difficult to explain away the hours that fully employed women spend cooking and washing dishes at home as a biological imperative. Gender segregation is a form of social segregation that biology cannot explain.

Gender segregation is the process in which women and men end up in different types of occupation, so that two different types of labour markets may be said to exist, female and male. This segregation has evolved from the concept of Gender marking which takes place by a process in which the qualifications and characteristics of an occupation become associated with gender. This gives us an idea of which gender a person should have for a particular job. Gender marking becomes apparent when occupations become female or male. In theory, gender segregation may be seen as a result of gender marking of qualifications, characteristics, occupations and work functions.

Gender segregation is highly complex and is reflected at all levels—horizontal, vertical and internal. Internal gender segregation is when women and men are employed in the same occupation (and in some cases by the same employers) but carry out different work functions. This means that even an apparently gender-integrated occupation may actually be highly gender-segregated in practice.

**Horizontal Segregation:** Horizontal segregation is when women work in certain occupations and industries and men in others. For example, a large number of women work in services, especially the personal and caring services, while women's participation in the industrial

sector is generally much lower than men's, and concentrated in a relatively narrow range of labour-intensive light industries. This matches with the gender roles assigned to men and women by society.

**Vertical Segregation:** Within the same occupation, men tend to occupy the higher managerial positions and women comparatively lower positions; this hierarchical division is referred to as vertical segregation. Even where an occupation is to some extent mixed, women are usually in the less responsible, less secure and less well-paid jobs. On the other hand, even in occupation numerically dominated by women, men are still often found in the management positions; for example, the principal of a primary school.

Worldwide, the proportion of women in managerial and decision making positions is low, the rule being the higher you go up, the fewer the women. In 1994, Susan Bullock has written that Women make up less than 5 per cent of the world's heads of state, heads of major corporations and top executives in international organizations; of the top 1,000 corporations in the United States, two are headed by women. Women represent, on average, under 10 per cent of members of parliament and 20 per cent of middle-level managers. This trend is pretty much the same today.

Gender segregation is the chief obstacle facing women who seek to enter the labour force. This is a form of discrimination that has led to gender inequality. Reflected in work as an unequal gender division of labour, it encompasses situations in which there is an unequal division of the rewards of labour by sex. The most obvious pattern in such a division of labour is that women are mostly confined to unpaid domestic work and unpaid food production, whereas men dominate in cash crop production and wage employment. Within paid work, women are more likely to work in the informal sector, for example in domestic work, street vending, and home-based work.

### **The Informal Sector**

The informal sector is often spoken of as a female sector. The extent to which this holds varies across regions and over time. In most countries women's possibilities for entering the formal sector remain even more limited than men's and the informal sector may be their only option. However, some women opt for or continue in the informal sector not necessarily because of a lack of choice, but because of the flexibility of working arrangements (especially in work timings) and a wider range of opportunities.

Women in self employment rely on the skills and experience they already have, for example, in food processing and trading, sewing, domestic tasks etc. For women, it is always a crucial balancing act where their domestic responsibilities cannot be abandoned. This leads them to turn either their homes into a workplace or their place of work into a home: small children may spend the whole day at a construction site where their mother is working.



It is important to note that gendered division of labour also exists within the informal sector. Women are especially numerous in the lowest-paid and most exploited categories of work: in small enterprises where they may work in sweatshop conditions or as outworkers; in the simplest types of self employment, with minimal capital, tools, and raw materials; as unpaid family workers; in domestic work; and in commercial sex work. The range of jobs women perform is as limited in the informal sector as it is everywhere.

It is not that women lack initiative or business ability; on the contrary, the way women are able to scrape an income together on the basis of almost no inputs but their own labour and ingenuity inspires admiration and respect. But when the margins are too tight, it is almost impossible to turn survival activities into growth.

For many years certain assumptions existed like women either could not do a job or that they did not need to do it. The consequence of this kind of thinking has been that sex segregation has affected women's and men's concentration in different occupations, industries and levels in workplace hierarchies. This has led to sex discrimination and has perpetuated gender inequality within the world of work.

### **GENDER DISCRIMINATION AT THE WORKPLACE**

Gender discrimination includes behaviours occurring in the workplace that limit the target person's ability to enter, remain in, succeed in, or progress in a job and that are primarily the result of the target person's gender.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Wage Gap: Income discrimination**

One of the direct consequences of gender segregation in paid work is wage differentials. Gender based difference in pay is a definitive sign of inequality at the workplace. In most countries, equal pay legislation exists; however, the gender segregation of work makes allows the easy application of different remuneration rates to men's work and women's work.

Women tend to be in jobs that are poorly paid and lack a career structure; even in mixed workforce jobs, women are more likely to be at the levels of lower responsibility. Further, there are a high percentage of women who work on a part-time or temporary basis. Some other factors that contribute to women's lower wages include the constraints on women that do not allow them to do overtime, night shifts etc., the interruption due to pregnancy that affects accumulation of seniority etc. Trade Unions have usually failed to take up these concerns because they have been male-dominated, and these issues have not yet entered the mainstream of their agenda.

Women's access to paid work is crucial to their efforts for economic equality and to their sense of self and well being. But women's paid work is generally valued as less important than men's. Women still earn considerably less than men and often find themselves in low-status jobs with few benefits. Professions that are male dominated tend to have higher wages; professions that are female dominated tend to have lower wages.

It is only a matter of observing what happens to a particular occupation that faces a change in its gender composition to study the impact of gender segregation on wages. For example, clerical work was once a practically all-male labour force that paid reasonably well as it was considered a highly skilled occupation. Today the gender distribution has changed in many countries and, most clerical workers are female. As a result, clerical work was re-evaluated as less demanding of skill and less valuable to an organization; thus workers' wages fell.

The exact opposite process may be observed with relations to the occupation of the computer programmer. When this occupation was in its nascent stage, women were hired as keypunch operators because the job seemed to resemble clerical work. After programming was recognized as —intellectually demanding‖ requiring complex skills in abstract logic, and mathematics etc., all of which, sociologist Katharine Donato observed, women used to perform in their work,‖ it became attractive to men, who began to enter the field and thus drove wages up considerably.

### **Glass Ceiling**

More women are hired at the lower rungs of an organization. The low status of this work means women exert less control over their work environment and have lower decision making powers. There is persistent discrimination against women in promotion which keeps women in low wage positions with little opportunities for upward mobility. Women thus face a double obstacle in attempting to achieve workplace equality. The first is that of centuries old gender ideologies that bar them from entering well paying occupations so that they are pushed into less-paying sectors of the economy. The second obstacle arises —when they enter those well-paying fields, they are prevented from moving up. This is what is known as the glass-ceiling. Men sometimes resent assertive, unemotional women and perceive them to be acting like men. Yet, men also judge women who are passive and emotional as being unsuitable for management.‖ (Kanter 1977a) So women often have to walk a fine line and work towards being perceived as tough, and yet —feminine‖ in order to be accepted as a —good manager‖. It has been seen in several cases when men and women who started out on a career path together, find themselves in very different levels after ten years—In most cases, men will be at a more senior level than the women.

Why are women underrepresented in management? Some reasons for women are under representation in senior positions:

- Women themselves: Lack of education and training; lack of a continuous career as a result of breaks for child-rearing, and a preference for part-time working; lack of the confidence or drive to succeed.
- Personnel policies and organizational career structures that are shaped by the traditions of a male career: lack of provision for career breaks and re-entry; lack of appropriate provision for women's management development; and lack of provision for flexible contracts at higher levels.

- Organisational climate and the attitudes of senior management: lack awareness of the pervasiveness of masculine assumptions; lack of interest in the need for strategic change to increase the utilization of female resources; and lack of support for the few women who do succeed. (Adapted from The Journal of General Management)

### Sexual Harassment

According to the EEOC, sexual harassment is defined as follows<sup>13</sup>

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. (EEOC, 1980, p. 33)

While there are instances of female harassers, sexual harassment cases in the workplace predominantly involve male harassers and female victims. Victims of sexual harassment may experience a number of negative consequences such as lowered productivity, lowered self-esteem, absenteeism, depression etc.

In India, the Supreme Court judgment of 1997, popularly known as the Vishakha Guidelines was the landmark judgement in which the court ruled that the issue of sexual harassment at the workplace is a human rights issue and not merely a criminal one. The judgement clearly states that sexual harassment includes behaviours such as physical contact, sexually coloured remarks, unwelcome verbal or non verbal communications of a sexual nature, and so on. It also defined the workplace in a broader sense, rather than limiting it to a certain geographical area. However, even today, cases of sexual harassment largely go unreported as women do not want to be seen as —trouble makers<sup>14</sup> or attract unnecessary attention. This is accentuated by the fact that strict action, or in fact any action is rarely taken by the organisation against the perpetrator. Many times, women prefer to leave a job rather than register a complaint of sexual harassment.

### Double Burden

The entry of women onto the labour market has not meant any lessening of domestic chores. Most women are still solely or mostly in charge of housework and child care. In order to fulfil all their responsibilities at the workplace and at home, women end up working longer hours. This phenomenon is called 'double shift' or 'double burden'. Even though children are tomorrow's workers and citizens, they are seen today as the private and personal responsibility of their families. The fact that child care has been made widely available under certain circumstances shows that its provision is primarily a matter of employment policy and

political will—or lack of it. During the Second World War, for example, facilities became available as increasing numbers of women were needed to work in factories and essential services.

### **WOMEN AND WORK IN RURAL AREAS**

Roughly 3 out of 4 women the world over live in rural areas, the majority of them working in agriculture or related activities. Women not only grow crops, but also pick fruit and tea; look after cattle and poultry; weave, spin, and make pottery; and sell goods. This is usually as unpaid workers on family farms or enterprises; in most cases where they are engaged in paid labour, it is casual, temporary or seasonal. Though women's waged employment has been increasing in many Asian countries, their wages remain much lower than those earned by men.

Women directly produce about half the world's food and they process and prepare almost all of it.<sup>15</sup> The problem of balancing multiple tasks is accentuated in the case of rural women, most of them being involved in the production of food for family consumption, and also for sale or exchange; many work on others' farms for wages; they also trade or make handicrafts; and of course, there is no respite from the daily domestic chores.

Rural women also bear the brunt of several other factors such as very early marriages, more children and poorer health. Both infant and maternal mortality are higher in rural areas. School enrolment is lower; In India, for example, chances of a rural girl child being enrolled in a school, and continuing education beyond class 8 are much lower than those of her urban counterpart. Rural women have poorer wages, more insecure employment, and longer hours of work. Customs and traditional practices often have a tighter hold—in some cases directly threatening women's health, social status and freedom.

Official statistics on the participation of women in food and agricultural production are still not available with the required amount of detail. This means that food and agricultural policies, and rural development programmes are gender neutral, and do not adequately address the concerns and needs of women. —Planners tend to underestimate or ignore:

- the nature and scope of women's separate and autonomous operations;
- the extent of the reliance of men on women's labour and inputs;
- the uneven distribution of income and resources within the household.

### **REDEFINING WORK**

In our discussion of work-related statistics, we must first of all define what constitutes work. Is work really only that which is done outside the home and that is paid for? What about those many tasks that women do in and near their homes? In rural areas, women and girls

walk long distances to fetch water; but because this does not fall in the purview of economic activity, it was not previously categorised as work.

Women, do both productive and reproductive work, and these categories often merge into each other. In fact their reproductive work contributes to production. The work that women put in subsidizes the production and maintenance of the work-force. —Because women labour for love, society in general and employers in particular are saved the expense of the upkeep of the workforce, either in terms of providing communal services canteens, child care, laundries – or in terms of paying wages high enough to cover the real costs. Their non-productive work in fact makes an enormous economic contribution. It has now been acknowledged that by not recognising women’s multiple activities, gender inequality is being institutionalized and perpetuated. It is important to recognize and value not only the economic contributions of women, but also their social contributions—child care, looking after the elderly and sick, and the numerous other tasks they perform on a daily basis for their family and community.

There is now a much wider acknowledgement of the scope and significance of women’s work, and the need for rigorous gender analysis. The absence of sex disaggregated statistics for employment and unemployment; the use of occupational categories that overlook many of women’s activities, skills and contributions; and broadening the definition of what constitutes economic activity (including cultural, regional and seasonal variations)—these issues have entered the mainstream consciousness of policy makers and planners, and are beginning to be addressed.

The undercounting of female economic activity, and lack of mechanisms for measuring unpaid work have received deserved attention. Some of the steps that have been taken in this direction include: an International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention on labour statistic (1985); revising to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO); and efforts by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) to change the guidelines for the World Programme of Agricultural Censuses.<sup>18</sup>

In India, in censuses prior to 2001, women’s economic pursuits were not recorded/ reported adequately, resulting in low female work participation rate (FWPR). In the 2001 Census, several measures were taken to address the shortcomings by taking measures for gender sensitization of both the collectors of data and the people in general. Since a lot of the work that women do is unpaid, it is important to understand what unpaid work is, and how it can be measured.

### **UNPAID WORK**

All work is not paid for. All people who perform work, paid or unpaid are economically active, but this is only a recent understanding. A satisfactory definition for unpaid work is yet to emerge because much of what it comprises is not reflected in labour statistics and therefore is invisible.

The concern for developing an inclusive understanding of what comprised unpaid work is now reflected in the System of National Accounts (SNA) production boundary as follows:

Unpaid work includes unpaid activities such as:

- Work done in a family enterprise or agricultural holding on an unpaid basis
- Primary production of goods primarily for own-household consumption including subsistence farming— example: preparing the soil, sowing, planting, and harvesting crops; gathering fruit, wild fruit, medicinal and other plants; tending, feeding or hunting animals mainly to obtain meat, milk, hair, skin or other products in or around a household compound; gathering firewood and fetching water; breeding or catching fish and cultivating or gathering other forms of aquatic life; and storing and carrying out some basic processing of products.
- Production of services for income and other production of goods that are not related to formal employment. Examples include: work done on a contractual basis on residential premises, as a pieceworker or outworker and assisting a family member or relative with such work; building shelters and making simple tools, clothes and utensils for household use;

What is still left out is:

- Meal preparation, laundry and clothes care, household maintenance, management and shopping for own household
- Care of children, the sick, elderly and disabled for own household
- Volunteer community services and help to other households or people, which are provided on a voluntary basis' either directly or indirectly through volunteer- based organizations and groups.

An attempt has to be made to add value to all work that has been left out of labour statistics. But we lack universally accepted ways to measure and value unpaid work, without which governments continue to use incomplete information when making fiscal and policy decisions. Since unpaid work is mostly invisible, it is often excluded from money transactions. According to calculations by the World Bank, \$11 trillion —earned by women and \$5 trillion —earned by men are missing from the global economy each year, representing the value of unpaid work as well as the underpayment and undervaluing of women's work.

Measuring and valuing unpaid work in national statistics was one of the main issues at the fourth world conference on women at Beijing in 1995. It became clear improving data on the full contribution of women and men to the economy required new accounting and the implementation of time- use data—that is measuring work by time allocation. Time- use data provide detailed information on how individuals spend their time, on a daily or weekly basis. They reveal the details of an individual's life with a combination of specificity and comprehensiveness not achieved in any other type of social survey. Hirway22 cited the key contributions of time-use data in fostering a better understanding of the economy and society. Time-use statistics can be useful because they move away from the vexed questions of

economic contribution and occupational categories, and look at what people actually do: they measure time spent on all activities, productive and reproductive, and the classifications used are not based on occupational groupings.

A major breakthrough occurred when Canada's 1996 Census became the first to collect data on unpaid work. It divided unpaid work into three categories: housework, care of children, and care and assistance to seniors but left out volunteer work with community or charity organizations. However, it was an important first step in measuring and recognizing women's unpaid work. One of the interesting findings of this census was that unpaid work is perhaps the biggest contribution that women make to the economy as most of it is performed by women.

A significant number of countries have chosen to adopt time-use surveys to measure unpaid work. Japan, Australia, Mali, Morocco, South Africa, Indonesia, India, Philippines, Palestine, Cuba, Ecuador, and many European countries have designed or undertaken surveys. While many other countries have expressed interest.

Efforts are now being made to improve the methodology: it has been recognized that it lacks precision in breaking down different activities, and that underestimation persists both of time spent and of the range of tasks undertaken.

### **Gender segregation of Labour in unpaid work**

Gender division of labour is as evident within the household as it is within paid employment. It is true that not all women undertake paid work, but few can escape household labour. Irrespective of the biological or the patriarchal explanation for the gendered distribution of unpaid labour, the bulk of unpaid work is undertaken by women. (See table 3) and therefore has affected the well being of women more than men.

Unpaid work, such as domestic work or work based in homes, entails no protective legislation, no social security, and is assigned low social status. This lack of income seriously affects women's ability to improve their lives. The lack of value assigned to unpaid work has serious implications both for policy and for quality of life, affecting the persistent gender wage gap, high poverty rates among single mothers and their children, the decreasing time parents spend with their own children, the decline in home-cooking and its health consequences, and the growing time stress that comes from the struggle to juggle job and household responsibilities.

## **POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN**



### Participation as a tool

Political Participation can be understood as actions on the part of individuals which either directly or indirectly affect the authoritative allocation of scarce resources, either material or symbolic, in their community or between communities either within or outside their society.

Within a wide range of countries there is a uniformly high correlation between citizen's socio- economic resources and their psychological involvement with politics-that is their interest in politics and their inclination to discuss political questions. But there is a much lower and more variable correlation between 'citizens' socio-economic resources and their actual, physical participation. Conversely, particular groups may be legally excluded from the franchise- like conscientious objectors after the First World War in Britain for instance, or women in Spain before 1977.

Although 'the women questions' has often figured as a political issue since the middle of the nineteenth century, the question of the political significance of gender only became an issue in the study of politics in the 1970s.

It arose partly in response to the women's studies movement which first emerged as part of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) which began in the 1960s. Prior to that, the study of women and politics was not regarded as important enough to warrant any special attention. During the 1970s these prevailing views were challenged and a wide-ranging debate was generated which continued throughout the 1980s. It has evolved from an initial and modest concern with mapping women's political behavior using traditional categories of analysis –the 'add women and stir' approach to a challenging critique of the very basis of political science. Women have played key roles in national liberation struggles and in the great political revolutions of modern times. There is a robust and growing women liberation movement in India. There are also data which indicate that women who are in paid employment, full or part time, participate more frequently than full-time housewives. This suggests that where women are economically integrated they are more likely to be politically integrated, a finding that has been replicated in a number of countries.

The Danish political scientist, Drude Dahlerup, studied the changes brought about when women became a sizable minority in a national legislature. She tested the notion that only when the minority of women in legislatures reaches a certain size (critical mass) the presence of women makes a difference. She hypothesized that one would expect to find six different kinds of change:

1. In reactions to women politicians
2. In the performance and efficiency of the women politicians
3. In the political culture
4. In the political discourse
5. In policy (Political decisions)

6. In the empowerment of women

Women should be able to act on the strength of being women and not merely despite being women. Democracy and the constitutions have provided women in most of the countries with political freedom and rights to plan for their own future and pursue their own interests. According to the Jakarta Declaration, "Involvement of women in the political arena and in decision-making roles is an important tool for empowerment as well as monitoring standards of political performance."

**Understanding Empowerment**

Before coming to the theme of Women Empowerment, let us understand the concept of Empowerment. Empowerment means 'to invest within power'. 'Empowerment' has become a frequently used and buzz word. It essentially means, decentralized of authority and power. In other words giving voice to voiceless. Empowerment aims at getting participation of deprived sections of people in decision-making process. Unless capacity is built in these sections in reality the power is used by others rather than the section for which they are meant.

Activists want government to empower poor people including women by legislative measures and welfare programmes. Empowerment is the process by which the disempowered or powerless people can change their circumstances and begin to have control over their lives. It results in a change in the balance of power, in the living conditions and in the relationships.

**Women Empowerment and Political participation**

Women empowerment means equal status to women, opportunity and freedom to develop herself. The focus of empowerment is equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have a positive self-esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in the process of decision-making.

Women's Empowerment as a phenomenon is not something new. It has been present throughout history in almost all societies for various reasons. What is recent is the increasing realization and recognition that empowering women is absolutely essential rather significant, for familial, societal, national and international development and progress.

The term 'Women empowerment' has become popular in the development field since the 1980s. It is vividly recognized that women empowerment is essential for sustainable economic growth and reduction in poverty in developing countries. 'Empowering' women has become a frequently cited goal of development interventions. Women empowerment is central to human development. Targeted actions aimed at empowering women and righting the gender inequalities in the social and economic share, as well as in terms of social and political rights, must be taken alongside effort to en-gender the development process.

The extent of women empowerment in a country is largely determined by three factors:-

1. Economic

2. Social and
3. Political identity

The term 'empowerment' denotes women's increased control over their own lives, bodies and environment. In discussion of women's empowerment, emphasis is often placed on Women's decision making roles, their economic self-reliance and their legal rights to equal treatment, inheritance and protection against all forms of discrimination. The popular UNESCO slogan should be considered as an ideal for not only empowerment but also development of women:

"Educated a man and you educate an individual, educate a women and you educate a family".

It has been accepted that genuine commitment and efforts have to be made by each country at the government, non-government and individual levels to work, towards establishing women's empowerment as nationally and internationally discussed in UN World Conference on Women and agreed upon in the Plan of Action. A general awareness of the exploitation of women on various fronts like social, cultural, political and economic fronts has led to strong protests manifested in women's liberation movement, which emerged in the United States since the early 1970s. Some prominent organizations associated with this movement were: National Organization for Women (NOW), Boston's Bread and Roses, Berkeley Women Liberation Group, Women's Radical Action Project, Women's Equity Action League (WEAL), National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) and others. According to Peterson and Runyan,

'A gender-sensitive lens enables us to 'see' how the world is shaped by gendered concepts, practices and institutions...' Feminists assert that until the condition of equal participation of women in public life is fulfilled, the concept of citizenship cannot be brought to its logical conclusion. In India a beginning in this direction has been made by making reservation of one-third of the seats in Panchayats for women. This will encourage women to join politics at grass-root level.

By and by their representation at this level can be increased to one-half, and provision can also be made for their adequate representation in legislative assemblies and parliament. The opening up of vast opportunities of higher education would prove to be instrumental to their larger representation in administration and high-profile professions. In this way the idea of equal citizenship can be fully realized from the feminist point of view

However in practice, famous few women can be mentioned in politics such as Indira Gandhi and Margaret Thatcher. Such personalities acquiring women were strong leaders, who showed no hesitation to take firm decisions and also to use force in international conflicts. This led some to say that the only difference between men and women is that women are rarely in power, if they are, they behave like men. Similarly, men who appear compassionate

or seek to negotiate away from conflict may accuse of being 'women' like. The 'public-private dichotomy' has played a vital role for suppression of women's rights.

### **International Scenario**

At the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994), Women's empowerment was recognized as a cornerstone for effective policies. Empowerment of women in all spheres, in particular the political sphere is critical for their advancement and the foundation of a gender-equal society.

In empowerment, the key indeed is 'power', it is power to 'access', 'control' and make 'informed choices.' In the sphere of international politics the participation of women is still meager. However some instances can be given of outstanding women internationally, who are renowned for their achievements in politics:

- Margaret Thatcher was the first women Prime Minister of Great Britain. She has been called the 'Iron Lady' for her strong decisions.
- Sirimavo Bandaranaike became the Prime Minister of Srilanka in 1960 and was the first women Prime Minister of the World. Her daughter Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumartunga is the first women president of Srilanka.
- Golda Meir was one of the founders and the fourth Prime Minister of the state of Israel.
- Hillary Clinton is a leading candidate for the presidential election in United States in present time and earlier in 2008. She is also a famous lawyer and served as foreign secretary in US government.
- Aung San Su Kyi, is the leader of the movement for democracy in Myanmar. She has spent many years under house arrest. In 1991, she is awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize for her non- violent resistance to the military dictatorship in Myanmar. She has been released from her house arrest as a result of constant pressure from the general public.
- Benazir Bhutto was the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the first women to be elected head of a Muslim country in modern times. She was killed before an election in December, 2007 to remove her from the national politics of Pakistan.
- Begam Khaleda Zia is the first women Prime Minister of Bangladesh.
- German Chancellor Angela Merkel is also one of the strong women in contemporary international politics. By the end of 2005, Germany had elected its first women chancellor.

Happily, by the beginning of 2006, Chile and Liberia had elected their women presidents. Then in 2007 India and Argentina had the distinction of having women presidents. Srilanka,

Israel, India Pakistan and Bangladesh have the record of having women Prime Minister or Head of Government. Thus, in Indian-subcontinent from ancient time, women have played important role in leadership and statesmanship. Some women have excellent record of performance in various important positions, like those in legislatures, cabinets, bureaucracy, diplomacy, journalism, legal profession, fine arts, academics and scientific research etc. This record is enough proof of the potential of women's power.

### **Indian context**

In our country though we find anomalies in Panchayati Raj, where a women is selected as sarpanch, it is possible that her way of working is mostly influenced by a male member of her family.

However this tendency should not be taken for granted. Looking back to the Indian history, one can find that women have played a vital role in politics. Though, before independence Indian politics is not formally well structured as it exists in contemporary period, still for understanding the journey of political empowerment of women in India, we have to take into account the contribution of the earlier empowered women. Symbolically some instances can be given in this context:

- Razia Sulatana, who ruled over Indian from 1236 to 1240 AD, was the very first ruler in Muslim history. She became one of the most powerful rulers of the Delhi Sultanate.
- Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi organized her fight against the British conspiracy and torture. She lived a short life of 23 years only, gave arousing call to the free-princely states to be united for the freedom of motherland. She moved the British Queen by her fierce leadership, lead the movement of 1857, but did not surrender. She died while fighting against the British rulers.
- Similarly, Rani Durgavati and Rani Ahilyabai had also played significant role in pre-independence period.
- Indira Gandhi, at age 12, she had already joined the fight for India's independence and at an advance age became the first women Prime Minister of India. But she was brutally killed by terrorists. In modern times, the place of women in Indian politics reflects the opportunities and constraints that are associated with its democracy. Women have been key actors in the numerous social movements and non-governmental organizations that underlie India's vibrant civil society.

India's most influential, Prime Minister was Indira Gandhi, and her daughter-in-law, Sonia Gandhi, is the major force within the Congress party today. India's former president Pratibha Patil and several state leaders have been women, including Mayawati, who served four times as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh

In India, numerous steps have been undertaken to provide constitutional safeguards and institutional framework for activities of women welfare. There have been various shifts in policy approaches during the last 40 years from the concept of 'welfare', in the 1970s to 'development' in 1980s, now to 'empowerment' in the '1990s and afterwards.

- The Government of India has declared the year 2001 as year for the Empowerment of women. The concern for women's political equality in India first emerged as political issue during the national movement in which women were active participants. Act of 1935, provided with the right to vote to all women over 21 years if they fulfilled the conditions of property and education.
- In Post-Independence period, women continued to play a significant role in less conventional political activities such as environmental movement, anti-alcohol agitation and peace movements.
- It was only with the setting up of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) in September, 1971 that the demand for greater representation of women in political institutions in India was taken up in a systematic way.

- The CSWI Report "Towards Equality" (1974) reveals that political parties have "tended to see the women voters and citizens as appendages of the males " It also refers to the 'tokenism' involved in having a few women's rights on account of their dependent and minority status.

In Indian scenario, with women's concerns gaining prominence in both governmental and non- governmental organizations during eighties (1980s), women's issues became an important agenda for all political parties. While the subjugation of women is gaining attention everywhere, women's organizations will be forced to choose their political allies within the existing political set up.

Over a million women are represented in the three-tiered panchayats. With the growth of a multi-party system since the early 1990s, political parties have increasingly sought women's electoral support. And yet most women continue to lack effective political power in parties and the state. Women's access to power is still mediated by their relationship to male kin, and is often indirect and symbolic. Parties have done little to provide women access to the networks and resources that would enable them to ascent the ranks of party hierarchies.

Hopefully, the continued administrative decentralization through programs like NRHM, have demonstrated the Government of India's commitment to increasing the political participation of

marginalized groups, especially poor women. The bureaucratic structure of India is very complex and messy and because of that we find lot of departmentalization in ministries and

various administrative posts. Women here can play a very effective role and in fact women have been doing so but the level of participation has decreased.

Further the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution in 1992 and 1993, provided with 33 percent reservation for women in panchayats and urban local bodies. Women have acquired resources and the development of skills, which have enabled them to excel in managing development. They have been able to articulate their priorities for basic needs and amenities such as food, drinking water, schools, healthcare centres, roads, and security. Some instances can be given to prove that how political participation works as tool of women's empowerment:

- Two detailed village surveys carried out in two districts, Birbhum in West Bengal and Udaipur in Rajasthan; found that women invest more than men in projects that meet community needs, which are water and roads in West Bengal and water in Rajasthan. In West Bengal, the panchayats are authorized to establish informal education centres. In Rajasthan, the panchayats can spend money on local infrastructure.
- In rural Punjab, over 4500 women heading 2446 panchayats have a common minimum programme: to work for uplift of weaker sections of society, adult literacy, pensions for aged and the poor, better education and healthcare facilities, and the development of their villages in their five-year term.
- Another success story is the Belandur gram panchayat in Karnataka, where six out of twelve members are women. It is estimated that collections of taxes have risen more than seven times. With the devolution of responsibility to the panchayats, the cost of the delivery of government services has gone down significantly, and a system of transparency and accountability has developed.
- Women panchayat members have also taken up questions of gender inequality in many places. In UP, 100 village leaders have banned the practice of giving or demanding dowry.
- In Akola district in Maharashtra, an all-women panchayat had the only liquor shop of the village closed down as it was resulting in the men of the village returning home drunk and beating their wives.
- In Madhya Pradesh, the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, awarded a woman sarpanch in the Jamunia taluk in district Sehore the "Outstanding Woman Panchayat Leader Award" for 2003. Her achievements included providing women with land rights, distributing land to ninety-five couples under a housing scheme, and ensuring that the documents were in woman's name.
- In Orissa, the Narayanpur gram panchayat under the leadership of its sarpanch Rajewari Rao passed a resolution banning child marriage. Even families who had performed child marriages before the ban was put in place were not spared- the adults responsible were required to pay a fine of Rs. 1000, to be used for the children's education.



The enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments represented a milestone in the process of decentralization. The 73rd Amendment Act made the Gram Sabha, comprising all adult villagers, the pillar stone of village governance. The amendments contain provisions for the reservations of 33 percent of elective seats for women in the village, block and district councils and an equal number in the urban municipal councils. Consequently, an estimated five million women entered local politics directly or indirectly in the last ten years. India's population consists of 15% Scheduled Castes and 7.5%, Scheduled Tribes. As a result, 22.5% of seats are reserved for them, out of which one-third are for women. The reservation of seats in each state is proportional to their population. The reservation of seats for women, SCs and STs applies also to office bearers, so that one-third of sarpanch must be women. These amendments, as a strategy of affirmative action, served as a major breakthrough towards ensuring women's equal access and increased participation in political power structures.

## **Gender & Health**

### **Definition of Women's Health**

The terms 'sex' and 'gender' are often used as synonyms in medicine and public health, but in gender research the two concepts have fundamentally different meanings. In the late twentieth century, followed by women's movement, 'sex' referred to the biological differences between men and women (such as chromosomes, internal and external sex organs, hormonal makeup and secondary sex characteristics etc.), while "gender" was employed to separate biological sex from the social, cultural and historical construction of femininities and masculinities (Rubin, 1975). For some feminists like Rubin, through this conception, sex remained an important aspect, where the psychological self, remained as a material "given", whereas the socialisation component which is superimposed on it (body), provided scope to postulate commonalities and differences among women.

While sex and gender are important precepts in gaining a gender perspective, analysing how sex and gender interacts with other aspects or variables is yet another factor. They interact both with the biological and social variables that create between or within group differences. Some of the factors that it interacts with but not limited to are: Genetics, age, sex hormones, reproductive status, body composition, co morbidities, disabilities, ethnicity, nationality, geographic location, socioeconomic status, educational background, sexual orientation, religion, lifestyle, language, family configuration, environment and more.

Further the difference is not just about interaction with other factors but also the different roles women engage in their daily lives displaying different identities. For instance, while exploring the abortion decision of a woman, she is not just a woman seeking abortion, but she is a mother of few children already, a daughter-in-law who has to fulfil her social norm that assigns her certain roles and responsibilities, a wife to a husband to whom she has to fulfil her assigned duties and more as prescribed by the gender roles and cultural norms of that space. Thus there exist multiple identities beyond a 'single' woman in her. The self here is not a universal self rather a relational-self that is influenced by the local surroundings. Thus there is a need to factor in these influences that are beyond sex and gender as concepts independent

of other factors. Thus, women’s health as said above is not something that is pertinent to the health conditions faced by women because of their biological givens-‘sex’ but containing the a broader understanding of the critical roles that women play and how social, cultural, political and other factors influence to promote and protect or impede health of women.

### **Gender perspective on women’s health**

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo created a landmark shift in the national population policies and donor strategies worldwide. The Programme of Action emphasised the need for improving the reproductive health and promoting gender equity. It referred to strategies that integrate gender norms into account and compensate for gender-based inequalities in the household and community. Similarly, goal - 3 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—aims to achieve gender equality and empower women, through rectifying those disadvantages through policies and programmes that builds women’s capabilities, improve their access to economic and political opportunity, and guarantee their safety. These efforts are aimed at improving and sustaining women’s health in the long-term by integrating them through the direct health interventions.

New approach to focus women’s health: There are many illness and diseases that have been classified and identified based on male norms, for example the myocardial infarction, related to coronary heart disease. The medical male norms have been problematized and questions have been raised taking into consideration women’s situation as the point of departure to identify the risk factors, diagnosis, symptoms and treatment as well as prognosis. Further, many health problems earlier neglected and associated as psychological such as fibromyalgia, infection of the urinary tract, musculoskeletal disorders and chronic pain that hit mostly women, have gained more research interest, although still with small resources. Another important aspect of research raised in the recent years is how medicine medicalizes women, where women’s normal physiological functions have been diagnosed as illness. For example, the low levels of oestrogen treated as illness through hormone replacement therapies for menopausal women.

By asking questions such as:

- Who does what?
- Who has what?
- Who decides?
- Who needs what?
- Who wins? Who loses?

These questions help us to address the engendering health inequalities. We would see how certain specific aspects of gender and gender relations that could affect women’s health that are intricately woven in different cultures.

## Gender concepts

Gender is the social meaning given to being male or female in a particular place and time. Gender is an acquired identity that is shaped through social norms, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures. Gender describes the array of different roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power and influence that a particular society assigns to men or women. We recognise that in every society there is a differential value ascribed to what men and women 'are' by the society. These beliefs about what men and women are determine the gender norms in that particular society. For example beliefs such as men are strong and rational and women are emotional and weak exist in many societies. These beliefs have translated to gender norms that govern the societies functioning. For instance men are rational, therefore they must be articulate; whereas women are emotional therefore they should not articulate or express themselves limits their expression. The differences in these gender norms have led to define the roles and responsibilities of men and women. The gender norm that men belong to the public because they are rational and strong has transformed to men should be breadwinners and women being weak and emotional has been transformed to the private to take care of the household and rear children. These gender norms in turn have permeated to define the gendered division of labour and sexual division of labour. The gender based division of labour implies that men are meant to produce productive labour that involves wages, and women are to involve in reproductive labour and household manual labour that is unpaid and less valued. While the sexual division of labour, that employs both men and women's physical labour in the market classifies what men would do and what women would do. For instance in agriculture women are offered work like weeding, transplanting, threshing etc which are low paid as well involves hard labour; while men may have more responsibility for cash crops, operating equipment and overseeing the work of women which are well paid. Similarly in the community, men could be leaders like the Sarpanch, the community leader, highly valued; but women can only be wise women or dai, much less valued and mostly unpaid. This differential role leads to differential access to and control over resources. Because of the different roles and differences in the position of men and women, the access to and control over resources also vary. Men have more access to control over the financial resources, credit, knowledge, self- esteem and more. This differential access to resources gives more power and decision-making authority to influence decisions. Only those people in position and have power have the ability to influence the beliefs, norms, sexual division of labour and control over access to resources.

Gender concepts and its substratum indicators

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## How gender constructs affect health of the women

Through certain illustration it is possible to gain insight on how the above gender constructs built upon the gender norms affect women’s access to health knowledge, self-perceptions of health needs and the ability to access services.

Exposure to health risks: The very belief that woman is to take care of household puts them to different risks. For example the extensive indoor pollution caused by biomass cooking fuels put women to greater risk of pulmonary diseases. Similarly the unpaid and less valued nature of women’s reproductive roles actually affects access to health care since they lack time, money and resources for accessing these services. Further, social norms such as early marriage for women and the women looked at only for their reproductive roles, the exposure to health risks such as Vesico Vaginal Fistula’s are higher. The nature of labour women take at the public sphere generally exposes them to different risks and health problems. It has been studied that women engaged in agricultural fields are prone to chronic back pain and leg problems due the nature of the work they engage. Health seeking behaviour: Since many women are denied education and they are not allowed to work or go out alone, their health seeking behaviour has been severely affected. For example women fail to recognise many health problems during pregnancy due to lack of knowledge. Even if recognised many women ignore for reasons such as they are over- burdened with household work, or lack support from family both physically and financially to visit a healthcare provider. This is partly due to the gender norms that govern women’s behaviour. Many women do not perceive themselves entitled to seek or invest in their health and wellbeing. Access to health services: Women have very limited access to resources and power to make decisions. In India, many women express the need to seek permission to access health care. With limited access to resources and power to decide many women have limited or no access to health care. The power to decide is not just about seeking care. Women’s power to control sexuality and use of contraception is also limited. The gender norms that asserts normalcy to men’s behaviour of having sex with other women puts wives at greater risk for STD/HIV infections. Women are discouraged to seek treatment in such cases due to stigma attached to visiting an STD clinic accompanied by other constraints such as money, lack of time and decision-making power. These examples above explain how and why gender is an important component in exploring the social determinant of health.

What is gender analysis?

Gender analysis is a tool that could enable to show us the gendered realities of the day-to-day life and highlight how these realities can affect health status, health decisions and access to health care. By answering the questions such as: Who does what? Who has what? Who decides? Who needs what? Who wins? Who loses; we actually perform a gender analysis. An intersectionality approach that considers simultaneous interactions between different aspects of social identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, ability, immigration status, religion) as well as the impact of systems and processes of oppression and domination (e.g., racism, classism, sexism, etc) is one of the best ways to explore realities that envisions social justice. However, while gender is an important pointer, it is important to recognise that while taking an ‘intersectionality’ approach where

gender is stratified by caste, class and other relevant stratifiers, these may vary according to the health condition being considered. For example in HIV, sexual orientation would be an important stratifier; for access to health services, marginalised status such as being a migrant, living in remote areas and belonging to socially excluded groups may be more relevant. Thus a gender analysis helps us to understand,

1. The underlying causes of illness or disease to plan interventions or treat diseases.
2. To explain how biological and social differences between men and women interact to produce differential health outcomes.
3. To explore how social beliefs about gender have a direct effect on health and.
4. How gender is constructed across cultures.

Thus in order to promote wellbeing and contribute to human rights, gender analysis in health has to go beyond effectiveness and efficiency to promote social justice and empowerment for women, in present day's agenda.

### **Approaches to address gender-based disadvantages affecting women's health**

While we so far we focussed on how the social norms in a society affect women's health, it is important to recognise that gender integrated national policies and programmes are lacking in many countries and there is lack of sex disaggregated data to understand the gender differentials in health risks, health information and access to health services. It is in this context 'gender mainstreaming' as a concept emerged following the (ICPD) in 1994, and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The aim is to exclusively focus on women to 'mainstreaming', or integrating, gender into the mainstream in all sectors. This approach is expected to increase coverage, effectiveness, and efficiency of all interventions. Further, it aims to promote equity and equality between women and men throughout the life course and, at the least, ensure that interventions do not promote or perpetuate inequitable gender roles and relations (WHO 2002). This approach is envisioned through two dimensions of gender mainstreaming namely;

Operational mainstreaming, which refers to the integration of equality concerns into the content of policies, programme interventions, and projects to ensure that these have a positive impact on women and reduce gender inequalities. This comprises mainstreaming within the government departments where in-house gender-sensitization workshops are implemented apart from other activities. It also implies incorporating gender sensitisation into the curricula of health professionals in medical education. Further, mainstreaming in health research is also part of mainstreaming wherein gender at all stages of the research process from defining the research till dissemination of results is considered. For operational gender mainstreaming to become successful it needs structures, mechanisms, and processes that will catalyse, initiate, and sustain gender-mainstreaming efforts.

Institutional mainstreaming, involves addressing the internal dynamics of formal (and informal) institutions, such as their goals, agenda setting, governance structures, and

procedures related to day-to-day functioning, so that these support and promote gender equality (UN 2000). One aspect of this mainstreaming is to identify and address gender considerations in health, and within the organisations responsible for managing and delivering health care services. This aims at elimination of gender-based discrimination in human resource procedures, changing institutional rules and culture to create an environment supportive of gender equity and equality and enhancing the capacity of staff and senior management for mainstreaming gender concerns within health policies, programmes, research, and training. At the international mainstreaming level efforts were made to integrate gender considerations' into all research, policies, programmes, projects, and initiatives. The aim is to evidence base on gender and health, and develop and refining tools and guidelines for gender mainstreaming in research.

Through these two approaches it makes it possible to address gender-based differences and inequalities across all health initiatives. And further it accentuates initiatives to address women's specific health needs that are result of either biological difference between women and men or gender-based discrimination in society. However, the challenges in mainstreaming remain. One of the challenges has been, top-down approaches that lack scope for democratic participation, both within international organizations and national government institutions. Further the within operational mainstreaming, community-based service-delivery and training interventions tend to focus on women's specific needs without challenging gender roles and norms. As regards the attempts at integrating gender issues in the training of health personnel have remained, largely, small-scale attempts. It is cited that the major reason for these challenges is lack of consideration of gender as part of human rights and social justice agendas.

However, mainstreaming gender remains a big challenge in the health sector due to certain reasons. Firstly due to attributing all male and female differences to biology and failing to examine gender issues in all health problem and delivery of health services. Secondly, the policy makers and programme managers are not convinced of any gender-based inequalities in health, and of the need for gender mainstreaming. This arises due to the reality of women who outlive men in most countries of the world, and, for many health conditions, male mortality exceeds female mortality. Lastly, the the health sector informed by biomedical approach, fails to see the relevance of understanding the social dimensions and determinants of health. While there are many challenges spoken, one of the important is de-politicization of gender mainstreaming . Gender mainstreaming is not just about identifying gender-gaps through gender analysis and 'including' women where they were previously excluded. It is also about asking why women were excluded in the first place, identifying the forces that perpetuated such exclusion, and challenging these forces. It is about taking on patriarchy, misogyny, and discrimination, and the structures that uphold them.

To conclude, this module has given insights on the importance of gender perspective to women's health. Although limited examples are given to express how gender aspects affect women's health, in the forthcoming modules, a similar gender perspective to different health problems gives a larger understanding of the implication of gender on health. And to gain

more insights on the gender mainstreaming efforts across the world and the challenges, the paper by Ravindran and Kambete would prove to be more useful reading.

### Summary Points:

- Gender differences are percolated at different sections of the society determined by class, caste, race, and ethnicity.
- The social roles and responsibilities held by women put women to greater risks of certain illness and diseases.
- A gender approach in health, while not excluding biological factors, considers the critical roles that social and cultural factors and power relations that play between women and men in promoting and protecting or impeding health.
- Second wave feminism, (1960's–80's) campaigned for legal and social rights of women extended to wider issues such as sexuality, the work place, family, reproductive rights including abortion and contraception, violence against women.
- Sex' refers to the biological differences between men and women (such as chromosomes, internal and external sex organs, hormonal makeup and secondary sex characteristics etc.)
- “Gender” refers to the social, cultural and historical construction of femininities and masculinities. It is the social meaning given to being male or female in a particular place and time.
- Sex and gender interact both with the biological and social variables that creates between or within group differences.
- Gender norms refer to the beliefs about what men and women are and determine the gender norms in that particular society.
- The gender system feeds on its substratum to perpetuate the gender norms stronger day by day.
- Gender operates at different levels, in all kinds of institutions such as family, health system, legal frameworks, and all kinds of formal and informal institutions including the market.



- Gender constructs affects women’s health in terms of exposure to health risks, health knowledge, health seeking behaviour, access to health services.
- Gender analysis is a tool that could enable to show us the gendered realities of the day-to- day life and highlight how these realities can affect health status, health decisions and access to health care.
- Intersectionality approach –considers simultaneous interactions between different aspects of social identity as well as the impact of systems and processes of oppression and domination.
- Gender Mainstreaming aims is to exclusively focus on women to ‘mainstreaming’, or integrating, gender into the mainstream in all sectors. The two types of mainstreaming are operational and institutional mainstreaming.

### **Gender & Media**

#### **Representation of women in TV serials, web, advertising and fashion magazines (Media)**

##### **Representation of Women in TV Serials**

TV serials or soap operas or simply soaps are to women what sports and music channels are to youngsters. Especially for those women, who stay at home and do household chores, soaps are the main source of entertainment. It is therefore not a surprise that the very genre of soaps is women-centric. However, despite their women-centric nature, TV serials are often accused of reinforcing stereotypes and not depicting women in a realistic manner. In this part, we will explore some of the aspects related to women’s representation in Indian serials.

TV serials in India have had a knack for stereotyping women and people belonging to different religions and states. A typical woman in an Indian serial wears an expensive saree, sports heavy makeup and more often than not is seen as a housewife with a little say in the running of the family except cooking, celebrating festivals and plotting.

There have been only a few serials where one can see any realistic portrayal of women. Women in India are working in every field including IT, medical, police service and administrative services, but it’s rare to come across a female engineer or a female government officer in serials. Even when working women find a space on the screen, their depiction remains stereotypical.

The concept of good and bad is black and white in most of the TV serials of India. The good women are housewives, doing every single chore in the house, not saying anything even if they are beaten or abused, taking everything in their stride with aplomb and putting everybody else’s happiness above theirs. In short, they don’t have a personal life or ambition. On the other hand, almost every serial has a vamp who is argumentative, has loose morals and is always shown scheming and plotting the downfall of the leading lady.

The distinction between the good and the evil is also shown by the way a woman dresses in serials. Even the way a woman representing the good wears a saree differs from the way a woman representing grey shade does. While those of the traditional women, dubbed symbol of virtues.

However, it's not all gloomy and depressing. There are/were serials which attempt/attempted to look beyond stereotypes besides raising social issues affecting women. Swabhimaan was one of the earliest serials on Doordarshan in which all the characters were rich and suave including the women. Most of the female characters wore shorts, drank, smoked and got pregnant before marriage.

What type of messages are these serials sending to the younger generations? In the words of film journalist Madhulika Singh of Hindustan Times, "They have reduced the status of women to a housewife who has nothing more to do than cook, keep quiet, deck up and sob. In reality, even housewives/homemakers also have nothing in common with them. A lot of women who chose to stay at home for whatever reason have a life and hobbies.... They have a mind of their own. In these serials, men are shown to be working outside and not even raising a finger at home. It reinforces the stigma attached to a man doing household work. Running a family is responsibility of both man and woman but no serial tends to focus on it." In conclusion, we can say that since TV serials have a huge reach in India, they should work towards breaking stereotypes and not reinforcing them. Women in India are already fighting a difficult battle towards equality and their portrayal in TV serials ought to help them win it.

### **Representation of women in the web**

From the melodramatic world of soaps, let us switch to the virtual realm of the web and find out as to how women are represented here Since the internet or web is a more recent media phenomenon which involves a two-way communication model, it should have been more democratic in its portrayal of women, or so it would seem. Democratic, in the sense, that the women are no more passive consumers of media, and would have a say in the way the online media treats them. That would mean women on the internet are not the silent, suffering majority. Being a more inclusive medium, women should have had more avenues to express their point of view. Moreover, since the internet caters to a more educated audience, the portrayal of women too, should have witnessed a paradigm shift, but shockingly, that is not the case. While there are more women- related material and more awareness about feminism on the internet, careful scrutiny reveals that treatment of women in the virtual world is a sad reflection of what happens in the real world.

You all might be coming across several women specific websites on several issues like women empowerment, health, shopping, etc. But the main question arises as to why do we need websites specific to women? According to women'sagenda.com, 'one reason is because women still aren't represented equally in or by the mainstream media. If newspapers and general news sites were run by, edited and produced by more women, this might be different. If female columnists and female bylines were as prolific as men's, this might not be the case. If women were quoted more proportionally in stories more often, this might be different1.

There are several other reasons and to know more about it, go to this link:<sup>s</sup> another issue on internet especially for women. The way men and women are treated online is quite different. Generally men are questioned about their competency and skills whereas attacks on women are mostly of a sexual nature. They range from making comments on her appearance to even molestation threats, and they are widespread. On and often these days, the different social networking websites are becoming the platforms for different mishaps for girls. The case of Anita Sarkeesian and Caroline Criado-Perez are only two high- profile examples of the millions of aggressions women suffer online every day<sup>2</sup>. These cases undermine the dignity of women, reduce them to sexualized bodies and delegitimize their voices as citizens. The result is detaching women from online discussions and suppressing their opinions or contributions to society to be more specific from bold activism actions to simple tasks as creating YouTube videos about fashion.

Amanda Spencer in her path-breaking analysis titled ‘Portrayal of Women in Online News Media Advertising’ (2008) suggests that ‘online news media advertisements utilize stereotypes and promote an unhealthy body image and concept of beauty among women. The power and influence these advertisements possess is worth researching. “Mass media have become the virtual little brick schoolhouse and advertisements the preferred lesson plan” (Langrehr, 2003). The unique aspect to this analysis is that there is very little research that exists on online advertising, especially online news media and women. The results are even more important to understand because it directly contributes to the knowledge of online advertising, an area that is currently in want of literature. From this analysis, it is clear that advertising in mass media preys on an emotional connection to the viewers through the use of emotions such as sexuality, vulnerability, insecurity and beauty to draw loyal customers<sup>3</sup>.

Content analyses and statistical evidence paint an even bleaker picture. According to the Media and Gender Monitor, only 24% of news stories were reported about women globally in 2011. Women were the focus of only 19% of news stories in politics and government in 2010. Of the 84 news websites monitored by the Global Media Monitoring Project, 23% of newsmakers were represented by women in 2010. NPR reported in 2010 that only 26% of its news sources were women. This shows that men are not only in charge of the government and news in all aspects of society, but they also dominate the voices and news exposed to the broader world.

Helping women to get online (<https://www.hwgo.com/>) is another website which contains different articles on women on various topics like childcare tips, cooking recipes, financial tips and household tips in India. When you go to this website which is made according to Indian market you would feel women are made for those four jobs only. The content is stereotyped. It’s just a single website on these issues; there are infinite numbers of websites also which portray women as a homely figure only. Generally women are represented as someone who can't be independent and we need to see their pathetic situation or they are represented in the most glamorous manner.

Thus, it can be said that the internet or web is a powerful instrument of change and a change can only occur once we are able to see the type of force this tool has cast on society. It’s up to

us to use the force of internet to influence positive changes and correct the representation of women.

### **Representation of Women in Advertising**

After learning about various facets of women’s representation in TV serials and web, let us now move ahead to examine the same in the world of advertising.

As a tool to sell products and services, advertising has existed for ages. However, advertising as we know today is an outcome of the modern industrialized world characterized by mass production, transport facilities to convey goods and most importantly, diverse media to advertise the products to the mass market. Today, as an all-pervasive element of the contemporary culture in a globalised and commercialised world, advertising has evolved as an industry in itself that exercises immense influence on the lives of people. It would not be an exaggeration to say that successful national economies of industrialized countries now depend a lot on advertising. The foundations of the mass media itself depend on advertising.

The dynamic changes that advertising has undergone over the years since its humble beginnings are largely due to the way mass media have evolved. Along with the changes in forms, advertising has also witnessed changes in the content. Without going into a detailed account of the historical development of advertising, we would look upon the ways it facilitates the formation of cultural perceptions and values particularly by its use and representation of women.

From the morning newspaper and radios to the hoardings on the roads, from the magazines to the television, and from bus and railway stations to shopping malls, advertising is around us everywhere. And now embedded in the webpages and smartphone apps, advertising is with us round the clock. Due to its repetitive all- pervasive visual nature, the kind of imagery of men and women projected in advertising becomes culturally significant. Advertisements we come across every day are full of statements about the ideals of femininity – about what it means to be a woman.

Most of the advertisements featuring women tend to establish physical beauty or ‘looks’ as the most important aspect of a woman’s existence through standardized images of ‘ideal’ beauty. Young female models in advertisements are free from any ‘imperfections’ that include wrinkles, scars, blemishes, facial and body hair. Computer retouching with the use of software like Photoshop has taken the removal of these imperfections to a whole new level by providing the ability to tone down or enhance muscles and curves in the digital photographs of these models.

Women are often portrayed playing the role of a mother or a wife, loving and caring for other members of the family The surge of economic growth and the resulting rise in levels of consumption after India started liberalizing its economy in 1991 led to the expansion of mass market in the form of rising middle class. These economic changes had profound social and cultural consequences that included proliferation of nuclear families and increased number of

women in workplace. The urban Indian woman rose in importance as target consumer as well as decision maker in the act of purchasing.

Not surprisingly, the years after the economic liberalization witnessed increased number of advertisements targeted to women. The image of the women represented in the ads also underwent a makeover. In the pre-liberalization era, women featured in advertisements for beauty products had long hair, worn braided or in a bun.<sup>4</sup>

Some of the frequently appearing roles played by the woman in Indian advertising include that of a picture-perfect housewife who is eager to please everyone and whose world revolves around her family.

Beauty products featuring women have continued to feature female models with flawless fair skin with the ads propagating that skin type as the hallmark of good looks and the means for all accomplishments – both personal and professional. In this product category, Indian advertising have been found to be highly influenced by its American counterpart. Overall, studies indicate that there has been a change in the way females are portrayed in advertisements, though the change is very slight. The portrayals have become less stereotypical over the decades with more advertisements showing women as breadwinners, professionally successful, having equal stake in decision- making, independent from family concerns and other progressive representations. At the same time there has also been an increase in advertisements in which women are depicted as objects of sex.

In due course, advertising has started trying to co-opt ideologies of feminism but much of this effort is characterized by what media literacy activist Jean Kilbourne in her pioneering and influential documentary film *Killing Us Softly: Advertising's Image of Women* called the ‘trivialization of freedom’ with very masculine definition of power. Of late, there have been some genuine progressive campaigns that have tried to break the stereotype. Jewellery brand Tanishq’s 2013 ‘A wedding to remember’ campaign was one such campaign that used the premise of remarriage of a young woman who has a child from a previous marriage

So far, we have taken a sneak peek into the representation of women in TV serials, web and advertisements. In the last part of this module, we will now dissect women’s representation through the prism of fashion magazines. When one considers the strands of human civilization, one would be able to logically delineate various efforts of men to record their expressions of ideas, thoughts and feelings. The discovery of printing press by Gutenberg and subsequent deepening of industrial revolution helped human race to diversify this endeavour of expression. Newspapers first, and various types of magazines later, followed the trends. Fashion magazine is one such effort cantered on women. This happened in the West, particularly in the capitalist economy. Fashion magazines are for women and in most cases by them. Ivana Bartoskova, in her thesis titled, *A Linguistic and Feminist Analysis of Style Magazine*, writes –

Women’s magazines have been part of a women’s world since the eighteenth century. At that time, women started to play an important part in literature and in society and this stimulated the publishing of women’s magazines. *Spectator*, one of the most significant magazines of its

age, realised the new trend and intently started to attract female readership, too. As Addison, the founder, said “there are none to whom this Paper will be more useful, than to the Female World. I have often thought there has not been sufficient Pains taken in finding out proper Employments and Diversions for the Fair ones” sic. (Pratt 2001). Although the attraction was realised in a strong paternalistic view and magazines wrote mainly about women’s manners and morality, women did not mind it at all. On the contrary, they were very grateful for any attention they received. Women of that time were disregarded and viewed just as an object; therefore, every interest in them was welcomed (Pratt 2001). Ivana Bartoskova writes about the efforts of the beginning of the eighteenth century. We may find the similar efforts taking place in 1892 when Arthur Turnure founded Vogue in the New York City. The idea was to create a new aristocracy, like that of Europe, among the women in the United States of America as it didn’t have such a component in the society.

Fashion Magazines are not for all women in a society. They are not focused on emancipation. They do not even talk about the serious issues like empowerment, sexual abuse, economic exploitation and domestic violence. The target women belong to the upper middle class and the rich group. They mainly focus on beauty, health, shape of figure, various therapies including yoga and various tips on use of cosmetics. The fashion magazines also focus on dating and sex.

In a way, fashion magazines have a negative connotation as they mostly concentrate on the lighter aspects of a woman’s life. One can also see that these magazines are subscribed to and read by women belonging to the age of 30 to 40 years. In a way the focus of these magazines is to inspire the women to make themselves as sex objects. The face and the figures of the models who are portrayed in these magazines have airbrush make-up.

The positive aspect of these magazines can be imagined as an effort to create a community of women with certain common values and attributes. Whether beauty, airbrush make-up, slim figures are positive values or not are debateable.

In a study conducted by Shannon Case, Layan Jawdat, Xuan Sun, Langford Wiggins titled Representation of Female Beauty: A Content Analysis of Fashion Magazine Advertisements and Street Style Fashion Blogs, Georgetown University, USA, it was stated that 53.8% of the content was text or editorial content, whereas 46.2% was advertisements. In the same article, it was found that the editorial content mentioned many brands that the editions had no advertisement from. These brands amount to about 50% of all the advertised brands. So, it can be said that about 70% of the content had either direct or indirect advertisements of brands in fashion magazines. Therefore, the fashion magazines are the engines of communication of brands to influence the purchase of goods and services from the female readers.

The fashion magazines create a community of women who represent certain values which can be inculcated when certain attributes are acquired or practised by the members of the community. Women are not monolithic group in which members have the same values and attributes. The feminism that is found in fashion magazines is artificially constructed. The



visual language, the signs and symbols that are used in fashion magazines make the women having an ideology devoid of any depth and emancipator direction. It promotes a culture that has no roots.

The fashion magazines are also not concerned about the unity of women as such irrespective of colour, creed and race. In a study conducted on the cover page appearances in print media fashion magazines in 2014, it was found out that the tilt towards Caucasian or white skin was given prominence. A total of 611 cover pages from 44 major fashion magazines were studied: 576 times, it was the white models who were depicted, and only 119 times the coloured ones. So, even women are not above the racism.... the more one talks about the change, the more it remains the same. In India, there are many fashion magazines. The prominent among them are: Savvy, Harper's Bazaar, Vogue, New Woman, Verve, Cosmopolitan, Marie Claire, Women's era, Elle, Femina. It is expected that the fashion magazines in India would not follow the treaded path of the western fashion magazines. Again, if one goes through the content (text) and advertisement, one could not find any difference between the two. Many popular fashion magazines of the West have Indian versions. The difference is that these versions use Indian models more and western models less, particularly on the cover page. One may forget that after all, the fashion magazines though of women, it need not be women issue centric, it is fashion centric. Fashion is important not women.

### **Gender Sensitivity**

Gender sensitivity is the ability to recognize gender issues, especially women's different perceptions and interests arising from their unique social location and gender roles. It calls for an understanding and consideration of the socio-cultural factors underlying discrimination based on sex (whether against women or men). Gender sensitivity is the process by which people are made aware of how gender plays a role in life through their treatment of others. Gender relations are present in all institutions and gender sensitivity especially manifests in recognizing privilege and discrimination around gender; women are generally seen as disadvantaged in society. Gender sensitivity trainings are used to educate people, usually employees, to become more aware of and sensitive to gender in their lives or workplaces. They are becoming more popular in the United States, particularly in areas of the service industry, such as healthcare and education.

#### **Gender sensitivity in reproductive health**

Gender sensitivity in reproductive health is reliant on treating all clients with equal respect, regardless of sex, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, or age. Indicators of gender-sensitive service include: refraining from discriminating against or stereotyping clients on the basis of sex or gender, treating all clients with equal respect, offering gender sensitivity training to all employees, and providing adequate representation of female care providers.<sup>[1]</sup> Gender-sensitive care also depends on informed consent to treatment for all clients. If service providers deliver gender-sensitive care, their clients might be more likely to seek further service from that provider



## Gender sensitization and children

Gender sensitivity is enacted through a process known as gender sensitization. Gender sensitization promotes equality for men and women by allowing men and women to view what is stereotypical of and reasonable for their gender. Therefore, teachers are in a position to teach children about gender sensitization through how they conduct their classroom and interact with their students. Teachers who are successful at sensitizing their students to gender at a young age can influence a change in children's thought processes, which positions them to break societal stigmas in childhood and throughout life.

Teaching children to be sensitive to gender also relies heavily on the parents or guardians of the children. Children begin to develop their gender identity around two to three years old. At this age, gender identity is reinforced through messages from parents, whether gender sensitive or not. A common phrase that is not gender sensitive and might be heard by young children through their parents is “boys will be boys.” Other examples of non-gender-sensitive reinforcement of gender includes teaching children that pink is an objectively feminine color and blue is an objectively masculine color, as well as forcing young girls to play with dolls and boys to play with trucks. Educating children about gender identities that do not conform to the gender binary helps to break the stigma associated with these identities

## Gender Equality

UNICEF says gender equality "means that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. It does not require that girls and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they be treated exactly alike."

On a global scale, achieving gender equality also requires eliminating harmful practices against women and girls, including sex trafficking, femicide, wartime sexual violence, gender wage gap, and other oppression tactics. UNFPA stated that, "despite many international agreements affirming their human rights, women are still much more likely than men to be poor and illiterate. They have less access to property ownership, credit, training and employment. This partly stems from the archaic stereotypes of women being labelled as child-bearers and home makers, rather than the bread winners of the family. They are far less likely than men to be politically active and far more likely to be victims of domestic violence.

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