

Millennium Development Goals and Women Empowerment in India

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Structured Abstract:

Purpose: We have already crossed the time line of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) declared by the General Assembly of the United Nations last two year, that is 2015. India accepted all the eight goals and initiated to reach the target through her policy and various development programmes. The purpose of this paper is to measure the improvement of women empowerment in India on the basis of MDG 3 indicators.

Design / Methodology / Approach: The present study is based on an exploratory in nature. The study largely depends on the secondary sources. The data have been collected from different relevant reports various books, journals, news papers, periodicals, website on the subject matter.

Findings: Among the four indicators of women empowerment we have achieved two that is indicator 9 and 10, but in the case of indicator and our position is far behind.

Practical Implication: It recommended that problems must be identified through proper investigation about the failure of women empowerment where India has made little progress. Besides, government schemes have to be continued and new government schemes must be generated.

Originality / Value: The assessment of the position of women empowerment in India after crosses the time line fixed by Millennium Development Declaration will help us to take necessary steps in this field.

Keywords: MDGs, Development, Women, Empowerment.

Paper Type: Analytical research paper.

Introduction

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the most recent statement of commitment towards narrowing gaps between the developed and developing regions of the world. The MDGs focused on human development which was to put people at the centre of the development process. The concept of development noticed a shift away from economic growth to human development in

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early 1990, based on the works of Mahbub-ul-Haq and Amartya Sen. In 1990, United Nations Development Programme was taken on the basis of this concept.

In September 2000 United Nations members adopted the United Nation millennium Declaration. (United Nations Millennium Development Declaration, 2000) The declaration asserted that every individual has dignity and certain fundamental values are essential for international relation. These include freedom from hunger and from the fear of violence, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect of nature and shared responsibility. The declaration was then translated into a roadmap setting out goals to be reached by 2015. The eight goals in this section on development and poverty eradication are known as Millennium Development Goals. All 189 members United Nations states at the time (now it is 193) committed to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals have 18 targets and 48 technical indicators to measure the progress. The eight goals are as follows:-

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger.

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education.

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women.

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality.

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/Aids, Malaria and other Diseases.

Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability.

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development.

Review of Literature

In an article “*Millennium Development Goals: Why They Matter*” director of the Human Development Report 2003, Sakiko Fukuda-Parr describes why MDGs are new from other development goals. The MDGs are not new strategy but a new instrument for mobilizing action because time limits and quantifiable outcomes pacified. He point out that ‘MDGs have two weaknesses: asymmetry and noncompliance.’ At the end he shows how far we reached the target.

The book *Rural India: Achieving Millennium Development Goals and Grassroots Development* is an excellent collection of theme papers by M. **Moni and Suresh Mishra** which presented in the third International Conference on Rural India Achieving Millennium Development organized by Bhoovigyan Vikas Foundation New Delhi. The papers review the current rural scenario policies programmes and draw lessons for creating a professional development strategy which would strengthen the rural based of the country.

Achin Chakraborty and Subrata Mukherjee in an occasional paper (2009) “*MDG-Based Poverty Reduction Strategy for West Bengal*” clearly show the MDGs based progress of West Bengal. According to them West Bengal has far away to reach the MDGs target. They also point out that poverty in West Bengal has been declining the past three decades which was mainly due to growth in agricultural and growth in non-farm sector than government policies. They suggested that only food support or employment-orient poverty-alleviation cannot pull out of poverty trap. Universal education must be emphasized. Government be active to promote agriculture specially horticulture in a planned manner.

Deolalikar in his book ‘*Attaining the Millennium Development Goals in India Reducing Infant Mortality, Child Malnutrition, Gender disparities and Hunger-poverty and Increasing School Enrollment and Completion*’ takes a critical look at India’s position across five selected MDGs. It uses a variety of data sources to analyze past progress in social indicators, paying particular attention to the heterogeneity of progress across India’s many states and sub-units. The millennium development outcomes and various policy interventions are established as correlated aspect and proceed to project the likely evolution of the millennium development indicators through 2015 based on particular policy scenarios.

Karl Marilee (1995) in ‘*Women and Empowerment: Participatory and Decision Making*’ opines that empowerment is a process of consciousness building regarding women’s situation, discrimination, and their rights. It is the decision making power and control and bringing about equality between men and women. She identifies empowerment through economic interventions to enhance women’s economic condition, the education, literacy, and provision of basic needs, services and fertility control. Karl also shows that empowerment leads to larger participation and it is capacity building and skill development. Being empower women can increase the decision making power within house hold and society.

Srilatha Batliwala (1993) defined empowerment as ‘gaining control over resources and freedom of choice.’ According to her the word ‘empowerment’ contains within it word ‘power’ which is control over resources whether it is economic or human resources or in decision making. She also opines that empowerment expands women’s power equally in the private and public sphere of their life. It is a transformation from established gender relation to more equal gender relation.

Objective

The major objective of the study is to assess the position of women empowerment in India after cross the time line fixed by Millennium Development Declaration. The specific objectives of the study are as follow:-

- To know about the various MDGs goal.
- To evaluate India’s initiatives to achieve the MDGs 3.
- To examine the status of women empowerment in India according to MDG 3 indicators.
- To find out constrains to reach the MDG 3.
- To offer policy suggestion of further improvement of women.

Methodology

The present study is based on an analytical in nature. The study largely depends on the secondary sources. The data have been collected from different relevant reports published by UNDP (United Nations), Departments of Social Welfare (Government of India), Development and Planning Department (Government of West Bengal), Ministry of Women and Child Development (Government of India), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (Government of India), Planning Commission (Government of India), Indian Council of Social Science Research, UNICEF, and various books, journals, news papers, periodicals, website on the subject matter have been taken as a source of data.

Discussion

The MDGs 3 desires to ‘promote gender equality and empower women’ through the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferable by 2005, and in all levels of education, no later than 2015. It has fixed four indicators to measure the status of women empowerment. Which are-

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- Indicator 9- Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education.
- Indicator 10- Ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old.
- Indicator 11- Share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural sector.
- Indicator 12- Promotion of seats held by women in National Parliament.

Studies show that development goals cannot be realized unless gender inequalities are removed and women are empowered to choose and decide about their own welfare, the welfare of their families, and the communities in which they live. Empowerment leads to development, which further leads to greater empowerment (Babu, 2007). Empowerment is a process of consciousness building regarding women's situation, discrimination, and their rights. It is the decision making power and control and bringing about equality between men and women (Marilee, 1995). Empowerment is gaining control over resources and freedom of choice (Batiwala, 1993). It is a complex notion involving political, social, and physical aspects. Self-decision regarding, education, participation, mobility, economic independency, awareness and exercise of rights, political participation and many more factors ensure women empowerment. Beijing Conference (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995) for action 'Women Empowerment' defines empowerment as women capacity to make the best of their own lives. From this point of view a women is empowered when she is literate, educated, and has productive skill, access to capital, confidence in herself and so on.

There are various types of empowerment. Empowerment can exist an individual level where it is about having agency increased autonomy, choice of confidence and self-esteem. It can also exist collective level that would include collective mobilization of women. Another view of women empowerment argues that it needs to occur in multistage dimensions, like economic, political, social, cultural, familiar, legal, and psychological etc.

Women economic empowerment helps women to depend on themselves. Economic empowerment of women can be uplifting through employment generation, poverty elimination, development of entrepreneurship, maintenance of sustainability. In another word women economic status may be enhanced by creating economic opportunities, in the form of better jobs, better business eliminate and access to financial services. The government of India has taken various initiatives for strengthening the economic power of women like poverty eradication programmes, enhance micro credit facilities, programmes for training women, soil conservation, diary development and occupation allied to agriculture, special concession for

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women entrepreneurs, income tax relief etc. Political empowerment of women is a part of the overall empowerment process. In general, the term political empowerment means the role guaranteed to the women on par with men in the political affairs of the state from top to bottom. But in the broad sense, participation in politics goes far beyond electoral politics, voting and election to the public office. (Devi & Laxmi, 2005). Participation in political decision-making process is an essential requirement of democracy and positive for society. Throughout history the political rights of women have been denied. They could not enjoy even voting rights till 1921 in America and 1928 in UK. After Independence, the Indian Constitutional provision of equality gave women political rights by legitimizing their role for participation in nation building. Besides, the 73 rd Amendment Act, 1992 has given women political power through one-third of the total number of seats reserved in the Indian Panchayati Raj institutions. Social empowerment of the women depends on women's educational status, health care, age at marriage, participation of women outside the home.

In the 1990s India introduced economic reform and liberalization of the economy and welcomed the concept of human development. This was reflected in the National Five Year Plan, formulated in 1992 which stated that development was the ultimate goal of all planning. The global release of the HDR in New Delhi in 1993 provided further impetus to the progress. Moreover India has produced the highest number of HDRs in the world. Eighty districts are preparing district level HDRs and twenty one Indian states have released HDRs. Besides, UNDP embarked on a partnership with the Planning Commission in India in 1999, initially to build state capacity for human development reporting and analysis, and later to help apply the human development approach in planning and policies (India's Human Development Journey, 2011).

India's MDG framework is based on the 2003 United Nations Development Goals guideline on concept, definition and methodology of MDG indicators. (India's MDG report, 2014). This framework recognizes 53 indicators (48 basic and 5 alternatives). All the 8 Millennium Development Goals, 12 of the 18 targets, namely 1 to target 11 and target 18 are relevant for India.

As a member of MDGs declaration India has been trying to fulfill the goals. To achieve the goal 3 or promote gender equality and empower women efforts are being made especially to finalize the draft of National Policy for Empower of Women and legislature reservation of not than one-

third seats for women in Lok Sabha and in state Legislative Assembly as to ensure sufficient representation of women in decision making.

According to World Bank (1991) investment in education needs to be expanded as to broaden the scope of their opportunities in increase their access to services. Opportunities come through levels of education. In order to have equal opportunities to get education there is need for gender specific programmes. It is necessary that the levels of education of women be raised and brought closer to those of men. The government of India has accepted this view and education of girls has become the main concern of the Government. The constitution amendment (eighty-six) Act, 2002 provided free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen as a fundamental right by the inserted Article 21-A constitution. Besides, India initiated a large number of development programmes/schemes and implemented under the five year plans. For example, National Programme for National Support to Primary Education (Mid-day Meal from 1995), Sarva Shiksha Avijan (2000-2001), National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (July 2003), Rashtrya Madhamic Shiksha Abhijan (2009), National Mission for Empowerment of Women. Sarva Shiksha Avijan included various provisions for girls, as such, free text books to all girls up to class VIII, separate toilets for the older girls, back to school camps for out of school girls, recruitment of 50% women teacher etc.

But coming to India's achievement in respect of the MDG, is a mixed bag. For some indicators India is fast, that is, it has already achieved the target level well ahead of the dead line and another indicators India is lagging behind by a huge margin. According to 'MDG India Country Report 2014' in primary education the Gender Parity Index has gone up from 0.73 in 1990-91 to 1.01 in 2010-11 showing 33 increase, in secondary education the increase from 0.60 in 1990-91 to 0.88 in 2010-11 thereby showing 47% increase, and in higher education, it is increased from 0.54 in 1990-91 to 1.86 in 2010-11 registering an increase of 59%. The data indicate that at the national level, the female-male gap in enrollment in education is gradually improving over the years and the transition level is a bright line. '71 round NSS data 2014 shows that within the age 5 and above 83.6 per cent male and 68.1 per cent female are literate while the literacy rate among the age group 7 and above are 83.2 per cent male against 67.1 per cent female. Besides, the ratio of adult (Age 15 and above) literate men to women is 79.5 per cent and 75.7 per cent.' As per the Census 2001 the literacy rate among females (15-24 year old) was 84 alongside 68 for males. The ratio of female literacy rate to male literacy rate for 15-14 years improved from 0.67 in 1991

to 0.80 in 2001 and stood at 0.88 in 2007-08. The ratio of female literacy rate to male literacy rate in the age group 15-14 years tends to exceed 1 very soon. The 68 round NSS data 2011-12 reveals that the percentage share of female in wage employment in non-agricultural sector as 19.3%. But India the number of women members in the Lok Sabha in terms of percentage of total number of members never crossed the figure, which is far below the average of around 15 percent in countries which have elected legislature.

Conclusion

The above discussion makes it clear that among the four indicators we have achieved two that is indicator 9 (Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education) and indicator 10 (Ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old). In these two indicators our target was 1.00. Now our position is 1.01 and 0.88 respectively. This is more or less satisfactory. But in the case of indicator 11 (Share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural sector) and 12 (Promotion of seats held by women in National Parliament) our position is far behind. In these area MDG target were 50% where our achievement are only 19.3% and 11.46 %. However, focuses on women education than to increase the share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural sector of various government policies/programmes and failure to pass the 'Women Reservation Bill' are the main obstacles to achieve the expected target of indicator 11 and 12.

Suggestions

- Problems must be identified through proper investigation about the failure of women empowerment where India has made little progress.
- Government programmes/schemes have to be continued to reach the particular target in which we stand far bellow from our goal.
- A consciousness must be made through campaign, lecture and seminar about the need of women participation in politics.
- All political parties have to be more active to give the opportunity of women in national level.
- New government schemes must be generated through which share of women wage employment in non-agricultural sector.

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