

Women In Indian Economy And Need For Gender Budgeting

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Abstract

Women have always been ignored and discriminated against. The effect of it is now being visible when every nation is running in the race of development and realizing how they have left a major portion of their population unskilled , uneducated and deprived of opportunities. Their development and upliftment is not only important for our economic progress but also for social progress. Women inclusive development will surely help India grow at a better place. Hence this paper examines the position of women in the Indian economy, their exclusion and the need for a gendered budget.

Introduction

“Empowering women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation, when women are empowered, a society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their value system leads to the development of a good family, society and ultimately a good nation”- DR.A.P.J.ABDUL KALAM.

Economic development is very important for any country. It helps in job creation, industry diversification, business retention and expansion, economic fortification and above all it improves the quality of life. For better economic growth it is important that every section of society should be able to contribute and benefit at the same time. In this paper , the focus is on the role played by women in the Indian economy. Women empowerment has several dimensions and economic participation is one of them. Whenever we talk about women , it does not necessarily have to be about their social condition but also about the progress they have made . In India women constitute almost 50 % of total population ,hence their contribution and involvement in the economy is crucial .

Women have always contributed in sustaining the economic condition of their families in tough times. When it comes to their role in the Indian economy , things become very complicated. They have to face societal prejudices and hindrances which limit their potential to contribute. They are excluded from taking advantage of economic development.

Women ignored in Indian economy

1975-1985 was declared by the United Nations as the decade of women by looking at the condition of women in India at that time. It was only then, the focus was shifted towards women and potential was being examined regarding their role in economy and overall development. Whenever we talk about women, we tend to revolve around issues such as domestic violence,child marriages,rape etc and in doing so we never consider the economic factor. All these factors obviously hinder the growth of an

individual but also curtail women from coming out in the world and making a place for themselves and being able to contribute to the economy.

Women are ignored because no separate mechanism was identified to engage them in economic activities. They not only face social exclusion but also structural exclusion. Though in recent times efforts are being taken to do away with such exclusionary policies, the effect of earlier policies since independence is huge. Several schemes and policies have been made so far, but were they really beneficial for women and did they have the access to avail such benefits, as the policies effectively implemented, these questions have no clear answers. Keeping in mind the women exclusion, gender budgeting was introduced in 2005 in India until then the planning commission concentrated on very limited notion of women's development that was confined to education, social welfare, and health. It was generally assumed that all other policies would benefit women indirectly.

In 1974 - Towards Equality report of Committee on the status of women in India, proved to be an important document to evaluate the scope of development through the optics of gender. It uncovers how state policy failed to live up to the constitutional provisions of equality in every field for man and woman.

The report clearly states the space of women in the Indian Economy.

1. In traditional village communities women played some role in production and marketing of products of agriculture and handicraft that too due to accessible markets.
2. It highlights how technological changes affected the employment of women since many of them were illiterate and could not acquire the new skills demanded by modern industry. Therefore it again slowed down their pace in economic participation. Even now that the literacy rate has reached up to 70 percent, they are forced to work in certain sectors only. Such as the education and services sector. Hence their contribution is not diversified.
3. The heterogeneous character of the Indian economy and the uneven rates of development have had varying degrees of impact on different segments of the labor force.

Overall the report concluded that economic participation of women indicates a decline both in percentage of workers to total female population and in their percentage to the total labor force after 1921. Agriculture continued to receive the burden of surplus labor force and participation of women showed a general stagnation in industry.

However the times have changed now since 1974 and here we are looking at a large participation of women in services sectors. But the only concern is that the participation is not diversified. They are limited to specific sectors and it is majorly the middle class urban women who are largely seen here.

In 2012 only 27 percent of women had a job. India's rapid urbanization has not yet encouraged more women to join the labor force. India ranks 120 among 131 countries in female labor force participation rates. India could boost its growth by 1.5 percentage points to 9 percent per year if around 50% of women could join the workforce.

Decreasing Female Labour Force

According to a PIB report the participation rate for women fell to 25 % in 2021 from 43% in 2005. This number is in contrast with rapid economic growth of the country on the other side. There are several reasons behind it. These reasons have persisted in our society for many decades now. Gender discrimination is one of the main reasons. There is a wage gap between men and women. there is a lack of skill based training. there is poor access to education and less work experience.

Other this various societal norms also leads in decreasing female labor force, such as

1. Marriages - some women leave their job and move to their in-laws house and never want to work again.
2. Connectivity- sometimes the working site is too far for a woman along with a bad transport facility . Therefore, keeping in mind the safety , a lot of women leave their jobs.

All these rural and urban factors lead to exclusion of women from the Indian economy. Therefore the need for gender budgeting has increased. It will work as a top-down approach. In improving the situation of women in the economic world.

Need for gender budgeting in India

Gender budgeting is all about advancing the decision making role of women, equity in distribution of resources between men and women. It helps in women empowerment, in doing so it makes our society a better place. It was first introduced in the 2001 union budget to address gender inequality in India. In India the gender budget is divided into 2 parts ,one consisting of policies where 100% allocation is only for women and the other part consists of pro-women schemes. In the last 10 years several such schemes have been launched. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Sukanya Samridhi Yojna, Ujjawala Yojna, Swachh Bharat Mission, Skill India are some of those schemes. These schemes have benefitted women in different ways. This will result in an increasing female labor force . Gender budgets not only focus on economic aspects but overall socio-cultural factors as well. It tends to make every possible step taken by the government, more gender inclusive.

Two missions that the Government of India has undertaken recently will help us understand gender budgeting in a better way:

1. Mission Shakti- 2022-2026

This mission has two sub-schemes- ‘Sambal’ and ‘Samarthya’. The former focuses on safety and security, the latter is concerned about empowerment of women. This scheme is a perfect blend of gendered budgeting and gender sensitive policy making. This mission is nothing but an umbrella under which comes all the small policies and initiatives that the government keeps on introducing from time to time. The good thing here is it supervises the whole funding process and keeps it in a mission mode. Under the Samarthya component, Gender Budgeting and monitoring schemes have been included under the Hub for Empowerment of women.

2. Skill India Mission-2014

It aims at giving adequate skill based training to people and help them in increasing their economic productivity. It is a very gender inclusive scheme. In order to increase the participation of women, conveyance costs and boarding and lodging facilities are being provided. There is 30% reservation for women in Industrial Training Institutes for promoting women participation.

It is important to understand the difference between gender responsive policy making and gender budgeting. The above mentioned policies are gender specific policies. India has a lot to do to bring a whole concept of gender budgeting into practice.

Here are some data showing gendered allocation of budget to various ministries in 2022-2023

MINISTRY	2020-2021 Actuals	2021-2022 Budget estimates	2021-2022 Revised estimates	2022-2023 Budget estimates
Dept. of agricultural research and Education	10.28 crores	13.25 crores	9 crores	8.44 crores
Dept. of higher education		20 crores	20 crores	20 crores
Ministry of Micro, small and Medium enterprises	5.14 crores	3.29 crores	4.21 crores
Ministry of minority affairs	6 crores	8 crores	2.50 crores	2.50 crores

MINISTRY	2020-2021 Actuals	2021-2022 Budget estimates	2021-2022 Revised estimates	2022-2023 Budget estimates
Ministry of Road transport and highway	139.33 crores	100 crores	33 crores	20 crores
Dept. of rural development	21150.45 crores	21438.80 crores	22234.36 crores	22027 crores
Ministry of skill development and Entrepreneurship	42 crores	42 crores	65.85 crores	65.85 crores
Ministry of women and child development	1543.03 crores	3310 crores	2369.34 crores	3343.85 crores

Source: general budget statement 13.

Above are some estimates of money being allocated to different ministries to promote gender equality in the economy. However there is still a persistent gender gap in India .

Only 15.6 % of female farmers are enrolled under PMFBY during 2020-2021. Around 25.1% of female beneficiaries under PM-KISAN. This was just an example to make us understand the disparity. Gender budgeting is not just about allocation of expenditure under specific schemes and ministries, but it is more about the implementation of allocated money. There has to be an assessment report and audit practices to make things more transparent and accountable.

For this we can take Sweden into consideration. An appendix to the Swedish budget bill is published each year, entitled economic equality between women and men, showing the distribution of economic resources between the sexes. It not only shows how gender inequalities between women and men are expressed in economic terms but also shows how the welfare system reduces the gender gap in earning.

There is a need to make gender budgets in India more strong and accountable. There has to be effective implementation of women related policies along with adequate funds. It should not be limited to rural development , women and child development, education and health development. It needs to expand the area beyond these fields.

If a proper track from fund allocation till its expenditure and implementation is done ,then gender budgets will prove to be a powerful tool for removing inequalities.

Gender Budgeting In Other Nations

Equality is something that is valued everywhere. The whole concept of gender budgeting revolves around this very notion of equality. Through this the government addresses gender related matters in its policies and schemes. It is basically a targeted intervention. Hence it is very much prevalent worldwide.

Gender budgeting ,especially in OECD countries, is a recent phenomenon. The western countries have always been more patriarchal .They gave voting rights to women much later though they were developed and free countries.they were much ahead of us. This discrimination was also seen in policy making. Now they have realized how their policy making mechanism has structurally abs systematically left women behind. The gender disparities have not changed drastically. Therefore in order to correct their mistakes and by looking at the fast growing world these countries started giving more emphasis to gender budgeting. They have taken a top bottom approach. By making the policies from a gendered perspective they want to curb the gap in outcomes and improve the participation of women in the economy. The developed countries identify perceived inequalities as one of the reasons for introducing gender budgeting. Another prominent reason is the aspect of gender mainstreaming. Out of 34 OECD countries only 15 have adopted the mechanism of gender budgeting excluding the USA. On the other hand, countries that have introduced gender budgeting are yet to see the proper effect of it in curbing the inequalities. There is a lot more to give in and improve. Hence the success or the failure of this concept is yet to be determined.

In OECD countries, there appears to be three broad categories of gender budgeting system:

1. Gender informed resource allocation
2. Gender assessed budget
3. Need based gender budgeting

The impact of gender budgeting is seen in few of these countries. For example, in Mexico, gender budgeting has resulted in special attention being given to diseases affecting women .

Similarly, in Japan, increased focus on gender policies has led to measures to reduce maternity harassment in the workplace. An example from outside the OECD is provided by Brazil, where gender budgeting has resulted in a comprehensive care programme related to women's health.

India has majorly 2 things to learn from gender budgeting in other nation:

1. India can inculcate a proper process of gender budgeting wherein there are stages and classification based on inputs , resource allocation and output audit.
2. Another thing that we can learn is about the audit system. There has to be a proper mechanism for assessment of the money that has been allotted . The implementation also has to be assessed for future reference. There should be fair, just and efficient distribution of public resources for the all-round development of women.
3. ministries should design their budget keeping in mind the gender based needs. Then the money that is allocated should be used in the best way possible . Only then will a substantial change be seen. For example, the ministry of health can not only make gender specific schemes but can also keep a certain amount of money specifically for the female section of society and work toward their health specifically . Women's disease should be identified and then target based steps should be taken. For example recently the government has launched the HPV vaccine in a universal immunization programme.it will help in eradicating cervical cancer. Thus more and more such gender empowering steps need to be taken.

Recommendation

Right to education was introduced to India in 2009.It states that free and compulsory education should be provided to children aged between 6-14. Average female literacy rate in India is 62.3% while the male literacy rate is 80%. Providing education till the age of 14 will not be fruitful enough to make women able to contribute to the economy. The age limit should be increased to 18. This act has not been implemented efficiently, it has made education compulsory for girls only on papers. The ground reality is totally different. Girls drop out of school due to several social factors and then never return back. Hence it is the need to make education compulsory for girls in India. Schemes of distributing laptops, scooters and cycles have been adopted but failed to give them a vision for future endeavors.While government is focusing on digital education, the number of female dropouts in primary and secondary education is 1.2% and 16.3% respectively. Thus special career classes should be introduced for girls.

- A. Some countries have moved to adopt program- or results-based budgeting, where rather than just focusing on the inputs (or cost of inputs), governments focus on the outputs and

outcomes of the budget process. Ukraine and Rwanda provide good examples, where governments are integrating gender budgeting into a program-based budgeting. In Ukraine 15 programs from health, education, sports, social policies analyzed for their impacts to gender equality. In India as well we can implement such programs, for instance in education, by making a program of increasing the number of seats for women and then align the spending.

- B. Gender budgeting as a whole and a number of country efforts have benefited from the work of nongovernmental organizations in analyzing and reporting on gender-oriented issues. In the United Kingdom and Canada, although these countries have never adopted a specific gender budgeting initiative, nongovernmental entities have produced compelling analysis on the gender differentiated impact of fiscal measures and applied meaningful pressure on governments to deliver on gender-oriented commitments through budget. In India, the Ministry of Women and Child Development should collaborate with those NGOs that specifically deal in resolving the issues of women in India and then make the policies.
- C. Providing tax benefits to women- less than 21 percent of women are in the MSME sector in India. To help women entrepreneurs, the government should provide tax relaxation or incubation. We can make a National Agency for Women Startup Activities and Services, which will act as the central women's entrepreneurship network by promoting and directing women entrepreneurs to national and state level support programmes. This agency has been operating in Germany since 2004. Other than this we can also provide entrepreneurship education to girls and women in schools and colleges. Tax relaxation is important to reduce the gender income gap. There are some countries where income tax includes specific measures to support women. For example, in Spain there are specific tax credits aimed at working women with children.
- D. In Malta, there is a policy which enables women to reconcile their work and family responsibilities. Measures such as parental leave, career breaks for parents, reduced working hours and responsibility breaks for carers of children and the elderly, have been adopted. Similar steps should be taken in India so that women can work more comfortably and contribute to the economy in the best way possible.
- E. Home makers are also important contributors in our economy. It is through their assistance that other family members are able to efficiently handle their work life. Therefore measures should be taken to make their life easy. For example, UJJWALA yojana made the kitchen smoke free. Many more such schemes are required to enhance their productivity.

Conclusion

There is a need to change the approach from seeing women as a vulnerable section of society to seeing them as a potential asset for economic development of a country. It is only then we will be able to bring more positive changes. India so far has done a good job but as we head towards becoming a developed nation, it becomes essential to improve women's participation in the economy. Gender budgeting will prove to be a powerful tool to meet this end. There is a need for properly assessing the gender budgeting practices abroad and involve that in the Indian budgeting system. Presence of women in the Indian economy has to be improved as they form 50% of our population. Though India adopted the concept of gender budgeting in 2005, we still have a lot to do to ensure the benefits of it. Gender budgeting should be done not only at central level but also at state level and rural /urban local bodies. Gender budgeting will ensure gender equality, gender justice, and help in bringing efficiency and equality in the economic system.

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