

A Study of Gender Equality in North West Region of India with Special Reference to Sustainable Development Goals 2030

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Abstract: Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary institution for a peaceful, comfortable and sustainable earth. The aim of the present study is to analyze the gender equality performance of North West Region of India with special reference to SDGs 2030. The study concludes that the participation of women in the labour force and the state leadership, in all the states of North West Region of India is drastically low. In the sex ratio, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir are much ahead of states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi. In usage of modern methods of family planning by females Punjab and Chandigarh are the front runners. In parity of wages paid to male and female Delhi and Haryana are the front runners. However, in domestic violence against women both these states are the worst performers among the North West regional states.

Keywords:- Gender Equality, North West Region, Sex Ratio, Comparison of Average Wages, Spousal Violence, Women Political Participation, Ratio of Female Labour Force Participation, Family Planning, Government of India efforts

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I. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary institution for a peaceful, comfortable and sustainable earth. There is no doubt about the fact that empowering women and girls is an important catalyst to socio economic growth and evolution of any society. But it is highly disappointing that still gender-based discrimination is prevalent in many nations round the globe. Sexual violence and exploitation, unequal opportunities, unpaid domestic work, and low level of respect, all remain huge barriers in the way of women's development. As per United Nation Report, at the current time, 1 in 5 women and girls between the ages of 15-49 have reported experiencing physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner and as many as 49 countries of the world currently have no laws protecting women from domestic violence (UNDP 2019). The eradication of harmful practices targeted at women through a strong legal framework is direly needed. To achieve greater gender equality, it is necessary to give women equal rights to land, property, sexual and reproductive wellness, technology and social media, and the same time to facilitate and encourage more political participation and leadership by women (UNICEF 2019). Most of the countries of the world which aim for a sustainable future are striving hard to achieve the goal of gender equality and to end all sorts of discrimination against women and girls.

The fact is quite disturbing that in India women and girls are not only experiencing inequalities in access to health care, education, nutrition, utilization and asset ownership, but also are living in an environment full of violence and discrimination. Though following the sustainable development goals (SDGs) laid by the United Nations India is also trying to empower women to live dignified lives, contributing as equal collaborators in the maturation and development of the nation. India's commitment towards undertaking reforms to guarantee gender equality is reflected in number of statute laws which are ordained to ensure equal opportunities and self-respect for women. Many state level and national level programs and policies have been established to attain the target laid by UNDP (SDG India Index, 2018) but the achievement in this direction is going on snail's pace.

Objective of Paper and Study Area:-The aim of the present study is to analyze the gender equality performance of North West Region of India with special reference to SDGs 2030. North West of India is a cross section area which can be representative of whole India because it includes heterogeneous states; the prosperous agrarian states Punjab, Haryana, their capital Chandigarh; hill states Himachal Pradesh, Jammu Kashmir; the country's capital Delhi and the neighboring state Rajasthan.

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Methodology: - The data base of the study has been extracted from SDG India Index Baseline Report, 2018, published by ‘Niti Aayog’, Government of India. The study makes a comparative overview of performance of North West Regional states/UT of India with regard to six indicators which measure gender equality.

Analysis of Six Indicators to Measure Gender Equality in North West Region

To measure India’s performance towards gender Equality, six indicators have been identified

First Indicator- Sex Ratio : The sex composition which is measured in terms of sex ratio at birth is considered as one of the significant demographic social indicator for measuring the status of male and female in society. In India, the sex ratio is calculated in terms of the number of females per thousand males (Dey, 2015). It is a broad indicator which reveals the ground realities that exist in Indian society. In India, the sex ratio is highly skewed in terms of males due to a host of factors such as early marriage, age of mother at birth, sex selective abortion, infanticide, infant mortality, maternal mortality, health hazards of women, migration and strong wish for male child (ibid). The explanatory note of SDG index in India sets the target of sex ratio at 954. But at present, the sex ratio at birth is 898 females per 1000 males. It is also found that only two States, namely Chhattisgarh and Kerala are above the target with a sex ratio at birth of 963 and 959 respectively (SDG India Index, 2018).

Table 1: Performance of Sex Ratio at Birth (Female per 1000 Male) in North West Region of India

Source: Compiled by Authors from SDG India Baseline Report 2018, Niti Aayog

State/UT	Sex Ratio at Birth (female per 1000 Male)	Index Score	Status*
Punjab	893	50	Performer
Haryana	832	0	Aspirant
Himachal Pradesh	917	70	Front Runner
Jammu Kashmir	906	61	Performer
Rajasthan	857	20	Aspirant
Delhi	857	20	Aspirant
Chandigarh	Null	Null	Null

Note: *Achiever 100, Front Runner 65-99, and Performer 50-64, Aspirant 0-49

Regarding North West region, Table 1 shows that Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir have performed well in attaining this target with a sex ratio at birth of 917 and 906 respectively. However, it is as low as 857 in case of Delhi, Rajasthan and 832 in Haryana. It is evident from the table that Punjab falls in performers category with sex ratio as 893.

Second Indicator- Salary Parity: The equality of average wages and salaries of females with males is also indicative of the gender parity. But women get just 70 per cent of remuneration for the same work as compared to their counterpart in India, although the national goal is to achieve equal pay for men and women. Only the UTs of Dadra and Nagar Haveli the female wage rate is higher than that of males and in Andaman and Nicobar islands the female wage rate is equal to that of males (SDG India Index, 2018).

Table 2: Comparison of Average Wages and Salaries of Females with Males

State/UT	Average female to Male ratio of average wages/salaries received per day by regular wage/salaried employees of age 15-59 for rural and Urban	Index Score	Status*
Punjab	0.83	67	Front Runner
Haryana	0.84	70	Front Runner
Himachal Pradesh	0.65	33	Aspirant
Jammu Kashmir	0.73	49	Performer
Rajasthan	0.77	56	Performer
Delhi	0.97	93	Front Runner
Chandigarh	0.88	77	Front Runner

Source: Compiled by Authors from SDG India Baseline Report 2018, Niti Aayog

Note: *Achiever 100, Front Runner 65-99, Performer 50-64, Aspirant 0-49

Table 2 reflects that in North West region, UTs Delhi and Chandigarh are performing well in this indicator with percentage as high as 97 and 88 respectively in comparison to Punjab (83 percent), Haryana (84 percent), Himachal Pradesh (65 percent), J& K (73 percent) and Rajasthan (77 percent). Four states/ UT Delhi, Chandigarh, Haryana and Punjab are the front runners in this category.

Third Indicator- Domestic Violence: To achieve gender equality, need is to totally minimize the percentage of ever married women who have ever experienced spousal violence. India's index score in this indicator is 33.3 that mean one in every three ever-married adult female between 15 to 49 years experience physical, sexual or emotional pattern of spousal violence (SDG India Index, 2018).

Table 3: Percentage of Ever Married Women Aged 15-49 who have Ever Experienced Spousal Violence

States / UTs	Percentage of ever married women aged 15-49 who have ever experienced spousal violence	Index Score	Status*
Punjab	21.20	61	Performer
Haryana	34.30	37	Aspirant
Himachal Pradesh	7.00	87	Front Runner
Jammu Kashmir	13.90	75	Front Runner
Rajasthan	26.40	52	Performer
Delhi	29.60	46	Aspirant
Chandigarh	22.50	59	Performer

Source: Compiled by Authors from SDG India Baseline Report 2018, Niti Aayog

Note: *Achiever 100, Front Runner 65-99, Performer 50-64 Aspirant 0-49

As far as North West region is concerned, Table 3 shows that in, Himachal Pradesh (7.00) and J & K (13.90) least percentage of women have experienced spousal violence. But in Rajasthan (26.40), Punjab (21.20), Haryana (34.30), Delhi (29.60) and Chandigarh (22.50) percent of women are victims of domestic violence. The table strikes a very important fact that there are very few cases of spousal violence in the States of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir which reflects the progressive approach of this hill states towards women unlike other so called developed, urbanized and modernized states of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Chandigarh. The more surprising fact is that these states are at the bottom of the list.

Fourth Indicator-Women Leadership: The percentage of seats won by women in the general elections of state legislative assembly is another indicator which reflects on status of gender parity. This indicator is important as it is generally believed that the full and equitable participation of women in public life is essential in building and sustaining strong and vibrant democracies (Pepera, 2018). But, rhetoric is different from reality as percentage of women's leadership stands only at 8.7 percent of seats in the State Legislative Assemblies, though the national target is that 50 percent of the seats should be held by men and women each. No state/UT has achieved this target yet in India. Amongst all the legislative assemblies in the country, only Rajasthan and West Bengal have 14 percent and 13.95 percent women members respectively, which are ironically the highest representation of women in India (SDG India Index, 2018).

Table 4: Comparison of Seats won by Women in the General Elections and State Legislative Assembly

States / UTs	Percentage of seats won by Women in the General Elections to state legislative assembly	Index Score	Status*
Punjab	5.13	10	Aspirant
Haryana	10.00	20	Aspirant
Himachal Pradesh	4.41	9	Aspirant
Jammu Kashmir	2.30	5	Aspirant
Rajasthan	14.00	28	Aspirant
Delhi	8.57	17	Aspirant
Chandigarh	Null	Null	Null

Source: Compiled by Authors from SDG India Baseline Report 2018, Niti Aayog

Note: *Achiever 100, Front Runner 65-99, Performer 50-64, Aspirant 0-49

Cited table shows that in North West region, no state or UT finds place in the list of front runner or performer. All States/UTs of North West region are in the aspirant list and this shows the low political participation of women. Rajasthan and Haryana have 14 percent and 10 percent women members respectively in legislative assembly which is the highest representation of women as compared to Punjab (5.13), J& K (2.30), Himachal Pradesh (4.41), Delhi (8.57).

Fifth Indicator- Female Participation in Work Force: The equal participation of female in the work force is the manifestation of gender equality. The women’s participation in Labour Force can fuel household income and economic growth and help offset declining prime-age male labor force participation. Unfortunately, labour force participation rate of women in India is only 32 percent than the labour force participation rate of men though the national target for 2030 is to have equal labour force participation rate for both women and men (SDG India Index, 2018). It brings out that in India, no State has achieved this mark yet (SDG India Index, 2018).

Table 5: Comparison of Female Labour Force Participation Rate to Male Labour Force Participation Rate

States / UTs	Ratio of Female Labour Force Participation rate to Male Labour Force Participation rate	Index Score	Status*
Punjab	0.16	3	Aspirant
Haryana	0.21	9	Aspirant
Himachal Pradesh	0.24	12	Aspirant
Jammu Kashmir	0.16	3	Aspirant
Rajasthan	0.29	18	Aspirant
Delhi	0.18	6	Aspirant
Chandigarh	0.13	0	Aspirant

Source: Compiled by Authors from SDG India Baseline Report 2018, Niti Aayog

Note: *Achiever 100, Front Runner 65-99, Performer 50-64, Aspirant 0-49

Table 5 indicates all the states and UTs of North West Region are in the class of aspirants with low labour force participation rate of women - Punjab (16 percent), Haryana (21percent), Himachal Pradesh (24 percent), J & K (16 percent), Rajasthan (29 percent), Delhi (18 percent) and Chandigarh (13 percent). This would imply that most of the women in India are running the house and taking care of children.

Sixth Indicator –Adoption of Family Planning Methods: Family planning is the adoption of means and methods that allow individuals to decide if and when to have children. The percentage of women in the age group of 15-49 years who are using modern methods of family planning is an important indicator of gender equality. This indicator is important because it highlights the significance of choice making by the women. (Garg and Singh 2014; Lomborg 2015). Findings reveal that in India, almost half of currently married women aged between 15-49 years are using modern methods of family planning. Female sterilization is the most popular contraceptive method among women (SDG India Index, 2018).

Table 6: Comparison of Percentage of Women (Age 15-49) who are using Modern Methods of Family Planning

States / UTs	Percentage of Women in the Age Group of 15-49 Years using Modern Methods of Family Planning	Index Score	Score*
Punjab	75.80	68	Front Runner
Haryana	63.70	52	Performer
Himachal Pradesh	57.00	44	Aspirant
Jammu Kashmir	57.30	44	Aspirant
Rajasthan	59.70	47	Aspirant
Delhi	53.00	38	Aspirant
Chandigarh	74.00	66	Front Runner

Source: Compiled by Authors from SDG India Baseline Report 2018, Niti Aayog

Note: *Achiever 100, Front Runner 65-99, Performer 50-64, Aspirant 0-49

Table 6 highlights that among the North West region Punjab and Chandigarh are the best performers in the use of modern family planning methods. In Punjab and Chandigarh, 75.80 percent and 74 percent women are using

modern methods of family planning respectively as compared to Himachal Pradesh (57 percent), Jammu and Kashmir (57.30 percent), Rajasthan (59.70 percent) and Delhi (53 percent). It means that Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan and Delhi are in the category of aspirants and their index score is less than 49. Haryana state is found in the list of performers where 63.70 percent of women are using modern family methods.

Efforts of Government of India to maintain Gender Equality

India is committed, both constitutionally and through its policies, to achieve gender equality in all spheres of life. The State will not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (I))³. This reiterated India's commitment towards social and economic well being of India's women in every sphere. So, Indian government time to time has launched several programs and schemes for the betterment of women. A few of them has mentioned as under:-

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:** It is a tri-ministerial effort of the Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development to address the declining Child Sex Ratio and related issues of women.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana:** This scheme is providing cash incentives for improved health and nutrition to pregnant and nursing mothers.
- **Scheme for Adolescent Girls (for age group 11-14):** The aim of this scheme is to empower and improve social status of girls through nutrition, life skills, home skills and vocational training.
- **National Nutrition Mission:** aims to improve the nutritional status of pregnant women, lactating mothers and anemic women along with children.
- **Rastriya Mahila Kosh:** uplifts the socio-economic status of poor women by providing them micro-finance services.
- **Mahila e-Haat:** is an online digital marketing platform for women entrepreneurs/ NGOs /SHGs.
- **Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra** has been launched to empower the rural women through community participation.
- **Training for Elected Women Representatives of Panchayati Raj** is to empower women in leadership.
- **One Stop Centres** like police, medical, legal, psychological support and temporary shelter have been established for facilitating access to an integrated range of services for women who are affected by violence.
- **Women Helpline:** uniform code 181 has been set up across the country to provide women with a 24x7 service. This Helpline is providing 24 hour emergency response to women affected by violence, and also provided counseling through phone and awareness about government schemes.
- **Mahila Police Volunteers:** To facilitate women in distress and to provide a link between police and community, Centre Government has started the engagement of Mahila Police Volunteers in States/UTs.

Source:-Ministry of Women and Child Development, Schemes for achieving gender Equality and Emancipation of Rural Women, retrieved from <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=178437>

Way Forward or Suggestions

To promote gender equality, in India 11 rights have been given to women that should be known by every Indian woman. Women have the right to equal pay, right to dignity and decency, right against workplace harassment, right against domestic violence. The sexual assault female victims have the right to keep their identity anonymous, the right to get free legal aid, right not to be arrested at night, the right to register virtual complaints (via e-mail, or writing her complaint and sending it to a police station from a registered postal address), the right against indecent representation, the right against being stalked, a right to Zero FIR (to lodge complain in any police station) (India Today 2016).

However, the road reaching the gender equality is too long for India. Major step towards gender equality in India is the passing of bill after 1993 amendment of the Indian Constitution, by way of which 1/3 rd of the elected seats to the local governing bodies has been reserved for women. The passing of the Pre-natal Diagnostic Tech Act in 1994 also proved an important step in removing gender discrimination in Indian society but still in the past decade, crimes against women show an upward trend, in particular brutal crimes such as

³ Important Constitutional and legal provisions for Women in India, retrieved from http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/reports_and_publication/cso_social_stactices_division/Constitutional&Legal_Rights.pdf

rapes, dowry deaths, and honour killings (Mondal, 2018). A study by Leach (2016) presents the views of some scholars⁴ regarding achieving the goal of gender equality are quite relevant in Indian context.

- Purpose of gender equality will be fulfilled only if every woman and girl is included in global and national decision making and for this talking to women and girls can be a good solution.
- Women and girls should have freedom to access mobile phones and other technologies.
- Stopping child marriage and sexual harassment can improve the condition of women in society to a good extent.
- Aya Kibesaki who is a senior education specialist suggests that improvement in gender sensitivity of the education system can promote gender equality.
- Similarly, it is also suggested that efforts should be made for raising the aspirations of girls and their parents, empowering mothers, increasing political participation, giving proper value to women's work, encouraging women into non-traditional vocations. The female friendly work places and violence free environment can improve the condition of women and promote gender equality. Only then India can achieve its sustainable development goal 2030.

II. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that in participation of women in the labour force and the state leadership, all the states of North West Region of India have performed drastically low. None of the state/UT of North West region finds place in the list of front runners or performers as far as the participation of women in state leadership is concerned. Similarly, in the sex ratio, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi have performed well in attaining the national target but it is as low as 893 in Punjab and 832 in Haryana. It is noticed that a little or no desired results have been attained in some states to maintain sex ratio. In usage of modern methods of family planning by females Punjab and Chandigarh are the front runners and other four are in the list of aspirants. It depicts that most of the females have less access to family planning means due to various reasons e.g. social barriers, opposition by partners, families or communities, lack of knowledge, poverty and lack of education etc. In parity of wages paid to male and female Delhi and Haryana are the front runners. However, in domestic violence against women both these states are the worst performers among the North West regional states.

In the end it can be said that all there is a dire need of new gender inclusive policies and approaches which can challenge the gender stereotypes and norms. For the purpose of sustainable development gender equality goal must be followed in proactive and planned manner.

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⁴ Patricia T Morris; Gayatri Buragoha in;Christine Hunte; Christine Hunter; Mandana Hendessi; Asif Saleh; Nijdeka Harry; Barbara Rodriguez

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