

Women Empowerment Through Girl Education

Jampa Venkata¹ and Rama Chandra Rao²

Abstract: Empowerment of women would mean 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 developmental activities. The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision making. Education will be the only factor which would play the most crucial role in empowering women. This paper aims to 1) To know the girl education in India 2) To know the current position girl education in India. 3) To find out the barriers of girl education in India. 4) To give necessary steps to encourage the girl education in India

Keywords: *Empowerment, Empowerment of Women, Gender Sensitization Economic Empowerment.*

1. INTRODUCTION

“...there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.” -- Kofi Annan

Empowerment of women would mean 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 developmental activities. The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision making. Education will be the only factor which would play the most crucial role in empowering women.

The questions surrounding women’s empowerment, the condition and position of women have now become critical to the human rights based approaches to development. The Cairo conference in 1994 organized by UN on Population and Development called attention to women’s empowerment as a central focus and UNDP developed the Gender Empowerment measure (GEM) which focuses on the three variables that reflect women’s participation in society – political power or decision-making, education and health.

India is a signatory to a number of International Instruments such as UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, with its two Optional Protocols, and Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), thereby affirming its commitment to the growth and development of women and children. It also accepted without reservation the international commitments of the ‘World fit for Children’ adopted by the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children in 2002, and the Beijing Platform for Action for the advancement of women and girls adopted by the World Conference on Women in 1995.

Beijing conference 1995 had identified certain quantitative and qualitative indicators of

Women empowerment which are as follows:

2. QUALITATIVE

1. Increase in self-esteem, individual and collective confidence;
2. Increase in articulation, knowledge and awareness on health, nutrition reproductive Rights, law and literacy;
3. Increase a decrease in personal leisure time and time for child care;
4. Increase on decrease of work loads in new programmes;
5. Change in roles and responsibility in family & community;
6. Visible increase on decrease in violence on women and girls;
7. Responses to changes in social customs like child marriage, dowry, and discrimination against widows;
8. Visible changes in women's participation level attending meeting, participating and demanding participation;
9. Increase in bargaining and negotiating power at home, in community and the Collective;
10. Increase access to and ability to gather information;
11. Formation of women collectives;
12. Positive changes in social attitudes;
13. Awareness and recognition of women's economic contribution within and outside the Household;
14. Women's decision-making over her work and income.

However, inadequate impact of programming investment and achievement in overall development of the child, and the adverse influence of negative social attitudes towards women and girls have left girl children in India disadvantaged. Their survival, development, security and well-being as citizens of India, and their participation as members of society are thus officially recognized as a matter of serious national concern. Working Group on Development of Children for the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012)- A Report 4th Girl child's status is dramatically profiled in female to male sex ratios of younger age groups in the population. The 1991 Census of India highlighted a serious and worsening decline in the sex ratio in the 0-6 age group, reflecting the rising prevention of female births, and the incidence of female infanticide and deliberate neglect of girl children's health, nutrition and safety. The 2001 Census revealed a further decline in the 0-6 age group and an even lower female-male ratio in the 15 to 19 age group.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To know the girl education in India

2. To know the current position of girl education in India.
3. To find out the barriers of girl education in India.
4. To give necessary steps to encourage the girl education in India

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The information has been collected from secondary sources like Journals, Government Reports and books and Internet

5. SCHOOLING AND GIRL CHILD

Education of girls has been a high priority with the Government of India. The National commitment to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the 6- 14 years age group is now a Fundamental Right of every child in India after the passing of the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act in December, 2002. Reaching out to the girl child is central to the efforts to universalize elementary education. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, or 'Education for All' programme recognizes that ensuring girl's education requires changes not only in the education system but also in social norms and attitudes. A two-pronged gender strategy has therefore been adopted, to make the education system responsive to the needs of the girls through targeted interventions which serve as a pull factor to enhance access and retention of girls in schools and on the other hand to generate a community demand for girl education through training and mobilization.

Efforts are being made to generate a community demand for girls' education and enabling conditions for people's and women's participation, to create the push factors necessary to guarantee girls education. Motivation and mobilization of parents and the community at large, enhancing the role of women and mothers in school related activities and participation in school committees, and strengthening the linkages between the school, teachers and communities are some of the ways in which the enabling conditions are being created.

6. THE CURRENT POSITION OF GIRL EDUCATION IN INDIA

The Indian government has expressed a strong commitment towards education for all; however, India still has one of the lowest female literacy rates in Asia. In 1991, less than 40 percent of the 330 million women aged 7 and over were literate, which means today there are over 200 million illiterate women in India.

Present condition of Female Literacy

Name of the state	Female Literacy (%)
Kerala	92.0
Mizoram	89.4
Lakshadweep	88.2
Tripura	83.1

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Andaman & Nicobar Islands	81.8
Chandigarh	81.4
Pondicherry	81.2
Delhi	80.9
Daman & Diu	79.6
Maharashtra	75.5
West Bengal	71.2
Gujarat	70.7
Assam	67.3
Haryana	66.8
Orissa	64.4
Madhya Pradesh	60.0
Bihar	53.3
Rajasthan	52.7

In India the highest Female Literacy having state is Kerala (92.0%) and whole India having Female Literacy of 65.46%

The enrollment figures in schools, for girls are comparatively lower than those for that of boys indicating that many girls do not get enrolled in schools. Thirty four percent of girls drop out before they complete Class 5. One of the major reasons why so many girls do not attend school is because of their workload, both within and outside the household. Daughters are often kept at home to help the family because the social and economic values of educating girls are not recognized. It is a little known fact that among the world's exploited child workers, girls outnumber boys. Without access to education, girls are denied the knowledge and skills needed to advance their status. Thus for a girl child, life is a constant fight for survival, growth and development from the time she is conceived till she attains 18 years.

7. BARRIERS OF GIRL EDUCATION

1. There are several reasons for the low levels of literacy among girls in India, not the least of which is the high level of poverty. one-fourth of India's population lives below the poverty line
2. Engaging girls in domestic job is another major barrier to the progress of women's education.
3. Another barrier to education in India is the lack of adequate school facilities. Many states simply do not have enough classrooms to accommodate all of the school age children.
4. Lack of female teachers is another potential barrier to girl's education. Shortage

of female teachers: 29 percent at the primary level and 22 percent at the university level. Girls are more likely to attend school and have higher academic achievement if they have female teachers. This is particularly true highly gender, segregated societies such as India.

5. Social values and parental preferences are causes the high dropout rates and low literacy. Even today some of the families believe that no education is required for women and they need not do jobs like men. They still believe that women are meant only for home making rather job seeking or other activities liken men.
6. It is a fact that many girl students felt insecure while attending school and colleges. Occurrence of cases of abduction, rape-and molestation of girls often dampen the enthusiasm of girls pursuing education beyond a certain age, when their parents bind them to homes.

8. NECESSARY STEPS TO ENCOURAGE GIRL EDUCATION

The need to encourage all girls to enroll in school and to retain them in the school system is imperative as education not only improves the worth and self esteem of the girl child but also enables her to become an economically productive woman and delays her marriage age. Community Vigilance Committees should be formed at village level and the members should ensure that every girl in the village is enrolled and regularly goes to school. Mid- day meals should be made compulsory for girls irrespective of the stage of their school education. This has a two-fold effect- on the one hand it encourages the child to remain in school and secondly it provides the girl with a nourishing meal.

There are a number of logistic constraints, which restrict girls from attending schools, especially after they have crossed the primary stage. These include distance from school and lack of girl friendly facilities in school buildings. Efforts should be made to enroll and retain girls in school by reducing distance of school from home as far as possible. There is need to provide safe transport to girls who have to travel considerable distances. In this context, the proposed Conditional Transfer scheme, can examine the possibility of providing bicycles to girls for travelling to school (as a non cash transfers) to young girls(at elementary and secondary school levels) so that they need not depend on irregular public transport services.

Also, if there are no elementary schools or secondary schools in the vicinity, Dept of Education may undertake alternative schooling system (like National Programme for Education of Girls for Elementary Education) which can take care of their schooling needs till such time an elementary school is made available. More residential schools (on the lines of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya) and hostels should be provided for girls (especially adolescents) to facilitate their continuation in education.

An important reason for girls dropping out of school is the lack of proper toilet and sanitary facilities. High priority is therefore needed to be accorded to providing separate girls' toilet with proper water and sanitation facilities. Efforts through Department of Education should be made to increase the number of female teachers at all levels so as to encourage girl child to continue in school in a safer environment. Further, Bridge schools with quality education package should be provided to girl children, especially street children, child laborers, seasonal migrants, who may have not been in formal edu-

cation system. These bridge schools should ultimately lead to their integration in the formal system.

As girl children are pressed into home based duties especially sibling care, the number of ICDS and AWCs in remote areas should be increased to relieve young girl children of their sibling care duties and help in reducing drop out rates. Provision of adequate number of crèches in urban and rural areas also facilitates girl children to attend school without the burden of sibling care. Also, it is important that Day-care center / Crèches for the girl children themselves be made available after school hours for their safety when their parents are at work.

Pre school education is a very important input not only for 0-6 years old but also for the older children as it serves as the motivating factor for the girl child to enroll in school. For this purpose, Training of Anganwadi workers and regular teachers at pre-school levels as well in regular school is required. Special training also needs to be given for early detection of mental disability among girl children and appropriate interventions that are needed to address their educational requirements. Additionally, parents and families of such children should be educated and provided with coping mechanisms to enable them to take care and support the girl child. Special incentive/ scholarships and recognition should be provided to motivate girls and help them to continue their education, especially those who succeed in education extra-curricular activities etc.

The proposed Conditional Transfer Scheme has a separate Cash and non cash transfer component to induce enrolment of girls in school and subsequently for their retention at different stages - primary, elementary and secondary.

8.1. Gender Sensitization of Educational System

Engendering educational system involves not just establishing girl friendly schools but also creating gender awareness in the educational system so that the entire educational environment is sensitive to the special needs of girls.

For this purpose the MWCD should work in close collaboration with Department of Education and ancillary bodies to ensure that the curricula and syllabi are gender sensitive. Positive images of girls need to be reflected in textbooks and special modules formulated which reinforce the economic and social empowerment of women. Such inputs in the curricula will help in improving the status of girls and their self esteem. It will also give them the necessary encouragement to improve their economic and social status. Apart from this, special modules on social problems facing the society and specially girls should be included in the syllabi so that these issues are openly and freely discussed and awareness and knowledge gets disseminated. Such issues may include personal hygiene, early marriage and pregnancy, prevention against abuse, exploitation and violence, HIV/AIDS, modules to enlighten them on the benefits of education, health, hygiene and nutrition, economic empowerment etc. The Ministry should also empower adolescent girls through “Balika Sanghas” to discuss these issues in their peer groups.

Gender Sensitization and gender awareness programmes should be organized and conducted for teachers, PRIs especially in rural areas on the rights of the girl child, social problems faced by them and to provide counselling or help if required.

9. CONCLUSION

Whether education is viewed as an asset in raising earning capacity, as a gateway to knowledge and information, or as a spur to inculcate values of concern for social transformation and establishment of gender justice for women education is a primary necessity. Elementary education empowers women by providing information and confidence, while higher education emboldens them so that they are confident about entering any field or profession not previously open to women. However, access to education does not depend upon will but on availability of educational institutions, familial support and quality of education. The future trend seems to be that while there will be a growing demand for girl's education, the high cost of living will force families to turn their daughters towards short-term courses or correspondence courses which in the long run may deprive the girl of vital interaction available in educational institutions. It seems that the strategy of lowering the cost of girl's education will have to be given serious thought so that girls may not be the victims of gender discrimination. It is indeed a sad situation when a mother would like her daughter to go to school/college but is unable to send her because the child must help in the housework. In the 19th century, we pleaded for the education of women to make her a better partner for her husband; in the last century, education was for her empowerment, and today we are pleading for her right to education as a citizen.

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¹Jampa Venkata Rama Chandra Rao, Lecturer in Education, Hindi Pracharak Training College, D.B.H.P Sabha, Vijayawada, Email: psychologist.jvr@gmail.com,
Mobile No: 9440150762.

Address for communication: Door No: 1-728 A /10B, Bapanaiah Nagar, Mangalagiri-522 503, Guntur Dist., Andhra Pradesh