

## **GENDER EQUALITY AND TELANGANA WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES IN LINE WITH GLOBAL SDGS**

**Dr. T. Rachel Shalini** Assistant Professor & Dean of Business Management Loyola Academy – Old Alwal, Telangana, India,

### **Abstract:**

*This research paper conceptualizes Women Empowerment as a framework for meeting goal 5 (gender equality) of the 17 sustainable development goals of 2030 agenda for 'Sustainable Development adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015'. Women empowerment as part of gender equality has become the most prominent issue because gender inequality and its socio-economic and cultural dimensions are all prevalent across the world. It has been noted that there has been a slow progress in providing equal growth opportunities for women in the state. The research interest is to examine whether women disempowerment in the country like India is actually being addressed with economic and social acceptance. The present study is descriptive and depends on secondary data to have a conceptual understanding on the women empowerment programs and discusses the transformative style of the initiatives taken by the state of Telangana for the socio-economic empowerment in order to exterminate gender inequality.*

**Key Words:** Women empowerment, SDGs, Gender Equality

### **INTRODUCTION**

Indian economy has increased opportunities to the private sector and the increase in the number of the multinationals tie up has provided women with prospects to become leaders and entrepreneurs in the cooperate sector. Kiran mazumder shows bicon a biotech firm's worth over 1.1 billion with her stake at 449 million. Fortune magazine has tanked Vidya Mohan Chhabria chairperson of the 2 billion Jumbo group, and Naina lal kidwai vice chairperson and managing director of HSBC securities and capital markets as the two Indian women to mark on the list of the 50 most powerful women in International Business.

Women have grown too quickly in the corporate line as core in the management role taking up superior position in the cooperate world. The corporate world has identified woman to be more successful professionally though gender discrimination existed in the work place. Women are able to make career and become financially independent with better education opportunities in almost all streams. Gender discrimination although prevalent in the world women have struggled to qualify on the basis of all the requirements of a profession in the workplace. There are laws that exist and have been passed in most of the countries to provide equal opportunities at the workplace for both man and woman, however, the fact that woman and the glass ceiling still exist has been witnessed in the industry especially when it come to women leading.

India has more than one billion population with almost 500 million women. One of the important factors for India's stupendous growth has been its young and educated population. Economic predictors believe that the phenomenal growth rate of Indian economy will be fuelled by the young work ready people in the coming years. Despite the fact that India has almost 250 million women in the working age group very few reach the top in Indian organizations. Women working in the Indian corporate sector cover only 2 % as they are undermined in the industry and as per statistics; they remain at the lower or middle levels in the organizations. Gender lines are drawn very early in the society and exclusions for woman continue throughout adulthood. Women are one of the important elements in the labour force and their inclusion in the economic development has been very significant. The role of women in business has also been gradually increasing all over the world and therefore women empowerment in relation to entrepreneurship development has given them position improving their societal status.

Women often are the building blocks to the society holding key positions in shaping the next generation. The cost of living in modern society has put the family in the position where both adults must work full time jobs to survive and to do so out of necessity. There is absolutely nothing wrong with women working a job outside of the home. In the Bible, the book of Proverbs mentions the woman of virtue working outside of her home. In the last chapter of Proverbs, she is pictured as working long hours to help her family with making money. The problem occurs when, after coming home from work, both parents do not put in an equal amount of energy into the home. Often, the woman is left with all the responsibilities with the children and household chores. This shows how hard working women could be and what is the kind of position in the society. As the growth of the woman's in the cooperate sector started the tremendous revolution came in the society. Women anticipated being valued for their brain power, assuming it would serve to create equanimity in the workplace. Women were donning suits, albeit skirted, and sometimes bow-ties, to compete with their male counterparts for management positions.

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### **Objectives of the study:**

1. To study if women are given social and economic acceptance in India
2. To study the central initiatives for women empowerment in India
3. To study the programs undertaken by the Telangana State government to meet Gender equality Goal of the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals

### **Significant idea to study women empowerment:**

Women today have evolved in all spheres of life despite the challenges and limitedness of their educational opportunities or work prospects. They hold key positions in the society, whether it is home or workplace. Industrial revolution has brought in changes to the work culture in order to break monotony. Corporate sector has different programs to make women aware of their strength. The idea to study women at workplace is to understand various schemes and agencies promoting women empowerment in India.

### **Implication of the study**

The research interest is to examine whether women disempowerment in the country like India is actually being addressed with economic and social acceptance. The objective of the study is to share different experiences of women working in the cooperate sector and see what challenges they face in the cooperate world. This study will explore the importance of women working in the corporate sector and the kind of opportunities that exist for them to excel in their work assignments. The study will also highlight the initiatives taken by the corporate sector and statutory schemes for women to claim in the state of Telangana

### **Research Method**

The present study is descriptive and based on secondary data to have a conceptual understanding on the women empowerment programs and discusses the transformative style of the initiatives taken by the state of Telangana for the socio-economic empowerment in order to exterminate gender inequality. The secondary data has been collected through various journals, websites, policies and schemes organized by the TS government.

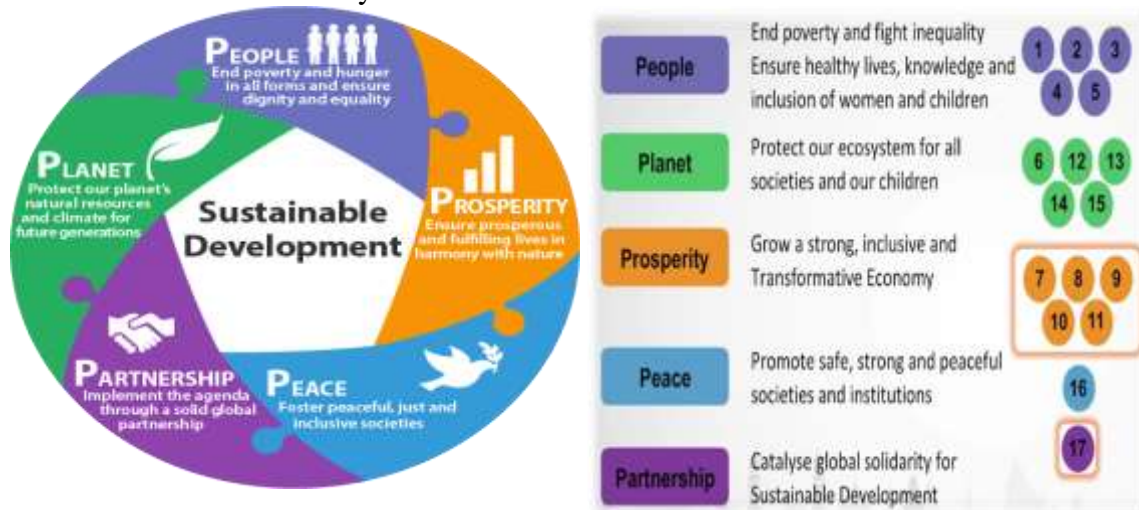
### **Literature survey**

Nancy J. Adler, Joyce S. Osland (2016), highlight in their research for twenty first century achievement on women being leaders as they compete with men in the corporate world. H. Purushotham (2011), defines women empowerment as the legal or lawful power or authority given to claim all the priviledges in the society. When compared to the past the present day situations have much larger scope to build the attitude of women to build themselves for betterment of the society. Purusottam Nayak, Bidisha Mahanta (2009), analyse the status of women empowerment in India

using various indicators like women's household decision making power, financial autonomy, freedom of movement, political participation, acceptance of unequal gender role, exposure to media, access to education, experience of domestic violence etc based on data from different sources. They have identified in their research that women in India rather maintain a low status despite government schemes to empower, which indicates they being relatively disempowered and a gender gap exists to the opportunities in education or for jobs. Power to decide and take steps to considerably upgrade their social status has always been a challenge to women in all spheres of life. There is existence of domestic violence, unequal gender norms, political pressures to degrade women been constantly addressed by the government agencies. However, it concludes that women's access to education and employment are only the enabling factors to empowerment, while there is attitude of people that requires a change in the society. Rajeshwari M. Shettar (2015): highlights the issues and Challenges women face in the 21st century and it has become a matter of concern especially in the upliftment of their status in the socio-political environment of the country. Women are deprived of access to Education and Employment. Change in Social Structure is the only enabling factor towards women Empowerment is what will make women stronger in the society. Initiative taken by the country to create a climate is the need of the hour where there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self decision making and participating in social, political and economic life with gender equality.

### THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Founded by the United Nations General Assembly in the year 2015 with a mission : "A blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all people and the world by 2030", the Sustainable Development Goals or also called as the Global Goals are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". SDGs identify that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.



[www.globalgoals.org](http://www.globalgoals.org)

- End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- End hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

- Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development



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#### **FINANCING SDG**

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent high investment opportunities.
- A major challenge in financing the 2030 Agenda will be attracting and directing public and private investments to areas that support the achievement of the SDGs
- Prioritizing the most important for the community
- Dovetailing all the financial resources is the crux
- Achieving the SDGs requires a surge in financing and investments.
- Domestic resources are the most sustainable source of investment in national development priorities over the long term and demand is growing for effective, integrated national financing frameworks for the 2030 Agenda.
- Global partners are critical in supporting national efforts and reducing risks.
- Sustainable business models and private finance are major drivers of change for SDGs.
- Taking financing successes to scale requires innovative instruments and new technologies that expand financial opportunities for people being left behind.
- Private investment is a powerful development enabler
- Job opportunities, skill building, encourage innovation, provide essential infrastructure services, boost economies and strengthen standards in public and corporate governance.
- Investment, both foreign and domestic, needs to be scaled up significantly for SDGs
- More investment is not enough, however. It must also be good quality.
- The SDGs explicitly call for quality investment to support this transformation.
- Tapping the sustainable development potential of investment means increasing the capacity of the local economy and the public sector to make countries attractive investment destinations
- It also promotes responsible business conduct along the length of global supply chains.

#### **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES BY TELANGANA GOVERNMENT**

**Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak Scheme** (2nd October 2014): Telangana government has implemented this marriage Scheme to provide financial assistance to backward classes and economically backward sections on par with the brides belonging to SC, ST and minority communities.



**KCR Kit Scheme** (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2017): for the pregnant women and new born baby as part of encouraging institutional deliveries in the state. Telangana State government allocated a budget of Rs. 605 crores to provide kits containing essential items for pregnant women and new born baby which has 26 items comprising of soaps, Baby oil, Baby bed, Mosquito net, Dresses, Sarees, Hand bag, towel and napkins, Powder, Diapers, Shampoo and Toys for kid etc. It is designed to get pregnant women nutritious food and to take care of the new born after delivery. Encouraging institutional deliveries in the state is also one of the objectives of the scheme.

- i. **Financial Assistance to Pregnant Women:** The state government under the KCR Kit scheme provides financial assistance of Rs. 12000 to working pregnant women to cover the wage loss which would be provided in three installments. An additional Rs. 1000 for a girl born baby.
- ii. **Pension Scheme for Single Women:** is a first in the country to start pension scheme from April 2017 for single women from poor families to provide financial support. Telangana government, under Single Women Pension Scheme, provides an amount of Rs. 1000 to those whose annual income is below Rs. 1.5 Lakh annually and unmarried women whose age is above 30 years in rural areas; below Rs. 2.0 Lakh and unmarried women whose age is above 35 years in urban areas along with those who belong to Below Poverty Line families.
- iii. **Aasara Pension Scheme:** was introduced as part of its social safety net strategy of Rs.1000 with a view to ensure secured life with dignity for the poor. This scheme by Telangana Government, was meant to protect the most vulnerable sections of society in particular the old and infirm, people with HIV-AIDS. The districts of Medchal, Malkajgiri and Hyderabad have the lowest density of old age persons with only 10-20 old age persons for every 1000 population who are beneficiaries of this scheme.
- iv. **Pension to Beedi Workers:** In some places in Telangana, women make a living out of making Beedis and thus support their families. Despite their hard work they are unable to sustain their families and therefore understanding their plight, the government has sanctioned Rs. 1000 per month as pension.

**Bangaru Talli Scheme:** this is one of the prominent schemes under the Telangana Government to reinstate the gender balance and to channelize the capabilities of woman for nation building. This scheme has resolved to prevent gender discrimination by empowering and protecting the girl children and catalyzing their all round growth, by providing incentives for achieving certain milestones until the girl child reaches 21 years.

**Arogya Lakshmi Scheme** (1st January 2015): was launched for providing nutritious food to pregnant women and lactating mothers and children up to the age of 6. The programme provides supply of one nutritious meal each day to the beneficiaries at the 31,897 Anganwadis and 4,076 mini Anganwadis in addition to other food items supplied once a month. For the women, 200 ml of milk for 25 days a month and one egg each day will be given with meal. Children, aged between seven months and three years are provided with 16 eggs a month in addition to a 2.5 kg food packet and children aged between 3 to six years, one egg a day in addition to rice, dal, vegetables and snacks is supplied. Eventually the quantity of food items supplied under the scheme has also been increased across all the categories.

**Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP):** is the main component to tackle malnutrition. SNP services are provided to Pregnant & Lactating women and children between 7 months to 6 years. Food models were devised in consultation with stakeholders to provide for calories / protein/RDA as per GOI norms.

### **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY**

**SHE Teams** (24th October, 2014): were launched on by Sri M. Mahendar Reddy, IPS, Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad with an Aim to Curb Eve-Teasing and Harassment of Women in Public Places. In view of the rise crime against women the Telangana Government with an aim for Safe and Secure Environment for Women has constituted a seven member committee headed by IAS officer Poonam Malakondaiah to advise it on the measures to

be taken for the safety and security of women and girls. The committee submitted its report with 77 recommendations. Forming SHE teams is one of them and there are about 100 teams formed currently.

**SHE Cabs** (September 2015): was introduced by the Transport Department of Telangana that are connected to Police Control Room through GPS and are equipped with a panic button as a safety feature.

**WE HUB -Women Entrepreneurs Hub:** is a start-up incubator exclusively for women entrepreneurs and aims to support women entrepreneurs with innovative ideas, solutions and entities focusing on emerging areas in technology. The vision is to eradicate financial, societal and support barriers for women and help them succeed in their enterprises among the under-explored / unexplored service sectors.

**BHAROSA – Support Center for Women & Children** (March 2016): was launched by the Hyderabad police as a one-stop support centre to provide protection for women and children in the state. Bharosa is intended to support women affected by violence in private and public spaces, within the family, community and at the workplace. Aggrieved women irrespective of age, caste, race, culture, marital status education status, due to attempted sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, trafficking, who have reached out or been referred to the Center will be provided with support and redressal.

**Housing Scheme for the Poor:** This is a hallmark initiative of Telangana government with an aim to provide quality and respectable housing to the poor. The scheme provides for two and three storied buildings with 2 BHK flats in Hyderabad and other urban areas while they are to be built as independent houses in rural areas.

**Land Distribution to Dalits:** This scheme under the Telangana Government provides 3 acres of agricultural land to landless SC women, along with the provision for creation of irrigation facilities, land development and other agricultural inputs for their sustained livelihood. It also provides Financial Assistance to Victims of Atrocities through WD&CW Department.

**E-Panchayat Service** centres run by women are specially trained by Panchayat Raj department and was set up as one-stop-shop centers to allow people to have access to number of government schemes. The services include payment of taxes, pensions and National Rural Employment Guarantee (NREGA) wages.

**Stree Nidhi Stree** is a unique women-centric branch-less banking model not present anywhere in the country that operates credit delivery using the technology platform to provide timely and affordable credit to Self Help Group Members (SHG).

#### **Others**

- Hyderabad Metro Rail provides easy and convenient accessibility to educational institutions for women and girls of lower economic strata society who hesitate to step out of home due to social restrictions or lack of proper transport facilities. Separation for women in RTC buses and CCTV cameras installed in 1,300 RTC buses moving through sensitive routes
- IT parks run Women special buses; A toll free number set up by the labour department for receiving workplace complaints from women. The Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC) has provided several solutions to women-related problems and has even developed mobile apps that boost urban safety
- Special help desks at reception of all police stations and 30 % of Police Constable Jobs are allotted to Women. Special patrolling teams round-the-clock; Special women counselors at government departments to deal with workplace harassment.

#### **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES BY INDIAN GOVERNMENT**

- i. **INDIRA GANDHI MATRITVA SAHYOG** (October, 2010): IGMSY is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, approved by the GOI and is implemented using the platform of ICDS. In Telangana, it is being implemented in Nalgonda district. The objective is to improve the health and nutrition status of Pregnant and Lactating women and their young infants.

- ii. **UJJWALA SCHEME:** The Ministry of Women & Child Department, New Delhi planned “Ujjwala” as a Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking, Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation. This Scheme provides food, shelter, clothing, counseling and legal aid to the inmates of Ujjwala Homes.
- iii. **SWADHAR SCHEME:** is formulated to address the specific vulnerability of women in difficult circumstances through a Home-based holistic and integrated approach. It aims at covering the primary needs of shelter, food, and clothing besides emotional support, counselling and a package for rehabilitation and reintegration specifically for the Women and girls rescued from trafficking.
- iv. **SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORK PLACE:** GOI has formulated Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 to provide protection against sexual harassment of women at work place. In accordance to the Act, every employer of the work place in writing, by order should represent Internal Complaints in the organisation.
- v. **WOMEN INSTITUTIONS:** GOI has set up Rescue Homes, Old age Homes and Home for College Girls who are provided with free food, shelter, clothing, medical care, education and training in skill development. The inmates are socially and economically deprived women rescued by police etc from different societal atrocities.

### **TELANGANA STATE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO MEET SDGS**

Established in 2017 in MCRHRD, Hyderabad, in telangana, TSDPS is designated as nodal agency for monitoring of SDGs and to coordinating with all the line departments in order to monitor the goals. So far, the following are the developments in relation to the SDGs. SDG related Sector wise workshops are being conducted at state level. Centre for SDGs set up at MCRHRD IT – thematic training programs are being conducted from CSDG. E-Learning Module is developed to generate awareness on SDGs in the State. Senior Officers of departments concerned are deputed to attend SDG wise National Level Consultations organized by NITI Aayog t has Mapped Budget Estimates with each SDG.

#### **Strategies for achievement of SDGs**

- State recognize the urgency of the 2030 agenda, Communicate the new agenda of SDGs and has Set up clear implementation mechanisms and accountability channels at national and sub-national levels
- Merges appropriate resources for achieving SDGs and ensures diverse participation from all and Commit to accountability at all levels
- Respects the universal, interlinked and indivisible nature of the agenda

**Gender Equality in Telangana:** The Government is especially focused on bringing gender reforms in the state to ensure that women are equally empowered in all respects. The Government is taking proactive measures for women’s welfare and empowerment by implementing schemes such as Arogya Lakshmi, Women Welfare Centres, the Mahila Shakti Kendras Scheme, UJJWALA scheme, the BetiPadhaoBetiBachao Scheme, as well as setting-up the State Commission for Women. The Government has also implemented 33.33% reservation for women in admissions in educational institutions and public sector recruitment. Similarly, under the newly legislated local bodies’ acts, 50% reservations have been provided for women. Accordingly, 67,486 (50.7%) of elected representatives in Panchayat Raj Institutions are women.

**Self Help Groups (SHGs):** One way to promote women empowerment is by encouraging collectivization of women belonging to economically backward classes. For this reason, the Government has been committed to building and nurturing SHGs of women. There are nearly 4 lakh SHGs with 43.4 lakh members in the state. The Government believes that social mobilization should start with empowering the most vulnerable sections of the society and as a result there are 9.2 lakh

SC, 5.9 lakh ST, and 23.5 lakh BC members in SHGs. The Government is facilitating bank linkage for SHG members by promoting diversified livelihoods to augment incomes under the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme, StreeNidhi Credit Cooperative Federation Ltd and the Mandal Samakhyas to supplement credit flow from the banking sector. StreeNidhi provides timely and affordable credit to poor SHG members as part of the overall strategy of SERP for poverty alleviation. SHGs are able to access credit easily from StreeNidhi by just using their mobile phones and this prevents SHGs from borrowing from other sources at usurious rates of interest. StreeNidhi is in a position to extend credit to the SHGs even in far flung areas of the state in 48 hours to meet credit needs for exigencies like health, education and other income generation needs like agriculture, dairy and other activities. To empower women and augment their incomes, the Government is also promoting various agriculturerelated activities, such as paddy procurement, farmer producer group (FPG) formation, and livestock rearing through SHGs. The Government has been encouraging non-farm livelihood through various measures, such as setting up the Sale of Articles of Rural Artisans Societies (SARAS) platform. The Government, through WE Hub, is identifying suitable SHG women entrepreneurs who wish to scale up their business activities; about 52 women enterprises (individual and group) have been selected through a sequence of screening processes and are currently being supported on all aspects of their business, from product standardization to marketing support.

**One Stop Centres (SakhiCentres):** The Department of Women Development and Child Welfare (WDCW) has been working towards women's all-round health and safety through various projects. The One Stop Centres (also known as Sakhi) provide an integrated range of services to women affected by violence and handled 11,276 cases in 2020-21. Out of these cases, 8,960 were provided psycho-social counselling, 3,763 were given legal counselling, 2,129 were provided emergency shelter, 1,019 were given medical aid, 1,000 were provided police support, and 593 were referred to SwadharGreh. The state's Women Helpline (181) initiative received more than 1.5 lakh calls which were directed to the Sakhi helplines.

**SHE Teams:** The Women Safety Wings monitor all the SHE-Bharosacentres by ensuring safety and security of women and deals with offences like eve-teasing, stalking, harassment against women in public places, work places, educational institutions, residential areas or social media. At present, there are 331 SHE teams working in the state.

**T-she Box:** To combat sexual harassment against women, the Government also established T-she Box, a mobile and web app allowing women to file complaints of sexual harassment at workplace and monitoring the complaints till their redressal. Women Development & Child Welfare Department also set up a new home for trafficked victims in Hyderabad.

## **CONCLUSION**

Women since ages have silently witnessed the significant changes in society whether its country's freedom, agricultural development, modernization, liberalization, privatization & globalization but the only thing that dint change much is gender inequality in Indian society. Men and women compete in the corporate world alike and the there is a drastic change in the attitude of people towards making women independent financially, physically and socially and enabling them to strike balance between social, personal & professional lives. In line with the sustainable development goals framed by the United Nations general assembly the Indian government has worked towards bringing in this gender equality with schemes and policies that really shape the way women live in the country today.

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