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ijmrset@gmail.com



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Skill Development-A Prerequisite for Women Empowerment

¹Prof. Dr. Manisha Rao & ²Smt. Disha

¹Dept. of Home Science, G.G. P.G. College, Bareilly, India

²Research Scholar, Dept. of Home Science, G.G. P.G. College, Bareilly, India

ABSTRACT: India is celebrated world over for its bright and vivacious youth, while in many developed countries the amount of working population is decreasing by the day, India has a huge advantage since its demographic dividend is heavily tilted towards the youth. If we approach this through an economic lens, India has a lot to gain since its median age is merely 28 years and consequently a younger workforce translates into increased pace of development and economic growth. However, the participation of women in India's workforce has been inadequate for over decades and in order to reap the complete benefits of our demographic dividend this gap has to be bridged at the earliest. A developing Indian economy needs around 103 Million (Mn) skilled workers between the years 2017-2020. Despite this more than 30 per cent, i.e. 100 Mn youth between the age groups of 15-29 are not in employment, education or training (NEET). Out this 100 Mn, around 88.5 Mn youth are women. While there has definitely been an increase in the proportion of women receiving vocational training over the past few years, this increase is visibly lesser than that received by men. To put the same in numbers, while the proportion of working age women receiving vocational training increased from 6.8 per cent in 2011-2012 to 6.9 per cent in 2018-19, the increase in proportion of working age men receiving training increased from 14.6 per cent to 15.7 per cent in 2018-19.

KEYWORDS: skill development, India, economy, women, empowerment, training, youth, population

I. INTRODUCTION

Women's economic participation and empowerment are fundamental to strengthening women's rights and enabling them to have control over their lives and exert influence in society. The economic empowerment of women is a prerequisite for sustainable development. Gender equality and empowered women are catalysts for multiplying development efforts.¹

Government of India has enacted various rules and regulations within the constitutional framework to improve female representation in different professions. Currently, a majority of female workforce in India is unskilled. Skill is the bridge between job and workforce. Skill development is a key to improve employability and income-earning opportunities for women and for enhancing sustainable rural development and livelihoods. Social outcomes are reflected in indicators of income inequality and poverty. Employment outcomes are reflected by indicators of employment rates, unemployment, youth not in school and earnings.²

Self-Employment through Skill-Building

Vocational training programme is introduced to enhance livelihood opportunities of women who are at a disadvantageous position and have a scant exposure to technical skills and knowledge. At present, the capacity of Skill Development in India is around 3.1 million persons per year. The 11th Five Year Plan envisions an increase in that capacity to 15 million annually. India has target of creating 500 million skilled workers by 2020. Thus, there is a need for increasing capacity of skill development programmes.³

Policies such as improving access to skill development by creating more seats for women, gender mainstreaming of content and delivery of training and use of digital platforms for women's empowerment should be streamlined in order to improve the productivity of the economy and participation of women. It will provide a roadmap for skill development and help the government to catalyse the process. Some of the proposed beginnings can be:



Additional training and apprenticeship seats

To improve access to skill development, we need to create facilities by setting additional training and apprenticeship seats which also includes increasing pool of women trainers. Mechanisms to provide certification to trainers should be resilient and new institute for training of women trainers to be promoted.

Need for special delivery mechanisms

The need for gender mainstreaming of training is very vital. In order to bridge the gap, there is need for special delivery mechanisms such as mobile training units, flexible afternoon batches with local needs-based training. It should also envision incorporation of women related issues such as issues of safe training environment, employment of women trainers, equity in remuneration and complaint redress mechanism⁴

Momentum of Digital India in skill development

There is a need to incorporate ICT (Information and Communication Technology) for providing skill development solutions. It should focus on promotion of internet or mobile based platform which would connect skilled women and employers. It should also emphasise on women re-willing to enter the workforce after a break or those affected by migration.

Certain successful methods to retain girls and women in the workforce can be as follows:

- Introduce trainees to role-models in respective sectors.
- Provide more-and-more hands-on opportunities.
- Collect and display testimonials so that trainees can relate and take more interest in the programme.
- Fetch candidates rapidly in under-served populations.
- Develop a comprehensive equity plan to identify and address discriminatory practices and artificial barriers to girls' enrolment.⁵

II. DISCUSSION

Investing in young women's economic empowerment and skills development is one of the most urgent and effective means to drive progress on gender equality, poverty eradication, and inclusive economic growth. Despite growing evidence of the positive outcomes of young women's economic empowerment, young women continue to experience unequal access to education and skills development and face barriers to securing decent employment and opportunities to thrive as entrepreneurs. Young women's access to resources, including land and loans, may be restricted by discriminatory laws, and young women continue to shoulder an unequal share of unpaid care work, due to the persistence of traditional gender roles. To increase access to decent employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, UN Women has provided vocational training to young, out-of-school women. UN Women provided training in computer skills to girls and young women around the world, including in Internally Displaced Persons' camps in South Sudan and Nat community girls in India. In Pakistan, women and girls were supported to use home-based food production methods. UN Women works with governments to introduce policy reforms for education and skills development for young women. In Albania, UN Women provided technical advice and training to the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth on gender-responsive budgeting, which resulted in the development of gender-specific objectives. In the Asia-Pacific region, UN Women supported the development of gender-inclusive curricula for public schools. To promote young women's innovation and entrepreneurship, UN Women launched a Global Coalition of Young Women Entrepreneurs on World Youth Skills Day, on 15 July 2016.⁶

Women today are facing an economy that is increasingly becoming less labor-intensive and driven more by capital, technology, knowledge, and skill. Due to the discrimination for ages in our society, women lack awareness of their surroundings and find it difficult to portray their true potential, thus developing a feeling of powerlessness. Women face complex ground realities including low levels of literacy; discriminatory social customs and practices; limited hours available for training and work, limited exposure, and unfamiliarity with new technology. In addition, women are more likely to be underemployed, underpaid, or work under temporary contracts. There is often a mismatch between the skills the workers can offer and the skills demanded by employers. Even the government efforts for the skill development of women have not reached a satisfactory level due to many confronting issues and inhibitions. In many



cases, skilling does not convert into actual employment in terms of getting a job due to a lack of industry/market linkages and other support.⁷

Economic empowerment of women is a prerequisite for sustainable development and is sustained by gender equality and empowered women. SEWA Bharat's skill development project has been envisioned to enhance the lives of women, who are at disadvantageous positions, through various livelihood initiatives suited best for them. These initiatives become a part of women's struggles, equipping them with skills that increase their bargaining power in their families and the community. SEWA Bharat through its experience has observed that the concept of skill development needs to move beyond imparting technical and managerial skills. For holistic development, there must be a focus on personality development, life skills, and the knowledge of the competitive and ever-changing environment. Through economic empowerment, the program tries to bring a positive change in the cultural and social life of women who have been facing historical injustice for ages. Our skill development training systems have adapted to the pandemic, participated in the recovery, and have developed strategies to continue filling the relevant skill and job gaps in India.⁸

III. RESULTS

Women have always participated in the uplift of the country and society. Be it the 1857 mutiny for India's freedom or the 1947 struggle of Independence, our women have always made India proud. The women of India have achieved new heights of success and sky is the limit for them. Even today, women are performing their duties with full devotion for the development of the country and uplift of society. Women are today working efficiently in various fields, such as academics, literature, music and dance, sports, media, business, information technology, science and technology, politics and social development. Not only this, Indian women from metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai are breaking barriers in fields ranging from politics to the corporate sector. They not only hold important positions across the country, but are also progressing in far off rural areas. Today, they are giving society a new direction through their leadership and critical participation in panchayat elections. Increasing awareness and clear intentions are the reason behind women strengthening economic, social and cultural establishments. This is very important for a democratic system.⁹

There is a constant evolution of female participation in the corporate sector. From Board Directors to Chief Executive Officers, women are leading the way in every position in the corporate sector. Female participation is constantly increasing in the Information Technology sector. Along with the IT sector, the presence of women is also significantly increasing in the Banking and Finance sector. Last year, the Indian Space Research Organization decided to hand over the command of Chandrayaan-2 to two women, and these women also did their best to successfully launch the satellite. This shows that Indian women's ability and competence is no less than anyone else's. This is an ode to the strength of our women. As a mark of respect and honour for our women, it has been stated in our ancient scripture that; "Yatr naaryastu poojyante ramante tatr devata | Yatr naaryastu poojyante ramante tatr devata." Means 'God resides where women are worshipped'. It is true that, if we link our ancient cultural heritage with our modern approach to encourage our women in all fields, then we will definitely carry forward our country's and society's tradition. Women and men together can take the society and country towards total development. This is why we will have to give our daughters the best education possible and dedicate them to our country's growth. The women in our country have been diverse with the way they have engaged in various groups, communities and society across different periods of time. With time, women in our country have been empowered to come forward and have been strengthened to take decisions. It is my opinion that, in order to empower women, we should first make them skilled. When a woman is educated and skilled, she also makes a family and society educated and skilled. As long as women are not fully educated, skilled and prosperous, it is not possible for the country to achieve the desired economic growth and meet the targets. When women progress in every village, town and city in our country, only then will India go forward on the path to development.¹⁰

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Our government is running many schemes for women's empowerment. For empowerment and progress of women, the government is running various schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana, Mahila E-haat Scheme, Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana, Sakhi Yojana, Ladli Yojana, Digital Lado, Swachh Bharat Mission. Our government is also working extensively on women's nutrition. In order to take good care of children and

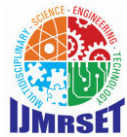


ensure their healthy upbringing, it is important to make sure women's diet and nutrition are also up to the mark. This is very important for the future generations of our country. We know that every single person has their unique skill set. What is needed is a mechanism to ensure that that skill-set is identified and honed in the best possible way.¹¹ As the Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Minister, it is a fundamental responsibility to ensure that all women in our country from different occupations are trained in their respective skill-sets and are employable. We would like them to put best use of their skill-set to be self-employed and entrepreneurs and progress. We have also been successful in achieving this objective at a fast pace.¹² If we are to talk about the skilling activities that our ministry has undertaken, around 68.12 lakh women in India have been trained under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikaas Yojana 2.0. Under the Jan Shikshan Sansthan Scheme, around 4.08 lakh women have been trained in the 2018-2020 period, while 38.72 lakh women have been trained in Industrial Training Institutes (ITI). This is a big achievement for the women in our country. At present, there are 18 National Skill Training Institutes across the country to train women. Special batches are being conducted to provide basic, theoretical and advanced training to women.¹³

It is a matter of joy and pride that while women in India are studying electronics, fashion design, technology and business management, there are also some who hone their new age skills in artificial intelligence, data analytics, 3D printing, etc. Along with traditional skills like beauty, wellness and healthcare, women are also progressing quickly in non-traditional skills such as electronics and hardware. Through skilled and gender-skilling, we are trying our best to increase the contribution of women in our country. The National Rural Livelihood Mission has strengthened women's skills and prepared them for employment. Training for self-employed tailors, beauty therapists, customer care executives, hair stylists, yoga trainers, etc.¹⁴ are being carried out in Prime Minister Skill Centres. Very soon, one will get to see women playing significant roles in Central Government schemes such as Ayushman Bharat Yojana, Swachh Bharat Mission and Smart City Mission. These schemes of our government are going to play a big role in bringing women into the fold of such national missions. By joining these missions, women will make a huge contribution in giving an orderly shape to the society. In fact, in the creation of a 'New India', women's education and skill development is going to be critical. It is true that without empowering women, it is difficult for any nation or society to achieve complete development.¹³ For the creation of a 'New India', complete development and social sustainability is dependent on women's skill development. This is why our vision is focused on the all-round development of women. Through this, we will also be able to ensure significant participation of women in the labour force of this country. In the last few years, under the leadership of our glorious Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Central Government has rolled out various schemes that have emboldened the women of our country and taken them on the path of self-reliance and security. With these schemes that our government has introduced, not only will women progress, but they will also help the country's economic development gain momentum. The efforts of our government have created a milieu of trust in the women of our country today.¹⁴ They are confident that the country's government machinery is standing by them by creating an atmosphere of respect and development for women. In the past few years, our government has made massive advancements in providing education and honing skill-sets. It is our pledge to make sure that this reaches each and every woman of our country. We are fully prepared to fulfil this pledge with aplomb.¹⁵

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