

# STATE OF GENDER DEVELOPMENT INDEX OF SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

<sup>1</sup>Dr. R. Latha, <sup>2</sup>Dr. V. Suthacini,

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor of Economics, <sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics

<sup>1</sup>Department of Economics

<sup>1</sup> M. V. Muthiah Govt. Arts College for Women, Dindigul, <sup>2</sup>Madurai Kamaraj University, Tamil Nadu, India.

**Abstract :** Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental dimensions of human development. Because half of humanity is not enjoying progress in human development, such development is not universal. Investing in girls and women has multidimensional benefits. If all girls in developing countries completed secondary education, the under-five mortality rate would be halved. Women also need support to pursue higher education, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, where much future demand for high-level work will be. Women in South Asia are often excluded from decision making, have limited access to and control over resources, are restricted in their mobility and are often under threat of violence from male relatives. These deprivations are linked strongly to patriarchal social norms and attitudes that impede equitable gender relationships within households. They have consequences for health, education and community participation. This paper attempts to make a comparative study on the Gender development index of South Asian countries.

**IndexTerms -** Gender Development Index, South Asia, Life expectancy at Birth, Expected years of schooling, Mean years of schooling, Gross National Income (GNI) per capita.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Women also have to juggle paid employment outside the home and unpaid care work inside the home as well as balance their productive and reproductive roles. Flexible working arrangements and enlarged care options, including day-care centres, afterschool programmes, senior citizen homes and long-term care facilities, can help women broaden their choices. Measures to encourage women's entrepreneurship include establishing a legal framework that removes barriers to women owning land, a critical asset, especially in agriculture. So nation's policies, legislation and administration need to be changed to accommodate women, and the new rules must be enforced. The glass ceiling, though cracked in many places, is far from being shattered. Gender requirements in selection and recruitment and incentive mechanisms for retention can enhance women's representation in the public and private sectors. The criteria for promoting men and women into senior management positions should be identical, based on equal pay for equal work. Mentoring, coaching and sponsoring can empower women in the workplace by using successful female senior managers as role models and as sponsors. Women have made major strides in all walks of life. Gender equality and women's empowerment are not add-on issues in the development dialogue, but a mainstream dimension of the development discourse locally, nationally and globally. Women have proved to be productive economic actors, prudent decision makers, visionary leaders, compassionate volunteers and constructive peacekeepers. And many women are expanding their horizons. Women are demanding gender equality in all walks of life. Nearly 15,000 people recently signed an online petition in Saudi Arabia calling on the government to abolish the country's guardianship system, which prevents women from engaging in fundamental tasks without the permission of a male relative or without being accompanied. Women have become active in areas where they were not traditionally active, and they have excelled in every aspect of life where they are engaged, even in societies where women have faced great obstacles in overcoming their traditional roles.

### 1.1. CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO ECONOMY

- *Women's economic contribution is limited when women are not employed.* Globally, women are less engaged in paid employment than men. In 2015, 36 per cent of women and 44 per cent of men worked full time for an employer. However, women's economic contribution in unpaid care and domestic work is remarkable: a 2011 survey in 46 countries found that, on average, 28 per cent of women and 6 per cent of men spent three to five hours a day on household work.
- *Women's economic participation equals women's economic empowerment.* Increasing the number of women in the workforce is an important objective, but if they enter it under poor conditions, their empowerment may not be improved. Exploitation, dangerous or stigmatized work, low pay and job insecurity are unfavourable terms often encountered by women.
- *There is an automatic win-win between gender equality and wider development outcomes.* Gender equality has been found to promote economic growth, household poverty reduction and human development. But the reverse is not always true. This means that governments need to pay dedicated attention to gender equality and not rely solely on growth to achieve it.
- *What works for one group of women will work for another.* Women across the world often face similar obstacles, such as limited access to property and financial services, lack of social protection and unpaid care burden. Yet demographic, economic and cultural contexts also contribute to these barriers and make each woman's experience different from others'. Policymakers cannot consider women to be a homogeneous group and apply standardized solutions to gender issues. Tailored approaches are required.
- *Increasing women's individual skills and aspirations is the main challenge.* Women's capacity to seize economic opportunities can be substantially improved through individual support such as training in business management skills, but structural causes of gender inequality must be addressed simultaneously. A survey of 67 countries in 2009 showed that 20 per cent of men believed that women should not be allowed to hold any job that they are qualified for outside of their home.

Women and girls are not able to live their lives to their full potential in many countries. Gender disparities in human development, while narrowing slowly, are embedded in social norms and long-standing patterns of exclusion from household and community decision making that limit women's opportunities and choices. Gender-based discrimination starts before school, even before birth. The preference for a son can lead to sex-selective abortions and missing women, particularly in some South Asian countries. Discrimination continues in families through intra household resource allocation.

The gender politics of food— nurtured by the assumptions, norms and values about women needing fewer calories— can push women into a perpetual state of malnutrition and protein deficiency. Women and girls sometimes eat last and least within the household. Early marriage among girls limits their long-term capabilities and potential. Each year, 15 million girls in developing countries marry before age 18, and if there is no reduction in the incidence of early marriage among girls, by 2050, 18 million girls will be married before age 18. Worldwide, one out of eight age-eligible girls does not attend primary or secondary school. Only 62 of 145 countries have achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education. As highlighted in the 2015 Human Development Report, women face numerous disadvantages in paid and unpaid work. The global labour force participation rate is 49.6 per cent among women and 76.2 per cent among men. Women employed in vulnerable work or the informal economy may lack decent work conditions, social security and voice and have lower earnings than do other workers.

Women also suffer discrimination in relation to productive assets, such as the right to land and property. Women are barred from owning land because of customary laws and social norms and practices. Only 10–20 per cent of landholders

## 1.2. Gender-based inequalities in South Asian households

A girl between her first and fifth birthdays in India or Pakistan has a 30–50 per cent greater chance of dying than a boy. The maternal mortality ratio in South Asia is also stubbornly high, second only to that in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is partly because many births are not attended by skilled health personnel (44 per cent in Bangladesh). Decisions about seeking care are made largely by husbands or older male and female household members, and mistrust or misinformation about modern health facilities for child delivery restricts access by women.

Inequality in work and education begins in childhood. Girls in South Asia learn domestic skills in the household and begin to take on domestic duties and child care. There are strong beliefs in rural areas that sons should be educated because they will remain in the family and support ageing parents, while daughters are likely to serve other families after marriage. Cultural beliefs that the role of a woman is to be a wife and mother have direct consequences on parents' incentives to invest in expanding their daughters' capabilities through education and preparation for paid work. Another common perception is that education for girls beyond primary school will make it harder for a woman to find a husband.

Legislation promoting gender equality is vital for women in South Asia. But households are where most Decision making takes place, and norms and values continue to perpetuate inequalities between men and women across generations, even when such laws are in place. If women are not encouraged to work outside the home, labour laws will not reach them. If families do not allow girls to attend school, scholarships and school gender quotas will not support them. And if violence against women is overlooked in the home, women will not feel empowered to voice their concerns.

## II. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study attempts to make a comparison of Gender Development Index of South Asian countries based on the 2016 statistical update of UNDP and also to analyse the gap in LEB of GDI between male and female, expected years of schooling between male and female, mean years of schooling between male and female

## III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this present study is a combination of qualitative and quantitative approach. The study makes use of only secondary data. As it was not possible to personally collect the data, the data were collected from the UNDP Human Development Report 2016. The sample consists of South Asian countries. Some statistical tools such as per centage, mean were used in data analysis along with qualitative description. The scope of the study is narrowed down to South Asian countries only.

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 4.1 South Asian Countries and their GDI Value:

Gender Development Index is the ratio of female to male HDI values. Gender Development Index groups consists of countries are divided into five groups by absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI values. Group 1 comprises countries with high equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation of less than 2.5 per cent), group 2 comprises countries with medium to high equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation of 2.5– 5 per cent), group 3 comprises countries with medium equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation of 5–7.5 per cent), group 4 comprises countries with medium to low equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation of 7.5–10 per cent) and group 5 comprises countries with low equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation from gender parity of more than 10 per cent).

TABLE: 1

S.No	Countries	GDI value	Group	Rank
1	Afghanistan	0.609	5	VIII
2	Bangladesh	0.927	3	III
3	Bhutan	0.900	5	V
4	India	0.819	5	VI
5	Maldives	0.937	3	I

6	Nepal	0.925	4	IV
7	Pakistan	0.742	5	VII
8	Sri Lanka	0.934	3	II
South Asia		0.822		-
World		0.938		-

From the table, it is inferred that Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka falls in the group 3 with medium equality in HDI achievements between women and men with absolute deviation of 5-7.5per cent. India falls in the group 4 with medium to low equality in HDI achievements between women and men with absolute deviation of 7.5-10per cent and group 5 comprises of countries with low equality in HDI achievements between women and men with absolute deviation from gender parity of more than 10per cent. It is very pitiable to see that no South Asian country is in group 1 with high equality in HDI achievements with absolute deviation of less than 2.5per cent and group 2 with medium to high equality in HDI achievements between women and men with absolute deviation

#### 4.2. Human Development Index Value

Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index measuring average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development, a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living. Table 2 shows the HDI value of South Asian countries with reference to female and male and their ranks among South Asian countries.

**Table: 2**

S.No	Countries	Female	Rank	Male	Rank
1	Afghanistan	0.348	VIII	0.572	VIII
2	Bangladesh	0.556	IV	0.599	VI
3	Bhutan	0.573	III	0.637	IV
4	India	0.549	V	0.671	III
5	Maldives	0.676	II	0.721	II
6	Nepal	0.538	VI	0.582	VII
7	Pakistan	0.452	VII	0.610	V
8	Sri Lanka	0.734	I	0.785	I
South Asia		0.549	-	0.667	-
World		0.693	-	0.738	-

From the table, it is referred that Sri Lanka ranks first in HDI value for both gender and the last place in both gender is seen in Afghanistan. Maldives, Bhutan, India, Bangladesh are above the average HDI value of South Asian countries. It is noteworthy that Maldives HDI value is closely associated with the world HDI value

#### 4.3 Gender Development Index of South Asian Countries and their Life Expectancy at Birth

Life expectancy at birth is the number of years a new born infant could expect to live if prevailing patterns of age-specific mortality rates at the time of birth stay the same throughout the infant's life. In table 3, the LEB of female and male of South Asian countries are given.

**Table: 3**

S.No	Countries	LEB (years)	Female	Rank	Male	Rank
1	Afghanistan	60.7	62.0	VIII	59.5	VIII
2	Bangladesh	72.0	73.3	III	70.7	III
3	Bhutan	69.9	70.1	V	69.6	IV
4	India	68.3	69.9	VI	66.9	VI
5	Maldives	77.0	78.0	II	76.0	I
6	Nepal	70.0	71.5	IV	68.6	V
7	Pakistan	66.4	67.4	VII	65.4	VII
8	Sri Lanka	75.0	78.4	I	71.7	II
South Asia		68.7	70.2	-	67.4	-
World		71.6	73.8	-	69.6	-

It is inferred from the table, Sri Lanka's LEB for both female and male are 78.4 per cent and 71.4 per cent respectively which is above the South Asia value and the world. Almost all the countries LEB for both genders are performing well except the LEB for male of Afghanistan is little bit low compared with other Asian countries. It is worthnoty that the LEB of male is par below the level of LEB of female in all the South Asian countries.

#### 4.4 Gender Development Index of South Asian Countries and their Mean Years of Schooling:

Mean years of schooling is the average number of years of education received by people aged 25 and older, converted from educational attainment levels using official durations of each level. Mean years of schooling of South Asian is given in the table 4.

Table: 4

S.no	Countries	Mean years of schooling (years)	Female (years)	Rank	Male (years)	Rank
1	Afghanistan	10.1	1.6	VIII	5.8	V
2	Bangladesh	10.2	5.0	III	5.6	VI
3	Bhutan	12.5	2.1	VII	4.2	VIII
4	India	11.7	4.8	IV	8.2	II
5	Maldives	12.7	6.2	II	6.3	IV
6	Nepal	12.2	3.2	VI	5.0	VII
7	Pakistan	8.1	3.7	V	6.5	III
8	Sri Lanka	14	10.3	I	11.4	I
	South Asia	11.3	4.9	-	7.8	-
	World	12.3	4.7	-	8.8	-

Table 4 shows that Sri Lanka ranks first and Afghanistan ranks last in the mean years of schooling of female. In mean years of schooling for male, as usual Sri Lanka bags the first place and the last place is ranked by Bhutan. Among the South Asian countries, the female mean years of schooling is very low comparatively with the men's mean years of schooling. Attention should be given by the policy makers to improve the mean years of schooling.

#### 4.5. Gender Development Index of South Asian Countries and their expected years of schooling:

Expected years of schooling is the number of years of schooling that a child of school entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates persist throughout the child's life. Table 5 shows the expected years of schooling of South Asian countries with reference to female and male and the rank among them.

Table: 5

S.no	Countries	Expected years of schooling (years)	Female (years)	Rank	Male (years)	Rank
1	Afghanistan	3.6	8.3	VII	13.1	II
2	Bangladesh	5.2	10.4	VI	9.9	VII
3	Bhutan	3.1	12.6	IV	12.4	IV
4	India	6.3	11.9	V	11.3	VI
5	Maldives	6.2	12.8	II	12.7	III
6	Nepal	4.1	12.7	III	12.2	V
7	Pakistan	5.1	7.4	VIII	8.8	VIII
8	Sri Lanka	10.9	14.3	I	13.6	I
	South Asia	6.2	11.3	-	11.1	-
	World	8.3	12.4	-	12.3	-

As seen in the above table, Sri Lanka tops first and Pakistan ranks last. If efforts are taken, the South Asian countries can improve their expected years of schooling. It is crucial to achieve the other dimensions of HDI. In all countries except Afghanistan, the male – female gap is a close call.

#### 4.6 Gender Development Index of South Asian Countries and their Gross National Income Per Capita:

Estimated gross national income per capita is derived from the ratio of female to male wages, female and male shares of economically active population and gross national income (in 2011 purchasing power parity terms). Table 6 shows the GNI per capita income of the South Asian countries.

Table: 6

S. No	Countries	GNI	Female	Rank	Male	Rank
1	Afghanistan	1871	511	VIII	3148	VII
2	Bangladesh	3341	2379	IV	4285	VI
3	Bhutan	7081	5657	III	8308	V
4	India	5663	2184	V	8897	III
5	Maldives	10383	7155	I	13591	II
6	Nepal	2337	1979	VI	2718	VIII

7	Pakistan	5013	1498	VII	8376	IV
8	Sri Lanka	10789	6067	II	15869	I
	South Asia	5799	2278	-	9114	-
	World	14447	10306	-	18555	-

It is seen from the above table that, Maldives stands first in GNI of female whereas Sri Lanka is first in male GNI with large disparity in the male- female GNI. GNI of male is high for South Asian countries. This shows that there is very much gender disparity in the South Asian countries.

#### V. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that from the tables, there is gender disparity in all aspects. Improvement was found in the LEB. Women needs should be addressed particularly to reduce the gender gap. Policy makers of the respective countries should pay attention to improve the women empowerment along with gender equality. Women empowerment and gender equality should be the main emphasis for the forthcoming years with multilateral, regional, national and local government entities along with the global network of civil society organisations so that Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 agenda can be achieved.

#### VI. REFERENCE

[1] UNDP (2010). *Human Development Report 2016*, New York: United Nations Development Program (UNDP) <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-update>

