

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT:

Women's empowerment and economic development are closely interrelated. Does this imply that pushing just one of these two levels would set a virtuous circle in motion? This article reviews the literature on sides of the empowerment-development nexus, and argues that the inter-relationships are probably too weak to be self-sustaining, and that continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women. In view of the critical role of women in the agriculture and allied sectors, as producers, concentrated efforts will be made to ensure that benefits of training, extension and various programmes will reach them in proportion to their numbers. The programmes for training women in 'Women and Economy' are connected with each other. Women's perspectives will be included in designing and implementing macro-economic and social policies by institutionalizing their participation in such processes. Their contribution to socio-economic development as producers and workers will be recognized in the formal and informal sectors (including home based workers) and appropriate policies relating to employment and to her working conditions will be drawn up. In order to enhance women's access to credit for consumption and production, the establishment of new, and strengthening of existing micro-credit mechanisms and micro-finance institution must be undertaken so that the outreach of credit is enhanced. Other supportive measures would be taken to ensure adequate flow of credit through financial institutions and banks, so that all women below poverty line access to credit.

Education for women

Equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured. Special measures will be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, create a gender-sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long learning as well as development of occupation/vocation/technical skills by women. Reducing the gender gap in secondary and higher education would be a focus area. Sectoral time targets in existing policies will be achieved, with a special focus on girls and women, particularly those belonging to weaker sections including the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/Other Backward Classes/Minorities.

Sensitive curricula must be developed at all levels of educational system in order to address sex stereotyping as one of the causes of gender discrimination. A holistic approach to women's health which includes both nutrition and health services must be adopted and special attention will be given to the needs of women and the girl at all stages of the life cycle. The reduction of infant mortality and maternal mortality, which are sensitive indicators of human development, is a priority concern. To effectively meet problems of infant and maternal mortality, and early marriage the availability of good and accurate data at micro level on deaths, birth and marriages is required. Strict implementation of registration of births and deaths would be ensured and registration of marriages would be made compulsory. In accordance with the commitment of the National Population Policy (2000) to population stabilization, this Policy recognizes the critical need of men and women to have access to safe, effective and affordable methods of family planning of their choice and the need to suitably address the issues of early marriages and spacing of children.

Women's traditional knowledge about health care and nutrition will be recognized through proper documentation and its use will be encouraged. The use of Indian and alternative systems of medicine will be enhanced within the framework of overall health infrastructure available for women.

Poverty Eradication-

Since women comprise the majority of the population below the poverty line and are very often in situations of extreme poverty, given the harsh realities of intra-household and social discrimination, macroeconomic policies and poverty eradication programmes will specifically address the needs and problems of such women. There will be improved implementation of programmes which are already women oriented with special targets for women. Steps will be taken for mobilization of poor women and convergence of services, by offering them a range of economic and social options, along with necessary support measures to enhance their capabilities.

Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide-

Three priorities will guide our work on gender equality. These are connected and mutually reinforcing and apply across many contexts. We will consider funding explicit investments or streams within investments to address these priorities. We will create opportunities to engage on them in our foreign policy and economic diplomacy work and report regularly against them. In multilateral context we can take a lead to provide opportunities for women's leadership and active participation. Our human resource development programs can promote equal employment opportunities and our investments in trade and economic sectors can implement a zero tolerance approach to violence Context.

Women's participation in decision-making, leadership and peace-building is important as a right in itself. Women also bring particular perspectives, priorities and strengths resulting from their life experiences, which are often different from men's. This means they are likely to make different decisions, with women leaders responding more strongly to women's policy priorities. Private sector businesses that have female Promoting women's economic empowerment Context, Women's economic participation helps to drive growth at a national level and reduce poverty within communities and households. Societies that make better use of the skills, talents and time of all members will more likely prosper. Women are often more likely than men to use income to support development outcomes within their families. Increasing women's earnings can strengthen their hand in decision making in their households. Women remain poorer than men globally, so in promoting economic growth internationally, work is needed to ensure women can participate in economic life and benefit equitably from doing so. This can promote equality and lead to empowerment, although often it merely increases women's time burdens and contributes to increased exploitation and violence. Careful analysis and considered interventions are needed so women's economic participation is empowering and does not exacerbate inequalities or place unfair burdens on women and their children. Accelerating women's participation in the paid workforce reflects the G20 commitment to close the gap between women's and men's participation rates by 25 per cent by 2025. A focus on women's formal sector workforce participation in Australia's development program, economic diplomacy and global and regional sector is important to support this and ensure that developing nations do not fall further behind. Investing in women's employment is not only the right thing to do—it's also essential for business. Companies that learn to effectively develop and retain women employees will gain a huge competitive advantage.

Women comprise nearly half of the world's agricultural workers but have less access than men to productive resources and opportunities. Improving women's access could increase women's agricultural yields by 25 to 30 per cent and increase agricultural output in developing countries between 2.5 and four per cent. Yet women's priorities, needs and interests are often overlooked and so more needs to be done. For example,

electrification programs could lessen women's unpaid work burdens by facilitating their access to time and labour-saving electrical devices. Providing access to modern, improved fuels, such as gas and renewable (rather than wood), would free up women's time for productive work.

Ending violence against women and girls Context- Violence against women and girls is pervasive and persistent throughout the world and a significant human rights violation. Violence against women and girls takes many forms including: violence in the home, sexual abuse of girls at school, sexual harassment at work and in the streets, rape by husbands or strangers, child marriage, acid attacks, trafficking of women and female genital mutilation. In conflict situations, rape is often used as a tactic of war and women and girls can be over-represented among displaced populations. Women and girls with disabilities are more likely to experience violence and face additional barriers in seeking justice and support. Boys are also at increased risk of certain types of gendered violence and exploitation, such as through labour involving significant risks to their health and safety. Violence or the fear of violence restricts women's lives and opportunities and constrains development. It causes trauma and limits women's social, political and economic participation. It can have a lifelong impact on women's children. It creates significant strain on national economies with escalating costs in health care, social services, policing and the justice system. In the aftermath of natural disasters and during conflicts, rates of sexual and gender-based. Everyone has a responsibility to prevent and end violence against women and girls, starting by challenging the culture of discrimination that allows it to continue. We must shatter negative gender stereotypes and attitudes, introduce and implement laws to prevent and end discrimination and exploitation, and stand up to abusive behaviour whenever we see it. We have to condemn all acts of violence, establish equality in our work and home lives, and change the everyday experience of women and girls. An effective response to ending violence against women is based around improved quality services and responses, access to justice, and prevention. Integrated responses that account for diverse forms of violence against women and girls are crucial. In any response, it is paramount to focus on the safety of survivors of violence and their children. Ensuring protection during humanitarian responses is also participation to transformation Even where the three priorities that guide our work on gender equality are not the focus, we will still contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Create confidence-

At a minimum, we will ensure that women and men benefit from our interventions, to avoid exacerbating gender inequalities. This means designing infrastructure programs to meet women's as well as men's needs and priorities, that aid for trade programs engage specifically with women entrepreneurs and that women can participate at all stages of conflict resolution, peace-building and reconstruction. We will focus on enrolment and retention in education, on the gender norms imparted in curricula and teaching materials and on ensuring women are recruited and promoted in the education system. In health, we will consider work to help empower women to have control over the number and spacing of the children they have. A focus of health programming will support universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Beyond ensuring that women can participate in and benefit from our work, we need to encourage a shift in norms, legal frameworks and policies towards greater acceptance of gender equality, to give women more equal control over resources and assets and more control over their lives and futures. We will not succeed if we do not take into account, and address, unequal gender norms - the social rules and expectations of men and women. We often hesitate to press for gender equality for fear of imposing western cultural norms and undercutting the important development principle of partner government ownership. Yet governments around the world are committed to gender equality, and each country we work with has a women's movement pressing for progress. It is therefore sensible to be strategic and sensitive in our gender equality work, but to remain a firm and consistent advocate.

Gender equality- is a politically and culturally sensitive area that requires careful gender and political economy analysis. It requires us to commit to do no harm and take into account challenges faced by countries in or emerging from fragility and conflict. We will think politically so we address the binding constraints to equality. We must be realistic about what we can achieve and where we can add value, and avoid inadvertently undermining local efforts. We will identify local champions and follow their lead. All of this means taking a long-term and strategic approach to all our work, for lasting and transformative change. For example, it is important to challenge assumptions that violence against women is acceptable, and support the reduction or redistribution of women's unpaid work burdens wherever opportunities arise. There is an inescapable truth – we cannot transform our world unless the place of women within it is transformed

It is important that we inform our diplomatic efforts with a sound understanding of the context of gender equality. We will scan consistently for gender issues and report on these, so we promote equality and speak with one voice. Overlooking gender equality can put effective outcomes at risk or exacerbate. Each year during implementation, Reporting must include results achieved. This is particularly important in the context of the development program targets specified in Making Performance Count. One such target is that more than 80 per cent of investments, regardless of their objectives, will effectively address gender issues in their implementation. This ambitious target is measured by an aggregate of ratings in the annual quality checks. Ratings need to be robust, credible and based on real progress that can be reported on. This means maintaining strong efforts in health and education, and increasing efforts in the aid for trade and governance sectors, which have poorer performance. Unsurprisingly, investments that have a principal or significant gender equality objective at implementation perform more strongly during annual quality checks. Increasing the number of new investments that have gender equality as a principal or significant objective will enhance performance. This means building gender equality into new investments at the start. Measuring the commitment More than 80 per cent of investments, regardless of their objectives, will effectively address gender issues. Commitment to practical action In implementing this strategy, we must take practical action.

Conclusion-

1. Work with partner governments and regional organisations to advance their own gender equality priorities
2. Work sensitively within the local context
3. Support women's organisations and coalitions, including women entrepreneurs, associations and service providers for women, wherever possible and appropriate, recognising the lead role of these organisations in creating change
4. Work in partnership with the private sector, civil society organisations and other donors, and engage the media, schools, parliamentarians and local government as gender equality champions wherever possible
5. Work with men and boys as advocates for gender equality and women's empowerment where that is appropriate, including to address forms of masculinity that hinder progress • closely scrutinise our funding for multilateral organisations, including the multilateral development banks, to ensure effective integration of gender equality
6. Recognise that women are not a homogeneous group, paying particular attention to girls, those with disabilities, indigenous women and disadvantaged women
7. Apply gender equality considerations across the full range of funding mechanisms, including core funding, grants and funding through partner government systems
8. Seize opportunities as they arise to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, keep in mind the 'do no harm' principle and identify and mitigate risks
9. Be prepared to work for the long term—while progress towards gender equality can be rapid when circumstances are right, we need to be aware that this is the work of decades; short term programing is unlikely to be effective.

Thus to integrate gender equality across all sectors and all investments, we will apply these steps.also offer financial support to women in India and encourage and teach them how they can bemaking their own money by starting various business activities.

Refrences-

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