

National Consultation on SDG 5 – Gender Equality

‘Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’

Sustainable Development Goals have a deep rooted emphasis on gender equality and empowerment of women. Concept of gender equality is cross cutting across several goals and targets along with Goal 5 which is specifically on ‘Gender Equality’. Women’s empowerment is a pre condition to achieve the targets of several Sustainable Development Goals like poverty eradication, inequality, good health and well being for all, decent work and economic growth among others. The related targets of the SDGs are encompassing as these also cover major areas of concern like violence and discrimination against women, child marriage, reproductive and sexual health of women, effective participation of women at workplace, political role from parliament to local bodies and also in public life, ownership over land, and laws and policies to ensure effective implementation of these. This is in congruence with the Global Gender Gap index which measures the relative gaps between men and women across four key areas – health, education, economy and politics.

India has remained committed to the goal of achieving equality among all its citizens. The Constitution of India conveys a powerful mandate for equality of women in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights and also Directive Principles of State Policy. India is also a signatory to a number of UN Conventions, like Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action and Convention on Rights of the Child where the nation’s commitment to protect and empower its women and girls is evident. India has been striving to dispel discrimination against women in all forms. Laws against sex selective abortion, child marriage and sexual harassment at workplace are being implemented. There is also a draft women’s policy (2016) of which basic tenet is empowerment of women as a socio – politico ideal.

However, discrimination against women in India remains a deep seated issue despite various policy and legislative reforms being undertaken at all levels. One of the main areas of concern is falling female participation in the labour force. A 2016-15 report by the Labour Bureau reveals that Female Labour Force Participation Rate in India is 23.7%. Even on the indicator of Economic participation and opportunity, and labour force participation in Gobar Gender Gap, India has a low rank on female labour force participation rate though in some

other areas like political empowerment it is ranked better. This is because of high representation of women in local governance institutions.

Sex ratio at birth is also a major area of concern for our country. However, initiatives are being taken to prevent such trends. Through committed implementation of programmes like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, awareness campaigns in the states, focus is on changing the mindset of people towards girl child.

Implementation of SDG 5 will go a long way in making India gender equal. Though the discourse on gender justice and empowerment is rampant in our country, SDG 5 can help in bringing a gendered approach to the policies, schemes and laws of the country. India is expected to gain from its 'demographic dividend' in the coming years and women are an integral part of this developmental process if India wants to tap its full potential. It is only through empowering the women in all forms that women will transcend beyond the constraints they presently face. It is essential to focus on these aspects if India wants to achieve its vision of "A society in which, women attain their full potential and are able to participate as equal partners in all spheres of life and influence the process of social change" (Draft National Policy for Women, 2016).
