

**National Consultation on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls)**

A Report

**11th April 2017
India Habitat Centre, New Delhi**

A National Consultation was jointly organised at New Delhi on 11th April 2017 by RIS, NITI Aayog and UN India on SDG-5 which reads ‘Achieving Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls’.

The Consultation began with the welcome remarks by **Dr. Ashok Kumar Jain, Adviser (Rural Development and SDGs), NITI Aayog**, who stressed that women’s empowerment is a precondition to achieve the targets of several other SDGs also like poverty eradication, inequality, good health, decent work and economic growth.

Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, RIS in his remarks stressed that Goal 5 can not succeed in isolation and in vacuum, and it has to have the connect with goals related to education, health, and poverty alleviation. He raised the issue of cross connect and the cross country connect particularly in terms of challenges like trafficking. He added that the cross-country connect of SDGs is extremely important.

Shri Hardeep Singh Puri, Chairperson, RIS in his special remarks stressed on integration of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment. He focused on sustainable development targets and means of implementation, covering three cardinal aspects of gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) – physical security, integrity and dignity, *Suraksha aur Samman, Manav Adhikar*; equal capabilities, opportunities and choice, *Sampoorna Sashastikaran*; equal voice participation; and leadership in decision-making, *Samanta Bhagidari Netritva*.

Shri Arvind Panagariya, Vice Chariman, NITI Aayog in his inaugural address said that India played an important role in shaping SDGs which can be seen from the fact that they actually mirror the Prime Minister’s development agenda. He opined that major strength of SDGs is not only about goals to achieve, but also about the instruments that will help in achieving those goals. He further added that SDG 5 is a desired goal with a special instrument which helps in achieving other goals too. He pointed out that ultimately we all believe in equality of all human beings, regardless of gender, race or religion and therefore undoubtedly SDG 5 has to be absolutely a central goal and it is also a major instrument of achieving many of the goals that we have listed in the SDGs. His emphasised on inter linkages of SDG 5 with other SDGs as increasing women participation helps in promoting economic growth, wage equality, poverty alleviation, reducing hunger and alike.

The **Hon'ble Minister of Textiles, Smt. Smriti Irani**, in her keynote address strongly articulated the urgency and seriousness of gender equality in India. She stressed on humanising the SDGs for people to connect with, and efficient localisation of various targets strengthening that it would help in achieving the SDGs, particularly goal 5. She added that to improve equality in the society, government has to channelize the resources in right direction to create suitable jobs for women and make women as leaders. She also emphasised about the role of education, which is going to make a huge difference in bringing equality between men and women in decision making power, not limited only to Parliament or Panchayat level, but also at the lower levels and in narrowing wage gap between male and female. She also referred to Hon'ble Prime Minister's initiatives for promoting gender equality like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*, *Mudra Yojana*, *Ujjwala Scheme* and to build toilets for girls in all schools, as some steps towards gender equality.

The National Consultation analysed various issues in the three technical sessions: first on *Promoting Women's Empowerment and Access to Employment*. Second, on *Ensuring Women's Participation in Decision Making and Leadership at all Levels* and lastly on *Ensuring Safety, Dignity and Freedom of Women and Girls*.

The **Session 1 on "Promoting Women's Empowerment and Access to Employment"** was chaired by Shri Hardeep Singh Puri, Chairperson, RIS.

Prof. Bina Agarwal, Institute of Economic Growth, a panellist, focused on Target 5.6a and shared the perspective of how land ownership would help in promoting gender equality and women empowerment. Within SDG 5, Target 5.6 a is to ensure women access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property are key to empower women socially, economically and politically. She added that, this goal is not only very important for women's economic, social and political empowerment but has a strong synergy with several goals like goal one, two, three, four and Target 5.2 which are on poverty, hunger, health, education and violence against women. She argued that access to land is likely to be extremely important in securing livelihoods, in food security and reduced hunger, as agriculture is the main source of livelihood for 67 per cent of the rural population and 69 per cent of the poor in India. But women are much more dependent on agriculture than on any other sector. Around 75 per cent of rural women, compared to 60 per cent of men, depend on agriculture for livelihood. And the term livelihood shouldn't be separated from the goal of employment because decent work and decent employment for women in agriculture means that there is need

for an asset and the more central and key asset is of course land as the factor of production. Further, there is not just a feminisation of poverty but also due to feminisation of agriculture, around 35-39 per cent of agricultural workers are female. She further argued that land in women's hand would improve their livelihood directly but also have an implication for their bargaining power within the home. And reduction in intra-household inequalities could therefore also have an impact on nutrition. Consequently it would increase women's ability to grow their own food; thereby it would increase their incomes. In doing so it is linked to goals 2 and 5 related to reducing hunger and gender equality. Immovable assets in the hands of women will help in empowering not only against intra-household poverty but also generational poverty. There is inter-linkage between land ownership and violence against women, as ownership of land and house greatly reduces women's risk of facing domestic violence and thereby leads to increase in women's participation in other productive activities.

Mr Sher Singh Verick, Deputy Director, ILO country office, focused on labour force participation in the work force and major policy pillars to promote opportunities for women. In his presentation, he pointed that female labour force participation has been historically low and is an important indicator of women's lower access to jobs. Of course, there has been an increase in education and a positive trend in the percentage of young women and girls in education between the ages of 15 and 24 that increased from around 16 per cent in 1993-94 to 36 per cent in 2011-12. Education is a very important issue, as it is one of the key determinants in terms of the wage gap, and in terms of access to good jobs and decent work. He flagged the issue that education levels of young girls need to go beyond secondary schooling to have a positive impact on female labour force participation.

He added that underreported and invisible unpaid work of women, lack of job opportunities, lower quality of employment for women and mechanisation of agriculture are some of the critical issues. Further, reducing women's time burden, improving transport infrastructure, social security, strengthening legal rights and protection, data measurement issues are other critical areas for achieving SDGs directly of course SDG 5, but also SDG 1 and SDG 8 etc.

Dr. Amrita Patel, State Project Coordinator, State Resource Centre for Women, WCD, Government of Odisha shared the innovative state initiatives initiated by the Odisha government to promote women empowerment and gender equality. She elaborated the overall

goals and objectives of the new scheme 'Biju Kanya Ratna' launched in 2016 by Chief Minister of Odisha to address declining child sex ratio in the state.

The next speaker, **Dr. Suman Bisht, Senior Gender Specialist, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)** focused on the challenges like high dependence on natural resources, greater physical labour, water stress, natural hazards, increased work load, time constraints, limited exposure to market, technology and communication and limited opportunities for off-farm income faced by women in the mountain areas, particularly in the Hindu-Kush Himalayan Range. Based on the past learning she recommended improving on-farm and off-farm activities for women, promotion of gender specific innovative livelihood strategies, like the case of replacing the traditional crop with *Tulsi* and *Lac*, and to relocate policies to create jobs for women in mountain and other hilly areas.

The final speaker of the session, **Dr. Ratna Anjan Jena, Statistical Adviser (Plan, Monitoring & Statistics), WCD** presented the Ministry's perspective on women entrepreneurship, skill development and technical knowhow. She stressed that one of the major driving forces for reduction of poverty and accelerating economic growth in the world over has been the promotion of women's economic empowerment. It is absolutely necessary for raising their status and it has been reflected in several studies that women's empowerment leads to better education, health and skill development of the family and certainly better opportunities for the girl child. It is a fact that when women are empowered, the income they would get will be spent on the family and the education and wellbeing of their children. There is need for development of comparable indicators at the national and sub-national level to monitor progress, gender equality being very much crucial. The sustainable goal 5, the gender equality and empowerment of women emphasises to end all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, provides equal opportunities, equal rights to economic resources, access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property. To provide a reliable estimate of women's status in India, it is necessary to develop key gender indicators so that gender parity can be achieved.

She added that the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the nodal ministry for Goal 5, has a robust framework of laws and policies and has initiated schematic interventions to facilitate women in distress, to have access to justice, to empower women through various initiatives like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*, *Sabla* Scheme for adolescent girls, Support to

Training and Employment Programme (STEP) , *Mahila e-haat* and has propagated gender issues through initiatives like gender champions and special *mahila* police volunteers. Shelter homes and working women hostels are provided for women in need through national commission for women, and issues of women are addressed in a quasi-judicial manner.

Session 2 on “*Ensuring Women’s Participation in Decision Making and Leadership at all levels*” was chaired by **Shri Anil K. Jain, Additional Secretary, NITI Aayog.**

Ms. Rebecca Tavares, India Country Representative, UN Women emphasized on prioritising sectors to ensure women participation in decision making and leadership. She added that there is need to prioritize some steps like ending violence against women and girls, promoting decent work and equal pay, listening to women’s voices in decision making in all institutions of Government. She opined that there should be clear guidelines in implementation of the specific policies for women in all the departments. Apart from that, for achieving Goal 5 there is need for transparent financing, increasing capacity to develop gender data and role of private sector in structural implementation of development policies for women.

Shri B.R. Naidu, Addl. Chief Secretary, Government of Madhya Pradesh, Department of Labour shared his experience from Madhya Pradesh and emphasised on restructuring the policy at local level. He recommended that most of the programmes and policy initiatives should be pro-women, while pointing out Madhya Pradesh’s Chief Minister Community Leadership Programme which emphasized on women empowerment. He highlighted three sections which need to be prioritized: IDC activities, gender budgeting and ending violence. He further elaborated on the Unique Capacity Development Programme of Madhya Pradesh where all the SDGs are divided into 18 subsections and also about development of a training programme.

The last speaker of the session, **Prof. Mridul Eapen, Member, State Planning Board, Kerala** in her presentation focused on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and shared the experiences of Kerala, particularly the Kerala’s 11th Five-Year Plan. She said that GRB is a powerful tool to ensure that development planning, financing, implementation and evaluation do not bypass women and girls, and this process becomes the medium through which gender inequalities can be addressed. She added that gender mainstreaming had emerged as a means to introduce gender sensitivity into policy making and promoting the goals of gender equality. One approach which had gained widespread acceptance was introducing a gender perspective

into Government Budgets. Social policies which have impacted positively on women should be integrated with macroeconomic policies keeping in mind women's unpaid work at home.

Last session of the National Consultation focused on *Ensuring Safety, Dignity and Freedom of Women and Girls* was chaired by **Shri Bibek Debroy, Member, NITI Aayog. Ms. Shipra Roy, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development** presented strategic approach to strengthen the implementation of the legislative framework to combat violence against women; establishment of institutional mechanisms to facilitate access to justice for women affected with violence; removal of gender discriminatory practices embedded within the government procedure; and revising National Policy for Women to develop an architecture for women empowerment over the next 15-20 years. She further threw light on various programmes and initiatives which government had come up with to deal with any form of discrimination and violence against women.

Shri James Mathew, DDG, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) informed in terms of planning for the monitoring aspects of sustainable development goals particularly in respect of SDG 5. He added about initiatives undertaken by MoSPI for developing an indicator framework for monitoring SDGs. He informed that there would be three monitoring frameworks on SDGs – Global, Regional and National. As far as development of global and regional indicators frameworks are concerned, work is ongoing under the leadership of UNSD and UNESCAP. For Goal 5, Ministry of Women and Child Development, the nodal ministry, after Consultation with other implementing ministries has developed a list of indicators for the targets which are included in the national draft list. In order to get the inputs, MoSPI had uploaded the national draft list on its website for finalising the national indicators for monitoring SDGs.

He informed that mostly the data in the case of SDG 5 and even other SDGs, data can be available from specific surveys by an agency like NFHS or the routine surveys by survey agencies like NSSO, RGI or from administrative data. These are the major sources and MOSPI is trying to initiate some action to identify new data sources like thinking of new data and other sources, and non-conventional data sources, but it is in the initial stage. In addition, the main objective of SDG principle is that no one is left behind, which means we should measure data at the lowest possible disaggregation level. Now that is a big challenge for a country like in India where we depend on survey data. In a small country of one or two million people in which

they have the complete administrative data, they can get any disaggregation but in a country like India it will be a problem.

The state government representative **Mr. Kuldeep Ranka, Secretary WCD, Rajasthan** highlighted various initiatives taken by Government of Rajasthan to empower women and girls. In his presentation, he highlighted that to facilitate champions for exemplary work done in the field of protection and empowerment of girls and women, the Government has initiated *Garima Balika Sarakshan Avum Samman Yojana*, in which there is provision to provide cash award and certificate on National Girl Child Day. Besides that *Mukhya Mantri Rajshree Yojana* has been implemented to create positive environment towards birth of a girl child and to support her health and education. So far, since 2016 around 3.76 lakh families have been benefitted. Further, *Chirali-Friends Forever*, *Sajha Abhiyan- Baal Vivah Mukat* Rajasthan and Self Defence Training Programme for Girls-*Saksham* are some of the flagship schemes of the Government. Besides, under the scheme 'Empowering Women: Digital Literacy' women are trained and educated about the digital world through basic computer training programmes, which have been running successfully.

One initiative which the state government has taken is to authorise the women SHGs to run the fair price shops. This shop in the village is a very important centre where not only the food grains are distributed, but a lot of influence is exercised in the community. Further state government is also advancing loans for the purpose of running of the FPS shops by the women SHGs. Realising the magnitude of the child marriage problem, the state government decided to have a ten-year plan, launched in March 2017, to carry out extensive state strategy campaign and also to have coherent action by various agencies like UNDP and UNFP in the state.

Dr. Sunita Dhar, Advisor, Jagori pointed out that violence against women and girls is a global human rights issue and a substantial development challenge, which crosses all cultural and economic boundaries. It is not about poor women, it is not about rural and tribal women, it is for women across all communities, classes, institutions wherever they are located. This has impacted in a very serious manner in terms of their productivity, mobility and equal participation. She also covered some facts on violence against women and its effects on women's productivity, mobility, and integrity. It is important to recognize women as an important individual rather than as a secondary citizen of a society.

She also mentioned that this multidimensional approach to gender equality is extremely important because we are also talking about ending discrimination and violence including

ending trafficking and sexual form of marriage. Early marriage, forced marriage, FGM, SDGs are also looking at recognising unpaid care and domestic work and promoting women's participation and opportunities in leadership in which we know that India is way ahead because of the reservations that we have at the local level. Now it is very important for us to recognise that most women are outside formal sector of work and many of the laws do not really reach them, and moreover they do not have access to the services which are limited need to be expanded. Another important point made was to understand that violence against women is also resulting in declining the workforce participation rate. There are many reasons for it as women are facing sexual harassment at work place being one of them, though we have had lots of initiatives in this country.

During the valedictory session, **Mr Yuri Afanasiev, UN Resident Coordinator** concentrated on global perspectives of SDG 5 for which about 80 per cent of the data and statistics in India are actually not disaggregated for the purposes of goal 5 or frankly any other gender related connectivity and other goals. He added that presentation of Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report on the implementation of SDGs at UN High Level Political Forum, 2017 would also be an opportunity for India to learn and compare and to possibly introspectively reflect on how ambitious targets are in India or not and make thereby conclusions.

Prof. Pam Rajput, Punjab University gave valedictory remarks on women empowerment and suggested developing national and local indicators, as data is a very critical factor to assess the women's status across the country. She further talked about the convergence and accounting mechanisms, both in terms of the line ministries, horizontally as well as vertically from the national to the state to the local level. And in the process, we can't forget the marginalised, the vulnerable and of course the young people group of women, which are very crucial, because when we talk about young people, we feel proud that India will be the youngest nation by 2030, but let us not forget half of the young population, that of the young girls.

Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, DG, RIS summarized the key takeaways from the day long National Consultation. He emphasised that promoting women's empowerment in access to employment is extremely important in terms of bringing out how as a learning process women ownership of land and houses, particularly in the form of property rights and then in terms of domestic violence and how we address issues related to their engagement in productive

activities. He suggested that there is a need to have regulatory as well as policy framework to enhance income and adaptive capacities of women living in mountain areas and thereby contribute in diversifying their livelihood securities and options.

On the Second session on ensuring women's participation in decision making and leadership at all different levels he suggested two important lessons that can be derived -from the Madhya Pradesh which emphasise on women empowerment and from the Kerala's five-year plan document which talked about how Kerala government has introduced gender responsive budget.

He summarised the Third session, pointing out that ensuring safety, dignity and freedom of women and girls had couple of points which are important in terms of how anti-discrimination law is going to be a priority and should remain so for the respective governments.

The National Consultation ended with the closing remarks by **Dr P. K Anand, Senior Consultant, NITI Aayog**. He gave some practical suggestions for empowerment of women and forcefully stressed on the importance of education, skills, employment, data indicators, ownership of assets, and use of Information Technology to facilitate empowerment. Installation of CCTVs at public places can act as a deterrent and also help change mindsets in the society.

He suggested that there is a need to have such indicators which actually capture what we want to capture to reflect the Goal and Targets. Further, an indicator should not make the Goal or Target as its prisoner; but the indicator should rather be such that it properly reflects the Goal and the Targets that we are striving at.

At the end, of the National Consultation, Dr Anand extended the vote of thanks to all the august participants.
