Gender and Inclusive Growth

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Communications for Debate and Research

In this section, we present Communications for Debate and Research. We also give a profile of some select issues on which policy-oriented high-quality research is required. Senior academicians from the universities and research organisations, senior officials in the various ministries in the Central Government and also in the State Governments, Planning Commission, Reserve Bank of India and other banks, economic advisers in the industrial organisations and scholars in India and from abroad are requested to communicate to the Journal, the themes on which significant research gaps exists and on which researchers need to undertake both analytical and policy-oriented research. The purpose of this Section is to bridge the information gap that exists between the research world and the policy/practical world.

We have now introduced the system of publishing brief accounts of the proceedings of select Conferences organised by our professional community in recent times. The purpose of these write ups is to provide some information about the research issues that have become manifest in these event, for the benefit of the research community. It is our intention to focus on the research issues and not on the general proceedings of the events. We welcome such write ups on the conferences organised by the members of the economic associations and by the research institutions, for possible publication in the CDR section of the Journal.

Articles on the suggested themes and of course, on other relevant themes may be sent to Managing Editor, The Indian Economic Journal (iejpanch@yahoo.co.in). Articles selected on the basis of rigorous refereeing system now adopted by the Journal, would be published.

Managing Editor
In spite of claim of ‘gender inclusive growth’ by the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012), the mass of Indian women have not only been bypassed but also marginalised in the growth process. Real wages of mass of women have declined. Due to withdrawal of the state from social sector, women’s work burden in unpaid care economy (cooking, cleaning, nursing, collecting fuel-fodder-water, etc.) has increased manyfold. Subordinate status of women manifests in declining child sex ratio i.e., ‘missing girls phenomenon’, deteriorating reproductive and child health, feminisation of poverty, increased violence against women, enhanced mortality and morbidity among girls and women and deplorable condition of elderly women and women in difficult circumstances. Government schemes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, Microfinance Movement and Mid Day Meal Scheme have brought the poor women from the level of starvation to subsistence but not to human development. For gender inclusive growth, the state needs to play more proactive role through gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming in the Indian economy.

Towards Faster and More Inclusive Growth

The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) ‘Towards Faster and More Inclusive Growth’ aims to attain ‘gender inclusive growth’ in terms of benefits flowing through more employment and income to women who have been bypassed by higher rates of economic growth witnessed in recent years. The recognition of the need for more inclusive growth by our planners is a welcome shift in emphasis from mere increase in growth rates to improvement in standards of living of those below the poverty line through increase in employment opportunities as well as better delivery systems to ensure access to economic benefits by women from poverty groups and more economic opportunities for women in different layers of the economy. Gender inclusive growth by its very definition implies an equitable allocation of resources with benefits accruing to women from every section of society. ‘The 11th Plan recognizes that women are not a homogenous category for planned intervention—that they belong to diverse castes, classes, communities, economic groups,
and are located within a range of geographic and development zones, and that mapping and acknowledging the specific deprivations which arise from these multiple locations, can alone determine the success of planned interventions. The Scheduled Caste (SC) women comprise of 16.24%, the Scheduled Tribe (ST) women comprise of 8.41% and Muslim women comprise of 13.48% of India’s female population as per 2001 census.” (Planning Commission, 2006)

**Current Macroeconomic Scenario**

In the context of depressing global macroeconomic scenario affecting the toiling poor women due to feminisation of poverty and heavy burden of global economic downturn on women of the South; an evaluation of gender implications of Eleventh Five Year Plan becomes need of the hour. Real wages of mass of women have declined. Women’s work burden in unpaid care economy (cooking, cleaning, nursing, collecting fuel, fodder, water, etc.) has increased manyfold due to withdrawal of state from social sector (Chakraborty, 2008). Privatisation of education, health and insurance has increased non-SNA (System of National Accounts) unpaid work of women in the working class and lower middle class households (Hiraway, 2009). Gender friendly implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in terms of skill building, resource generation, work condition and remuneration reaching actual beneficiary women is still a distant dream. While large majority of women are drowning in the ocean of market fundamentalism, they are given small sticks in the form of self-help groups (SHGs) and microfinance to sail through.

Inflation in agricultural commodities, sky rocketing prices of essential food items such as grain, vegetables and seasonal fruits has imposed massive hardship for women. More than two-third of Indian women suffer from malnutrition as per National Family Health Survey (NFHS 3) in 2006. Startling revelation of Dr Arjun Sengupta Committee’s *Report on Unorganized Sector Labour* (GoI, 2007) that over 394.9 million workers (more than 85 per cent of the working population and more than 78 per cent of the workers in unorganised sector) live with an income of less than Rs 20 a day. Eighty-eight per cent of the STs and the SCs, 80 per cent of the other backward classes (OBCs) and 85 per cent of Muslims belong to the categories of ‘poor and vulnerable,’ who earn less than Rs 20 a day. Twenty-one to 46 per cent of men and 57 to 83 per cent of women in non-agricultural sectors are employed as casual workers, who get less than minimum wages. The unorganised workforce contributes around 60 per cent to the national economic output of the country.

The neoliberal economic policies of financial sector reforms; attacks on the livelihood base of the farmers, forest people and slum dwellers; land grab in the name of creation of special economic zones (SEZs), massive displacement and relocation of the masses to suit the vested interests of construction industry violate ‘rights’ or ‘entitlements’ of the urban and rural poor, especially women from the marginalised sections.
Non-Fulfillment of Commitments made in the Eleventh Five Year Plan

Goals and objectives of the Eleventh Plan have not translated into better output and outcome indicators and persistence of gender based disadvantages are evident (Mishra and Jhamb, 2009) as follows:

Child Sex Ratio

The declining juvenile sex ratio is the most distressing factor reflecting low premium accorded to a girl child in India. As per the Census of India, juvenile sex ratios were 971, 945 and 927 for 1981, 1991 and 2001 respectively. In 2001, India had 158 million infants and children, of which 82 million were males and 76 million were females. There was a deficit of 6 million female infants and girls. (Patel, 2010) The mid-decade Census, 2005 has revealed further decline in the child sex ratio in several parts of India. In the urban centres, deficit of girls has been enhancing due to pre-birth elimination. (HDR, Mumbai, 2010). In spite of demand of women’s groups and recommendation of the Eleventh Five Year Plan to revisit ‘the two child norm’ laws imposed by several state governments, the authorities continue to victimise the victim, namely poor, Dalit, tribal and Muslim women and unborn girls (as the norm has resulted into intensified sex selective abortions).

Reproductive and Child Health

Evaluation of Chiranjeevi Yojana to halt maternal and child mortality has revealed that the public-private-partnership (PPP) in this scheme allows private practitioners milk taxpayers’ money without giving necessary relief to pregnant woman. Only in cases of normal delivery, the private practitioner admit women for delivery and in case of complicated delivery, the concerned women are sent to over-crowded public hospitals. In National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), accredited social health activists (ASHAs) who are the first point of call for any health related demands of deprived sections of the population, especially women, children, old aged, sick and disabled people. She is the link between the community, and the health care providers are not paid even minimum wages and are paid ‘honorarium’! (Acharya and Paul, 2009).

Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)

Restructuring of ICDS must promote convergence of several schemes of different ministries such as health, rural development, tribal development, Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) and NREGA targeting children. Though the Eleventh Five Year Plan promised ‘Walk-in ICDS centers’ at railway stations and bus stands for migrant women and children, none has started yet; not even in the megapolis such as Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai.
**Food Security**

As against targeted public distribution system (PDS), the state needs to adopt an approach of universalisation and upscaling of PDS. Government has a vital role to play in countering the tendency toward concentration of economic resources, through genuine tax, credit, and land reforms to disperse buying power toward the poor. Women eat the last and the least. Women have the highest stakes in food security.

**Under the Category of 100 Per cent Allocation for Women**

In the budgetary allocation of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), institutional support for women survivors of violence needs major attention, but so far not much has been done regarding Scheme for Relief and Rehabilitation of Victims of Rape promised by the Eleventh Five Year Plan. Women’s groups providing support to women survivors of domestic violence are highly disappointed as there is no separate allocation for implementation of The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 which had defined major role of service providers such as hospitals, law & order machinery, protection office/counsellors and shelter homes. In several states, implementation of Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 2002 is far from satisfactory as no budgetary allocation is made for putting in place structures and mechanisms for monitoring abuse of sex determination and sex pre-selection technologies. Schemes for working women’s hostels and Swadhar scheme for women in difficult circumstances should be easily made available to reputed women’s groups and the state must facilitate the process of acquiring of land, physical structures, building construction, connectivity with road, transport, health centre, schools, etc., for Swadhar centres. The state governments, zilla parishads should be asked to encourage women’s groups and SHGs of women to come forward to run them in a democratic and participatory manner.

**Water**

The audit report of Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) on Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) has made a shocking revelation that despite recurrent bouts of water-borne diseases across the country, all states are ignoring drinking water quality. Most of the state governments did not conduct water quality tests during 2008-09. Poor urban, rural, tribal women’s major survival struggle revolves around safe drinking water. Leaving supply of safe drinking water to private players has enhanced hardship of common women.

Budgetary allocation for water supply and sanitation that affects women's life greatly as consumers, and unpaid and partially paid-workers does not mention facilities for women. This has perpetuated 'unproductive female workload of fetching water from long distance' avers Indira Rajaram (2007), 'water-sheds in the country need to be contoured on the Geographical Information systems (GIS) platform. Using space technology for mapping of
aquifers, a five year plan needs to be drawn up for creating sustainable water sources within reasonable reach of rural habitation.’

**Energy Expenditure of Women**

Reproductive work and domestic duties demand major time and energy of women. A study conducted in urban Delhi through a household survey between September and November 2006 estimated that, ‘Working women spend five hours on an average per day on housework/childcare in addition to six hours on paid work; where unpaid work is also being done, this adds on another four hours. Women who are not working spend on an average of seven hours in housework and care work.’ (Sudarshan and Bhattacharya, 2009). In the rural and tribal areas, collection of fuel, fodder, water, looking after the livestock, kitchen gardening demand great deal of time and energy from women and girls. The Eleventh Plan document has acknowledged the fact, but in reality nothing significant is done in terms of priority given to alternative to biofuels that causes smoke related illnesses, availability of safe drinking water, child care facilities and adequate public transport for women that would reduce their drudgery.

**Social Security for Women in Informal Sector**

Unorganised Workers’ Social Security Act, 2008 has hardly made any difference in the lives of millions of poor women in the unorganised sector due to non-implementation of the Act. In the labour market, bizarre scenario is created where girl children are trafficked for sex trade, domestic work and bonded labour is employed in occupationallty hazardous condition, ‘sexploitation’ has become the norm in the informal labour markets, domestic work/servitude go unchallenged; young women workers in SEZs are hired and fired as per the whims of employers and are paid miserable wages (Labour File, 2010).

Ninety per cent of women are not getting maternity benefits. Design of National Maternity Benefit Scheme must be critically examined and specific details should be provided for its judicious implementation, and concerned officers who are guilty of non-performance must be made accountable and punished.

**Elderly Women**

Half-way homes and elderly women’s homes must be provided in every district. Pension Scheme for old, disabled women is implemented only in four or five states such as Kerala, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) must be motivated to provide an extensive data base on 60+ women in their areas. For widows or elderly women, creation of community-based half-way homes, fully equipped with counselling facilities, temporary shelter, ‘get-to-gather’, drop-in-centre, skill building/upgradation and technical training, is far more humane way of providing social security rather than doling out money that gets snatched from them by the bullies or wicked relatives.
NREGA

Trade unions and women’s rights organisations from Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Bihar have repeatedly conveyed that even under NREGA pay disparities are reported by women. Though NREGA provided jobs to 56,29,822 women in 2007-08 (GOI, 2009), they are assigned mostly the unskilled and low paying tasks. Development economists and feminists have demanded that NREGA be turned into an ‘earn-while-you-learn’ plan through public-private partnership (PPP) model that creates an on the job training module aimed at upgradation of skills of women working at the sites. National Skill Development Mission (NSDM) plans to add one crore workers to the non-agricultural sector through skill training. It must respect 30 per cent women’s component of the total employment opportunities. Human (here, women) capital formation is a must for value addition among women employed in NREGA. Central Employment Guarantee Council that is supposed to be an independent watchdog for NREGA must be made accountable for gender sensitive implementation of NREGS.

JNNURM

Vocational training for women must be an inbuilt component of JNNURM. Support services such as crèche, working women’s hostel, schools, ICDS centres, ITIs must converge to make an effective utilisation of infrastructure.

SHGs

Provision of loans at 4 per cent interest rate is implemented only in Andhra Pradesh. Federations of SHGs for women are pressurising other state governments also to provide loans at differential rate of interest. A feminisation of agriculture, 71 per cent women workers are in agriculture and form 39 per cent of total agricultural workers, demands women component plan in PRIs. There is an urgent need for a paradigm shift from micro-credit to livelihood finance, comprising a comprehensive package of support services including insurance for life, health, crops and livestock; infrastructure finance for roads, power, market, telecom etc., and investment in human development; agriculture and business development services including productivity enhancement, local value addition, alternate market linkages etc., and institutional development services (forming and strengthening various producers’ organisations, such as SHGs, water user associations, forest protection committees, credit and commodity cooperatives, empowering panchayats through capacity building and knowledge centres etc.). A network of capacity building institutions should be set up to strengthen and develop SHGs to undertake the various functions into which they are expanding, including training of trainers (ToT), and to nurture and mentor them during the process. Milk cooperative must be run and managed by women. The local authorities should facilitate meeting of SHGs of women with the bank managers, lead bank officers and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.
(NABARD) officers. There should be reservation of 10 per cent of authorised shopping areas for SHGs of women. Women’s SHGs with primitive accumulation of capital should charge 2 per cent or below 2 per cent rate of interest. The SHGs that manage to acquire Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) loans should reduce the rate of interest to 1.5 per cent. Female headed households (single, divorced, deserted and widows) should get special consideration while granting loans.

**Women’s Component Plan (WCP)**

Gender audit of Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP), Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) and financial allocation of Ministry of Minority Affairs is urgently required. So far only proclamations are made by the state governments but except for Kerala, none of the states have implemented WCP in all development oriented schemes and programmes. For example, in the Union Budget, 2009-10, there is need to emphasise women’s component in mega schemes on education, health, MGNREGS, Bharat Nirman, AIDS control programme, skill development fund, animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries programme and funds from Department of Agricultural Research and Education. These development oriented activities where massive financial allocation is made need to specify women’s component, at least 30 per cent of the total budgetary allocation within the overall financial provision. Reservation of seats for girls must be ensured for skill development institutes and model schools for which sizeable allocation is made in the budget.

**Women’s Right to Education**

No efforts are made by the state or professional bodies for employers’ education about basic human rights of women workers. Supreme Court’s directive as per Vishakha Judgment (August 1997) concerning safety of women at workplace is still not implemented by most of the private sector employers and media barons.

**Utilisation of Financial Allocation for Pro-Women Schemes**

Only three-four states are taking advantage of financial allocation for Swadhar, working women’s hostel, short stay homes for women in difficult circumstances and UJJAWAL: A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation. What are the bottlenecks? Implementation of crèche scheme is far from satisfactory. Three meals per child per day at the crèches recommended by Eleventh Five Year Plan are rarely provided. Except for Tamil Nadu, Cradle Baby Reception Centres are non-existent in rest of India. No status report is available on Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) promised in the Eleventh Five Year Plan.

It is encouraging to note that the proposal to reserve 50 per cent seats for women in PRIs was cleared by the cabinet on 27 August 2009. But flow of funds to PRIs has not been
streamlined even after separate budgetary allocation are made in the current budget. How many states have provided women's component in panchayat funds? Is it utilised judiciously for women's practical and strategic needs?

All state governments must be made to work towards fulfillment of longstanding demands of the women's groups that provisions be made in the composite programmes under education, health and rural development sectors to target them specifically at girls/women as the principal beneficiaries and disaggregated within the total allocation and restrictions are placed on their re-appropriation for other purposes.

Road and Rail Transport for Women

India is undergoing U-shape phenomenon so far as women’s work participation is concerned (Sudarshan and Bhattacharya, 2009). There has been continuous increase in the work participation of women in the Indian economy. Most of the working women in urban and rural areas travel in overcrowded buses and trains. In the transport sector top priority needs to be given for women special buses and trains in all cities. For women street-vendors, seat-less buses and special luggage compartments in trains need to be provided.

Implementation of Legislations

Promise of the Eleventh Plan to allocate funds for implementation of PCPNDT Act, 2002 and Domestic Violence Act, 2005 has remained unfulfilled in most of the states; and marginally fulfilled in some states such as Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

No progress is made in providing audit of land and housing rights of women by any ministry—urban development, rural development, tribal development, PRIs and urban local self-government bodies.

Minority Women

After consistent highlighting of the findings of Rajinder Sachar Committee Report, 2006 on deplorable socioeconomic status of majority of Muslims in India, special budgetary allocation for socially excluded minority communities has been made. In sub-plan for minorities where allocation of Rs 513 crore is made in budget estimates, no specific allocations are made for minority women and women headed households by Ministry of Minority Affairs.

Inadequate allocation for crucial schemes affecting survival struggles of women such as Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers (Rs 56.50 crore), working women's hostel (Rs 5 crore), Swadhar (Rs 15 crore), rescue of victims of trafficking (Rs 10 crore), conditional cash transfer for girl child (for the first time introduced and allocation of Rs 15 crore made) needs to be corrected.
Assessing the Performance of the Eleventh Plan

Several women-specific schemes and programmes don’t make state government responsible for better financial allocation and channelising through appropriate ministries. Synchronisation of funds from the ministries to targeted population through specially designed schemes is very important. For example, need for schemes towards education, health and nutrition, skill development for girls in the age group of 6-15 years who are neither covered by heavily funded ICDS (that targets 0-6 age group) or RCH (that targets 15-45 age group).

In rhetoric, the policy framework underlying the Eleventh Plan recognises the rights/entitlements for women but the structures and mechanisms for interventions are too bureaucratic, top down which don’t allow women’s groups to take lead. For example, schemes for women in difficult circumstances—Swadhar, working women’s hostels. For women-specific centrally sponsored schemes, the state governments are not coming forward with matching grant and funds of the union budget for women remain unutilised.

Women Elected Representatives in PRIs

The Eleventh Plan promised the PRIs their due share with recognition that empowerment of PRIs as the primary means of delivery of essential services is crucial and critical to inclusive growth. But in reality, PRIs are treated as beggars and are starved of funds. Series of workshops conducted for women elected representatives repeatedly brought out the fact that, ‘Even in 2009, democratic decentralization in PRIs has not ensured financial decentralization.’ (Raskar, 2009). The leakage in delivery mechanism and poor accountability at the state level has prevented funds from reaching the targeted beneficiary. (Ahuja, 2009). Except for RCH programmes, all schemes and programmes targeted for women have grossly inadequate budgetary resources for the major programmes/schemes in the EFYP.

Inclusion of gender budget statement in the annual national budget has been a noteworthy achievement for the women’s movement in India. (Nakray, 2009). Under, the Eleventh Plan, several state governments have been proved guilty of non-utilisation of allocated funds due to non-release of funds on time (e.g., Maharashtra, Assam, Rajasthan).

Assessing the Eleventh Plan from the perspective of women, children, Dalits, adivasis, minorities, disabled and others, we can infer that the Plan has not addressed the issues of social exclusion adequately. Not only that, but at times the Plan has shown complete antipathy towards women’s concerns as follows:

Women’s Rights to Land and Housing

Women’s land and housing needs must be understood from the point of view of their right to dignified life. They should not face any discrimination in exercising their right to land and housing due to their gender, caste, race, age, religion and ethnicity. State and civil
society initiatives must facilitate the process of women’s empowerment through exercising women’s housing rights (WHRs). The local self-government bodies should reserve 10 per cent of all houses/flats/industrial units/shops in the market places for women. Rural and tribal women must get their land and housing rights. Scheduled Caste Sub Plan and Tribal Sub Plan financial allocation should be used for this purpose. Half-way homes for special needs of elderly, disabled and mentally ill women should be created in the community/neighbourhood. Schools of architecture, engineering colleges and institutions for interior design must incorporate gender concerns in housing, land use and town planning in their syllabi and must organise capacity building workshops and training programmes for women. Gender sensitisation of the decision-makers in the housing industry (both public and private sector) and the elected representatives of the mainstream political bodies should be given top priority. For formulation of gender-sensitive policies, gender experts and community based organisations (CBOs) working on the housing-land-water and sanitation must be inducted in the apex bodies of urban, rural and tribal housing projects.

**Dangerous Consequences**

Tax-free clinical trials with stated goal of making India a preferred destination for drug testing to private sector can have adverse impact on Indian women as it makes the poor guinea pigs at the hands of commercial minded ‘techno-docs’. Non-utilisation and partial utilisation of funds allocated for protective, promotive, economic and social welfare programmes for women due to faulty design of the schemes (Maternity Benefits Scheme, wherein non-synchronisation of financial allocation, schemes targeted for adolescent girls’ nutrition and Members of Parliament Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) and funds earmarked for grain banks in the tribal areas known for starvation deaths—demand urgent attention of politicians, bureaucrats, citizen organisations and women’s groups.

**Research Issues for Further Analysis**

The Eleventh Five Year Plan needs to not only recognise and value social reproduction but work proactively to redesign development services and macroeconomic policies that ensure social security and support services to mass of women (CBGA, 2009). Gender commitments of the Eleventh Plan must reflect into budgetary allocation coupled with greater efficiency and effectively targeted and utilised resources to guarantee substantive equality for women. Enhancement of public spending on social infrastructure is the only way to gender inclusive growth.

Studies need to be commissioned to highlight the gap between plan outlay and outcome, local and global implications of pro-poor and pro-women budgeting, alternative macro scenarios emerging out of alternative budgets and inter-linkages between gender-sensitive budgeting and women’s empowerment (Patel, 2009). There is an urgent need to promote researches to ensure visibility of women in statistics and indicators. Research on
conceptual and technical issues to capture women’s paid and unpaid work in different sectors of economy demands top priority.

The most difficult task in the gender analysis of budget is to compile gender segregated data on allocation and expenditure on pro-women and gender neutral schemes which are not generated from the existing formats and schedules of budgetary procedures and reporting systems. Again, mere expenditure analysis does not give any true picture about the actual impact of such expenditure on women. This certainly calls for more in-depth research on sectoral issues over a larger than annual time frame. There is need for research to formulate uniform guidelines and procedures for gender budgeting so that valid comparisons and inferences can be made at the regional and national level.

References


