

Part – II: Initiatives for Women Empowerment

The need of gender equality and women empowerment is universally adopted and is the matter of huge concerns now-a-days for ensuring it, various organisation, worldwide have take initiatives. Some of them are as follows:

1. Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): in 1979 and international convention to secure equal rights to women.
2. International Women's Day:
 - UN began celebrating International Women's Day on 8th March in the International Women's Year, 1975.
 - It is a time to reflect progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who played an extraordinary role in history of their country or community.
 - International Women's Day, 2017's theme was Women in the changing World of work's Plan 50-50 by 2030.
3. UN initiated UN Decade for Women programme, the goal of which was promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women around the world, in 1975-1985.
4. UN has organised four world conferences on Women:
 - A. Mexico City – 1975: here UNGA adopted Mexico Plan of Action; here World Plan of Action for implementation of the objectives of International Women's year was defined.
 - B. Copenhagen – 1980
 - C. Nairobi – 1985: here UNGA adopted Nairobi forward looking strategy.
 - D. Beijing – 1995: here UNGA adopted Beijing Declaration and the platform for Action.
5. International Day of the girl child is observed on October 11, since 2012, as declared by UN.
6. World Bank started Gender Equality Strategy: an ambitious course to narrow opportunities and outcome gaps between males and females.

7. Gender Equality is one of primary goal of ILO.
8. Goal of MDG was to promote Gender Equality and empower women.
9. Gender Equality is our 5th Goal under SDG:2030.

Provisions in Indian Constitution for Safeguard for Women:

Principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution, in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and DPSPs. Constitution does not only grant equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women.

Various Provisions are:

A. Preamble

- Assures justice – social, economic and political, equality of status and opportunity and dignity to individual. Thus, treats both men and women equal.

B. Fundamental Rights

- Article 14 – ensures to women, Right to Equality.
- Article 15(1) – specifically prohibits discrimination on basis of sex.
- Article 15 (3) – empowers state to take affirmative actions in favour of women.
- Article 16 – provides for equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office.

C. DPSPs

- Article 39 (a) – provides that state due to its policy towards securing or men and women equality the right to an adequate means of livelihood.
- Article 39 (d) – mandates equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- Article 39 (e).
- Article 42 – provides that state make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

- Article 51A (e) – promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce the practices derogatory to dignity of women.

Indian Interventions for Women's Right

- In 1976, India enforced National Plan of Action providing guidelines based on UN's World Plan of Action for Women.
- During 7th Plan – National Policy on education was adopted focusing on providing educational opportunities to women.
- 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, ensures reservation for women in local bodies.
- India is signatory to number of Un convention such as:
 - CEDAW
 - Beijing Plan for Action
 - Convention on Rights of the child, etc.
- India enacted National Policy for Empowerment of women in 2001.
 - It is a blueprint for the future, with the express goal of bringing about advancements, development and empowerment of women and eliminates all forms of discrimination.
 - It is directed towards achieving inclusive growth with special focus on women.
- National Girl Child Day is celebrated in India on 24th January since 2006.

Various Schemes for Women

1. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao – to ensure survival, protection and education of girl child.
2. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP): seeks to upgrade skill of poor and assetless women and provide employment on sustainable basis.
3. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme or Employment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG) – SABLA: meet nutrition needs and to provide vocational training for girls above 16 years of age.
4. Rastriya Mahila Kosh – National Credit Fund for Women: set up in 1993, to access micro-credit from the formal financial system in the country.

5. Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY): a conditional Maternity Benefit Scheme.
6. Ujjwala Scheme, 2007: for prevention of trafficking and rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims.
7. SWADHAR GREH (A scheme for women in difficult circumstances): ensuring protection to women, especially in difficult circumstances.
8. Maternity Benefit Act, 1961.
9. Adolescent Anaemia Control Programme.
10. National Mission for Empowerment of women.
11. Working Women Hostel.
12. Central Victim Compensation Fund Scheme.
13. Rajiv Gandhi Creche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers.
14. PRERNA – a responsible parenthood strategy to broke stereotypes of early marriages and early childhood, etc.
15. Jansankhya Sthirata Kosh.
16. National Adolescent Girl Scheme/Kishori Shakti Yoajana.
17. Balika Samriddhi Yoajan.
18. Nutrition Program for Adolescent Girls.
19. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana: Maternity Benefit Programme.
20. Janani Suroaksh Yojana.
21. Ladli Yoajan.
22. Nai-Roshni: scheme for leadership development of minority women.
23. Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme.
24. Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme.
25. Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana.

Legislative Interventions

1. Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.
2. Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.

3. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.
 4. The Indecent Representation of Women Act, 1986.
 5. National Commission for Women Act, 1992.
 6. Prevention of Trafficking of Women and Children.
 7. Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986.
 8. The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987.
 9. The Married Women's Property Act, 1874.
 10. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929.
 11. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
 12. The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technology (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994.
 13. The Prohibition of Child Marriages Act, 2006.
 14. The Guardians & Wards Act, 1890.
 15. The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986.
- Recent Initiatives:**
1. One stop centre: to be funded by Nirbhaya Fund and provide range of services including medical, legal and psychological support to women.
 2. POCSO e-Box: online complaint system for child abuse.
 3. Mahila-e-haat: a unique digi-market platform for women entrepreneurs. It aims at financial inclusion and economic empowerment of women.
 4. New Passport Rule: for benefit of single/divorced mother.
 5. Gender Champion Scheme: to make young boys and girls sensitive and create positive social norms that values the girls and their rights.
 6. Mahila Police Volunteer Scheme.
 7. Training for Women heads of Panchayat.
 8. Village facilitation and Convergence Service: to link women in need with the schemes/programs being implemented.
 9. Mahila Coir Yojana.
 10. Women Helpline Scheme.
 11. For recognition of Women:
 - Stree Shakti Puraskan
 - Rajya Mahila Samman and Zila Mahila Samman
 - Nari Shakti Puruskar

(For Crime Against Women visit Part - III)