

## Development Models of Gender: Policies and Perspectives

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### Abstract

Gender defines traits forged throughout the history of social relations. Gender, although it originates in objective biological divergences, goes far beyond the physiological and biological specifics of the two sexes in terms of the roles each is expected to play. Gender differences are social constructs, inculcated on the basis of a specific society's particular perceptions of the physical differences and the assumed tastes, tendencies and capabilities of men and women. The gender perspective looks at the impact of gender on people's opportunities, social roles and interactions. Successful implementation of the policy, programme and project goals of international and national organizations is directly affected by the impact of gender and, in turn, influences the process of social development. Gender is an integral component of every aspect of the economic, social, daily and private lives of individuals and societies, and of the different roles ascribed by society to men and women.

**KEYWORDS:** Gender, Social Relations, Divergences, Social Constructs, Social Development.

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### Introduction to Gender

"Gender" is not the same as "sex" or "women"; it is about the relationship between men and women, and therefore concerns men as much as it does women. Defined by societal norms and practices, and supported by societal attitudes, this relationship is usually skewed in favour of men. Hence the focus of this article on the situation of women. This approach to analysing gender relations does not negate the fact that men can also find themselves in a position of subordination; it recognizes that women are more often subordinated.

### Subordination

"Subordination" within this gender relationship can take various forms, ranging from inhibited access to certain kinds of work to the skewed structure of the legal framework. In general, subordination can result in the marginalization of women; that is, their exclusion from the process and benefits of development. It is important to note that this relationship - as well as the roles men and women are expected to fulfill - is often socially defined; by what is expected culturally, by religion, by the balance of power within society, and other factors. As such, this relationship is a difficult one to change through policy, particularly if the policy environment is one that favours the status quo. Subordination and marginalization can lead to a planning process which does not consider the needs of women, nor their contribution made through the various roles they

play. It is premised on the assumption that decisions made will have universal benefits, and it can occur in the household, in the community or in institutions.

## **THEORIES OF GENDER DEVELOPMENT**

The Cognitive Approach

The Behaviorist/ learning approach

The consequences of behavior and their impact

Shaping and the learning of gender roles

Observational Learning approach

The Cognitive Approach

The approach that focuses upon the thought processes underlying learning.

The approach that gives importance to cognition when understanding and explaining behavior.

The term cognition refers to "knowledge" as well as "the process of knowing"

### **Cognitive approach emphasizes:**

- ❖ Thought
- ❖ Feelings
- ❖ Thinking
- Values
- Expectations etc

The core of the cognitive approach is the idea that people's thinking determines how they will perceive the world, and how these perceptions will be acted upon.

### **The Cognitive Approach to Gender Roles**

The theory proposes the interaction of mental schema and social experience in directing gender role behavior.

The cognitive approach focuses upon the child's "understanding". A child's understanding refers to

the way he/she perceives and tackles a phenomenon. Information about gender is organized into set

of beliefs the sexes i.e. gender schema is mental framework that organizes and guides a child understand of information relevant to gender.

**Example:** information about which toys are for girls and which toys are for boys forms schema that guides behaviour.

**Example:** If

a child has seen women being respected in his family, he will perceive women as a respectable being; and if

he has seen women being battered and maltreated he will perceive them as some low grade creature.

A Policy Paper produced by the OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) and the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), assesses how donors can improve the quality of their programming in fragile situations drawing on case study reviews of programmes in Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DCR), Ethiopia and Nepal is much useful for reference.

### **Gender Inequality Index (GII)**

Gender inequality remains a major barrier to human development. Girls and women have made major strides since 1990, but they have not yet gained gender equity. The disadvantages facing women and girls are a major source of inequality. All too often, women and girls are discriminated against in health, education, political representation, labour market, etc.—with negative consequences for development of their capabilities and their freedom of choice.

The GII is an inequality index. It measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development—reproductive health, measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates; empowerment, measured by proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females and proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education; and economic status, expressed as labour market participation and measured by labour force participation rate of female and male populations aged 15 years and older. The GII is built on the same framework as the IHDI—to better expose differences in the distribution of achievements between women and men. It measures the human development costs of gender inequality. Thus the higher the GII value the more disparities between females and males and the more loss to human development.

The GII sheds new light on the position of women in 159 countries; it yields insights in gender gaps in major areas of human development. The component indicators highlight areas in need of critical policy intervention and it stimulates proactive thinking and public policy to overcome systematic disadvantages of women.

### **Equal Opportunities Commission**

The Development of Gender Roles in Young Children Sex stereotyping is one of the EOC's (Equal Opportunities Commission) key themes. The main focus of this theme is to raise awareness of the pervasive nature of sex stereotyping and the social and economic damage it causes, to increase young people's opportunities and to act as a catalyst to bring about a reduction in occupational segregation. Much of the EOC's work on this theme concentrates on young people in secondary education and the move from school to training, further or higher education or work. Despite this, attitudes towards gender and what is seen as gender appropriate behaviour are formed in early childhood. Despite this, attitudes towards gender and what is seen as gender appropriate behaviour are formed in early childhood. Although these views may change as children grow older, they will still influence choices and decisions which are made throughout life. Those

subject and career choices can contribute to job segregation leading to poorer pay and prospects, particularly for women.

## **Some of the policy issues involved with Gender**

### **A. Health**

#### **1. Practical**

To tackle those health issues facing women, such as low nutrition, high rates of complications in childbirth, and the rapid rise in the incidence of AIDS.

To support women in their child-bearing and child-rearing roles, by providing better access to maternal and child health services.

To improve women's access to health services in general, as well as to clean water supplies.

#### **2. Strategic**

To increase women's control over fertility decisions, including improving access to contraceptive advice and technology, and ensuring abortions are conducted under medically safe conditions and at reasonable cost.

### **B. Education**

#### **1. Practical**

To improve women's level of educational attainment

Even though there is equality between the sexes in this area, the levels (for both women and men) need to be improved.

To provide second-chance educational opportunities for women who leave the system early, whether due to pregnancy or otherwise, as well as for young adult females who wish to continue their education.

To improve access to education, such as through distance learning and promotion of non-formal education, so as to take into account the multiple demands of women's time.

#### **2. Strategic**

To increase the number of females and males in non-traditional subjects, such as in Science and Technology courses after Form 3.

To encourage females and males to pursue non-traditional careers

This will require instilling in both males and females the appropriate attitudes and skills in order that they may define personal goals and pursue individual aspirations, as well as the creation of an environment which is supportive of their participation in non-traditional spheres.

To ensure that educational materials, teaching methodology and classroom management reflect gender considerations.

To sensitise and heighten the awareness of teachers, school administrators and education officials, as well as those involved in non-formal education, to gender issues.

To facilitate the presence of more women in decision-making positions within the education system.

### **C. The Household**

#### **1. Practical**

To improve our understanding (as mentioned above) of the nature and extent of women's unwaged work, with the aim of valuing this in some way for statistical and policy purposes.

#### **2. Strategic**

To improve our understanding of the internal workings of the household, not only in relation to the sexual division of labour, but also in relation to the internal distribution of resources and patterns of decision making.

To develop effective societal mechanisms to protect women against domestic violence, which is an infringement of human rights.

### **D. Media**

#### **1. Practical**

To encourage media agencies to be responsive to the fact that women often lack access to information on issues that affect their lives and which would help them overcome their particular problems. For instance, the media's capability as a tool of education and health promotion should be supported and utilised.

To increase media coverage, with respect to both quality and quantity, of women's situations and concerns, their contribution to society, for example, with reference to their level of unwaged work.

## **2. Strategic**

To encourage and utilise the media agencies' role in providing information on issues that affect women's lives. For instance, the media are in a position to explore avenues for and obstacles facing women's economic empowerment and participation in politics and decision-making. In general, government should take advantage of the media's position to examine the gaps that exist between men and women, and aim to enhance the media's capability as a tool of economic empowerment of women so as to promote a more just society.

To ensure the mainstreaming of gender issues in the media, given the media's important and influential role in removing or reinforcing prevailing prejudices and stereotyping vis-à-vis women's role in development. The portrayal of women in advertising is one of the areas that must be looked at in this regard.

To increase media coverage, both with respect to quality and quantity, of women's situations and concerns, their current and potential contribution to society as equal partners with men, for example in the political area.

To encourage gender-responsive media programming that recognises the similarities and the differences among women.

To increase women's access to and participation in all levels of the media, including decision making levels.

## **E. Institutional Framework**

### **1. Practical and Strategic**

To ensure that the the ministry of health has the capacity and the capability to carry out its functions with the greatest possible efficiency and effectiveness. The mainstreaming of issues that concern women's position and condition must be accompanied by effective mechanisms for the review and monitoring of sectoral policies.

To improve co-ordination within the non-governmental organisation sector and between this sector. The ultimate aim will be to encourage the emergence of a women's movement, comprising a network of women's organisations and individuals, regardless of class, race, religious persuasion, age, disability and political party affiliation.

To promote and maintain an awareness of key gender issues and develop analytical capabilities for those issues.

## **F. Legislation**

### **1. Strategic**

To reform the law in those areas which still do not provide for gender equality, such as in the areas of pregnancy, tenure, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and recognition of women's unwaged work.

To improve implementation of the law, through improvements in the level of legal awareness amongst women and men and in legal enforcement mechanisms.

### **General**

Overhaul existing databases and introduce new databases, so as to capture the true picture of the situation of women in India, and their contribution to the nation's development. There is a desperate need for databases broken down by sex to get a better understanding of differences in the incidence of poverty between men and women and between different groups of women. This may require a comprehensive national survey. In addition, studies need to be conducted that focus on women's participation in the informal sector, as well as women's unwaged work within the household (such as time use surveys). Moreover, data need to be updated on a more regular basis than is presently the case.

Establish "focal points" within all Ministries and agencies, to ensure the inclusion of gender considerations in policy making, and to act as a source for training in gender planning for all female and male policy-makers. Under the schemes these focal points will be charged with identifying gender needs as they relate to their Ministry's area of activity, and ensuring that these needs are considered in policy design and implementation, as well as in the distribution of annual budget allocations. Monitoring of outcomes will need to conduct against detailed objectives, indicators and targets. In addition, the focal points will be charged with the gender sensitisation of government personnel at all levels.

Provide budgetary support to women's support groups at the community level (contingent to the review of their action plans and monitoring their performance), so that they can establish shelters for women and children affected by domestic violence, carry out community sensitisation programmes on that subject, and provide support groups and counselling for women. A goal in this area is that, eventually, every man who commits domestic violence would have to face moral pressure from a committee of a dozen or so neighbors.

## **G. Poverty**

### **1. Practical**

Increase the remunerative employment opportunities for women, through a combination of policies to promote economic growth, investment in women's "human capital" (such as

relevant training and improved health), and encouragement of women's entry into the market (such as flexible work conditions). Since most remunerative employment opportunities may not be in the formal sector, there also need to be policies to support self-employment and microenterprise development [such as, small business advice, credit facilities (see below), marketing advice and transportation assistance]. The context should be a policy environment supportive to the informal sector.

Enhance women's access to credit by supporting grass-roots credit schemes, and encourage the setting up a national women's credit institution, which will meet the credit needs of low-income women who often find themselves excluded from formal credit due to collateral requirements. The institution can be modelled on successful institutions in other parts of the world (such as the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh) that have proven the effectiveness of lending to poor female entrepreneurs and producers, in terms of high savings mobilisation, high repayment rates, and productive use of loans)

. The institution should be a joint project between the NGOs, the private sector and the donor community (all of whom have valuable experience with such schemes), and the Government may have a minority stake in its capitalisation.

Invest in basic social services, with an emphasis on the poorest groups of women. Among other things, there needs to be an expansion of SIMAP money supplements; expansion of nutrition programmes; improvements in the social infrastructure and service delivery mechanisms; increased access to productive resources, including training and credit (see above); increased access to education and primary health care; and increased access to safe drinking water. Investment in social infrastructure will disproportionately benefit women, given their need to balance different roles. In line with the Social Summit in Copenhagen, the aim should be to earmark at least 20 percent of the national budget for basic social services.

Establish the special funds for supplementing poor families' mortgage payments and housing rent payments that are called for in this National Development Strategy.

## **2. Strategic**

Train women in non-traditional (and more highly paid) trades. Apart from direct provision, financial inducements should be offered for women to attend non-traditional vocational training institutions (such as sponsorships or career development loans).

Establish a committee to look into the case for affirmative action. Affirmative action in the form of quota systems are used to overcome historical imbalances in many countries around the world, as diverse as Norway, Argentina, Pakistan and Tanzania. However, affirmative action remains controversial, and its applicability in India be analysed. Tax incentive to private firms can have a similar affect in boosting the participation of women, and should also be considered by the Equal Opportunity Commission.

## **H. Employment**

### **1. Practical**

Implement the policies announced throughout this Strategy to boost employment opportunities. Note that there should also be sponsorship (or provision of career development loans) for retraining of unemployed women, and those returning to labour market after raising children.

Conduct a study into use of time, in the attempt to estimate the economic value of women's unwaged contribution to the national economy. By imputing economic values to unwaged work, we will gain a greater understanding and appreciation of women's contribution; a contribution which is largely invisible in national income accounts.

Introduce policies to create "family friendly" working environments and employment conditions. Such policies would include some combination of one or more of the following: (1) the introduction of crèches at work; (2) the provision of more day-care facilities; (3) the introduction of "flexitime" systems; (4) the introduction of the option for workers with very young children to work from home; (5) the introduction of the option to shorten the working day while a child is very young; (6) the introduction of the option to switch to part time work while a child is very young; and (7) the introduction of parental leave for females and males (that is, both maternity and paternity leave). Such policies, by assisting women in balancing their roles, will encourage more women to enter the work force.

## **I. Health**

### **1. Practical**

Provide improved levels of primary health care and reproductive health care, with a special emphasis on female malnutrition and maternal mortality levels. An integrated programme will need to include, among other things, nutrition programmes, health education, improved access to safe drinking water, improved access to health care, improvements in the quality of health care, and tackling of resource constraints in the Ministry of Health (in terms of staffing shortages and financial resources). The rapid rise of AIDS amongst women should be tackled through a concerted health education programme.

### **2. Strategic**

Distribute contraceptive technology, so as to enhance women's control over fertility decisions. This will need to be accompanied by wider availability of family planning advice.

Monitor those health institutions that carry out abortions, to ensure that minimum health and safety requirements are adhered to. In addition, counselling should be provided for those women.

### **Conclusion**

On overall it is very easy to develop policies on women and particularly marginalized communities but it's difficult to practice them in action. In India the situation is same, we have best policies but not that best practices. As matter of policy we should develop proper policies to ensure the gender equality.

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