

Study of Millennium Development Goals of Education in India from A Gender Perspective

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Abstract

The focal point of the present paper is to assess the progress of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of education from gender perspective in India. Though India, has emerged as one of the largest and fastest growing global economies during the last decade yet it lags behind its neighboring countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, China and Vietnam, both in terms of HDI (135th rank out of 186 countries) and GDI (132th rank out of 148 countries). The low ranking reflects the need to study certain kinds of inequalities which hamper its growth process. One such dimension is gender inequality in education. The present study attempts to capture gender inequalities in education through Educational Index using figures of 2011 Census and Sex Ratio using figures of 2001 and 2011 Censuses. It has been observed that the States/U.Ts with highest ranks in female Educational Index such as Lakshadweep, Delhi, Goa etc. occupy lowest ranks in terms of Sex Ratio. Puduchery presents the best syntheses in both indicators i.e. in female Educational Index and Sex Ratio while Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu have registered poor levels in both the respective indicators. As the unequal sex-ratio and gender inequalities in education pose a serious challenge for inclusive development, a proper integration of gender equality in development process is required in order to combat with this problem.

KEYWORDS: Gender inequality, Education, Millennium Development Goal, Education Index, Sex Ratio, India

(I) INTRODUCTION

“Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015” Millennium Development Goals Gender equality has become a global agenda in the 21st century. Over the past few decades, gender equality has been explicitly recognized as a vital key for socio-economic development of the country. Gender equality is defined as the equal participation of males and females in various spheres of life such as education, employment, health and politics etc. whereas gender inequality represents the unequal participation or the gap in the achievement of males and females in these spheres which ultimately affect the overall wellbeing of the whole society/nation. The progress and prosperity of any nation is determined by the level of its education. A well educated population is not only essential to support economic growth, but is also a precondition for growth to be inclusive. Moreover, inclusive development cannot be attained unless women participate equally in the development process and any kind of inequality especially in the area of female education hinders the whole developmental process. Education is the single most effective instrument for social and economic transformation. The literature suggests that the economic gains from female education are higher as compared to male education (Schultz, 1993). Various other studies have also shown that

education has made a significant contribution in improving the status of females. Female education is the most effective way of reducing the inequalities and ensuring their maximum participation in the developmental process and moreover it is female schooling which is more important than male schooling for social outcomes such as fertility, child health, and infant mortality (Subbarao and Raney, 1995, and Dreze and Murthi, 2001& Hassan and Menon, 2004).

In this regard, the world community recognizes gender equality and education for all as an important Millennium Development Goal; and therefore the Resolution of the United Nation (2010) stated that: “achieving gender equality and empowerment of women is both a key development goal and an important means for achieving all of the Millennium Development Goals”. This Resolution focuses on gender equality through proper access to education to females, full and productive employment for them, increase in female’s participation rate in economic and political decision-making processes, and ending any kind of violence against females.

Currently, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been widely accepted as a yardstick for measuring the development progress across the countries. The MDG constitute eight global objectives (see Table-1) each with one or more quantitative targets, which the countries plan to achieve by 2015.

Table-1 Millennium Development Goals & Targets

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	1. Halve the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day by 2015 2. Halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015
2. Achieve universal primary education	3. Make sure that all boys and girls are able to complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015
3. Promote gender equality and empower women	4. Get rid of gender differences in primary and secondary education by 2005
4. Reduce child mortality	5. Reduce the number of under-five children who die by two thirds by 2015
5. Improve maternal health	6. Reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters by 2015
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	7. Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015 8. Halt and begin to reverse the spread of malaria and other major diseases by 2015
7. Ensure environmental sustainability	9. Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs; reverse loss of environmental resources by 2015 10. Halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015 11. Make a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020

<p>8. Develop a global partnership for development</p>	<p>12. Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction—nationally and internationally</p> <p>13. Address the least developed countries’ special needs. This includes tariff- and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction</p> <p>14. Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing States</p> <p>15. Deal comprehensively with developing countries’ debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term</p> <p>16. In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth</p> <p>17. In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries</p> <p>18. In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies—especially information and communications technologies</p>
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Source: Millennium Development Goals Report

India, which is a signatory to the Millennium Declaration (2000), also aims at achieving the MDG by the year 2015. Presently, India is passing through the phase of demographic and economic transition. On demographic front, it has demographic bonus, with the distinct advantage of having one of the youngest population and home to the second largest population (with a headcount of around 1.4 billion by 2025) in the world whereas on economic front, the growth rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was more than 9 percent in 2003-08 and continued to grow at higher pace in 2009-11. India’s transition to one of the largest and fastest growing global economies during the last decade has been a remarkable phenomenon. But the ultimate aim of the development/growth is to improve the quality of people’s lives by providing an environment of wider choices, equal opportunities and higher levels of well-being. More practically, it means removing obstacles or inequalities in the way of achieving optimum level of human development and welfare. Thus, for India, to reap the benefit of demographic dividend it is essential that its population must be educated, healthy, and adequately skilled. Whereas, in terms of human development index (HDI, which include three basic indices: healthy index, education index and income index), India stands at 135th rank out of 186 countries. It means India has a long way to go as it is still in the medium human development category and lags behind with neighboring countries like Sri Lanka (73rd), Thailand (89th), China (91st) and Vietnam (121st) which falls in the category of high human development levels(Human Development Report, 2014). But as the HDI themselves; do not reveal a complete picture of human development, the UNDP introduced the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) in 1995, GDI is a gender sensitive index which

accounts for inequalities between males and females in the same dimensions as those of HDI (India Human Development Report, 2011).

Following, the Human Development Report (2014) India is placed at 132nd rank out of 148 countries in terms of Gender Development Index (GDI). Even the neighboring South Asian nations like China (88th rank) and Sri Lanka (66th rank) are far ahead of India. Though the Constitution of India ensures gender equality in its preamble as a fundamental right and also empowers the States/U.Ts to adopt measures of eliminating discrimination against females by ways of legislation and policies, yet the considerable disparity still persists and need to be overcome. Thus, it makes a strong reason for studying the issue of gender inequality in education in Indian context.

Given the diversity in socio-economic and demographic structure of Indian economy, the developmental progress at national level conceals large disparities within the country. Accordingly, the national goals must be re-tuned at State level and more attention is to be paid to the areas which are lagging behind i.e. the poor performing States. Therefore, the broad purpose of the present study is to capture the progress in education from gender prospective at the State level in India. The reason for the same is that education is an important input as well as an outcome indicator, which influence the other development indicators like health, nutritional status, income and enhancing social status (IHDI, 2011). And, India is actively pushing forward with its MDG agenda for revamping and restructuring education towards inclusive education.

In order to do this, the study is based on various secondary sources namely Censuses reports of India for the year 2001 and 2011, various other reports and documents, research papers, articles, books and news papers etc. The study throws light on various dimensions of gender inequality in education in India which will be helpful for decision makers in formulating new policies/amending the existing policies. Thus, the present study is divided into the following sections:

Section-II discuss the measurement issues particularly related with educational dimension; Section-III depicts the findings pertaining to the levels of inter-state disparities in the education especially from gender perspective in India and sex ratios and Section-IV conclude with a suggestions and policy implications.

(II) METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

In the present study the Indian States have been accorded ranks using figures of (a) indicators of Educational Index (which is a combination of literacy index and enrolment index of males and females) and (b) Sex Ratio (using data of 2001 and 2011 Censuses) with a view to assess the gender equality in education in India.

The Educational Index uses the same methodology as in the HDI and a following formula is applied in order to construct the Educational Index by using the data of 2011 Census of India:

$$\text{Educational Index} = [(0.65 * \text{Enrolment Index}) + (0.35 * \text{Literacy Index})]$$

Further, to calculate enrolment and literacy index, the following methodology is adopted:

$$\text{Enrolment Index} = \frac{\text{Percentage of children attending educational schools in the age-group of 6-18 years in each State}}{100}$$

$$\text{Literacy Index} = \frac{\text{literacy rate of each State}}{100}$$

(III) FINDINGS/RESULTS

Gender and education, especially female education has been crucial and fundamental to advancing overall human development levels and to increase productivity. The Census data provide a comprehensive view of where India stands on key indicators of socio-economic development namely sex ratio and literacy, set against the goal of creating a more equitable society and attaining the Third major objective of Millennium Development Goal. Thus, this section presents the pattern of inter-state gender inequalities through Education Index and trends in gender composition through sex-ratio and finding out best performing States and laggard States in the progress of gender development in terms of education.

III.1 Educational Index of India

According to the latest Census data, the literacy rate of India has gone up from 64.83 percent in 2001 to 74.04 percent in 2011 showing an increase of 9.21 percentage points. The literacy among males rose from 75.26 percent to 82.14 percent, with an increase of 6.9 points, whereas among females it rose from 53.67 percent to 65.46 percent, with an increase of 11.8 points (Census, 2011).

Though over the years the gender gap in education has been narrowing, but still it is matter of great concern even after various policy measures with respect to gender equality in India. The progress in literacy levels, when viewed in terms of different sections of society, presents a picture of wider gap and neglect as it highlight that female literacy in India remains lag behind their male counterparts in both the Censuses (2001, 2011). The following Table-2 highlights the variation in educational levels of males and females.

Table-2 Educational Index by Sex in Haryana, 2011

States/UTs	Literacy Index		Enrolment Index		Education Index			
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Rank	Female	Rank
Andhra Pradesh	0.748	0.591	0.611	0.62	0.659	33	0.610	31
Arunachal Pradesh	0.725	0.577	0.794	0.754	0.770	14	0.692	21
Assam	0.778	0.662	0.496	0.53	0.594	35	0.576	35
Bihar	0.712	0.515	0.632	0.625	0.660	32	0.586	34
Chhattisgarh	0.802	0.602	0.723	0.692	0.750	17	0.660	24
Goa	0.926	0.846	0.818	0.806	0.855	3	0.820	4
Gujarat	0.857	0.696	0.671	0.638	0.736	19	0.658	26
Haryana	0.840	0.659	0.609	0.661	0.690	29	0.660	25

Himachal Pradesh	0.895	0.759	0.800	0.800	0.833	7	0.785	9
Jammu & Kashmir	0.767	0.564	0.609	0.605	0.664	30	0.590	33
Jharkhand	0.768	0.554	0.662	0.684	0.699	28	0.638	27
Karnataka	0.824	0.680	0.673	0.672	0.726	23	0.675	23
Kerala	0.961	0.920	0.723	0.733	0.806	10	0.798	8
Madhya Pradesh	0.787	0.592	0.794	0.784	0.791	11	0.716	15
Maharashtra	0.883	0.758	0.699	0.688	0.763	15	0.712	16
Manipur	0.860	0.723	0.659	0.681	0.729	21	0.695	20
Meghalaya	0.759	0.728	0.703	0.761	0.722	24	0.749	13
Mizoram	0.933	0.892	0.784	0.753	0.836	6	0.801	6
Nagaland	0.827	0.761	0.533	0.538	0.636	34	0.616	30
Odisha	0.815	0.640	0.647	0.614	0.706	27	0.623	29
Punjab	0.804	0.707	0.692	0.695	0.731	20	0.699	19
Rajasthan	0.791	0.521	0.696	0.634	0.728	22	0.594	32
Sikkim	0.865	0.756	0.73	0.792	0.777	13	0.779	10
Tamil Nadu	0.867	0.734	0.741	0.77	0.785	12	0.757	12
Tripura	0.915	0.827	0.754	0.741	0.810	8	0.771	11
Uttar Pradesh	0.772	0.571	0.691	0.672	0.719	26	0.636	28
Uttarakhand	0.874	0.700	0.663	0.675	0.737	18	0.683	22
West Bengal	0.816	0.705	0.669	0.715	0.720	25	0.711	17
Andaman & Nicobar	0.902	0.824	0.805	0.799	0.839	5	0.807	5
Chandigarh	0.899	0.811	0.761	0.793	0.809	9	0.799	7

Dadra and Nagar Haveli	0.851	0.643	0.712	0.738	0.760	16	0.704	18
Daman and Diu	0.915	0.795	0.527	0.680	0.662	31	0.720	14
Delhi	0.909	0.807	0.807	0.839	0.842	4	0.828	2
Lakshadweep	0.955	0.879	0.861	0.850	0.894	1	0.860	1
Puducherry	0.912	0.806	0.830	0.837	0.858	2	0.826	3
India	0.808	0.646	0.680	0.676	0.725		0.665	

The data presented in Table- 2 depicts the following important facts:

- The top three States in terms of highest ranking in Educational Index among males comprises: Lakshdweep (0.894), followed by Puduchery (0.858) and Goa (0.855). Whereas the bottom three States in terms of lowest ranking in Educational Index among males consist of: Assam (0.594), preceded by Nagaland (0.636) and Andhra Pradesh (0.659).
- Similarly, the top three States in terms of highest ranking in Educational Index among females comprises: Lakshdweep (0.860), followed by Delhi (0.828) and Puduchery (0.826). While the bottom three States in terms of lowest ranking in Educational Index among males consist of: Assam (0.576), preceded by Bihar (0.586) and Jammu & Kashmir (0.590).
- Assam is laggard in both segments i.e. male-female Educational Indexes while Lakshdweep and Puducherry top in the both indexes.
- Disparities in case of male Educational Index is less as compared to female Educational Index i.e. the highest value in case of male Educational Index is 0.894 and lowest is 0.594 whereas the highest value in case of female Educational Index is 0.860 and lowest is 0.576 among the same States i.e. Lakshdweep and Assam respectively.
- Except the above said States, some States shows no change in their ranking of both male-female Educational Index and this category comprises- Andaman & Nicobar (5th), Mizoram (6th), Tamil Nadu (12th) and Karnataka (23rd). While other States shows large variations among the male-female Educational Index ranking and which consists of: Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and West Bengal.
- In terms of educational levels, the Union Territories of India perform better as compared to the States of India. Nearly, 4 out of 6 Union Territories hold higher ranks in both male and female Educational Index.

As generally it is accepted that with educational development the sex ratios are expected to be balanced (or less unfavourable). Because literacy level and educational attainment are considered as the vital factors of development; higher levels of literacy and education further help people in acquiring new skills and lead to greater awareness about gender-

sensitivity. Here, the question arises that-Do the States/U.Ts with high female literacy or educational levels also have high sex ratio? Thus in order to answer this question, the next section deals with the gender composition level of Indian States/U.Ts i.e. it tried to assess societal benefits of female education in terms of sex ratio.

III.2 Gender Composition in India, 2001 & 2011

One of the most important demographic feature of human population is its gender composition which should be always balanced otherwise the very survival of mankind is in danger. Gender composition in terms of sex ratio in India is defined as the number of females per thousand of male population. The skewed sex ratio in India is mostly attributed to lower status of women, high mortality, illiteracy and economic backwardness. The survey of the data given in Table-3 has brought forth the following facts about gender composition of India:

- ❖ Overall sex ratio at the national level has increased by 7 points to reach 940 at Census 2011 as against 933 in 2001 Census. This is the highest sex ratio recorded since Census 1971.
- ❖ As per 2001 Census, 16 States had sex ratios above the national average of 933 while in 2011 Census 18 States have sex ratio above the national average of 940.
- ❖ Kerala ranks highest in terms of sex ratio (1st rank) followed by Puduchery (2nd) consecutively in 2001 and 2011 Censuses while Daman & Diu recorded the lowest sex ratio (35th) in both the Censuses.
- ❖ Notably, the two major States (namely Mizoram & Gujarat) have shown remarkable improvement in their ranking. Mizoram from 16th to 9th rank and Gujarat from 21st to 24th rank. Unfortunately two regions (namely the Union Territory of Lakshdweep & the State of Nagaland) have shown major decline in their ranking. Lakshdweep from 14th to 18th rank and Nagaland from 24th to 19th rank in both Censuses period.

Table-3 Sex Ratio in India (2001, 2011)

States/U.Ts	Sex Ratio, 2001	Rank	Sex Ratio, 2011	Rank
Andhra Pradesh	978	5	992	4
Arunachal Pradesh	893	26	920	23
Assam	934	17	954	15
Bihar	919	23	916	25
Chhattisgarh	989	3	991	5
Goa	961	12	967	12
Gujarat	921	21	918	24
Haryana	861	30	877	31
Himachal Pradesh	968	9	974	10
Jammu & Kashmir	892	27	883	29
Jharkhand	941	15	948	16
Karnataka	965	10	968	11
Kerala	1058	1	1084	1
Madhya Pradesh	920	22	930	20
Maharashtra	923	19	925	22

Manipur	974	6	987	6
Meghalaya	972	7	986	7
Mizoram	935	16	975	9
Nagaland	900	24	931	19
Orissa	971	8	978	8
Punjab	876	28	893	27
Rajasthan	922	20	926	21
Sikkim	875	29	889	28
Tamil Nadu	987	4	995	3
Tripura	948	13	961	14
Uttar Pradesh	898	25	908	26
Uttrakhand	962	11	963	13
West Bengal	933	18	947	17
Andaman & Nicobar	846	31	878	30
Chandigarh	777	34	818	33
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	812	33	775	34
Daman & Diu	710	35	618	35
Delhi	821	32	866	32
Lakshadweep	947	14	946	18
Puduchery	1001	2	1038	2
India	933		940	

Source: Censuses of India, 2001 & 2011.

In-nutshell it can be said that the State level study of India has brought forth results contrary to the belief that the imbalances in sex ratios occur in case of socially and educationally backward areas. Whereas the present study bring out the surprising trends in terms of female literacy and sex ratios. It has been observed that States/U.Ts with high female education levels registered poor ranks in terms of sex ratios i.e. except Puduchery, all other States/U.Ts such as Lakshdweep, Delhi and Goa who perform better in female Educational Index ranks but registered lower ranks in sex ratios. While the States/U.Ts which shows higher ranks in sex ratios namely Kerala, Chhatisgarh and Tamil Nadu etc. recorded lowest ranks in terms of their performance in female Education Index.

Therefore, all it depicts that India is still crippling with the problem of sex ratio imbalance. In India, the preference for sons is quite strong that it is manifested as limiting the birth and survival of girls. Thus, it necessitates that the nation works out on gender-related policies with special focus on the most laggard States/U.Ts. In this regard, a proper coordination is required between female education programs and gender sensitive programs for all round development of the States/U.Ts.

(IV) SUGGESTION & CONCLUSION

If education is considered as the crucial indicator of national development then it must also address and incorporate gender issue in it. As the core subject-matter for achieving “Education for All” is the issue of access and equity. It is now globally recognized that education particularly female education is imperative to control illiteracy and poverty. Thus, the educational supply factors and Government intervention must be strengthened

in order to make the Millennium Development Goals successful in India without any compromise to achieve comprehensive growth. On the basis of the above analysis of inter-state gender inequalities in education across India, the following policy options are suggested:

- To educate women for empowerment and poverty alleviation.
- To nurture communication between ministries to create new mechanisms, maximize the present potentials and foster a unified gender responsive approach.
- To build gender education awareness programs and to revamp the existing plans and policies and develop de-centralized pattern in planning, implementing and monitoring the process.
- To ensure a synergistic partnership between formal and non-formal type of education.
- To orientate the educational system to serve the objectives of equality for females and their empowerment especially for the females which belong to lower, ethnic and poorest section of the society.
- To increase the enrollment and retention of girl students in the educational institutions, the Government and policy-makers made provision of stipends for rural girls to cover their educational costs; hire more female teachers; building and improving sanitary facilities and to establish village educational committees, formed by parents, teachers, and community representatives to provide parents a visible role in promoting quality education.

CONCLUSION

Massive educational deprivation of the females is still the core reality of the nation. It is crucial in regions where stubborn social norms of caste and patriarchy, along with poor governance, are rampant. Education must be used as an agent of basic changes in the status of women. Education, being a public good, must include principles of non-discrimination, equity and justice. It should be visualized as a milestone for female development, which in-turn leads to inclusive national development. These realities cannot be disassociated from the planning and implementation of educational policies. Therefore, the success of Goal of Millennium Development would remain an illusion for India if constructive, consistent and progressive legislative reforms, which can effectively address the ground realities and facts of the economy are not given due consideration in national policies and programs. India is hovering towards becoming a super power; a developed country by 2020 and this aspect must be supported by ensuring gender equity particularly in education. Thus, there is a need to rethink concepts and strategies for promoting female's dignity and rights that support equal and just relations between women and men. A gender-centred policy framework needs to be aligned with inclusive economic growth policies. This leads to provide basic social facilities, social protection and foster and sustain human development.

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