

EDUCATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN- OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES

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Abstract:

Raising the education levels, literacy rates of women is one of the most effective investments for increasing female productivity on top of enhancing the well being of families. In developing countries, reducing gender inequality in literacy and in primary, secondary and management education is essential to reduce poverty and accelerate sustainable development. The gender differential is particularly large in educationally backward, traditionally captured and under developed regions. Educated women provide good human habitat and knowledge to the future generation. Therefore, the presence of educated women is needed for the sustainable development. Paper has assembled two major objectives as obstacle and opportunities for the girls and women education.

Key words: *Sustainable development, Civilized, Gender, poverty, opportunity, obstacles and women education.*

INTRODUCTION:

Gender is an important area of study in many disciplines such as Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, Literature, and Economics and so on. Gender Studies, an interdisciplinary study dealing with gender identity and other related topics, examines the way in which historical, cultural and social events shape the role of gender in different societies. To understand gender as a part of different discipline it is necessary to understand many terms and concepts that are in use.

Gender inequality persists in Indian economy and prevails in all sectors of life like health, education, economics and politics. Men have always had the upper hand in these fields. Even though gender equality soars to great heights in the post independence era, many steps have been taken in various sectors of life to bridge the gap between men and women to bring them up to the same level.

All men and women have equal rights. These rights help them to contribute to and benefit from social, cultural, political and economical development. To ensure this, all men and women must have equal access to conditions that help them realise their rights. Gender equality refers to equal valuing of the similarities and differences between men and women and the roles they play.

EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

Gender based discrimination is both a cause and a consequence of deep rooted disparities in society. Poverty, geographical isolation, ethnic background, disability, traditional attitudes and status play a role in undermining the ability of women and girls to exercise their rights. Harmful practices such as early marriages and pregnancy, gender based violence, and discriminatory education laws, policies, content and practices still prevent millions of girls from enrolling, competing and benefiting from education.

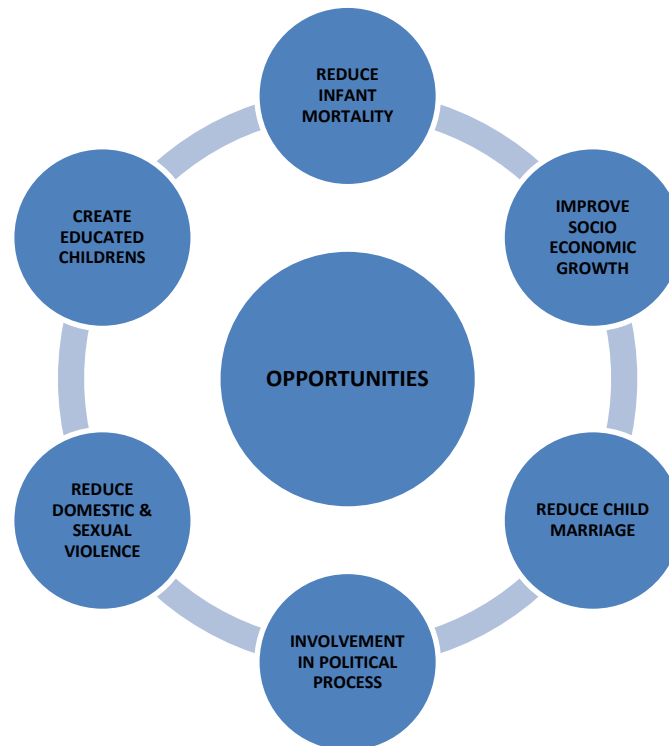
Gender must therefore be integrated at all levels of education, from early childhood to higher education and from planning infrastructure to training teachers.

GIRLS AND WOMENS EDUCATION: A LIFE LINE TO DEVELOPMENT

Education is one of the most critical areas of empowerment for women. It is also an area that offers some of the clearest examples of discrimination women suffer. Among children not attending school, there are twice as many girls as boys, and among illiterate adults there are twice as many women as men.

Offering girls basic education is one sure way of giving them much greater power of enabling them to make genuine choices over the kinds of lives they wish to lead. This is not luxury. Opportunities will create many bridges to climb up; many stepping stones to achieve their goals.

EDUCATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN- OPPORTUNITIES:



1. Reduce infant mortality:

There are many different reasons for infant mortality like lack of nutrition , disease, lack of knowledge, poverty, pollution, prevention and the need for vaccination and maternal healthcare etc. Education alone helps to reduce infant mortality significantly.

2. Reduce maternal mortality:

Educated women with greater knowledge of health and care and fewer pregnancies are less likely to die during pregnancy, childbirth, or during postpartum period. Increased education of girls also leads to more female health care required to assist with prenatal care, labour, delivery, emergencies and follow up care.

3. Improve socio economic growth:

Educated women have a greater chance of escaping poverty, leading healthier and more productive lives, and raising the standard of living for their children, families and communities. It also benefits nation as a whole. Increasing the share of women with secondary education by 1% boosts annual per capita income growth. Educated famers (women) are also more efficient and their farms are more productive, which leads to increased crop yield and reduction in malnutrition, according to UN world food program.

4. Reduce child marriage:

Child marriages have become an obstacle for girls schooling. The result is illiterate or barely literate young mothers without adequate tools to build healthy, educated families. Educated girls typically marry later, when they are better able to bear and care for their children.

Author Khaled Hosseini said: “Marriage can wait, Education cannot.”

5. Increase involvement in political activities:

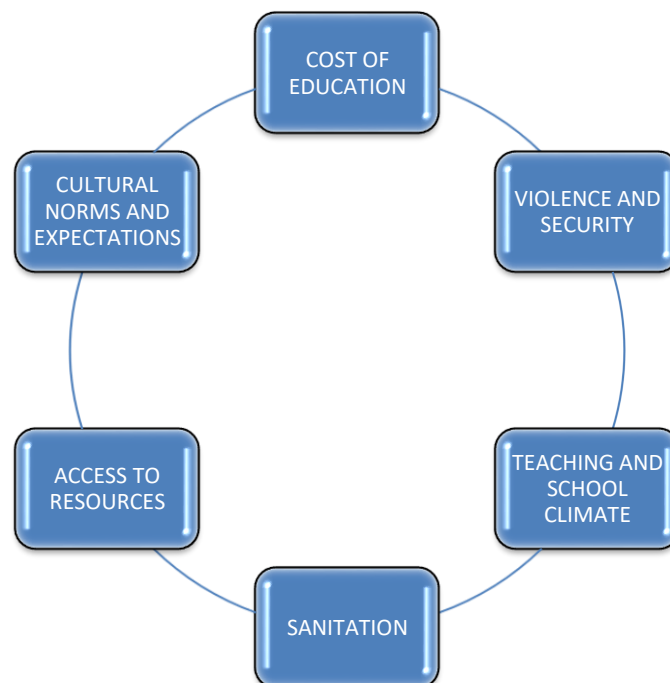
Educated women are more likely to participate in political discussions, meetings and decision-making, which in turn makes a well represented, effective government. Women with leadership skills are also a major factor in sparking economic and social change.

6. Reduce domestic & sexual violence:

Educated girls and women are less likely to be victims of domestic and sexual violence. Economically dependent females are isolated within their communities, have little education and cannot earn much, girls are often regarded as an economic burden and women and girls sometime suffer a lot. Education provides them confidence and strength to overcome all the obstacles of domestic and sexual violence.

7. Increase numbers of educated children;

Educated women are more likely to insist on education for their own children, especially their daughters. They provide them higher education and make them more independent and self dependent.

OBSTACLES IN GIRL’S AND WOMEN EDUCATION:

The problem of female education in India is one which attracts our attention immediately. In our country, due to conservative attitude, women status has through ages, been considered to be lower than that of men. During the later part of the Vedic period the Aryans had sealed the fate of women culturally and socially by denying them the right to study Vedas and thus half the population was deprived of one of the most fundamental human rights. They were regarded as slaves to men because of their economic dependence on them. Even today, in spite of the recognition of women status equal to that of men, majority of them suffer in primitive ignorance as ever before. Illiteracy and ignorance is prevalent more in women than in men and this evil is rampant especially in rural areas and backward communities.

The importance of women in matters of building the character of the citizens, economic reconstruction of the country and social reforms is being realized. Under the fast changing conditions in the country in the recent times, increased attention is being paid to their education.

The barriers, particularly for girls in the poorest countries are wide-ranging and complex but these are some of the most challenging:

1. Financial constrains in the family:

Single man earning in the family and females are dependent on one person put a lot of burden on head of the family. Even in area where school fees are nonexistent, there's still a price to pay. Students are often required to buy uniforms, transportation, and supplies, like textbooks, and notebooks. Higher education is denied to girls considering the financial constrains.

2. Lack of safe transportation for girls to go to school:

In some regions, parents don't allow their daughters to attend school, but it isn't necessary because they don't want them to be educated. Sometimes parents keep their children home because the commute to and from school is unsafe. No proper school bus for transportation. In rural area no proper road for walking and even using cycles for commuting from home to school.

3. Cultural mindset:

Girls are considered as someone else's daughter in law, more than their own daughter. Parents always feel no return on investment done on girl's education, rather save for their marriages. Among Indian population, there is a longstanding obsession with having girls marry as early as possible.

4. Task of performing domestic duties:

Men have always been viewed as the breadwinner, powerful leader, executors of action, and free to express their thoughts and opinion. Whereas the women were confined to the domestic space: raising children, taking care of household affairs and grooming their young daughters to find husbands. Women still are viewed to be mothers, nurturers, household caretakers and caregivers. In our country, predominately male dominated women are still doing more work than ever. Not only do women give birth and are obligated to raise kids, despite their efforts in securing a job equated to their male spouse.

5. Teaching and school environment :

Perpetuation of traditional gender norms can result in girls being excluded from learning important subjects like Science, technology, engineering and math. Teaching must be inclusive and must be available to girls to learn the same lesson as their male counterparts. Girls are always denied subjects like sports, politics and defense services.

6. Sanitation:

In rural areas the schools amenities are not very good. They have very crowded classrooms and rundown schools provide students with a less than quality learning environment. Schools that don't provide students with access to separate toilets, washing areas, and sanitary products can discourage girls who are menstruating from attending classes.

Unesco And Its Strategies For Promoting Equal Opportunities In Education:

UNESCO works to promote equal opportunities to quality learning, free from gender based or other forms of discrimination.

- ✓ Mobilises additional funds through the “Better Life Better Future” initiative, aimed at expanding learning opportunities for girls and women.
- ✓ Seeks to address obstacles to leaning such as gender based violence and HIV & AIDS promotes gender equality in national education law, policies and plans.
- ✓ Seeks and expands access to learning opportunities, in particular for girls and women, in both formal and non formal education.

- ✓ Develop the capacity of education policy makers, planners, teachers, and other education personal regarding gender sensitive approaches.
- ✓ Supports countries to make education content gender- sensitive and free from discrimination.

Conclusion:

This article has provided analysis of key positions in debates about equality of educational opportunity among men and women. We began by describing the reasons for being concerned about equality in this arena and then surveyed debates about the value and distribution of such opportunities. Social and scientific advances in recent years have clarified our understanding of the mechanisms behind children's unequal access to educational opportunities, and the consequences of those inequalities for social viability. This knowledge enables policymakers to target interventions in areas that will be most impactful (e.g., growing recognition of the importance of early childhood education). This understanding of the causes and consequences of educational inequalities will be sharpened.

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