Women Empowerment Policies & Initiatives

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Abstract—The government's financial support to women is an indispensable strategy for enhancing gender equality and improving women empowerment. Despite the continuing support of the Indian government towards women development and growth in women entrepreneurs, the current status of women is still in a miserable state. Time and again, the government has taken numerous policies initiatives to promote women entrepreneurs with a mindset to empower them holistically. The study analyses the economic, political and social empowerment of women entrepreneurs separately. The study highlight that women entrepreneurs have seen a significant change in empowerment after availing the loan, but still, most of them find it uncomfortable or difficult in making decisions related to themselves, family, relatives, financial and society. The study has implications for human resource development's related policies in India.

Index Terms—Women Empowerment, Entrepreneurs, Social empowerment, Political empowerment, Economic empowerment.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment is key to economic and social outcomes. Women's empowerment is the process by which women become aware of gender-based unequal power relationships and acquire a greater voice in which to speak out against the inequality found. Women's empowerment is important because it can lead to a range of positive outcomes, including increased economic growth and development, improved health and well-being, and greater gender equality. Women Empowerment is the progression of women and, accepting and including them in the decision-making process. It also means providing them with equal opportunities for growth and development in society, and disapproving gender bias.

Women's empowerment can be defined to promoting women's sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices, and their right to influence social change for themselves and others.

It is closely aligned with female empowerment – a fundamental human right that's also key to achieving a more peaceful, prosperous world.

Women and children are a vital part of Indian society. Also, these are the most vulnerable sections of India. Empowering women is essential to the health and social development of families, communities and countries. When women are living safe, fulfilled and productive lives, they can reach their full potential. Contributing their skills to the workforce and can raise happier and healthier children. They are also able to help fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large. A key part of this empowerment is through education. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life.

Employment can help create empowerment for women. In particular, education empowers women to make choices that improve their children's health, their well-being, and chances of acquiring survival skills. Such education empowers women to make choices that can improve their welfare, including marrying beyond childhood and having fewer children. Education can increase women's awareness of their rights, boost their self-esteem, and provide them the opportunity to assert their rights.

Article 15(3) mentions the welfare of women and children and can be stated as "Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children."

The Internet is often a source of empowerment for women through its creation, dispersion, and utilization of hashtags on social media. Growing Internet access in the late 20th century provided women with various tools to empower themselves. Through online activism, they are able to empower themselves by organizing campaigns and voicing their opinions for equality rights. Blogging emerged as one tool for educational female empowerment. Ministry for women and child development has collaborated with Facebook on November 19, 2019, to enhance digital literacy and online safety for women and children in India. The campaign categorized under the Global Literacy Program is named "We Think Digital".

Women with digital skills are better able to make their voices heard on local issues and influence the outcome of decisions that affect themselves and their communities. Digital skills has empowered women to participate in political movements too.

Governments should take measures to promote the fulfilment of girls' and women's potential through education, skills development and the eradication of illiteracy for all girls and women without discrimination of any kind, giving paramount importance to the elimination of poverty and ill health. Governments, in collaboration with civil society, should take the necessary measures to ensure universal access, on the basis of equality between women and men, to appropriate, affordable and quality health care for women throughout their life cycle.

Governments should take every possible action to remove all gender gaps and inequalities pertaining to women's livelihoods and participation in the labour market through the creation of employment with secure incomes, which has been shown to advance women's empowerment and enhance their reproductive health. Legislation ensuring equal pay for equal work or for work of equal value should be instituted and enforced.

This article provides a list of women empowerment schemes in India as listed under the Ministry of Women and Child Development. This is an important topic for UPSC and other .

List of Major Women Empowerment schemes in India
The important women empowerment schemes in India are listed below:

Women Empowerment ddddddscheme	Launch Year	Objectives
Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme	2015	• To prevent gender-biased sex selective elimination • To ensure survival & protection of the girl child • To ensure education and participation of the girl child
One-Stop Centre Scheme	2015	To provide support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces. • To Facilitate/Assist in filing First Information Report (FIR/NCR) • To provide psycho-social support and counselling to women/girl
Women Helpline Scheme	2016	• To provide toll-free 24-hours telecom service to women affected by violence. To facilitate crisis and non-crisis intervention through referral to the appropriate agencies such as police/Hospitals/Ambulance services/District Legal Service Authority (DLSA)/Protection Officer (PO)/OSC. To provide information about the appropriate support services, government schemes, and programs available to the woman affected by violence, in her particular situation within the local area in which she resides or is employed.
UJJAWALA	2016	• To prevent the trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation. To facilitate the rescue of victims from the place of their exploitation and place them in safe custody. • To provide rehabilitation services with both immediate and long-term to the victims by providing basic amenities/needs such as shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment including counseling, legal aid and guidance, and vocational training.

Working Women Hostel	1972-73	To promote the availability of safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women. To provide accommodation to children of working women, up to the age of 18 years for girls and up to the age of 5 years for boys.
SWADHAR Greh	2018	To cater to the primary need for shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment, and care of women in distress. • To provide women with legal aid and guidance.
Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)	1986-87	• To provide skills that give employability to women. • To benefit women in the age group of 16 and above in the country.
Nari Shakti Puraskar	2016	• To strengthen the place of women in society. To facilitate institutions that work towards the progress and development of women in society.
Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)	2017	To create an environment for women where they have access to healthcare, quality, education, guidance, employment, etc. • To facilitate these opportunities at the block and district level in the country.
NIRBHAYA	2012	• To facilitate safety and security for women at various levels. To ensure strict privacy and confidentiality of women's identity and information. • Provision for real-time intervention as far as possible
Mahila E-Haat	2016	• To facilitate entrepreneurship opportunities online for women. To educate women on various aspects of online selling and helping them establish their venture.
Mahila Police Volunteers	2016	An MPV will serve as a public-police interface in order to fight crime against women. The broad mandate of MPVs is to report incidences of violence against women such as domestic violence, child marriage, dowry harassment and violence faced by women in public spaces.

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The government of India has taken the safety and empowerment of women and children into serious consideration. The growing injustice towards women had to be minimised, and these schemes are the solutions to the major problems related to women in India. Aspirants should also know that Women Empowerment Essay is a probable choice in UPSC Mains. So making use of these schemes, aspirants can easily draft a good Women Empowerment Essay.

There are multiple other Government Schemes in India launched for the betterment of people in the

society and for the overall development of the country. Aspirants can visit the linked article and learn in detail about the various schemes and campaigns introduced by the Government.

II. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

1. Speaking on the 25th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Union Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani said at the United Nations that India recognises the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment in all aspects of developmental agenda. The minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani highlighted that more than 200 million women have been brought into the formal banking system through the Government's Financial Inclusion Initiative. Innovative use of digital technologies has provided equal opportunity for women to access insurance, loans, and social assistance.

2. Microsoft on Wednesday announced recently it has collaborated with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to impart digital skills to more than one lakh underserved women in India. This initiative is an extension of Microsoft's partnership with NSDC to provide digital skills to over 1 lakh youth in the country. The programme will curate a series of live training sessions and digital skilling drives to help create opportunities for young girls and women, particularly first-time job seekers and those whose jobs may have been impacted by COVID-19, to join the future workforce

3. Women's empowerment in India has received more attention in recent years, and one NGO is working to help disadvantaged Indian women achieve financial independence with one specific method: an all-women cab company.

Vulnerable groups generally polices and schemes for women are formulated as if they are comprised of one composite and homogenous group. In reality there are many layers of heterogonous groups and depending on their socio economic, geo political background the degrees of vulnerabilities also differ. Therefore, specific strategies and programmes need to be developed which will address the unique problems of specific groups. Amongst vulnerable groups, the women belonging to socially backward communities such as SC, ST or OBC face double discrimination of being a woman and also from a backward community. Similarly, women with disabilities have very specific problems even when compared to men with disability. There are women who are victims of violence or sexual abuse such as trafficked women, rape victims who need a very different but specialized rehabilitation package etc. Adolescent girls are a highly vulnerable group as they are subject to a number of atrocities like trafficking, rape, child marriage.

➢ Women Impacted by Violence
i. domestic
ii. rape
iii. trafficked victims
iv. women who are labelled as witches
v. acid attacked

➢ Women impacted by internal displacement, disasters and Migration
i. either for economic reasons
ii. conflict e.g. refugee women
iii. women who have been displaced because of SEZ, building of dams etc,
iv. Women impacted by natural or man-made disasters.

➢ Women and Labour
i. domestic labour
ii. bonded labour
iii. destitute women who are homeless

➢ Women in Agriculture
i. land less women
ii. marginal farmers
iii. Agricultural workers.

➢ Women and Health
• women affected by HIV/ AIDS
• women suffering from life threatening diseases
• women with disabilities
➢ elderly and a Slum Dwellers
➢ Women Prisoners
➢ Women belonging to ethnic and socially vulnerable communities
i. women belonging to ethnic and religious minorities (especially Muslims)

ii.   ii. women belonging to socially backward communities (SC, ST)

➤ Single women

i.   adolescents

ii.   widows

iii.   women whose husbands are absent due to conflict, economic migration etc

iv.   Divorcees

The above categories of women find themselves more vulnerable on account of their unique social, cultural circumstances or because they are victims of violence or abuse. These groups require special interventions to address their needs. The possibility of developing pilot projects suitably formulated to address specific requirements may be examined.

III. CONCLUSION

Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. Women's empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location (urban / rural) educational status social status (caste and class) and age. Policies on Women's empowerment exist at the national, state and local (Panchayat) levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, and gender-based violence and political participation. The Empowerment of Women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self-decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.

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