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INDIAN ECONOMY TOWARDS INCLUSIVE GROWTH
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-EMERGING TRENDS,
ISSUES AND CHALLENGES"



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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Women and girls represent half of the world's population and therefore also half of its potential (UN). Today gender inequality persists wherein women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in every part of the world. Gender equality is a fundamental right and a prerequisite for the realization of a peaceful and sustainable world. The promotion of gender equality and empowering of women was one of the eight Millennium Development goal to be achieved by 2015. Also at the September 2015 global summit held in New York, achieving gender equality and girl and women empowerment emerged as the fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) to be achieved by 2030. India is on track to achieve gender parity at all education levels, having already achieved it at primary level. The ratio of female literacy to male literacy for 15-25-year-old is 0.91. As of August 2015, in India the proportion of seats in national parliament held by women is only 12% against the target of 50% (NITI Aayog). However still more needs to be achieved on this front. The primary objective of this paper is to assess the progress of India towards gender equality and women empowerment using data from the 2015 National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-4. The paper attempts to present data on multiple indicators drawn from the NFHS-4 to examine the level of women empowerment in India and its 29 states. Also, an attempt is made to compare the indicators in NFHS-3 with that of NFHS-4.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, Female Literacy, Decision Making, Domestic Violence.

INTRODUCTION

Empowering women is to make them independent in all aspects from mind, thought, rights, decisions, by overcoming all the social and family limitations. It is to bring about equality among male and female in the society. Women empowerment is very necessary to bring about overall development of family, society and country. The UN claim that improving women's status is not only beneficial to themselves but also for the overall socio-economic development. "Investing in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself but also the best way to contribute to economic growth and overall development" (UN, 1995). Empowering women means to provide them a healthy environment so that they can take their own decisions in any field either for their own benefit or for the good of the society or the country at large whether for themselves, family, society or country. The United Nations identified that women's empowerment has five components: women's sense of worth, their right to have and to determine choices, their right to access to opportunities and resources, their right to have the power control their own lives - both within and outside the home, and ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally (United Nations, 1995). The inclusion of 'Women Empowerment' as one of the prime goals in the eight Millennium Development Goals in 2000 underscores the relevance of this fact. And further United Nations SDG 5 to 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, gives an account of significance attached to women empowerment.