

Sustainable Development Goals (Sdgs) And Gender Equality In India – A Reality Check

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Abstract

Economic growth is crucial for any country as an indicator of development. However, a sustainable growth warrants development in a sustainable manner and required to register all round development that provide economic security to the marginalized and maintain environment sustainability. After a challenging implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), United Nations has called for implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the same has commenced since 2015 and the various targets are to be achieved by 2030. The objective of the paper is to assess the significance of SDGs and assess the progress of implementation in India. Gender equality is one development agenda that the policy makers have been debating in India and the paper looks into the status of implementation. The methodology of the paper is to review the progress made in the implementation of SDGs in India. Existing literature on SDGs and Gender Equality would be reviewed to gather deeper understanding of the subject. The paper is expected to help policy makers, practitioners and civil society in understanding the significance of ensuring gender equality and advocate for better policies and programs to correct the imbalance in gender equality.

Key words: Sustainable Development, Development Goals, Gender Equality, Women Empowerment

J E L Classification: Q01, J16, D63, I30

Introduction

The economic prosperity, social development and environment sustainability across all countries of the world have been the goals of international community. In September 2000, leaders of 189 countries met at United Nations headquarters at Newyork and took a pledge signing the Millennium Development Goals Declaration. As per the Declaration, eight broad goals ranging from halving extreme poverty to promoting gender equality and sound education and health were to be achieved by 2015. These goals were eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and women empowerment, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combating AIDs and other diseases, ensure environment balance, and create global partnership for development. These eight goals were easily recognised, measured and evaluated.

Globally people living in extreme poverty have come down from 1.75 billion in 2000 to 836 million in 2015. The proportion of people in under-nourished community in developing regions have come down from 23.3 per cent in 1990 to 12.9 per cent in 2015 as much of the progress has occurred during 2000-2015. Under the goal to

achieve universal primary education, the primary school net enrolment rate in developing regions has increased to 91 per cent in 2015 from 83 per cent in 2000. On the goal gender equality and women empowerment, developing regions as a whole achieved the target to eliminate gender disparity in primary, secondary and tertiary education. In South Asia, the girls enrolled in primary school increased from 74 girls for 100 boys in 1990 to 103 girls. On gender equality, there was improvement as the average proportion of women in parliament has nearly doubled during 2000-2015, though there exists disparity between men and women as only one in five members in parliament are represented by women. On reducing child mortality, the global under-five mortality rate has declined more than half reducing from 90 to 43 deaths per 1000 live births between 1990 and 2015. Maternal health has seen improvement under MDGs as the global maternal mortality rate has reduced from 330 deaths per one lakh births to 210. On reducing HIV/AIDs and other diseases, new HIV infections reduced by 40% between 2000 and 2015, from 3.5 million cases to 2.1 million cases. The global malaria incidence rate has come down by an estimated 37 per cent. On ensuring environment sustainability, globally 1.96 billion people have gained access to piped drinking water during 1990-2015. In 2015, 91 per cent of the global population is using improved drinking water source compared to 76 per cent in 1990. Worldwide, 2.1 billion people gained access to improved sanitation. The last goal under MDGs is to develop global partnership for development. The Official Development Assistance (ODA) from developed countries increased by 66 per cent reaching \$135.2 billion between 2000 and 2015. Internet penetration has increased from 6 per cent of the global population in 2000 to 43 per cent in 2015. On reviewing the progress of various goals under MDGs, it is seen that gender inequality persists in various parts of the world. Women continue to face discrimination in work force participation, ownership of assets and in household decision making. While three fourths of the working age men participate in labour force, only half of the working age women engage in labour force. Women are not at par with men on earnings, as they earn 24 per cent less than men globally. On reviewing the progress made by India in respect of implementing MDGs, it is felt that India has met the target of reducing the number of people below the poverty line, made gender equality in school and secondary education, achieved the target of reversal in fight against HIV/AIDS, met the target of providing drinking water facilities and improved substantially the telephone and internet penetration. Those areas in which targets are not achieved, but significant progress made are in education, reducing child mortality, reversal of trend in malaria and TB incidences and reducing the loss of environment resources. In the case of banishing extreme hunger, reducing the incidence of maternal mortality and ensuring sanitation facilities, the required progress could not be achieved. The unmet goals can be pursued more vigorously under Sustainable Development Goals that India undertakes since 2015.

The road from MDGs to SDGs

The UN General Assembly on 25th September 2015 adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that consists of seventeen goals and 169 associated targets and came into force w.e.f. 1st January 2016. The SDGs integrate social, economic and environmental dimensions of development and would like to have a life of dignity to all by the year 2030. Care was taken to integrate the



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MDGs with SDGs. SDG 1, 2, 8 and 10 are related to the goal of MDG1 i.e. eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. SDG4 relates to the goal of MDG2 i.e. achieving universal primary education. SDG5 and MDG3 are common in achieving gender equality and women empowerment. SDG 2 and 3 are related to ensuring healthy lives and synchronise with MDG 4 and 5 reducing child mortality and improving maternal health. The goal - MDG7 ensuring environment sustainability is integrated to SDG 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 all related to environment sustainability. The goal of MDG8 i.e. developing global partnership for development is integrated into SDG17 revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development.

Gender Equality

Gender equality is a situation when women and men enjoy the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities in economic participation, decision making, behaviours, aspirations etc. Thus, the rights, responsibilities and opportunities are determined not on the basis of gender. Gender equality implies that both women and men are treated equal in respect of their interests, needs and priorities. In most societies, it is observed that there are differences and inequalities between men and women in access to control and control over resources, responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken and opportunities in decision making, In attributes like gender, class, race, ethnic group, age etc. inequalities in treatment are observed. Gender equality warrants ensuring the absence of discrimination on the grounds of sex directly or indirectly. It aims to provide women and girls with equal access to healthcare, education and decent work. Representation in political and economic decision making processes will benefit societies and create sustainable economies. In the words of United Nations, “Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world”.

Gender equality is essential for economic prosperity and social harmony. It prevents violence against women and girls. Societies that treat women and men as equal are comparatively safer and healthier. Gender equality is a human right. The benefits of gender equality are discussed in terms of better living in a safe and equal society, equal access to power, resources and opportunities by all, and equal treatment with dignity, respect and fairness. One of the key interventions of gender equality is empowerment of women and girls. Women empowerment is made possible through awareness building, building self-confidence, enhanced access to and control over resources etc. Women should have equal capabilities and these are to be derived through better education and health. They should have equal access to resources and opportunities derived through employment and entrepreneurship. Women empowerment is possible through better participation in political institutions.

Gender equality is measured on a wide range of attributes by looking at the representation of men and women. The European Union Statistical Office – Eurostat releases an overview of gender statistics from the areas such as education, health, labour market etc. to bring out differences in the situation of men and women. Gender equality indices are prevalent in certain countries and each index comprise of a distinct set of parameters. EU Gender Equality Index is released by European Institute for Gender Equality that provides measure of gender equality in the European Union on six key policy areas – work, money, knowledge, time, power and health. Apart from these six areas, two more domains viz. violence and intersecting inequalities are added. The Gender Equality Score of 67.9 out of 100 in 2020 shows that progress in gender equality in European Union is moving at a slow pace. United Nations (UN) has developed UN Gender Inequality Index (GII) based on the discrimination of women and girls in the areas of health, education and the labour market. GII Measures gender inequalities in three areas of human development viz. reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status. Reproductive health is measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates, empowerment is measured by proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by women and economic status is measured by labour

force participation rate of women and men. The composite index is developed and higher the GII value, more disparities between men and women exist. As per the latest GII value released by UN for the year 2019, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden and Belgium bag the top four ranks with the GII value being 0.025, 0.038, 0.039, and 0.043 respectively. India's rank is 123 with GII value being 0.488. World Economic Forum (WEF) introduced Global Gender Gap Report in 2006, a framework for capturing the intensity and scope of gender disparities on economic, political, education and health parameters. The index measures the deviations on economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. In its Global Gender Gap Report 2021, 156 countries across the world are surveyed and India slipped 28 places to rank 140th. The report indicates poor representation of women in parliament seats and ministerial representation, showing existence of disparity in political empowerment. On economic participation, women occupy only 27 per cent of leadership positions. On positive side, gender gaps in educational attainment, and health and survival get nearly closed with improvement in education and health indicators.

Gender Equality and SDGs - Literature Review

Various authors have probed into the gender issue and suggested measures to set right the imbalance. While Harper et al. (2018), SIDA (2010), Devi (2017) and John (2009) intervened on explaining the gender equity in terms of empowering women, Patel (2018), Blithe (2015), Jayachandran (2014), Kurzman (2019) and Singh (2017) explained in detail about the various aspects of gender equality. Kelly and Kerry (2020) illustrated the global aspects of gender equity and England (2020) focussed on the gender equity issues in United States. Gender Equality in terms of Sustainable development Goals has been evaluated by Hassan and Parveen (2020), Quisser (2016), Peake and Nyasimi (2019), Deshpande and Bhat (2019), Ghosh (2020) and Jayswal (2020). Morgan et al (2021) took stock of the situation on a global perspective.

Harper et al. (2018) substantiated gender norms contributing to girls' empowerment in life course. Educational vulnerabilities, early marriages, hurdles in seeking employment opportunities, family burden etc. stand as obstacles for the adolescent girls getting empowered. Towards empowerment, authors suggest capabilities approach to development as improvements in access to education, health and livelihoods lead to better human development. SIDA (2010) in the background paper on Women's Economic Empowerment Series argues gender equality as fundamental human rights essential for poverty reduction and sustained growth. Gender based inequalities place hurdles on poverty reduction and economic growth. Countries that perform better on gender equality are seen benefitted with better development indicators. Closing gender gap is suggested to promote development and growth. Devi (2017) says gender equality demands empowerment of women with stress on identifying and redressing power imbalances and providing women more freedom and autonomy to manage their own lives. The paper discusses some of the key determinants of gender equalities. These are ensuring access to education, banning child marriage, access to affordable and quality health care, extending training in agriculture and other allied occupations, parity in wages, eradicating violence against women, improving political participation of women, gender sensitized training programmes etc. John (2009) while reviewing the performance and impact of Kudumbashree project in Kerala comment that the state has created a strong social capital through this project. Through the Neighbourhood group (NHG), women are joined together to discuss and find a livelihood solution for upliftment of their life. The social network is further strengthened through the federating structure i.e. NHGs federating into ADS (Area Development Society) and ADS into CDS (Community Development Society). The report says that the women members have acquired knowledge, skills, confidence and leadership qualities through their involvement in Kudumbashree project.

Patel (2018) states that the ultimate goal in gender equality is to materialise all types of gender have equal access to, and benefit from society's resources, opportunities and rewards. Over the years, government has put in various legislations to ensure gender equality, but these are applicable to formal sector and the informal sector is outside the purview of these legislations. Lack of income security, irregular employment, absence of

health insurance, bad working conditions etc. make the life bitter in the unorganised sector. Measures to overcome these hurdles can contribute to gender justice. Affirmative action is suggested to protect girls and women from discrimination and violence. [Blithe \(2015\)](#) commented on gender equality and work life balance in the context of work life practices in United States. Achieving gender equality in US organizations depends not only on individuals' equal access to policies and programmes, but also on individuals' equal use of and participation in such programmes. [Jayachandran \(2014\)](#) explores the root causes of gender inequality in poor countries and prove the hypothesis that progress in gender equality in countries improves with increase in growth and development. The gender inequality in poor countries is seen tilting unfavourably with the characteristics viz. education and health, employment gender based violence, decision making power within marriage freedom of choice and life satisfaction etc. Economic underdevelopment stands as a cause of gender inequality. The author suggests measures like granting legal rights to women, financial incentives for parents to invest in or have girls, shifting household financial resources to mothers, changing attitude of men and women towards gender equality etc. [Kurzman et al. \(2019\)](#) in their work argues for a universal criterion of gender equality and focus on subjective understanding of women's priorities. [Singh \(2017\)](#) views gender inequality limits women's access to resources and opportunities apart from disturbing the life prospects of future generations. It is the traditional patriarchal customs and norms that relegate women to a secondary position within the household and work place.

[Kelly and Kerry \(2020\)](#) illustrate the gravity of gender inequality and quote the World Economic Forum (WEF) estimates that overall global gender gap won't be closed for another 100 years. Countries estimated to be closest in reaching gender equality are Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden and Ireland. Across the globe, women hold only 5.2 per cent of CEO positions and 21.2 per cent of board representation in S & P 500 companies.

[England et al. \(2020\)](#) takes a stock of gender equality in United States by examining change in multiple indicators of gender equality during the period 1970 to 2018. The indicators in this regard are employment, educational attainment, segregation of field of study, segregation of occupation and earnings. On employment, women's employment rose steadily during the study period moving from 48 per cent employed in 1970 to 75 per cent in 2000 and 73 per cent in 2018. In the area educational attainment compared to 1970, more women obtained baccalaureate degrees in 2018. The ratio of women to men completing degrees increased from 0.76 to 1.34 for baccalaureate degrees and from 0.13 to 1.18 for doctoral degrees. Earning as an indicator of gender equality has been surveyed. The ratio of women's pay to men's pay was 0.60 in 1970, the same increased to 0.74 in 1990 and 0.83 in 2018. The overall analysis shows substantial improvement in gender equality. The analysis concludes that the progress towards gender equality has slowed in recent decades, even though much improvement is registered between 1970 and 2018.

[Hasan and Parveen \(2020\)](#) writes on gender equality and empowerment of women in India in the context of UN Sustainable Development Goals. The paper explored the plans and policies initiated by Govt of India to achieve gender equality goals. Low literacy rate, less decision making power and less work opportunity make the women backward in exercising equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities. The six targets on SDG5 goal of gender equality have been explained which include the target of ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere, eliminating all harmful practices like child marriage, early marriage, genital mutilation, and eliminating all forms of violence against women. Schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, the Mission for Protection and empowerment of Women etc. are introduced by Govt of India for achieving SDG goal5. Women in education are not catching up with men as the literacy rate for men and women are 82.14 per cent and 65.46 per cent respectively leaving a gap of 16.68 per cent as per

2011 Census. As per 2015-16 survey, the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPRP) in India is 50.3 per cent and the same for men and women are 75 per cent and 23.7 per cent respectively leaving a gap of 51.3 per cent. On political participation, Indian women are far behind men. As per Women in Politics Map 2017, published by UN Women India was at 88th rank. Women's share in Indian Parliament is only 13 per cent currently. [Quiesser \(2016\)](#) comments that the SDG5 goal of achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls is detailed into targets that looks into challenges like discrimination of women violence against women, reproductive health and ownership rights. Even though women are better educated than men their participation in labour market is restricted as they spend fewer hours in paid work. [Peake and Nyasimi \(2015\)](#) while reviewing the progress of gender equality as SDG goal 5 of United Nations state that the goal of gender equality should be treated as a follow up of the unfinished agenda of MDGs. The targets under gender equality and women empowerment should be time specific and needs to include a number of economic and social targets on employment, pay, education, mental and physical health. [Deshpande and Bhat \(2019\)](#) raise the public consciousness of gender inequality beyond sustainable development goals. The SDGs focus on 5 Ps – people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The authors bring out the integration of SDG5 and SDG3 i.e. gender equality and health security. The six gender specific indicators within SDG3 are maternal mortality ratio, births supervised by skilled health personnel, new HIV infections, satisfactory family planning, adolescent birth rates and coverage of essential health services. Hence achieving gender equality as the SDG5 goal is significant and imperative in sustainable development. [Ghosh \(2020\)](#) gives an estimate that the share of world population living in extreme poverty has come down to 10 per cent in 2015, down by 16 per cent of 2010 base line. The extreme poverty rate is projected to be 6 per cent in 2040, missing the global target of eliminating poverty. It is estimated that 60 per cent of countries are not likely to reach the targets of full implementation of SDGs by the year 2030. On gender, women represent less than 40 per cent of the employment, engage in only around a quarter of managerial positions in the world, and experience a gender pay gap of 12 per cent. [Jayaswal \(2020\)](#) illustrates that the goal of ensuring gender equality under SDG5 encompasses a multi-dimensional approach and includes targets on ending discrimination and violence against women, ending child marriages and forced marriages, eliminating trafficking and sexual exploitation, recognising unpaid care and domestic work, ensuring universal access to sexual health and reproductive rights, promoting women's participation and opportunities for leadership, enabling ownership of land and other properties etc. [Morgan et al. \(2021\)](#) suggested timely action on gender equality goals to ensure meeting sustainable development goals. To realise the rights of women and girls, concerted action is required throughout the SDG regime. The authors wanted to focus on other SDG goals other than SDG5 to realize the empowerment of women and girls. The gender relationship is attributed to two SDGs viz. water and sanitation (SDG6) and energy (SDG7). In various communities, women and girls are exposed to different illness owing to the burden of water collection and maintenance. Safe water, sanitation and hygiene are essential to the wellbeing of girls and women. Citing incidence of burden, the authors proved that women and girls from rural or lower socio economic backgrounds exposed to greater risk of dying compared to women of higher caste. Likewise the interventions that address gender inequality under SDG5 will have a positive effect on the outcomes of other SDGs. These interventions are enhancing women's autonomy, access to resources, leadership, redistribution of labour etc. Specific actions to realize the goal of gender equality are a) political leadership and policy making, b) resource allocation and gender budgeting, c) linkage of gender with other social stratifiers like realities of race, caste, socio economic status, education, religion, age, disability etc. d) shifting the power into the hands of women by increasing participation in labour market, political leadership etc. To close the gender gap in a meaningful manner, inter connectedness of gender equality and other sustainable development goals is required. [Panda \(2019\)](#) in his study on Achievement of SDGs from a gender equality perspective comments that across the globe, women and girls face structural barriers that impact all aspects of their lives and hence gender specific constraints are to be eliminated. A sea change in democratic governance is required for women and girls to reinforce their rights and shape sustainable development.

Progress under SDGs

The progress in implementation of SDGs in India has been tracked by the SDG India Index. Introduced in 2018 by Niti Aayog, in collaboration with United Nations, the SDG India index documents the progress made by states and union territories on implementation of various goals over a scale of 0-100. India's overall score for the year 2020 is 66, an improvement of 6 over the score of 60 secured in 2019. In two areas viz. clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), and affordable and clean energy (Goal 7), the score was 83 and 92 respectively which helped India to reach the overall score to 66. Good performance was registered in six goals – good health and wellbeing, climate action, sustainable cities and communities, reduced inequalities, responsible consumption and production, life on land, and peace, justice and strong institutions. The goals in which unsatisfactory performance were seen are zero hunger and gender equality where the scores are 47 and 48 respectively. However, these scores are an improvement over the scores registered in 2019 where it was 35 and 42 respectively. On state wise performance, Kerala stands top with an overall score of 75, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu scoring 74 each. Bihar remained at the bottom.

In the case of Gender equality, the indicator - the share of landholding by women is only around 14% as against the target of 50% to be achieved. The share of women elected to state legislative assemblies is only 8.46% compared to the target of 50%.

Goal 5 of Sustainable development Goals aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and to undertake policy reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources and access to ownership of property. India has achieved gender parity at the primary education level and is near track to reach on other education levels. The proportion of seats held by women in parliament and assembly reached only 11 per cent, but in the Panchayati Raj institutions, women representation is 46 per cent. On violence against women, India is facing the challenge as more crimes are reported against women in India.

Gender Equality – Indian Situation

India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. It is the second largest in population and fifth largest in national income. However, on gender equality India fares poorly. Women and girls in India do not reach their potential and enjoy their rights. A recent UNICEF report reveals that 56 per cent of 15 to 19 year old girls are anaemic, compared to 30 per cent for boys. On early marriage, 27 per cent of 20-24 year old women were married before age 18. On properties owned by women, only 12.7 per cent of land holdings are in the name of women in spite of 77 per cent women rely on agriculture as primary source of income. UNICEF India 2018-22 Country Program is developed in line with the gender based deprivation that Indian children face. This focuses on health, nutrition, education, rights protection and social protection.

India's rank in HDI 2020 is 131 out of 189 nations which is not all satisfactory for a nation that lays emphasis on social equity and inclusion. As part of HDI, United Nations arrives at Gender Development Index (GDI). The GDI value of India as per HDR 2020 is 0.820. Bangladesh with a GDI value of 0.904 is placed ahead of India. The average GDI for the entire South Asian region stands at 0.824 and for the medium HDI countries, it is 0.835, in both cases India lags behind.

A standalone index – Gender Inequality Index (GII) is calculated by United Nations to arrive at the extent of inequality in gender. This is arrived at taking into account three dimensions – economic activity, reproductive health and empowerment. The GII ranges from 0, where women and men fare equally, to 1, where one gender fares as poorly as possible in all measured dimensions. Thus the higher the GII value the more disparities arise

between females and males and the severe loss to human development. The GII value for India is 0.488 and standing at 123rd rank among 162 nations. Economic activity as an indicator of development is measured by labour market participation, the same for Indian males and females are 76.1 per cent and 20.5 per cent respectively indicating a wide inequality between men and women. The measure reproductive health is arrived at using maternal mortality rate and adolescent birth rate which are 133 deaths per one lakh births and 13.2 births per 1000 women respectively. On empowerment, the index measures the extent of seats filled in by women in parliament which is 13.5 per cent in India. Educational attainments as empowerment measure is also taken into account which is measured by the extent of completing secondary education, the same stands at 47 per cent for males and 27.7 per cent for females.

Gender Inequality Index (GII) has been calculated in Indian context. In line with international norms, three dimensions viz. health, empowerment and labour market have been taken into account. For health two indicators viz. Maternal Mortality rate and Adolescent Birth rate and for empowerment indicators two indicators viz. female and male population with at least secondary education and female and male share of parliamentary seats are taken. For the labour market dimension, the indicator is female and male labour force participation rate. Index is arrived at for these three dimensions and finally migrated to the GII index. Higher the index higher is the disparities between men and women.

Table 1.GII Dimensions and Indicators

| Dimension → | Health | Empowerment | Labour Market |
|-------------------|--|--|---|
| Indicators → | Maternal Mortality Rate Adolescent Birth Rate | Female and Male Population with at least Secondary education Female and Male share of parliamentary seats | Female and Male Labour Force Participation Rate |
| Dimension Index → | Female Reproductive Health Index | Female Empowerment Index | Female Labour Market Index |

The aggregate GII score and the score for each of the three dimensions are arrived at for India for the year 2011-12 and 2017-18 and narrated in table 2. The aggregate GII score for each state and union territories for the years 2011-12 and 2017-18 are narrated in table 3.

Table 2.GII and Dimensions Index Scores of India for the year 2011-12 and 2017-18

| Year | GII Score | Reproductive Health Index | Empowerment Index (Female) | Empowerment Index (Male) | Labour Market Index (Female) | Labour Market Index (Male) |
|---------|-----------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2011-12 | 0.531 | 0.044 | 0.147 | 0.549 | 0.225 | 0.556 |
| 2017-18 | 0.462 | 0.083 | 0.174 | 0.590 | 0.175 | 0.555 |

Source: 'Gendering Human Development', Ministry of Statistics & Program Implementation, Govt of India

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The Gender Inequality Index for the country as a whole has registered marginal improvement as the inequality has come down to 0.462 in the year 2017-18 from 0.531 in the year 2011-12. In respect of the incidence of inequality in states and union territories, Maharashtra stands top as the inequality index is least at 0.340 in the year 2017-18. Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh stood second and third rank in the performance. The worst performance is for Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Jharkhand with the GII value being 0.789, 0.765, 0.758, 0.742, and 0.741 respectively. Concerted efforts are required for these states to register better performance in gender equality.

On a perusal of the table 3 indicating the GII Scores in respect of various states for the years 2011-12 and 2017-18, it is observed that in certain states the gender inequality has increased which is a matter of concern. Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Tripura, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Arunachal Pradesh, the GII scores registered an increase. Necessary steps are to be taken to arrest this trend.

Table 3.State-wise GII Scores and Ranks for the Year 2017-18

| Sl.No. | State/UT | GI I Score 2011-12 | GI I Score 2017-18 | Rank 2017-18 |
|--------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | Maharashtra | 0.480 | 0.340 | 1 |
| 2 | Tamil Nadu | 0.449 | 0.358 | 2 |
| 3 | Andhra Pradesh | 0.479 | 0.361 | 3 |
| 4 | Himachal Pradesh | 0.296 | 0.373 | 4 |
| 5 | Jammu & Kashmir | 0.697 | 0.374 | 5 |
| 6 | Meghalaya | 0.480 | 0.403 | 6 |
| 7 | Chandigarh | 0.733 | 0.413 | 7 |
| 8 | Telangana | 0.479 | 0.415 | 8 |
| 9 | Kerala | 0.474 | 0.418 | 9 |
| 10 | Gujarat | 0.468 | 0.425 | 10 |
| 11 | Uttarakhand | 0.519 | 0.434 | 11 |
| 12 | Chhattisgarh | 0.492 | 0.440 | 12 |
| 13 | Delhi | 0.526 | 0.444 | 13 |
| 14 | Haryana | 0.504 | 0.462 | 14 |
| 15 | Punjab | 0.398 | 0.464 | 15 |
| 16 | Karnataka | 0.546 | 0.464 | 16 |
| 17 | Odisha | 0.583 | 0.483 | 17 |
| 18 | Madhya Pradesh | 0.523 | 0.488 | 18 |
| 19 | West Bengal | 0.559 | 0.491 | 19 |
| 20 | Uttar Pradesh | 0.577 | 0.520 | 20 |
| 21 | Tripura | 0.516 | 0.551 | 21 |
| 22 | Rajasthan | 0.551 | 0.589 | 22 |
| 23 | Assam | 0.628 | 0.598 | 23 |
| 24 | Goa | 0.733 | 0.646 | 24 |
| 25 | Bihar | 0.698 | 0.682 | 25 |
| 26 | Pondicherry | 0.713 | 0.688 | 26 |
| 27 | A & N Islands | 0.752 | 0.704 | 27 |
| 28 | Dadra & N Haveli | 0.796 | 0.719 | 28 |

| | | | | |
|----|-------------------|--------------|--------------|----|
| 29 | Sikkim | 0.762 | 0.725 | 29 |
| 30 | Daman & Diu | 0.825 | 0.730 | 30 |
| 31 | Lakshadweep | 0.785 | 0.734 | 31 |
| 32 | Jharkhand | 0.624 | 0.741 | 32 |
| 33 | Mizoram | 0.761 | 0.742 | 33 |
| 34 | Manipur | 0.777 | 0.758 | 34 |
| 35 | Nagaland | 0.765 | 0.765 | 35 |
| 36 | Arunachal Pradesh | 0.774 | 0.789 | 36 |
| | All India | 0.531 | 0.462 | |

Source: 'Gendering Human Development', Ministry of Statistics & Program Implementation, Govt of India

Conclusion

The implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in India is well on track and the performance on various goals has been mixed. The covid-19 situation has created hurdles in all spheres across the globe and the achievements of the goals by the deadline 2030 are uncertain. On gender equality, India is lagging behind other nations and need a lot of changes to be made by government policy making bodies and civil society. The rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and girls are to be implemented. To ensure women's rights, deep legal and legislative changes are required. Gender mainstreaming is to be resorted as a strategy. It ensures that gender equality is central to all activities – legislation, advocacy, policy development, resource allocation, implementation, monitoring, research etc. The existing government schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Sukanya Samrudhi Yojana, Jana Surakha Yojana for mothers, women entrepreneurship programs etc. are to be deepened and widened to reach the benefits to the target population. Financial inclusion and social inclusion programs are to be tailor made to benefit women and girls. There is progress in coverage of women under Jan Dhan Yojana (JDY), the financial inclusion program. Commercial banks have designed women specific schemes to attract women entrepreneurs to come forward and prove their entrepreneurial talent. As a policy to promote entrepreneurship for socio economic development, government has introduced MUDRA Yojana wherein micro and small business entrepreneurs can seek loans to set up enterprises. It is gratifying to note that 74 per cent of the beneficiaries under the scheme are women.

Violence against women is an issue that is to be intervened with utmost priority. Recent incidences of dowry related violence and cruelty to girls and women in different parts of the country requires more efforts on the part of civil society. Awareness is to be created and more sensitization programs are to be organized on gender equality and women empowerment. Education, health, employment, entrepreneurship, political participation and peaceful existence are the areas in which women and girls are to be supported and brought to the mainstream so that their role and participation contribute to nation building on the one hand and achieve gender equality on the other.

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