

Sub-theme 9 Women, Employment and Education

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Women's employment and education are the crucial factors in addressing the key development challenges such as poverty, inequality, injustice. Across the world, it is proven that ensuring gender equality in education and employment promotes equal opportunities in socio-economic, cultural and political spheres of life. Envisioning the benefits, the constitution of India has enshrined gender equality through Preamble, Fundamental Rights and Duties and Directive Principles. The constitution has also empowered the states to provide specific affirmative actions towards gender equality. Several policy measures have been initiated in the direction of achieving gender equality in women's education and employment. Besides, India is a signatory to several UN Conventions including the ambitious 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to promote gender equality and empowerment and eliminate gender disparities at all levels of education and employment. However, the outcomes in education and employment towards achieving gender equality still remains a long way to go.

The labour market outcome indicators in India highlight the disadvantages faced by women workers in India. While a lot of these inequalities are a consequence of the existing gender division of labour based on stringent social norms and patriarchal attitudes, a large part of these are also driven by the existing policies or the lack of it. These policies, in turn, have a considerable impact on macroeconomic indicators such as women's labour force participation rates, distribution of employment across sectors, occupational segregations, and re-distribution of income, assets and wealth. It also has its implications on improvements/changes on women's access to resources, basic amenities and thus on overall well-being.

A lot of the labour market inequalities faced by women also arise from the occupational segregation of women into typical occupations and sector that are often low paid, low productive and lack any form of upward mobility within the existing patterns of work and social security benefits and are mostly located in the informal sectors of employment. The rigid segregations in the labour market are often both a reason for women workers being unable to access better forms of work and is also often a consequence of the existing inequalities faced by women. . While the causalities operate to act as barriers for women to access remunerative options in the labour markets, the consequences of segregations often result in gender wage differentials, unequal access to social, economic, physical and technological resources, exacerbating the inequalities, thus rendering an inferior status to women in the labour markets. Besides, women workers often experience gender-based differences due to their geographical location, limited mobilities, forced

migration for several forms of labour across geographies, lack of safe workplaces and vulnerabilities in terms of violence, both private and the public that has bearing upon women's engagement in social and economic opportunities.

Further, an important factor that creates barriers for women to access labour markets is the 'double burden' or women's unpaid work. Global figures and statistics have shown that India is one of the extreme cases in terms of the incidence of the burden of women's unpaid work. Household chores, care of children elderly and sick takes away a large part of women's time, which could have been employed for income-earning activities. While these are major issues for women workers in India, women's work cannot also be seen in isolation to the current capitalist conjuncture. Although the nature of women's work continues to broadly depict the characteristics mentioned above, there have been small yet numerous changes in women's participation in the labour market. Changes in the global production processes, organisation of work around the globe in tandem with the changing nature of capitalist accumulation have had an immense impact on women's work. Women's engagement in paid work increased substantially in the last 50 years. Newer clusters of female occupations emerged across the world. India, however, lagged in catching up with these changes. While clustering of women across specific sectors of work such as garments, domestic services, low value-added ITeS, home-based work and so on was not a new phenomenon, low work participation rates of women in India could not improve despite India's high rate of global integration. This essentially is a result of the strategies of globalisation that were adopted in India through its greater macroeconomic and trade policies. Thus apart from the supply side factors of access to education, demographic characteristics, access to resources, rigid patriarchal norms, the demand side determined by the trajectory of capitalist accumulation has had an immense impact on women's work in India.

A lot of the employment indicators of women are driven by access to education, which is evidently gender unequal at many levels. As per the Global Education Monitoring Report 2019, 80% of the seasonal migrant children in major cities in India lacked access to education near worksites and 40% are likely to end up in work, experiencing abuse and exploitation. The report cites that the growth of slums, informal settlements, lack of decent living opportunities, prejudices are major challenges in ensuring inclusive equitable quality education. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) recent survey shows that 39% of adolescent girls in the 15-18 age group are not attending any educational institutions and the majority of them are either forced to attend household chores or begging. Adolescent girls in India are most disadvantaged, economically vulnerable and have limited opportunities to gain the education, knowledge, and skills for the economic advancement. 71st round NSS shows that there is a wide gap between rural and urban areas in terms of quality of education and gender parity.

A lot of children, on the one hand, could not avail of the benefits of the Right to Education Act as they are discriminated based on their social status; on the other, the government schools are neglected in terms of quality and infrastructure. And the absence of factors such as equality to

access, equality in the learning process, equality of educational outcomes and external results largely affect girls and poorer sections of the population. Moreover, there is a major gap in ensuring one of the priorities of the RTE Act, gender-friendly infrastructures such as functional girls' toilets, a supportive environment in schools and colleges through a responsive complaint mechanism to address discriminatory attitudes, sexual harassment, and intimidation.

A lot of unscientific cultural practices hinder girls' education, in particular in rural India. The scientific approach is very central to gender equality; it is important to evaluate the role of textbooks in promoting critical thinking among children for questioning stereotypes, myths and misconceptions, customary practices, and also in promoting gender-friendly classrooms and violence-free educational spaces. It is also important to evaluate the content of textbooks in terms of inclusiveness towards caste, class, religion, gender, and space.

The draft New Education Policy 2019 has also raised concerns from several quarters including academia and civil society. Majority of these organisations voiced against the missing secular commitments, centralisation of education and high thrust on privatisation. Given the inequalities, it is important to get more nuanced insights of the proposed draft New Education Policy in terms of equality to access, equality in the learning process, equality of educational outcome and gender-equal education system.

The above clearly indicates that public investment in basic social infrastructure and services such as health, food security and nutrition, social protection are of critical importance in the process of gender equality in both women's employment and education through several interlinked structural processes. With this background, IAWS would like to invite papers preferably under the following themes. These are of course not exhaustive and therefore not necessarily limited to the below areas.

- Women's education outcomes and long-term impact on women's employment
- Rural labour markets and women's work in India
- Urban women's work and emerging opportunities
- Women's labour rights in an eroding regime for human rights
- Migrant women's work and forms of 'bonded labour' faced by women
- Legislative protection and safety of women at workplaces
- Women's work in the continuum of paid, underpaid and unpaid work
- Measurements, underreporting and missing women in the labour force surveys in India
- Equality in access, learning process and educational outcomes in India
- Privatisation and girls' education
- Migration, gender, and educational rights
- Textbooks, Stereotypes and critical thinking

- RTE and Gender friendly measures
- Policies, SDG goals and gender equality in education
- Caste, Religion, Culture and girls education in India