

Women welfare through five year plans (1951-2012)

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Abstract

Women's inclusion in the planning of development in India preceded Independence. The Planning Commission was constituted in March, 1950 by a Resolution of the Government of India, and it works under the overall guidance of the National Development Council. The First Plan (1951-1956) envisaged a number of welfare measures for women. The Second Plan (1956-1961) retained the welfare approach to women's issues, taking cognizance of the plight of women workers on account of the social prejudices, and the need to provide and implement maternity benefits, protection from injurious work, crèches, and equal pay for equal work policies. The Fifth Plan (1974-1979) there was a shift on the approach from 'welfare' to 'development' as the scope of social welfare and enlarged to cope with several problems of the family and the role of women. The new approach integrated welfare with development services. The Eleventh Plan (2007-12) The vision of the Eleventh Plan is to end the multifaceted exclusions and discriminations faced by women and children; to ensure that every woman and child in the country is able to develop her full potential and share the benefits of economic growth and prosperity.

Keywords: women welfare, five year plans (1951-2012)

Introduction

Women's inclusion in the planning of development in India preceded Independence. In 1939, a sub-committee of women was set up to outline Women's Role in Planned economy (WRPE), as part of the structure of the National Planning Committee, which in turn was to chart the course of future planning in India. The sub-committee was to "deal with the place of woman in the planned economy..." ranging from family life, employment, education and social customs that prevent women's participation in the economy^[1].

The chairperson of the Committee was Rani Lakshmi Bai Rajwade, and the members were influential leaders such as Sarla Devi, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Begum Zarina Currimbhoy, Sarojini Naidu, Durgabai Joshi and Dr.(smt.)Muthulakshmi Reddy. The ideas and suggestions that the sub-committee proposed in their report covered areas such as civic rights, economic rights, property rights, education, marriage, family and issues like widowhood, caste, prostitution etc^[2].

The Planning Commission was constituted in March, 1950 by a Resolution of the Government of India, and it works under the overall guidance of the National Development Council. The Planning Commission consults the Central Ministries and the State Governments while formulating Five Year Plans and Annual Plans. It functions as an advisory Planning body at the apex level. In the early years of planning, it was assumed that women would automatically benefit from the overall measures for national development.

The present study discusses the various efforts taken by the Government of India through Five Year Plans to develop women through various policies,

Programs, commissions and schemes etc., the plan wise description of Five Year Plans are as follows:

The First Plan (1951-1956) envisaged a number of welfare measures for women. The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was set up in 1953 to act as an apex body at nation

level and to promote action organizations at various levels, especially at the grassroots; to take up welfare related activities for women. In 1954, the State Social Welfare Advisory Boards (SSWAB) were established in the state Government, as the limb of the CSWB. The CSWB acts as an umbrella organization networking through SSWABs and through them thousands of Voluntary Organizations^[3]. Sought to 'promote the welfare of women' by helping them to play their legitimate role in the family and the community and stressed that "the major burden of organizing activities for the benefit of vast female population has to be borne by the private.

The Second Plan (1956-1961) retained the welfare approach to women's issues, taking cognizance of the plight of women workers on account of the social prejudices, and the need to provide and implement maternity benefits, protection from injurious work, crèches, and equal pay for equal work policies. The plan efforts were geared to organize 'Mahila Mandals' (women's groups) at the grass root levels to ensure better implementation of welfare schemes.

The Third Plan (1961-1966) envisaged female education as a major strategy of welfare. Under 'social welfare' the emphasis was on the provision of rural welfare services and condensed educational courses. Health services were geared to maternal and child welfare and also health education, nutrition and family planning.

The Fourth Plan (1966-1969) emphasized women's education and the promotion of women's welfare within the family, bringing down the birth rate, and increasing expenditure on family planning.

The Fifth Plan (1974-1979) there was a shift on the approach from 'welfare' to 'development' as the scope of social welfare and enlarged to cope with several problems of the family and the role of women. The new approach integrated welfare with development services^[4].

The Sixth Plan (1980-1985) included a separate chapter on women and development and attributed the low status of women to the lack of income-generating opportunities. Indian women were seen as active partners in development rather than passive subjects for welfare. Employment was the critical goal and bringing in data on women's position in the occupational classification of India's labour and other such information was a big leap forward. The plan focused on extending assistance to help women overcome poverty, highlighted the need to improve women's accessibility to assets and recommended that women receive joint titles to land and property. Special institutions for women were set up during this time – one was the National Committee on Women under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister [5].

The Seventh Plan (1985-1990), acknowledged the important role of women in agriculture and allied sectors and the gap between social reality and its perception by society at large. The strategy was to organize women around socio-economic activities, with the twin objectives of making their projects economically viable and adding to their social strength for the overall enhancement of their status by bringing them into the mainstream of national development. However, in identifying concrete strategies, there was a tendency to slide back into women specific-sectors.

In the beginning of the plan (1985-86) Support for Empowerment of Women programme (STEP) was formulated, a scheme to render support to women's.

Employment in various sectors viz., agriculture, dairy, animal husbandry, fisheries, khadi, handlooms, handicrafts, sericulture etc. [6].

In this plan development programs for women were continued with the objective of raising their economic and social status and bringing them to the main stream of national development, a very significant step there in was to identify and promote 'Beneficiary Oriented Programs' which extended direct benefits to women.

The plan also paved the way to establish a separate Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) in 1985 was created under the ministry of Human Resource Development to give separate identity and provide a nodal point on matters relating to women's development [7].

The plan also introduced a new measure namely Women Development Corporations would be taken up through equity participation in a 50:50 basis between the state and the Centre for promoting employment generating activities for women's group and women from the weaker sections [8]. By the year 1989, Women Development Corporations were established all Indian states.

The Eighth Plan (1992-1997) was to shift emphasis from *women's development to women's empowerment*, to 'ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors do not bypass women and special programs are implemented to complement the general programs.' It reiterated the formation and strengthening of grassroots organizations to articulate local women's needs and play an important role in decentralized planning and implementation. It emphasized the convergence and integration of services offered by health, education, employment and welfare programs at the grassroots level. A policy was adopted to earmark specific Percentage of allocations and numbers for women in all anti-poverty schemes in rural and urban areas [9].

The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) made two significant changes in the conceptual strategy of planning for women. Firstly "empowerment of women became one of the nine primary objectives of the ninth plan. To this effect, the approach of the plan was to create an enabling environment where women can freely exercise their rights both within and outside home as equal partners along with men. It is directed both the Centre and the state to adopt a special strategy of 'Women Component Plan' (WCP) through which not less than 30% of funds/benefits flow to women from all the general development sectors [10].

The Tenth Plan (2002-2007) had made a major commitment towards empowering *women as the agents of socio-economic empowerment and gender justice*. In the pursuance of the avowed objective of empowering the women as agents of socio-economic change, the national policy of empowerment of women was adopted in April 2001 [11]. The Department of women and child was upgraded into a Ministry in 2006. The Tenth Plan must also focus on programs for increasing the work opportunities and productivity of female farmers. Increasing women's access to productive land by regularizing leasing and share cropping of uncultivated agricultural land by women's groups.

The Eleventh Plan (2007-12): The vision of the Eleventh Plan is to end the multifaceted exclusions and discriminations faced by women and children; to ensure that every woman and child in the country is able to develop her full potential and share the benefits of economic growth and prosperity. The gender perspectives incorporated in the plan are the outcome of extensive consultations with different stakeholders, including a Group of Feminist Economists.

The plan recognizes that women are not a homogeneous category. Their situations and consequently requirements differ based on their locations within various Castes, communities, religious geographic and development zones. For the first time, *the plan in the History of Indian planning women were recognized women as equal citizens but as agents of economic and social growth* [12].

The government has emphasized women's welfare through all the succeeding five year plans in form of policy initiatives and administrative measures which have attained mixed success in achieving their goal of improving the socio-economic conditions of women in the country. However considerable development has been observed through such implementations of women welfare oriented initiatives.

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