

## Women-led Development Succeeds Alleviation of Time Poverty

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(Opinions are personal)

*G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration*, a great diplomatic achievement by India as G20 President,<sup>1</sup> recognises women-led development as crucial for gender equality and global GDP growth. The *Declaration* commits to achieving the Brisbane Goal to reduce the gap in labour force participation and implementing the G20 Roadmap Towards and Beyond the Brisbane Goal '25 by 25'. The *Declaration* agrees to create a new Working Group on Empowerment of Women to support the G20 Women's Ministerial.<sup>2</sup>

"Creation of a base of two crore *lakhpati didis* (millionaire sisters) in the villages is my dream", announced the Prime Minister from the ramparts of the Red Fort on 77th Independence Day.<sup>3</sup> Economists agree that India can become a high-income country by 2047 and one key factor is increase in female labour force participation.<sup>4</sup>

However, India is ranked 127 out of 146 countries in the *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*.<sup>5</sup> In the category for economic participation and opportunity category for women,

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<sup>1</sup> UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has praised India's Presidency of the G20 Summit and underlined that New Delhi did its best to have the voice of the Global South represented in the Summit. <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/un-chief-antonio-guterres-praises-indias-presidency-of-g20-summit-narendra-modi-leadership-2435375-2023-09-13> Accessed on 09.09.2023.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gttwenty/gtwenty\\_new/document/G20-New-Delhi-Leaders-Declaration.pdf](https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gttwenty/gtwenty_new/document/G20-New-Delhi-Leaders-Declaration.pdf) Accessed on 10.09.2023

<sup>3</sup> Shri Narendra Modi's address from the ramparts of Red Fort on the occasion of 77th Independence Day, 15 August 2023 <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1948808> Accessed on 09.09.2023

<sup>4</sup> Martin Raiser, World Bank's VP for South Asia, shared four key factors for India to become a high-income country by 2047:

- Continue investment in Human Capital
- Increase Female Labour Force participation
- Improve business climate to attract more private investment, including FDI
- Accelerate climate action initiatives to build resilience & advance India's economic growth & development

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/video/2023/05/11/talk-by-martin-raiser-on-india-s-position-in-a-changing-global-economy-at-srcc> Accessed on 09.09.2023.

<sup>5</sup> The Global Gender Gap Index annually benchmarks the current state and evolution of gender parity across four key dimensions (Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment). It is the longest-standing index tracking the progress of numerous countries' efforts towards closing these gaps over time since its inception in 2006.

*The Global Gender Gap Report 2023*. World Economic Forum 2023. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2023> Accessed on 09.09.2023.

Indian women's Labour-force participation rate (labour force as a percentage of the working-age population) is just 28.26%.<sup>1</sup>

### **Time poverty**

Time poverty is one key concern that pulls back women from pursuing active careers. Indian women have to spend 13.2 hours a week on cooking, whereas South Korean women spend just 3.7 hours per week.<sup>2</sup>

India's first *Time Use Survey* reveals more distressing statistics: 81% of women devote 5 hours per day in unpaid domestic services for household members. To be precise, 75% of women (of the age 6 years above) devote 204 minutes per day for food and meals management and preparation.<sup>3</sup>

ILO estimates that if unpaid care work were to be valued on the basis of minimum wage, they would amount to 9% of global GDP (or US\$11 trillion (PPP 2011)).<sup>4</sup>

As per UN Women's *Gender Snapshot 2022* report, women's exclusion from the digital world alone has shaved \$1 trillion from the GDP of low- and middle-income countries in the last decade.

This burden of unpaid work creates "time poverty", which inhibits women's ability to dedicate time to paid work and acquire the skills necessary to seek better job opportunities. Community Kitchens can address the challenge of time poverty.

### **Unclean fuels**

49% rural families are not able to access clean source of energy for cooking food.<sup>5</sup> Per capita consumption of successful Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana beneficiaries (9.58 crore households) was 3.68 refills per year in 2021-22.

Unclean fuels for household cooking, primary sources of emissions of Particulate Matters (PM) 2.5, contribute nearly 19% of the total emissions in some states; disease burden of this pollution on women and children is a cause of concern.

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<sup>1</sup> Women's Labour-force participation rate for the top four economies: US-56%, China- 63%, Japan-54%, Germany-55%.

<sup>2</sup> GfK survey among 27,000+ consumers (ages 15+) in 22 countries, 2015

<sup>3</sup> *Time Use Survey*, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2019

<sup>4</sup> *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work* / International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> *National Sample Survey Office, Multiple Indicator Survey, 78th round, 2023*, National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)

## **Community Kitchens**

A Community Kitchen can be a group of people who meet on a regular basis to plan, cook and share healthy, affordable meals.

Community Kitchens adapt an empowerment and capacity building model, rather than a welfare model. Financial contribution is shared by all group members; Food prepared is for consumption by participants and their family members only. It is participant driven, and all participants are actively involved in the planning, preparation, cooking of food and cleaning processes. Australia tried this self-sustainable model in a small way.

Community Kitchens are initiated by community facilitators and are planned to be self-sustaining after an initial period of support. Economy of scale associated with bulk food purchasing and preparation is an added advantage in savings.

Training is to be provided to groups on food safety, kitchen safety and budgeting principles. A few group leaders can be formed into a cooperative society which can access finance from banks, if required.

Community Kitchen is an effective strategy to improve nutritional intake and promote social inclusion and community strength. Studies reported improvements in social interactions, cooking skills, food budgeting skills, shopping skills, confidence and enjoyment in cooking; By sharing expenses, Community Kitchens have shown to improve participants' dignity and enable women to devote their time for further studies and employment.

Community Kitchens may also employ a few local men and women; capacity building of Community Kitchens can be done with focus on themes like promotion of millets in a big way and combating malnutrition effectively.

India, aiming to achieve economic growth cannot afford women staying out of the workforce. So far 9 Crore women from Rural Households have been mobilized into 82.61 lakh Self Help Groups (SHGs) under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM). "*Sangathan Se Samridhhi*– Leaving no Rural Woman Behind", a national campaign is aimed at mobilizing one crore women from eligible rural households.<sup>1</sup> Community Kitchens can facilitate such mobilisation quickly in a massive scale.

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<sup>1</sup> "Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihood Mission launches National Campaign "*Sangathan se Samridhhi*" to mobilize 10 Crore Rural Women into Self Help Groups", Ministry of Rural Development, 18 APR 2023. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1917633> Accessed on 09.09.2023

Further, *Palna* scheme (National Creche Scheme) for providing day-care facilities for children (6 months to 6 years) of working mothers at existing Aanganwadi Centers, needs to be implemented with adequate budget allocations and infrastructure development.<sup>1</sup>

### **Gram Sabhas for Women led development**

Women empowerment is a corollary of women's active participation in Gram Sabhas.

Gram Sabhas, more specifically Mahila Gram Sabhas (where majority of the members present are women), need to be strengthened to function effectively, as the basic forum of people's participation, transparency and accountability for promoting a culture of participatory governance, openness and trust.

Gram Sabha, village-level assembly of the registered voters, identifies gaps in service delivery and creates pressure on public authorities for compliance. Though State Panchayati Raj Acts mandate conduction of Gram Sabhas, participation in such Gram Sabhas is not satisfactory. Non-participation of women is a more serious cause of concern. There is a need to build the capacity of officials as well as civil society to strengthen functioning of Gram Sabhas in India.

Interestingly, Telangana Panchayat Raj Act, 2018, Section 6 (6) provides that at least two (out of six) Gram Sabhas, each year, shall be conducted with a focus on women. Section 33 provides that Sarpanch shall be deemed to have been removed from the office as such if they fail to convene the meetings of the Gram Sabha.<sup>2</sup>

When Gram Sabha is strengthened, members collectively demand information during the meetings, if not individually. For example, Gram Sabha shall have the right to know about the budgetary provisions, the details of plan outlay, item wise allocation of funds and details of the estimates and cost of materials of works within the Gram Panchayat. This facilitates social audit of all the welfare schemes.

Constitution of India, Clause (3) of Article 243D ensures participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions by mandating not less than one- third reservation for women out of total number of seats to be filled by direct election and number of offices of chairpersons

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<sup>1</sup> Under Mission Shakti, the National Creche Scheme has been revised and subsumed as Palna scheme.

<sup>2</sup> The Telangana Panchayat Raj Act, 2018

<https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/8492/1/Act%20of%202018.pdf> Accessed on 09.09.2023

of Panchayats. Over 20 States have made provisions of 50% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in their respective State Panchayati Raj Acts.<sup>1</sup>

It is often alleged that male relatives of these women representatives actually take key decisions on behalf of women. However, in practice, women representatives are found to be taking active role in Panchayat administration, motivated by presence of women in successful Mahila Gram Sabhas.

Community Kitchens as self-sustainable initiative can be a revolutionary concept that can bring positive change in the lives of women in India. On the other hand, effective Mahila Gram Sabha has the potential to promote Gender equality and contain crimes against women and children that leads to overall development and empowerment of villages.

India needs to take strong initiatives to facilitate women to contribute to the Nation's development. As the Prime Minister remarked at the G20 Summit Session 2: Women-led development will be a significant driver of change in the 21st century.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseFramePage.aspx?PRID=1658145> Accessed on 09.09.2023

<sup>2</sup> Prime Minister's remarks at the G20 Summit Session on 10.09.2023

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1956012> Accessed on 10.09.2023