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An Analysis of the Adequacy of Indian Laws in Attaining Gender Equality within the Framework of Agenda 2030

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ABSTRACT

Given its centrality to the G20 India seeks to offer a unique vantage point for weighing the efficacy of its laws in fostering gender equality associated with Agenda 2030. As a prominent member of the G20, India's part in shaping global economic policies and its commitment to addressing multifaceted challenges stands at the forefront. The research paper examines the effectiveness and sufficiency of Indian legal frameworks in achieving gender equality in alignment with the goals set forth in Agenda 2030. The United Nations' Agenda 2030 emphasizes the empowerment of women and girls, aiming to eliminate gender disparities across various sectors by the end of the decade. Considering the legal landscape of India, this study conducts a comprehensive analysis of existing laws, policies, and their implementation in relation to gender equality. The research incorporates a multi-faceted approach, utilizing qualitative analysis and comparative studies to evaluate the strengths, short comings, and loopholes within Indian legislation pertaining to gender equality. The research paper proposes prospective reforms and policy recommendations to strengthen the legal framework and address the tenacious barriers preventing the full realization of gender equality. Ultimately, this research contributes to the discourse on gender equality by illuminating insights into the adequacy of Indian laws and policies in order to achieve the goals outlined in Agenda 2030.

Keywords: *Gender equality, sustainable development, women empowerment and gender laws.*

I. INTRODUCTION

AGENDA 2030, an ambitious global outline crafted by the United Nations, embodies a collective commitment towards sustainable development, covering 17 *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* focused at addressing pressing global challenges. *Agenda 2030* focuses on achieving gender equality and empowerment for all girls and women, aiming to eliminate disparities, promote women's rights, and ensure equal opportunities across various

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life spheres.²

Goal 5 aims to eliminate all forms of gender based discrimination, violence, & all harmful practices against all women and girls, ensuring equal rights, opportunities, and full participation in decision-making processes across all sectors. In order to achieve it, *Agenda 2030* incorporates gender-sensitive targets and indicators across various other SDGs to confirm that gender equality infuses all dimensions of sustainable development.³



Worldwide, the gender equality targets outlined in *Agenda 2030* hold profound significance as they address the historical and systemic gender disparities that remain worldwide. Achieving gender equality will build inclusive, prosperous and sustainable societies as it is one of the very basic human right. The eradication of gender-based discrimination and violence, the promotion of women's economic empowerment, and the guarantee of equal access to education and healthcare are pivotal in creating a more just and equitable world for all.

Furthermore, fostering gender equality is intricately linked to broader global development objectives. It has been recognized that empowering women and girls leads to improved social outcomes, enhances economic growth, promotes peace and security, and contributes to the achievement of multiple sustainable development targets beyond Goal 5. But, with only 12 percent of Sustainable development targets being on track, Gender equality according to is some 300 years away from a complete realization.⁴

Examining the Indian context within the framework of *Agenda 2030* assumes paramount significance. As one of the world's largest and most diverse democracies, India stands at a crucial juncture in its pursuit of gender equality. The societal landscape and the trajectory of development towards gender parity are significantly shaped by the legal and policy frameworks

² SDG 5, Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, Department of economic and social affairs, United Nations

³ Goal 5, Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social affairs, United Nations, *available at*, https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5#targets_and_indicators , (last visited: December 7, 2023)

⁴ Secretary-General's remarks to launch the Special Edition of the Sustainable Development Goals Progress Report, *available at*, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2023-04-25/secretary-generals-remarks-launch-the-special-edition-of-the-sustainable-development-goals-progress-report-delivered#:~:text=Halfway%20to%20the%20deadline%20for,percent%20is%20weak%20and%20insufficient> , (last visited: December 10, 2023)

of the nation.

It is necessary to analyze and evaluate the adequacy of Indian laws and check whether the national laws and policies are in alignment with the transformative goals envisaged in Agenda 2030, particularly concerning gender equality. The author has tried to examine the existing legal framework with respect to gender equality, considering the major commitments towards Agenda 2030. By doing the provisional analysis of existing legislation, implementation of policies, complexities in society and working of various institutions, the researcher attempts to trace the progress made under the Indian laws to achieve the goals enshrined in Agenda 2030. The study aims to highlight the obstacles and prospects for legal reforms. Lastly, this research aims to provide suggestions and recommendations aimed at safeguarding India's journey towards achieving gender equality.

II. GENDER EQUALITY AND AGENDA 2030: ANALYSIS OF LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF INDIA WITH RESPECT TO SDG 5

India being a country of great diversity and varied cultures, it becomes very important to recognize gender equality. The gender disparities in India mandates a focused approach to eliminate gender bias. India has made a notable progress towards this direction but still, a lot has to be done to make this goal a reality. *The Indian laws* have always enshrined the values of gender equality. The constitutional principles such as equality and justice has a great impact upon the policies made from time to time for the upliftment of the women and their overall participation in every sphere of life.

(A) Analysis of Key Indian Laws, Policies, and Constitutional Provisions Pertaining to Gender Equality

India's legal framework consists of constitutional norms, statutes, policy guidelines designed to ameliorate the conditions of women. India has taken considerable steps in evolving gender equality through an all-encompassing legal framework. India's commitment is very well manifested through various steps taken by the members of the constituent assembly at the time of making of the Constitution. Right to equality has always been a very integral part of the *grundnorm* of the country. The part IV of the Constitution has dealt with numerous policy guidelines encompassing various aspects such as education, employment, social security and social equity and equality. In this regard various policies and initiatives have been taken by the governments in power to ensure all an inclusive development of women. While still a lot of

challenges persist because of prevalent social dynamics.⁵ India's legal framework manifests staunch commitments towards achieving gender equality considering the larger perspective of sustainable development goals in the form of *Agenda 2030*.

The Indian Constitution has various provisions which shows India's basic values regarding gender equality. The fundamental rights lay the foundation for gender equality. Articles 14, 15, and 16 lay the foundation for equality, nondiscrimination, and equal opportunities. Article 14 states that every person is equal before law and will have equal protection of laws. Further, no person will be discriminated on the various grounds such as religion, caste, class, sex or race.⁶ Furthermore, every citizen gets equal opportunities in public employment.⁷ Additionally, Articles 39(a) and (d) highlight safeguarding gender justice and ensuring equal pay for equal work, directing the state to take affirmative action to uplift marginalized sections, including women.

(B) Various Legislation Addressing Gender-Based Violence:

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, recognizes various forms of domestic violence, providing legal recourse to victims through protection orders, residence orders, and financial relief.

- a. **The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976** :This Act provides for equal pay for equal work i.e. men and women should get equal remuneration for equal work. No employer can, while “recruiting, training or transferring”, discriminate between men and women.⁸
- b. **The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013**:A committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Justice Verma and it recommended changes in the criminal law and as a result of it Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 came into force on February 3, 2013. This Act added some new offences⁹ to protect and safeguard women under IPC.¹⁰

⁵ Shrivastava, A., Usha, R., Kukreti, R., Sharma, G., Srivastava, A.P., Khan, A.K., “Women Safety Precaution”, 2023 1st International Conference on Circuits, Power, and Intelligent Systems, CCPIIS 2023, 2023, DOI: 10.1109/CCPIIS59145.2023.10291594

⁶ The Constitution of India, Art. 15

⁷ The Constitution of India, Art. 16

⁸ “Equal Remuneration Acts and Rules, 1976, Ministry of Labour & Employment|Government of India,” available at: <https://labour.gov.in/womenlabour/equal-remuneration-acts-and-rules-1976> (last visited December 26, 2023).

⁹ Acid attack, sexual harassment, voyeurism, stalking etc.

¹⁰ Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013 (Act 13 of 2013)

- c. **The Women's Reservation Bill:** The Constitution's 108th Amendment Bill introduced the Women's Reservation Bill that aims to ensure reservation of 33% seats to women in the Lower House of Parliament, and state legislative assemblies, although the Rajya Sabha has not voted on it.¹¹
- d. **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013:** The issue being pertinent from a very long time was first brought to light in the Vishaka case¹² in 1997. There was an elaborative discussion on sexual harassment of women at their place of work and thereafter legislation for the same was passed. Harassing women at their place of work violates the women's fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution of India.¹³
- e. **The Hindu Succession Act, 1956¹⁴:** In 2005, an amendment to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, abolished discriminatory provisions, allowing females to own property acquired before or after the Act's signing.
- f. **The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961:** The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 is a legislation that regulates the employment of women in certain establishments for specific periods. It deals with provisions relating to maternity benefits. The act applies to establishments such as mines, factories, circuses, plantations, and shops or establishments employing ten or more persons. The Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 was amended in 2017 to provide women with longer maternity leave—it was formerly only twelve weeks but later extended to twenty-six weeks.¹⁵ The amendment additionally permitted working mothers to apply for 12 weeks of maternity leave from the day of the child's birth if they adopted a child under three months old. Additionally, mothers were permitted to work from home after reaching 26 weeks, contingent on their employment arrangement and with the approval of their employer.¹⁶

¹¹ "India passes law to reserve seats for women legislators," *UN Women – Headquarters*, 2023 available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2023/10/india-passes-law-to-reserve-seats-for-women-legislators> (last visited December 26, 2023).

¹² Vishakha vs. State of Rajasthan AIR 1997 SC 3011

¹³ Handbook on Sexual harassment of women at workplace (Prevention, prohibition and redressal) Act, 2013, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, available at: <https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/Handbook%20on%20Sexual%20Harassment%20of%20Women%20at%20Workplace.pdf> (last visited, December 14, 2023)

¹⁴ Act 30 of 1956

¹⁵ Section 56, The Employees' State Insurance (Central) Rules, 1950

¹⁶ The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 (Act 6 OF 2017), Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India (last visited: December 15, 2023)

- g. **The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961:** It makes the act of offering or accepting a dowry illegal to stop violence against women that is caused by dowries. The act of soliciting or providing a dowry carries a penalty of up to five years in prison and a penalty of Rs. 10,000 or the whole sum of the dowry.¹⁷ The Act of 2005 Protects Women from Domestic Violence grants civil remedies such as residency orders and protection orders and protects women against domestic abuse.
- h. **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006: Addresses child marriage, prohibiting marriages where either party is below 18 for girls and 21 for boys.**

Policies and Initiatives:

- **National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001**¹⁸: Aims to empower women economically, socially, and politically by ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities.
- Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child Campaign¹⁹: It Focuses on eradicating female foeticide, improving the sex ratio, and promoting education for girls.
- **Sukanya Samridhi Yojna**, A savings program supported by the Government of India, under the aegis of the government's larger plan of "*Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*" is aimed at female child parents. The initiative encourages them to establish a fund for their female child's future marriage and schooling. Since there is a minimal commitment necessary and the account remains active for 14 years after it is opened, parents can begin saving early.²⁰
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**: Provides financial assistance to pregnant women for their first living child, encouraging them to seek proper nutrition and healthcare.²¹
- **Women Helpline (181)**: Offers 24x7 emergency support and information to women in distress.
- **The 'Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)'**, formerly known as the

¹⁷ The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 (Act 28 of 1961), s. 4

¹⁸ "National Policy for Women, Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Child and Development, Government of India," available at: <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=103327> (last visited December 27, 2023).

¹⁹ Also commonly known as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign.

²⁰ Sukanya Samridhi Yojna, Ministry of Finance, Government of India,

²¹ Mission Shakti Guidelines, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, available at: <https://pmmvy.wcd.gov.in/Content/assets/PDF/MissionShaktiGuidelines.pdf> : Last visited: December 21, 2023

Maternity Benefit Programme, has been making a positive impact on women by offering financial incentives to expectant and nursing women who improve their overall health.

- **Scheme for Adolescent Girls:** This scheme targets girls from the age group of 11 to 18 years, it empowers girls by ensuring their nutritional needs, health, vocational training and life and home skills.
- **Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme:** This scheme promotes empowerment of rural women through community participation with the help Student Volunteers.
- **National Creche Scheme:** This scheme provide Day care facilities for the children²² of working women by providing crèche facilities.
- **Rastriya Mahila Kosh (RMK):** This fund was established to give low-income women microcredit for their income-generating and livelihood support activities at favourable conditions in a client-friendly manner, consequently promoting their socioeconomic development.
- **Swadhar Greh is** a rehabilitative scheme for supporting destitute women and women in distress.
- **Ujjawala, this** is another Comprehensive Scheme to stop human trafficking for commercial and sexual exploitation and to ensure rehabilitation, re-integration and repatriation of victims of trafficking. Under this scheme Hostels are constructed for working women.
- Few other Schemes such as **One Stop Centre (OSC)** and **Women Helpline (WH)** are being implemented to provide better access to services such as first aid, assistance from police, legal aid and counseling and support for women who are subjected to violence.
- Lastly, a unique scheme titled the **Gender Budgeting Scheme** is used as an instrument to mainstream gender perspectives at various phases of planning, budgeting, implementation, impact assessment, and policy/programme review, including objectives and allocations. The Program assists in bolstering institutional frameworks and educating diverse stakeholders to bring gender issues into the mainstream of national and state governments.

The menace of *gender biasness* are dealt with by a comprehensive legal framework to achieve the goal of establishing an equitable society. The country, from time to time implemented

²² Children between the ages of 6 months to 6 years.

plethora of laws which have been consistent with Constitutional norms to protect women's right and to combat gender biases. These laws were comprehensive in nature and covered critical issues such as education, employment, protection against violence, women empowerment in all aspects of life. While, these laws are laudable but their effectiveness is conditioned upon their proper execution through effective machinery.

III. IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF GENDER EQUALITY NORMS WITH RESPECT TO THE TARGETS AND INDICATORS OF SDG 5

The just and equitable society is the need of the hour and proper execution of gender based laws are a litmus test of countries efforts to achieve these norms at different levels of society. The implementation process pre-supposes a wide analysis of the efficacy of institutional structures, cultural mindsets, socio-economic disparities and flexibility of both law enforcement mechanism and judicial system. These all issues need to be tackled in order to make gender equality legislations robust and fully functional.

(A) An analysis of the targets under SDG5 and Indian laws with that regard is provided below.

India ranks 127th on the worldwide index, having narrowed 64.3% of the total gender gap. It has risen by a factor of 1.4 and eight spots since the previous edition, indicating a modest return towards 2020 (66.8%) parity. The country has achieved parity in enrollment across all levels of schooling. Nevertheless, it has only touched 36.7% parity in terms of economic involvement and opportunities. On the one hand, pay and income parity are improving; on the other hand, the proportion of women in high-ranking as well as technical positions has declined slightly since the previous edition. In terms of political empowerment, India has achieved 25.3% parity, with women constituting 15.1% of total representatives in parliament, the highest figure since the first edition in 2006. On the Health index, an increase in the sex ratio at birth of 1.9 percentage points to 92.7% has pushed up parity after more than a decade of gradual development.

(B) Target 5.1 – To end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere:

National indicator 5.1.1 specifies whether or not a legislative framework exists to promote, enforce, and monitor gender equality and non-discrimination. India ranks 127 out of 146 countries in gender index.²³ Even with so much legislative involvement the fifth largest

²³ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report, 2023, , available at,

economy of the world is still behind a 126 nations. The statistics show that from 2017 to 2022, 88.89% of laws with regards to violence against women are in place, 100% laws for employment and economic benefits and 100% for marriage and family are in place.²⁴

(C) Gender Bias in Education:

Despite strides in education, disparities persist in access to quality education for girls, especially in rural areas. Societal beliefs favoring male education over female education, coupled with financial constraints and safety concerns, limit girls' educational attainment. Over 120 million girls were enrolled in primary to secondary school in 2021-22, a rise of 8.19 lakh over the enrollment figure of girls in 2020-21. The GER Gender Parity Index (GPI) demonstrates that the representation of females in the school system corresponds to the proportion of girls in the population of the corresponding age group. The GPI value at all levels of school education is one or more, meaning that more girls participate in school education.²⁵ Educational attainment- 26 out of 146

Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for women increased from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 37% in 2022-23 but the same remains far behind from that for men which stands at 78.5%.²⁶

Target 5.2 - Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres: Even though a lot of strong laws have been brought into action, the data related to crimes against women tells a story of failure of these laws. India has laws addressing violence against women, yet instances of violence remain high. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2020 report, crimes against women increased by 7.3% from 2019, with a significant rise in cases of cruelty by husbands and relatives. The crime rate against women has increased from 54.23 (per 1,00,000 female population) in 2015 to 64.45 (per 1,00,000 female population) in the year 2021.²⁷ According to the NCRB report for 2021, there was a 15.3 per cent rise in offences against women in comparison with events in 2020. While the NCRB report for 2022 shows 4,45,256 cases of crimes towards women, the figure for 2021 was 4,28,278.²⁸

Target 5.3 - Eliminate harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage and female

https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf , (last visited on: December 15 2023)

²⁴ Government of India, Annual Report 2022-2023, (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2023) , *available at* :https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/ar-2-211E_merged.pdf, (last visited: 15 December, 2023)

²⁵ Government of India, Report on Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) 2021-22 on school education of India, (Ministry of Education, November 2022)

²⁶ "Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Annual Report 2022-2023 Released," *available at*: <https://pib.gov.in/pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1966154> (last visited December 20, 2023).

²⁷ Crime in India 2022 statistics volume-I , National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, *available at*: <https://ncrb.gov.in/crime-in-india-year-wise.html?year=2022&keyword=> (Last visited: 16 December 2023)

²⁸ Crime in India 2022, Statistics Volume-I, Chapter 3A, National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

genital mutilation:

(D) *The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006*²⁹, prohibits child marriage and provides penalties for its violation. India has made significant strides toward ending child marriage. The practice's frequency has dropped dramatically during the last two decades, from 49% in 2001 to 23% in 2021. This progress is attributed to, among other things, female education, a lower poverty rate and low fertility rate, the fostering of positive gender norms, and the enhanced capability of social service, judicial, and enforcement systems.³⁰

Target 5.4 - Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies:

Social protection policies: India has various social welfare schemes³¹ aimed at supporting women, Economic participation and opportunity- 142 out of 146. Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work is 2.5% for male and 19.44% for female.³²

Target 5.5 - Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life:

Political representation: India has reserved seats for women in local governance bodies (Panchayati Raj Institutions) through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, ensuring their participation. India ranks 59 out of 146. Out of the 117 countries with available data since 2017, Women however, still remain underrepresented in political and corporate leadership roles. Structural barriers and inherent biases limit their access to decision-making positions, hindering their influence in shaping policies and agendas. 18 countries, notably Bolivia (50.4%), India (44.4%), and France (42.3%), have attained more than 40% female representation in municipal government. In terms of political upliftment of women, India has achieved 25.3% parity, with females constituting 15.1% of MPs, the highest figure since the first edition in 2006.

Target 5.6 - Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights³³: India has various policies and programs addressing sexual and reproductive health, including the National

²⁹ Act No. 6 of 2007

³⁰ Hana Moumen, "Ending Child Marriage: A profile of progress in India" *UNICEF DATA*, 2023 available at: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/ending-child-marriage-a-profile-of-progress-in-india-2023/> (last visited December 26, 2023).

³¹ National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).

³² "NSS REPORT: TIME USE IN INDIA- 2019 (JANUARY – DECEMBER 2019)," available at: <https://www.pib.gov.in/www.pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1660028> (last visited December 27, 2023).

³³ This target was agreed in accordance with the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

Health Mission and schemes like Janani Suraksha Yojana aimed at maternal healthcare. After more than ten years of sluggish development, the improvement in the ratio of men to women at birth by approx 2 basis points to 92.7% has raised parity on the Health and Survival index (95%). The MMR³⁴ has significantly decreased, falling from 130 per 100,000 live births in 2014–16 to 97 per 100,000 in 2018–20.³⁵

Target 5.A - Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources:

In 2005, the HSA, 1956 was changed to provide daughters with equal rights with respect to family property. Even while inheritance rules have made great progress toward parity, on average across states, women still make up only 14% of landowners and own 11% of agricultural property in rural landowning households.³⁶ Women face significant economic disparities, with lower labor force participation rates and unequal pay compared to men. Limited access to formal employment, coupled with wage gaps, perpetuates economic inequalities. Women's limited access to land and property rights perpetuates economic vulnerabilities. Despite legal provisions ensuring property rights, societal norms often inhibit women from claiming ownership.

Since the inception of **the scheme, around 2.73 crore accounts have been opened under the Sukanya Samridhi Yojna** scheme, having nearly ₹ 1.19 Lakh Crore deposits.³⁷

Target 5.B Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women: According to data from the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)** and NSS, only about 32% of women in India have access to the internet compared to 67% of men, indicating a significant digital gender gap.³⁸

Target 5.C - Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels:

³⁴ Maternal mortality ratio

³⁵ Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Significant Decline in the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) from 130 in 2014-16 to 97 per lakh live births in 2018-20, Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, *available at*: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1879912>

³⁶ Bina Aggarwal and Malvika Mahesh, Does the Landowner's Gender Affect Self-Cultivation and Farm Productivity? An Analysis for India, *The journal of development studies*, Volume 59 2023-issue 5, *available at*: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00220388.2022.2162883> (last visited: December 20)

³⁷ "Sukanya Samridhi Yojana," *myScheme - One-stop search and discovery platform of the Government schemes available at*: <https://myscheme.gov.in> (last visited December 27, 2023).

³⁸ Poonam Muttreja & Andrea Wojnar, India needs to double down on bridging its digital gender gap, United Nations Population Fund, 7 March 2023, *available at*: <https://india.unfpa.org/en/news/india-needs-double-down-bridging-its-digital-gender-gap>, (last visited on: 18 December, 2023)

In India, despite strides made through legal frameworks and policies to promote gender equality and empower women, challenges persist in implementation and enforcement due to deep-rooted cultural norms, limited access to resources, and societal biases. While initiatives targeting women's political representation, economic empowerment, education, health, and technology access have been implemented, gaps remain, such as low representation in higher governance, economic barriers, disparities in education and healthcare, and the prevalence of gender-based violence. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts, including better implementation of existing laws, awareness campaigns to challenge societal norms, enhanced access to education and resources, and proactive measures to counter cultural biases, ensuring a more comprehensive approach to achieving sustainable gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFORMS

Laws regarding gender based violence need to be strengthened: The Indian legal system must reinforce legislations pertaining to gender-based violence. Amendments to the Indian Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code should ensure stricter punishments, expedite justice through specialized courts, and address cybercrimes against women.

1. Workplace Equality and Empowerment: The Equal Remuneration Act must be enforced across all sectors, while measures to encourage women's workforce participation, such as flexible work hours and subsidized childcare, need legal reinforcement and amendments.

2. Land and Property Rights: The text advocates for amending inheritance laws to guarantee equal rights for women in ancestral property, strengthening legislation on women's land ownership rights in rural and tribal areas, and promoting economic independence and social security.

3. Education and Awareness Programs: Implement gender-sensitive education curricula in schools and universities nationwide, incorporating gender studies to promote equality and address bullying, harassment, and stereotypes.

4. Access to Justice: Expanding legal aid services, particularly for marginalized communities, establishing women-friendly courts, increasing female judges, and providing gender-sensitive training to legal professionals can enhance women's access to justice.

5. Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurship: Implement policies promoting entrepreneurship among women through skill development programs, capital access, business

incubation support, special financial schemes, mentorship programs, and subsidies for economic independence.

6. *Healthcare and Sanitation Initiatives:* Strengthen healthcare infrastructure in rural and underserved areas, focusing on maternal health, family planning, reproductive rights, nutrition, menstrual hygiene, and sexual health education for women's well-being.

7. *Better inclusiveness in political domain:* The author suggests that the representation of women in the Parliament and legislative assemblies must be backed not only by proper reservation laws but also their on ground implementation. Awareness about the voter rights and political participation must also be ensured.

8. *Environmental justice:* The paper sheds light upon the gender specific vulnerability of women and advocates for decision making power in environmental matters, sustainable development and disaster resilience.

9. *Better inclusion in digital sphere and access to technology:* Better internet connectivity, digital skills, training for the marginalized community in the rural areas should be ensured through implementation of relevant policies.

10. *Gender mainstreaming and policies:* the paper suggests that certain factor must be kept in mind while drafting policies. These grounds can be SDGs, Gender vulnerability, budget allocation for gender based policies.

11. *Collective approach:* For realizing the gender targets it is necessary that there is a comprehensive collaboration between the International, national and local organizations and institutions who could establish a unified approach to ensure gender equality. This approach can be unified by better collaborative data collection methods and tailored intervention to reduce the gender gaps.

12. *Capacity building and training:* The policies to be implemented are conditioned upon the ability of the policy makers, law makers and law enforcement agencies and therefore, regular capacity building programs, specifically making them aware about gender sensitivity, human rights and intersectionality.

Implement Social protection measures for marginalized women, such as widows, transgender, women with disabilities and address the unique needs. India can ensure their trajectory towards gender equality through a proper implementation of these reforms and recommendations, by doing so India can confirm a better inclusive and equitable society which can go parallel to the Agenda 2030 targets.

V. CONCLUSION

The research paper after thorough examination of Indian legal framework with special reference to gender equality, keeping in mind the targets mentioned under Agenda 2030 concludes that India as a supporter of these targets has so far done a commendable job. The investigation revealed that there are strong laws and just procedures to combat gender disparities. However, the area of effective implementation needs proper attention, owing to social, cultural and institutional limitations. The research also found that the intersectional approach to comprehend gender inequality is more advisable in case of India. Criteria such as caste, class and geographical barriers also need to be taken into account while looking into women's condition evolving. The recommendations and reforms have covered various aspects such as legislative reforms, financial growth and stability, health care, political participation and conformity with global sustainable development goals. While India has made various laws and policies in order to achieve gender equality and address the issues related to it, the implementation of these policies remain a big hindrance to their success. The Indian Judiciary being the guardian of these rights has time and again tried to keep the nation's approach towards this goal in line. Through various landmark judgements the apex court has clarified the legal standpoints and has suggested the government to adopt various international conventions into domestic laws. But even these efforts do not elevate India's rank in the Gender Gap Index. The recent legal development including the various policies such as *'Beti bachao beti padhao'* and *'Sukanya Samridhi Yojna'* have paved a better road in this regard. The results will surely be on a positive side and the data suggests that India's stand on gender equality will surely be reflected on a global scale with better results.
