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Women Empowerment - A Key Factor to Sustainable Development in Global Context

A. JONAH ELISA SHINY¹

ABSTRACT

Women empowerment is a procuring term to make women create their own dwelling, their participation in all areas and sectors to build stronger economies and survival with dignity to improve their quality of life and bring gender equality. Empowerment means moving from enforced powerlessness to a position of power. Empowerment is the expansion of freedom of choice and action. Education is an essential means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to fully participate in the development process. Sustainable development is only possible when women and men enjoy equal opportunities to reach their potential. This paper carries the concept of empowerment and gives an overview on the role of women's empowerment in the context of the sustainable development Agenda, clarifies concepts relating to empowerment and sustainable development and examines the means of implementing, financing and monitoring the activities related to the concept of sustainable development. It then discusses the concept of sustainable development and its goals to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. This research paper merges the concept of empowering women and sustainable development, mainly enumerating the concept of empowering women in the context of the 2030 Agenda. This research paper concludes by providing further steps of improvement and suggestions for empowering women to contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities and to improve prospects for the next generation, and to prove women are neither superior nor inferior to men -both are equal, so they deserve equal opportunity and distribution of resource.

Keywords: *Women empowerment, Sustainable development, Monitoring, Gender equality, 2030 Agenda, European Union, distribution of resources.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Women! Women! Women! The centric of this paper deals to show their empowerment and participation in this inevitable society and to acquire power and possess equal resource power. Whereas sustainable development depends on the equal distribution of opportunity and

¹ Author is a Lawyer, India.

resources, and it cannot be achieved without gender equality. Especially not only charity begins at home but also “THE SOCIETY BEGINS AT HOME” this shows the homemakers are the primary source of making this society. But the society is keen enough on making them homemakers and economically dependent, as home parasites, and they oppose them to participate in society. This is the genuine Pathetic situation that is prevailing all over the globe. Subsequently, the globe is now encountering problems pertaining to the recognition of the third gender rights where all people are not given equal rights and freedom. This is the time for the globe to realize the empowerment of women, provide them with adequate opportunities at all levels in the field of education, politics, administration, Information Technology, Social Status, Position, Leadership, Capabilities of mobilisation, and so can be marching into domains which were previously reserved for males (police, army, air force, navy, commandos). In order to build women as a catalyst for sustainable development, their role in family, community and society at large has to be free from socio-cultural and religious traditions that prevent women participation.

II. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of women. “

-Jawaharlal Nehru

Sustainable Development Goals² –our common future to meet the present without compromising the future³. On 25th September 2015, the UN general assembly with 193 countries adopted the 2030 development agenda (SDG) with 17 goals⁴ and 169 targets and earlier to SDG; gender equality was included in eight-millennium goals in 2000. Thus the future goals carry numerous achievements. One among them is the empowerment of women and girls with equal opportunity and equality in distribution of resources in the level playing field of economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection by means to meet

² Herein refer as SDG- sustainable development goals.

³ The commission on Environment And development defined sustainable development

⁴ Sustainable development Goal- 5: Achieve Gender Equality and empower all women and girls. The following target has been included to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls: 1) End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. 2) Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. 3) Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. 4) Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate. 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. 6) Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the programme of action of the International conference on population and development and the Beijing platform for action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

viable, bearable and equitable development⁵. According to UN world Survey on the role of women in development 2014, has stated there is a connection between women's empowerment and economic, social and environmental sustainability. The women who possess half the population of world strength are stamped as vulnerable sex, the physical feature may differ from the opposite sex but not the intelligence, and moreover now women are dominating in every field which carries physical wrestle too. Yet discrimination is still prevailing. It is a big question mark towards the globe that why such discrimination on giving freedom and recognition to women. Gender-based violence, discrimination on economic distribution, imposition of traditional myth and customs, family oppression, early marriage, lack of education, restriction on reproduction rights, choice of life, political participation. Now the fetters are broken, and they are coming out with flying colours and unlocking every field. Increasing women's capabilities and empowering them is the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development"⁶. Equal opportunity for women and men in all activities lead to ensuring a sustainable path to development. Empowerment is multidimensional to expand their freedom of choice and action in all spheres- political, social, economic, microfinance institution, agricultural, personal management, law, literacy, cultural, health-care, entrepreneurship, and familiar to change their self-esteem"⁷and responsibility of imposing democratic and liberal ideology to the family⁸.

III. WAYS AND MEANS OF ACHIEVING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

- **The crosscutting effect of Gender justice and sustainable development:**

Gender justice is achieved by gender equality. The world is not formed only by sole gender. Gender equity is equal access of literacy, opportunity, dignity, respect, honour, freedom, independence, participation and distribution of resources and legislation and, mechanism accessibility and reservation in every field to women is identical to men who are actually deserved to women too. CEDAW, The 1992 Rio summit, together with the 1993 Human rights Conference, the 1994 International conference on population and development, the 1995 social summit, 1995 Fourth World conference on women have focused on gender equality and help empowerment of women is the foundation of peace and sustainable development.

⁵ Sudharshan kumar pathania "SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: GENDER EQUALITY OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS "International journal of research-Granthalayah.vol5 (iss4) April2017.

⁶ United Nation Development Programmes(UNDP),Human Development Report 2006

⁷ Gupta V.S." Capacity building for effective empowerment of women ",Kurukshetra,50, No. 8,June 2008,P.47

⁸ Uplaonkar Ambarao, " Empowerment of women", Mainstream ,XI-III, No. 12,March 12,2005,P.20

- **Ending all forms of violence against women:**

According to WHO, about 70 % of women face physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime⁹, which causes abortion, sexually transmittable disease, and about 43% of women in 28 European union member states have experienced physical violence by life partner¹⁰, one in ten women faces cyber-harassment since from the age of 15 and the age between 18-29 years are high on risk¹¹., according to 2016 survey 1 in 4 women in Washington DC, the United States, experiences harassment in public transport.¹²,44% reports initiated on rape, death, assault, abduction, threats on women¹³these surveys are shown as an example of the aggravation prevailing to date and show though we have international conventions like CEDAW 1979, which does not explicitly define violence against women and girls except the recommendation 12 and 19 deals with violence. World Conference on Human Rights (1993)recognized violence against women as a human rights violation and appointed Special Rapporteur on violence against women that paved the way to the instrument named- The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women of UN general assembly on 20 Dec1993 the first international document that explicitly states violence against women as defined under Article 1 and providing a framework for national and international action for the protection of women. It defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. International conference on population and development 1994 draws a link between reproductive health rights of women and violence against women, 1995 Beijing Platform for Action plan has specified certain action by the government to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, On 2006 The Secretary-General's In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women was released, which is considered as the first comprehensive report on violence against women. The 2011 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence has become the second legally binding instrument on violence against women. On 2nd July 2012, UN WOMEN

⁹ World Health Organization, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council (2013). Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence, p.2. For individual country information, see The World's Women 2015, Trends and Statistics, Chapter 6, Violence against Women, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015 and UN Women Global Database on Violence against Women.

¹⁰ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014). Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, p. 71

¹¹ . See European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014). Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, p. 104

¹² Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (2016). Understanding Sexual Harassment on Public Transportation, in UN Women (2017), Corporate Brief Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces.

¹³ Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016). Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians, p. 3.

¹⁴was formed for the full-fledged motive of empowering women and UN Women's Virtual Knowledge centre to end violence against women and girls, UN general assembly's bi-annual resolution on 2012 which includes trafficking, The UN Human Rights Council's annual resolution on 2012.

In 2013, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the functional Commission of ECOSOC, came out with the priority theme on eliminating all forms of violence and equal sharing responsibility of men and women¹⁵. The women on the globe still face certain violence every day.

- **Educational empowerment:**

Education is a right of every individual. If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family (the nation).¹⁶ In many countries, education is denied to girl children. Like Pakistan, over 13 million Pakistani girls have never been to school. And more pathetic to know is the taboo starts from their home then the custom, religion, society, community, a threat to security, myth on patriarchal society that by, giving education women dominate men .., it is a wonder how the society is overwhelming with the reason for to suppress the education right of a girl. According to UNESCO, over 31 million girls are out of primary school education, and among these, over 17 million are never entered school ., about countries like Nigeria, five and a half million, in Pakistan three million, in Ethiopia, one million girls are out of school¹⁷ Two-thirds of the 774 million illiterate people in the world are female.¹⁸ Various factors need to be shunned like early child marriage, decreased infant mortality, domestic and sexual violence, community or locality abstain, family pressure. There is no achievement without overcoming the discrimination and poverty that struck the empowerment of women in education. Education should not be denied just because she is a girl. It should be a fundamental right of every child, which should be effectively implanted by nations like India.

- **Women and Governance:**

Women's participation in leadership and participation in politics is still in the growing stage where fundamental right like suffrage is being restricted in some country, whereas some country like Saudi Arabia has now recognized women suffrage by the 2015 election, which is

¹⁴ United Nations Entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women

¹⁵ UN Women. 2022. Commission on the Status of Women. <<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>> [Accessed 12 February 2022].

¹⁶ Well-known saying is attributed to the Ghanaian scholar Dr. James Emmanuel Kwegyir-Aggrey (1875-1927)

¹⁷2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report; UNESCO Institute for Statistics database .

¹⁸ Ibid

very late for the welcome and now the increasing need for women's active participation in state governance. Some International recognition like the UN Economic and social council resolution 1990/15 has made a call over the governments, the political parties, the trade unions, and professional and other representative groups to adopt 30 per cent as a minimum proportion of women in leadership positions, with a view to achieving equal representation, and The Beijing Platform for Action reiterates resolution 1990/15 for the increase of women representation in strategic objective G2, CEDAW commitments under Article 7 on political and public life, and Article 8 on representation, in 2003 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/58/142)-member state to monitor the representation of women, voting, encouraging women in the political process and recently in 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/66/130) has stressed UN members to make appropriate measure on women participation in politics. The paper would like to highlight some survey reports on actual achievement on this instrument and action of the state in average according to the 2019 report, Only 24.3 per cent of all national parliamentarians were women, a slow increase from 11.3 per cent in 1995¹⁹, State Rwanda has the highest women parliamentarian worldwide, and women in Rwanda holds 61.3% seats in the lower house.²⁰ Across the region, as of February 2019,²¹ Nordic countries have 42.5 percent, America 30.6 per cent Europe including Nordic countries, 28.6 per cent; Europe excluding Nordic countries, 27.2 per cent; Sub-Saharan Africa, 23.9 per cent; Asia, 19.8 per cent; the Arab States, 19 per cent; and the Pacific, 16.3 per cent. Especially in India, bearing around 49 per cent of women in population has only 15 per cent of women representation in parliament, 2017 survey says Lok sabha has 64 women (11.8%) out of 542 MP's and Rajya sabha 27 women out of 245 members (11%).

- **Economic Empowerment:**

Patriarchal society's ultimate achievement is degrading women in economic participation, restraining them from working and self-independent, though we have international organization ICESCR²², which upholds the equal right and equal remuneration to men and women and guarantees work conditions to women not inferior to those enjoyed by women, global norms and standards like The Beijing declaration and platform for Action's Commitment to promoting women economic independence, employment, eradicating the

¹⁹ Single House or Lower House. Inter-Parliamentary Union. "Women in national parliaments, as of 1 February 2019".

²⁰ Inter-Parliamentary Union. "Women in national parliaments, as at 1 February 2019"

²¹ Ibid.

²² International convention on economic, social and cultural Rights.

poverty on women(para26)and to develop gender-sensitive multispectral Programmes and strategies to end the subordination of women and to empower them(para108{e}). The convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women’s provision on employment (Article 11), economic and social benefits (Article 13), and rural women (Article 14)., 2011 ILO Convention Concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers.,2012 The ILO Social Protection floors Recommendations(No:202), four gender equality conventions like Equal Remuneration Convention (No.100), Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No.111).Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156) and Maternity Protection Convention (No.183). As rightly pointed out by OECD, when there is an increase in female labour, the economies grow²³. Women are earning 24 per cent lower than men²⁴in the labour market, they are not represented in the union, and the labour is extracted from them in low paid, and they are take-up as granted for undervalued jobs²⁵. Now the states need to take appropriate measures in implementing the international convention and empower women. No woman should be economic dependent -this is primarily achieved only by formal education, family support, social security and independence to every girl child.

IV. CONCLUSION

History has witnessed only a few women achievers, and there are many to be explored. Women empowerment is not actually dominance of women; it is a chance and space for them to break through what they actually are. Women are portrayed as a deity, but in reality, they are not even considered as the parallel race – they deserve basic humanity and freedom. Her individualism, education, economic, social, political identity should be out weighted. This global target is achieved by effective implementation of state policy providing health, safety, opportunity, legislation, remedial mechanism, gross root level concentration of women participation in every field. It’s time for every girl and woman to raise their voice and be self-motivated. Women who play roles like a daughter, a wife, a mother have one more role that is her –“self”. All countries should shoulder her the support and responsibility to achieve the 2030 Agenda of sustainable development. The actual exigency is women empowerment.

²³ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship: Final Report to the MCM 2012. <http://www.oecd.org/employment/50423364.pdf>. p. 17

²⁴<http://sustainable.development.goals.un.org/women-and-sustainable-goals>. Pdf accessed on 25/12/2019

²⁵ ILO, Global Employment Trends for Women, 2012, p. 8 and 22. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_195447.pdf. See Also, The World Bank, Gender at Work: A Companion to the World Development Report on Jobs. http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/GenderAtWork_web.pdf