



# IAS PARLIAMENT

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A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative

## GIST OF KURUKSHETRA

JANUARY 2018

*Empowering Rural Women*



**Shankar IAS Academy™**

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# **I N D E X**

## **KURUKSHETRA – JANUARY 2018**

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## **KURUKSHETRA – JANUARY 2018**

### **1. WOMEN AS A PART OF RURAL WORKFORCE**

#### ***What is the status of Women workforce in rural India?***

- In contrast to the urban women workers, who are offered with technological and infrastructural advancement, rural working women constitute 81.29 percent of female working force in India.
- Quantitatively, rural women workers (121 million) outnumber their male counterparts (105.5 million) in the urban areas.
- Empirical studies indicate the emerging scenario of gender equality in rural labour comprising with female labour force (48.6%) and male labour force (51.4%) respectively.
- The emerging phenomena of feminisation of rural labour is discernible through a gender analysis of rural people seeking work in which, 25.8% of rural women labourers are seeing work in contrast to 16.2% rural male labourers.
- Rural women (228 million) outnumber rural men (153 million) among the marginal work seekers.

#### ***What are the challenges of rural women at work?***

- Contradictory to feminisation of global farming, women cultivators lack access to fertilizers, seeds, credit,

membership in cooperatives and unions and technical assistance that are bestowed upon the men holding title to the agricultural land of the household.

- Lac of access to credits, capital, decent of work in addition to dependent children succumb rural women to the vicious cycle of poverty, which is deeper than that of men due to gender equality in the control and use their own income, household resources etc., to the same degree as men.
- Triple role of women labourers saps their energy and time that renders them weak and malnourished.
- Rural women lack immunity and become vulnerable to ill health and diseases that adversely affect their work participation temporarily or permanently.
- Both the option of and being in physical labour precludes the possibility of women to engage in further education.
- By the nature of tasks assigned and the extent of time augmented from women labourers by masculine hegemony, women labourers are succumbed to over work.
- Routinised tasks and absence of training renders rural women labourers unskilled for their life time.



- In addition to physical hardships, rural women are subjected to ill treatment, verbal abuse and sometimes even physical violence and abuse which go largely unreported.
- Under rural patriarchy operating at home and workplace, the women's work is pervasively undervalued, underrepresented and exploitatively extracted due to women's lack of knowledge about safeguards, inadequate voice in public forum and coercion beneath symbolic violence.

## **2. HEALTH OF RURAL WOMEN - WEALTH OF NATION**

### **Why protecting health of women is important?**

- It's our women who form the roots of our families and thereby society and ultimately the country.
- The most recent research also supports the claim that investment in the health of women and children, besides saving lives and preventing avoidable tragedies, secures high social and economic returns for the country.
- Increasing health expenditure by just 5 dollars per person per year up to 2035 could yield up to nine times that value in economic and social benefits according to the Lancet study.
- These returns include greater growth in gross domestic product through improved productivity and prevention of the needless deaths and disease.

### **What are the interventions and initiatives of GOI to promote the health of women?**

- **Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A)** approach has been launched in 2013 and it essentially looks to address the major causes of mortality among women and children as well as the delays in accessing and utilizing health care and services.
- The RMNCH+A strategic approach has been developed to provide an understanding of 'continuum of care' to ensure equal focus on various life stages.
- **National Iron + Initiative** to address the issue of anemia across all age groups and the Comprehensive Screening and Early interventions for defects at birth, diseases and deficiencies among girl children and adolescents.
- Under **Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram**, Peer Educators are selected and trained on six thematic areas namely- nutrition, sexual reproductive health, substance misuse, non-communicable diseases, mental health, injuries and violence.
- The **National Health Mission (NHM)** aims for attainment of universal access to equitable, affordable and quality health care services, accountable and responsive to people's needs, with effective inter-sectoral convergent action to address the wider social determinants of health.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched Scheme for **Promotion of Menstrual Hygiene** among adolescent girls in the age



group of 10-19 years in rural areas as part of the Adolescent Reproductive Sexual Health (ARSH) in RCH II, with specific reference to ensuring health for adolescent girls.

- **Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics** was created as the first level of contact of primary health care services with adolescents. These clinics are being developed across all level of care to cater to diversified health and counselling need of adolescent girls and boys.
- Under the Framework for Implementation of NRHM, a female community health worker called **Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA)** has been engaged in each village in the ratio of one ASHA per 1000 population or one ASHA per habitation in tribal areas.
- **Mother and Child Tracking System** is designed to capture information on and track all pregnant women and children (0-5Years) so that they receive 'full' complement of maternal and child health services, thereby contributing to the reduction of maternal, infant and child morbidity and mortality.
- The **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)** is aimed to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates through safe pregnancies and safe deliveries. The national programme will provide special free antenatal care to about 3 crore pregnant women across the country in order to detect and prevent high risk pregnancies.

- **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)** is a centrally sponsored scheme which is being implemented with the objective of reducing maternal and infant mortality by promoting institutional delivery among pregnant women.
- Under the JSY, eligible pregnant women are entitled for cash assistance irrespective of the age of mother and number of children for giving birth in a government or accredited private health facility.
- The **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK)** has been launched on 1st June, 2011, which entitles all pregnant women delivering in public health institutions to absolutely free and no expense delivery including Caesarean section.
- Under **National Iron Plus Initiative (NIPI)**, through life cycle approach, age and dose specific IFA supplementation programme is being implemented for the prevention of anaemia among the vulnerable age groups like under-5 children, children of 6 – 10 years of age group, adolescents, pregnant & lactating women and women in reproductive age along with treatment of anaemic children and pregnant mothers at health facilities.

### **3. NATIONAL POLICY FOR WOMEN 2016**

#### ***What is the need for the new policy?***

- Retention of girls in schools, providing for their gender specific needs including issues of sexual harassment



are left out or given negligible importance till date.

- Many women work in semi - marketised, semi monetised and non contractual subsistence activities either in agriculture, petty production or services, which are outside the organised sector should be taken care of.
- One of the most important challenge that has close association with the overall decline in the status of women in our society is the economic participation of women because it intersects with other structural issues which needs attention.
- The long run decline in women's workforce participation rate, evident even during most distinctive phase of accelerated rates of economic growth still remains a large puzzle that needs to be addressed.
- The women are burdened by the responsibility of sustaining the agriculture which is in crisis, and it needs an intervention to protect them.
- Lack of property rights for women especially agricultural land has affected women's decision making in agriculture and they must be empowered.
- Access to credits and extension services which are based on the ownership of land have also been issue for the women entrepreneurs.
- The distress migration of women from rural to urban areas, and their segregation into low paid and highly

exploitative informal employments such as paid domestic work must be addressed.

### ***What are the priority areas of the new policy?***

- **Health including food security and nutrition:** Focus on recognizing women's reproductive rights, shift of family planning focus also to males, addressing health issues in a life cycle continuum such as psychological and general well-being, health care challenges related to nutrition/hygiene of adolescents, geriatric health care, expansion of health insurance schemes and addressing the intergenerational cycle of under-nutrition
- **Education:** Improve access to pre-primary education, enrolment and retention of adolescent girls, implement innovative transportation models for better schooling outcomes, advocate gender champions and address disparities with regard to ICTs.
- **Economy:** Raising visibility, engendering macro-economic policies and trade agreements, generate gender-disaggregated land ownership database, skill development and training for women, entrepreneurial development, review of labour laws and policies, equal employment opportunities with appropriate benefits related to maternity and child care services, address technological needs of women.
- **Governance and Decision Making:** Increasing women's participation in



the political arena, administration, civil services and corporate boardrooms,

- **Violence Against Women:** Address all forms of violence against women through a life cycle approach, Legislations affecting /relating to women will be reviewed/harmonized to enhance effectiveness, Improve Child Sex Ratio (CSR), strict implementation of advisories, guidelines, Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) and protocols, prevention of trafficking at source, transit and destination areas for effective monitoring of the networks.
- **Enabling Environment:** Gender perspective in housing and infrastructure, ensuring safe drinking water and sanitation, gender parity in the mass media & sports, concerted efforts towards strengthening social security and support services for all women especially the vulnerable, marginalized, migrant and single women.
- **Environment and Climate Change:** addressing gender concerns during distress migration and displacement in times of natural calamities due to climate change and environmental degradation. Promotion of environmental friendly, renewable, non-conventional energy, green energy sources for women in rural households.

**What are the operational strategies to achieve the policy objectives?**

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- **Enabling safety and security of women** – with initiatives such as One Stop Centres, Women Helpline, Mahila Police Volunteers, Reservation of women in police force, creating immediate response mechanism through panic buttons in mobiles, public and private transport, surveillance mechanisms in public places.
- **Creating eco-systems to encourage entrepreneurship amongst women** – through platforms like Mahila E-Haat, dedicated theme based exhibitions, focussed skill training, mentoring through Women Entrepreneurship Council, availability of easy & affordable credit and financial inclusion.
- **Training and capacity building** of all stakeholders including youth through Gender Champion initiative, frontline workers, women sarpanches and all officials dealing with policy and delivery systems impacting women.
- **Facilitating women in workplace** – through gender friendly work place, flexi timings, increased maternity leave, provision of child care / creches at workplace, life cycle health care facilities

#### **4. WOMEN'S SAFETY : TOP PRIORITY**

**What are the security issues do women face?**

- Millions of women are subjected to overt and latent violence as they are trafficked for sex tourism, fall prey to 'kitchen accidents', face sexual war crimes like rape, face intimate partner



violence and lack the agency to determine sexual and reproductive choices, honour killings among others.

- The gender violence is not only a legal crime but also a violation of basic human rights directed against the female human population.

### **What are the interventions of GOI to ensure women's safety ?**

- The **Scheme for Universalisation of Women Helpline** has been recently approved i.e. on 19th February, 2015 with a total project cost Rs. 69.49 crore for implementation through States/UTs from 1st April 2015.
- The scheme envisages to provide 24 hour emergency and non-emergency response to all women affected by violence both in public and private sphere, including in the family, community, workplace etc.
- **Panic Button and Global Positioning System in Mobile Phone Handsets** :The Ministry had discussed this issue with a number of stakeholders as well as Department of Telecommunications and had insisted that a physical panic button is much superior to having an App on the mobile phone.
- It was argued that a women in distress does not have more than a second or two to send out a distress message as a perpetrator will often reach out to her mobile phone in the event of a physical/sexual assault.
- So all feature phones will have the facility of panic button configured to

the numeric key 5 or 9 and all smart phones will have the panic button configured to three times short pressing of the on-off button.

- **Mahila Police Volunteers (MPV):** The MPV will encourage women to come forward with complaints of violence and discrimination, provide information to them on remedies for this and assist them in taking their cases to police authorities.
- MPV will serve as an example to the village and encourage a woman friendly environment both within and outside the police station.
- Any empowered woman from the community, who is of 21 years of age and is at least 12th pass can be selected to be a MPV.
- The Union Cabinet gave its approval for making reservation of **33 percent for women**, horizontally and in each category (SC/ST/OBC and others) in direct recruitment in non-gazetted posts from Constables to sub-inspector in the police forces of all Union Territories, including Delhi Police.
- The Cabinet also approved that suitable enabling provisions in the Recruitment Rules should be made accordingly by all UTs police forces including Delhi Police.
- The reservation will be available to women against all such vacancies existing on the date of issue of the order after Cabinet approval and vacancies arising thereafter.



- The **portal (SHe-Box)** is an effort to provide speedier remedy to women facing sexual harassment at workplace as envisaged under the SH Act.
- Once a complaint is submitted to the portal, it will be directly sent to the ICC of the concerned Ministry/Department/PSU/Autonomous Body etc. having jurisdiction to inquire into the complaint.
- Through this portal, WCD as well as complainant can monitor the progress of inquiry conducted by the ICC.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing **“Ujjawala”** – a Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation, Re-integration and Repatriation of Victims of Trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation.
- These rehabilitative centres are given financial support for providing shelter and basic amenities such as food, clothing, medical care, legal aid; education in the case the victims are children, as well as for undertaking vocational training and income generation activities to provide the victims with alternate livelihood option.
- The **Women Power Line 1090** is a IVRS based dedicated service in Uttar Pradesh, India, to empower women from all forms of harassment and ensure their safety in society.
- 1090 is a toll-free number that provides immediate help to the

harassed women suffering from an antisocial behaviour or any other format of assistance which is sought.

- This helpline handles the cases of offense against women and ensures speedy protection to women and girls.

## 5. EDUCATING THE GIRL CHILD FOR BETTER TOMORROW

### *Why education is indispensable for Women?*

- Education can be a tool of social development. By pacing woman education in India, the country can achieve the goal of social development as it will help to solve many issues faced by society.
- Education is the only tool which can prevent the society from its myth and will help to close a gender gap in the society.
- Educated woman can bring in more productive linkage, backward and forward both, which can bring in fruits in multiple directions.
- Education not only brings economic gains to a woman but also raises the GDP of the nation.
- A well educated woman will have more chances of making better decisions for her family's health.
- Education will improve the chances of employment for women and hence they can contribute to their family income.
- By educating herself, she can achieve a place in society also and they are



less likely to be taken advantage of and lower exposure to domestic abuse.

- Women who are educated are capable of shaping their future and also their family by bringing up their children in more enlightened way.
- When women are included in key decision making positions, they take holistic decisions for the development of the society.

### **What are the reforms taken by GOI to promote Women education?**

- **Sakshar Bharat mission for Female Literacy programme** was formulated in 2009 with the objective of achieving 80% literacy level at national level, by focusing on adult women literacy seeking – to reduce the gap between male and female literacy to not more than 10 percentage points.
- It has four broader objectives, namely imparting functional literacy and numeracy to non-literates; acquiring equivalency to formal educational system; imparting relevant skill development programme; and promote a leaning society by providing opportunities for continuing education.
- The **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009** lays down the duties of the appropriate Government and the local authority to ensure that good quality elementary education conforming to norms and standards is provided, curriculum and courses of study are

prescribed in a timely manner, and teachers are trained.

- As per model rules prescribed under RTE Act, 2009 a primary school is provided at a distance of 1km and an upper primary school is provided at a distance of 3Km, though the States have notified their own neighborhood norms as per their requirement.
- **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs)** which are residential upper primary schools for girls have been opened in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs) with rural female literacy below the national average as per Census 2001 with 75% seats allocated to SC, ST, OBC, Muslim & BPL girls.
- The **National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level scheme** is meant for the educationally backward blocks (EBB) where both girls who are in 'in' and 'out' of school, are targeted.
- The out of school girls include never enrolled and drop out girls. In the case of girls in elementary school, the thrust is on girls with low attendance rates and girls with low levels of achievement.
- Ensuring a positive self image and to eliminate gender bias in the classroom is also in the design of the scheme.
- **Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)** is a Centrally



Sponsored Scheme that envisages inter-alia provision of a secondary school within a reasonable distance of any habitation and to improve quality of education imparted at secondary level by making all secondary schools conform to prescribed norms, removing gender, socio-economic and disability barriers etc.

- **Dhanalakshmi** is a conditional Cash Transfer Scheme for Girl Child to provide a set of staggered financial incentives for families to encourage them to retain the girl child and educate her.
- The **Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG) Sabla** is a centrally sponsored program which has an objective of mainstreaming out of school adolescent girls into formal/non formal education.

## 6. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN

*What is the role of education in empowering women?*

- Mahatma Gandhi once said : " If you educate a man, you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family"
- As education is both input and output of human development, educational equity will ensure enabling and entrepreneurial development.
- Educated girls and young women are more likely to know their rights and to have the confidence to claim them.
- Education helps people to understand democracy, promotes the tolerance and trust that underpin it, and motivates people to participate in the political life of their societies.
- Education enables women to respond to challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their lives.

*What are the constitutional and legal provisions available for women?*

- Equality before law for women (Article 14)
- The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i))
- The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15 (3))
- Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)
- The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))
- To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are



not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A)

- The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)
- To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e))
- Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3))
- Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women (Article 243 D (4))
- Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243 T (3))
- The **Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961** prohibits the practice of giving or

taking of dowry by either parties to a marriage.

- **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976** aims at providing equal remuneration to men and women workers and prevention of discrimination, particularly against women on the ground of gender.
- The **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005** is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted to protect women from domestic violence.
- The **Maternity Benefits Act, 1961** aims at regulating employment of women employees all over the country. The act provides 24 weeks as the maximum period for which any working woman shall be entitled to maternity benefit.

#### ***What are the initiatives taken by Government to encourage empowerment of women?***

- **Aajeevika** - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India in June 2011.
- Aided in part through investment support by the World Bank, the Mission aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms of the rural poor, enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services.



- **Mahila e-Haat** is a unique online platform where participants can display their products. It is an initiative for women across the country as a part of 'Digital India' and 'Stand Up India' initiatives.
- **Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)** Scheme aims to provide skills that give employability to women and to provide competencies and skill that enable women to become self-employed/ entrepreneurs.
- The Scheme is intended to benefit women who are in the age group of 16 years and above across the country including rural women.
- **Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme For the Children of Working Mothers** provides day care facilities to the children in the age group of 0-6 years from families with monthly income of less than Rs.12,000/-.
- The scheme, inter-alia, also provides development services i.e. supplementary nutrition, health care inputs like immunization, polio drops, basic growth monitoring and recreation to such children.
- Poor knowledge on legal rights hampers the social and political empowerment of rural women.
- Illiteracy also impedes their access to skill up gradation and capacity building programs, access to credit, access to subsidies on inputs provided by government agencies and related training modules offered by the agricultural extension system and their decision making power.
- They do not enjoy autonomy in decision making in the family matters relating to children's education and occupation in spite of their significant contribution to economic activities.
- Poor access to Information Technology (IT) by rural women intensifies existing inequalities between women and men and also creates new form of inequalities in education and health.
- Access to women friendly technologies and services by the government schemes is poor.
- Poor linkages between the nonfarm activities and farm activities further hampers opportunities for value addition and market linkages for economic empowerment promotion of women.

## **7. EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN : THE WAY FORWARD**

### ***What are the key challenges faced by rural women?***

- Rural women often suffer from high illiteracy rates and high dropout rates from schools.

- Though women's participation in agricultural production is consistently expanding, they lack access to input supplies, extension services, credit and the most important agricultural resource land.



- There is often less involvement of women in opportunities related to construction, trade, transport, storage and services due to lack of skills.

### **What are the Government efforts in this regard?**

- **Aajeevika** - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India in June 2011.
- Aided in part through investment support by the World Bank, the Mission aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms of the rural poor, enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services.
- The Ministry of Rural Development implements **DDU-GKY** to drive the national agenda for inclusive growth, by developing skills and productive capacity of the rural youth from poor families.
- DDU-GKY bridges the gap by funding training projects benchmarked to global standards, with an emphasis on placement, retention, career progression and foreign placement.
- The **Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana**, launched by the Ministry of Rural Development as a part of Deendayal Antodaya Yojana-NRLM,

aims to empower women in agriculture.

- A comprehensive module for capacity building of **Elected Women Representatives** (EWRs) of Panchayats and a training program for Trainers of women panchayat leaders across the country was launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
- **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)**, established in 1993 is a national level organization as an autonomous body under the aegis of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, for socio-economic empowerment of women.
- The operating model currently followed by RMK is that of a facilitating agency wherein RMK provides loans to NGO-MFIs termed as Intermediary Organizations (IMO) which on-lend to Self Help Groups (SHGs) of women.
- **Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra** aims at empowering rural women through community participation to create an environment in which they realise their full potential.



- In a path breaking initiative to empower women an online portal **National Repository of Information for Women (NARI)** was developed by the Ministry of Women & Child Development, the portal will provide women citizens with easy access to information on government schemes and initiatives for women.

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