

# **Gender Equality and Women Empowerment: An Overview of Sustainable Development Goals Frameworks**

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**Abstract:** This paper commentary over the gender equality and women empowerment under the sustainable development goals programme. The 17 SDGs with 5<sup>th</sup> goal stand for gender equality and women empowerment with measurable indicators. The progression of gender equality and women empowerment is unacceptably slow for economic upheavals in some extent. It tries to show complete picture on gender equality its causes and relevance and also women empowerment in various sectors and its importance, as well as its target and method of implementation on modern world. However it theoretically analyses on the expression of data provided by various UN officials which continuously works regarding gender equality and women empowerment over worldwide. Effort has been made to analyze and introspect the main problems behind gender equality and women empowerment and the structural adaptability of sustainable development goals frameworks, and examine how far this programme will be successful in addressing gender equality and women empowerment in contemporary times.

**Keywords:** - Empowerment, Gender Equality, Sustainable Development, Adaptability.

## **CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS:**

The United Nation Organization for achieving global social justice worldwide has adopted adoption a legendary programme in 2015 named Millennium Development Programme and it is approved by 191 United Nation Member states and atleast 22 international organizations but somehow it could not be successful as accepted for that reasons. So UN stimulates another programme in 2016. It has set 17 goals for a time period of 2030. Gender equality and women empowerment is one of them. The UN has defined 9 targets and 14 indicators for SDG 5. As far as the global social justice is concerned gender equality and women empowerment are two strategic issues it needs to be achievable for the end of all discrimination against all girl and women including in public and private sectors. All round of the world there continuously women are denied to access to education, good health and unrepresented in economic and political decision making and suffering physical and sexual violence. Women are facing lack of decent employment and gender wage gaps. Women exploitation is general in present context it is estimated that 35 percent of women worldwide have experience physical and sexual intimate by partner and non-partner. According to a national study that 70 percent of women get physical or sexual violence from their intimate partner. As a result of higher rate of depression increasing and acquiring HIV in their abortion <sup>1</sup>. In 2007 data shows that 87,000 women were intestinally

killed even more were killed by intimate partner or family member. It mean more than a third among 30,000 of women intestinally killed in 2017.<sup>2</sup>

Gender equality demand for a fairer world, where everyone gets equal opportunity for equal access of health, education, labour, burden and equal participation in the society. The exclusion of women in every opportunity or various sectors is not a common concern, decent work equal access of education and decision making power they have access it but also supported by humanity at large. Gender disparity causes the major stagnation and regression also. So it needs to be addressing all national and state government with effective policy forum. For this SDGs set goal 5 for alleviation of poverty and sustainable economic growth.

About two third of country of developing regions achieve gender parity in primary education. In south Asia the enrollment of girls and boys in school was showed large differences in 1990 but both girls and boys parity in enrollment were same in 2012. Where as in Sub-Saharan African country it still barrier for girls to entering primary and secondary education. Around 30% of seats acquire by women in national parliament of 46 countries.<sup>3</sup>

However sustainable development programme continuously work for a vision of sustainable and peaceful world the recent data of 2019 shows that many progress have been noted that around from 106 countries show that 18% of partnered women and girls between age 15-49 experience physical violence and it is more than 24% in least developing countries.

The child marriage has continuously decrease in south Asian and sub-Saharan region between 2013 to 2018. The female genital mutilation which is subjected to 200 million girls and women worldwide now declined one quarter between 2000 and 2018. According to recent data of 90 countries shows that women are devoted more than as men as unpaid labor work limiting time, available for paid work, education and leisure which further reinforced gender based socio economic disadvantages.

As recent data of sustainable development goals knowledge platform 99 countries women have underrepresented in all level of political leadership it varies from less than 1% to 48% with the median distribution of 26%. While 39% of women represented as world employment only 27% of women occupied managerial position in 2018.<sup>4</sup>

Over the last few years there have been various reformations in laws towards gender equality and women empowerment yet discrimination has been seen in legal law and gaps in legal protection in many countries. In 2018 data shows that there are 53 countries have legal gape in overreaching in legal framework and in public life.<sup>5</sup>

Despite these progress countries now put forward gender responsive budget to establish transparent and comprehensive system. The sustainable development goals under the UN restlessly works for elimination of all discrimination against girls child, empowering women in every sphere of their life, and achieving equality between men and women for development of humanitarian action and peace and security.

## **RELEVENCE OF RESEARCH TOPIC:**

The sustainable development goals endeavor to reform the global problems and challenges exist in 21<sup>st</sup> century, instance for poverty, inequality and injustice against women. Now more than half countries of the world adopted equality in their constitution in every sphere of men and women in 2014. Still women have not accessing equality in the society due to law and policies as well gender based stereotypes and social norms.

The SDGs goal 5 programmed for achieving the ends for equality and empowerment of women. It emphasis as women equality and empowerment as objective and part of solution. Violence against women in 1993, declared as pandemic by UN general assembly's and make out strategies for smash out the problems. It has been seen as more than 20 years later, 1 in 3 women still experience physical or sexual violence mostly by an intimate partner.

In most of the nation's gender discrimination is still persist due to social legal norms. So it needed to reforms legal and legislative change so that to stop violence against women, while it is record that 143 guaranteed equality in their constitution for men and women, yet 52 countries had not taken step.<sup>6</sup>

Female genital mutilation 133 girls and women have experienced female genital mutilation in the 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East where the harmful practice is most common. Its impact on severe emotional and physical trauma, potentials health risks, including reproductive and sexual health complications and possible death through loss of blood.

Massive gender disparities remain in economic and political fields. There has been some progress over the decades that average women in the labour market still earn 24 per cent less than men globally.<sup>7</sup> women were politically active only 11.3% in 1995 than it is develop to 22% in 2015.<sup>8</sup> Therefore it sign that the political participation of women increasing gradually.

Land and other resources in 26 of 143 countries statutory inheritance law i.e. Laws by different legislature leads to poverty and food insecurity; a very limited and access to resources and credit; dependency on men and it's difficult to secure livelihood.

Although many nation have progress in other areas but still women valance lauded and it affect to the social, economic and political scenario. There are 35 per cent of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence.<sup>9</sup> In this context UN Women raise their voice against many global actors.

Women have a right to equality in all areas. It must be united the all legal system and legal practice across the globe to reforms new set of legal rules and administrative set up to eliminate gender discrimination over the globe. As far as it is closely related to the every sphere of human life.

UN Women works to empower women and girls in all of its programmes. UN women always stress upon the Advancing women's in political participation such as casting vote

and holding political representative and make them economically self-sufficient accumulate assets secure decent job and influence public policies by redistribute the burden of women unpaid care. UN women promote women's role and leadership in humanitarian action, including in conflict-prevention and efforts to ensure peace and security. It advocate for ending violence, raise awareness of its causes and consequences and boost efforts to prevent and respond, including ensuring the rights of women living with HIV. It is the responsibility of every government that how to overcome the problems of women and girls needs by framing policy planning and budgeting. More over engagement of men and boys, urging them to become champions of gender equality, including through our him or her initiative.

There will be areas of controversy in the definition and examination of the scope of this topic. However to handle the problem of gender inequality and hurdles in the way of women empowerment and someway failure of SDGs framework to address these problems , one will of course go beyond the definitional controversies, and analyze the factors of organizational responsibility and policy implementation. More over gender inequality and women empowerment is a multi-dimensional concept for this it has undertaken to study various dimension which is inter related to this topic.

In the study proposed here, it explores the various dimensions and documents the problem of forms of discrimination of against women in a global perspective. To some extent the purpose of this paper endorses and examine role of SDGs addressing these issues.

All women are not same and they are not facing same problems. They may face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on for instance place of birth and residence, religion, economic and social status, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability etc.

Now a day's gender discrimination manifests itself in a number of areas, both in law and practice. These are;

**Nationality:** In many nation women are not allowed to acquire, change or retain their nationality, including conferring nationality to non- national spouses. Its impact are inability to exercise the same citizenship right as men and to pass along rights afford to citizens.

**Family:** Among the 29 country of the world husbands are control all decisions.<sup>10</sup> As a consequence husbands are manage everything such as choosing the family residence or obtaining official documents and in some cases are allowed restrict the wife's right to work or open a bank account.

**Education:** 781 million adults and 126 million youth worldwide lack basic literacy skills more than 60% of them are women. Far and wide ranging effects from reduce access to economic and productive resources to poorer health and well-being; and greater barrier to engagement in decision making spheres.

**Sexual orientation and gender identity:** 77 countries criminalize same sex relationship its impact are increased vulnerability to violence, arbitrary arrest and detention, violations of the right to privacy and non-discrimination.<sup>11</sup>

And more over SDGs has criticizing on various grounds and it declare unambiguous. As a result some of the Economist argued that the targets for the SDGs are too many, as compare to the Millennium Development Goals and calling them "sprawling," "misconceived. It also criticized the goals for ignoring local context. Question arises here that how far SDGs able to remove gender inequality and enhance women empowerment in the global context.

In the study proposed here, an attempt is be made to answer the question why gender equality and women empowerment is significant and what are suggestive role of SDGs and how the organizational procedure and policy implementation address these issues global level and how far it achieve its end.

I have chosen this topic for the common understanding of problems and prospects of gender equality and women empowerment and valuable role plays by SDGs in removing inequality and exploitation from the society. For that it takes comprehensive study of different factors and dimensions of inequality and women violation for this it will take a normative study by through the interpretation of the secondary data.

#### **ACCOUNTABILITY AND MONITORING:**

Unless people are not accountable and monitored properly these global agenda will be meaningless the selection of appropriate indicators and target endeavor for better implementation of SDGs. The gender equality and women empowerment develop during fourth world conference on women in Beijing and in this conference highlighted the issues and challenges to tackling unequal distribution of paid and unpaid labor work. Some of targets do not capture the real intention of SDGs.

For enriching goals set by sustainable development agenda by UN it has set 9 targets and 14 indicators for SDG 5. The set of target and indicator is mismatch in some content. It seems to be indicators is lengthy and not satisfactory as according to target and lastly inadequacy of data it makes harder to identify the real implication of target. Somehow weak and undemocratic nature of global social economic and political organization it is difficult to implication of goals of SDGs.

Through the above list of target and indicators SDGs supervise and monitor all the member nation of United Nation. Around the world 62 million girls are not in school. Over the globe 1 in 3 women will experience gender-based violence in her lifetime. In the developing nation child marriage is unavoidable it is more worsen than developed nation.<sup>12</sup> Each year more than 287,000 die from pregnancy- and childbirth-related complications in developing countries.

While women make up more than 40 percent of the agriculture labor force only 3 to 20 percent are landholders. There were 10 % of business and enterprises hold by African women and 3% women hold business in South Asia. More over less than 20% of women represented as world's legislators.<sup>13</sup>

#### **STRATEGIES:**

SDGs mandate that gender equality and women's empowerment is the core of development. It stands for and ensures that women and girls must have access to education, healthcare, and technology. They must have control of resources, lands, and markets. And they must have equal rights and equal opportunities in every sphere of their life in maintain family, in accessing education involve in decision making process so on so forth. That's why it has gender programs in more than 143 countries. In 2015, it released its Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy cementing our commitment to supporting women and girls. Works on this critical foundation and decades of experience, it has been noted that all its strategies and programs are shaped by women empowerment and gender analysis, and to set up a series of metrics that measure the gender impact of its programs.

In Future, it has to be experienced different type of policy which makes changes in women access to financial and ownership control. After launching Saving Mothers, programs in country like Uganda and Zambia, the public-private partnership program has reduced maternal mortality by roughly a third. In Afghanistan, the Promoting Gender Equality in National Priority Programs promote Partnership is the largest investment we have ever made to advance women and girls in development.

#### **GOALS AND VISION OF SDGS:**

Its vision is to make a better world where there will be no barriers in enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights and it execute beyond the gender gap disparity and all are equally able to access quality education and healthcare; accumulate their own economic assets and resources; and live free from intimidation, harassment, discrimination, and violence. Responsibilities for earning income and the care of family members are not restricted by the roles or stereotypes society has defined for males and females. Women and men, girls and boys treat each other with mutual respect and dignity and participate freely and equally in economic and political decision making at the all levels. Women's and girls' unique expertise, initiatives, leadership, and contributions are recognized and supported by individuals and governments, leading to their economic, social, and political environment.

#### **TARGETS:**

- End of all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, and also eliminate all type of violence including trafficking and sexual in all sphere of life.
- It emphasis upon eliminate forced marriage and female genital mutilation. It guaranteed the public service and social protection to unpaid care and domestic work.
- It stresses upon the women's full participation and opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.
- It endorses the sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme and Action plan of the International Conference and Beijing Platform enumeration.



- Guaranteed women regarding financial freedom and right to land ownership and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in suitable with national laws.
- Enhance the use of technology, information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women. And adopt suitable policies and legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the women empowerment at all levels.

#### **METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION:**

There was a limitation in MDGs programme lack of an opaque system to monitor and report progress and also no institutional mechanism to redress the problems at local level. In views of SDGs programme it is enough space for legalization at national and international level lies with the government. The soft nature of the SDGs law emphasize that it is the simple enumeration and hard obligation binding legal rules and commitments and it also binding upon every state and national government that to workout in their administration strictly. But the question is which target will be considered more important when countries are busy in development of their target.

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

The followings books and research papers have been revised to the purpose of the study.

**Global sustainable development reports (2016):** This report provides a detail understanding of assess the role of SDGs in shaping the gender equality and women empowerment. It is a moral and ethical imperative. Efforts to achieve a just and sustainable future cannot ignore the rights, dignity and capabilities of half the world's population. It redresses the unethical impact on women and girls of economic, social and environmental shocks and stresses. As results this 2016 report got mandate from the Rio+20 Conference for science-policy interface and high-level political forum on sustainable development. This report gives a valuable data for assessment in the gender inequality and violence in women. And also provide suggestive note for the study.

**Gender Equality and women Empowerment policy (2012):** This book is referred to understand in the policy framework it shows that women plays a very critical role in accelerating progress by advancing global prosperity and security. It gives importance to developed women empowerment and reduces gender gaps. The policy comes at a critical time and its effort is to reduce gender gapes and education to economic inclusion as strategic challenges for gender inequality over the globe. Building on the Agency's decades of experience, the new policy provides guidance on pursuing more effective, evidencebased investments in gender equality and female empowerment and incorporating these efforts into its core development programming on organizational role and responsibility.

**Oxaal, Z. and Baden, S. (1997) Gender and Empowerment: Definitions, Approaches and Implications for Policy,**

It gives a common understanding about women empowerment and what measure should be taken for women empowerment. It emphasis women empowerment by comparison

between man and women perspective , it also noted that in developing countries women are facing problems related lack of control over resources, lack of education, lack of political participation and health related issues. At the same time women have also role in increasing social and economic development. Unless women have full participation and empowerment along men empowerment and development would be partial effect. Empowerment programs should be worked in coherently rather than separately.

**Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), (1999) Women in Leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions: An Analysis of Six States**

In 1993, India passed the 73rd Constitutional Amendment which reserved 33% of *panchayati raj* (village councils) seats for women. The Amendment enabled thousands of women to enter the political arena. While some women have created political spaces to voice their needs, concerns and priorities, others are still trying to grapple with the power and authority thrust upon them. Empowerment is not only a process by which women overcome the challenges of a patriarchal society. What has emerged, however, is that women have felt empowered at different points through their experiences and at various levels. A number of women have challenged their roles as care-givers by entering the public domain, have gained new prestige, and have become role models for other women. Although it is difficult to measure how these experiences have impacted on the women in their personal lives, but *panchayati raj* institution draw a big impression over consciousness of women rights and critical gender issues.

**Stromquist, N. P. (2002) Education as a Means for Empowering Women, in J. Parpart, S. Rai & K. Staudt (eds.), Rethinking Empowerment: Gender and Development in a Global/Local World (pp. 22-38). London: Routledge**

This book gives a common understanding to rise and acquire knowledge regarding women rights and empowerment through accessing education. It believes that education is the strongest part to leads to empowerment. Most of the nations have very slow progress of enrollment of girls in education it may be formal and informal education. It is very problematic without education girls can't assume their experience and knowledge as a results they are unable to access their worth envisage and new possibilities. Moreover most of the government step forward to modifies text books and give gender sensitive training. Empowering girls mean gives them knowledge about sexual stereotypes and also provide alternative vision for gender equitable society.

**"Measuring women's empowerment as a variable in international development"**  
**by Malhotra et al from the world bank (2010)**

This book provides a correlation between women's empowerment and international development. It supports the empowerment in case of women for the development of the world. A sustainable development is possible after the enhancement in women empowerment. It analyze upon the empowerment of marginal section of people such as women and poor on the basis of community development. It assure that all round development of women and consciousness over the gender problems issues, only leads to empowerment of women and it should be functioning at every level of a society.



**Agency and empowerment: a proposal for internationally comparable indicators” by Ibrahim, S and Alkire, S in oxford development studies (2007)**

This book has outline thirty two different definition of empowerment. This paper adopted different indicators to define empowerment such as control over personal decision, household decision making and domain specific autonomy and ability to change one life at community levels. The author here mentions that the empowerment is an expansion of agency, it explore internationally comparable indicators and interconnection of empowerment and economic human development.

**Measuring empowerment across disciplinary perspective “by Narayan, D. from the world bank (2005)** This book argues that, Literature stresses that empowerment is extremely culturally specific, and it is related to norms, values and beliefs of a society; therefore empowerment can be revealed differently in different societies. The term empowerment is still varying in organization and at individual levels. This book prepared by different scholars from different discipline and their outlook is to define and measure empowerment for addressing poverty reduction and issues of inequitable power relation.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

- To examine and introduce the concept of gender equality and women empowerment in the SDGs framework.
- To analyze the gender equality in sustainable development.
- To examine concept of women empowerment for sustainable development.
- To assess the role of SDGs by organizational apparatus and policy implementation.
- To provide certain suggestion for achievement of these goal.

**HYPOTHESIS:**

- How far the sustainable development goals (SDGs) programs effective in execution of gender equality and women empowerment.
- Gender equality and women empowerment could be more effective with the real accountability and monitoring along with strong organizational structure.

**METHODOLOGY:**

The Research study is based on normative method involving a historical analysis of the facts. It relies upon various secondary resources for analyzing the concept of gender equality and women empowerment in the perspective of SDGs. In process it will use the secondary data, and it include reports of SDGs, UN women agency, United nation entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women and Government documents and all so refers different books, journals, articles newspaper, internet sources and other related published material For the purpose of analysis and interpretation in the context of gender

equality and women empowerment. Based upon the historical documents and contemporary sources, a humble attempt is made for the perception on SDGs framework.

#### **FINDING OF THE STUDY:**

Admitted above all forms and issues gender equality and women empowerment is a very delicate concern. Only better organizational structure and constructive policy framework along with people participation, mass movement and global social justice movement could addresses the real issues of gender equality and women empowerment. More over the United Nation Organization also stress upon the legal guideline for every nation state government to enforce rules and policy over gender equality and women empowerment.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Gender equality is a very important fundamental human rights and it is the foundation stone to peace prosperity and sustainable world. These has been more progress over the last decades more awareness are generated among the people regarding gender and its various issues and more girls child enrolled in school large number of women hold top position in various office and organization from the back drop women's are taking active part in party politics.

Despite these gains some lacuna and challenges lags behind girls are not safe due to the technological age in every minute a girl is raped and experiencing physical or sexual violence and women continue to be unrepresented in every section or in every field. Most of the laws and social norms are not suitable for women.

Now the global pandemic Covid-19 many ways responsible for increasing violence against women and girls. In lockdown women's at home and struggling with the cut and expression more over the emerging data express that domestic violence has increase in case of women and girl child.

From the back drop women play very important role in outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. They continuously worked at home and busy in fulfilling all needs of child, older persons and her family members. Due to lock down they are involved in disproportionately work in insecure labor markets. There are 60% of women works in informal economy it also signs of falling into poverty.

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