

# WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Pragati Bakshi<sup>#1</sup>

<sup>#</sup>Assistant Professor

Department of Economics, Yogoda Satsanga Mahavidyalaya  
Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

<sup>1</sup>Email: pragati.bakshi@rediffmail.com

**Abstract** - Inclusive Growth adopts long term perspective for sustained economic growth which is crucial condition for poverty eradication and gender mainstreaming. For sustainable economy, growth policies should be broad based and cross section. Issue of structural transformation for economic diversification is indispensable. Inclusive growth encompasses large part of country's labor force. Thus inclusiveness refers to equal opportunity in terms of access to market, resources and unbiased regulatory environment for individuals irrespective of gender. A recent policy Report by World Bank (2001a), identifies gender equality as both development activity in itself and means to promote growth, reduce poverty and promote better governance. Whether Economic Growth promotes gender equality is debatable issue. Empirical evidences from fastest growing developing countries reveal least sign of progress on gender equality outcome. However while economic growth on its own is not always sufficient to promote women empowerment, the outcome of growth appears to be far more positive when accompanied by expansion of women education and employment. This suggests that process of growth is inclusive if equipped with public actions to remove gender related barriers against education and employment.

Relationship between employment and empowerment is influenced by several factors. Empowerment outcome through employment depends on nature of works, proximity of workplace and, income accrued by women. Woman's empowerment is likely to improve if she is significant contributor to domestic income. Empowerment is multifaceted, decision making power, freedom of movement and control over resources and all this interact positively with employment. Thus women empowerment positively effects development or inclusive growth outcomes such as income level, health education etc.

**Keywords** - Employment: Inclusive Growth: Women Empowerment.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive growth is concept that ensures equitable distribution of resources and thereby conferring benefits to each and every section of society. In conformity with this definition inclusive growth can be termed as process in which economic growth measured in terms of sustained increase in GDP contributes towards creating and security of livelihood and access to education and opportunities for harnessing the individual's capacity. Inclusive Growth approach is a long term perspective as it focuses on productive employment rather than on redistribution of income as a tool to include the excluded group. In short run government could resort to policies of income redistribution but such measures of income transfer are not conducive for long run. Therefore Inclusive Growth is about Policies and perspective necessary for long term sustained Economic growth. This should be broad based across sections and inclusive of large part of labour force. Inclusiveness connotes to equality in terms of access to market resources and unbiased regulatory environment for individuals and firms. A recent policy Report by World Bank (2001a), identifies gender equality as both development activity in itself and means to promote growth, reduce poverty and promote better governance. The eleventh five year Plan emphasized on sustainable balance between growth and inclusion. And keeping in view to this theme of Eleventh five year plan approach, women

empowerment occupies the center stage of Inclusive Growth.

Within the domain of Inclusive growth, we need to locate the place of women empowerment. Inclusive growth, as defined by IDRC, is growth which ensures opportunity for all sections of population, with special emphasis on poor particularly on women and young who are more likely to be marginalized. Gender equality has positive impact on positive economic growth as suggested by several empirical studies.

These Macro- level findings suggest women education and employment not only reduces the household poverty but also ensures participation in process of growth. The access to economic resources improves distributional dynamics within the household.

## II. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Empowerment as most of the scholars have envisaged is multidimensional approach. It influences individuals and community in different ways and at different levels. In fact empowerment is a process, therefore it involves changes in the existing power structure, and moves from state of disempowerment to empowerment. The UN population information network (2005) defines women empowerment, "Their right to have control over their own lives, both within and outside home; their ability to influence the direction of social changes to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally." The OECD-DAC Network on gender equality defines women's economic empowerment as their ability to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth process in ways that recognize the value of their contributions, with respect to their dignity and make possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth (OECD, 2011 p.6). Women empowerment is process and outcome which involves choice and control. In fact empowerment is not restricted to domains and scopes. In terms of multiple dimensions of empowerment, Malhotra et al. (2001) suggest various empowerment frameworks, and

emphasizes on multiple unique dimensions. This encompasses, social political, legal, interpersonal and psychological dimensions. The concept of choice and agency has somewhat taken centre stage in Empowerment literature. Alsop and Heinsohan (2005) broaden their definition of empowerment through taking the concept of agency and opportunities into its ambit. They envisaged that the extent or degree to which a person is empowered is influenced by personal agency and opportunity structure. Agency is indicated by asset endowments (Psychological, informational, organizational, material, social, financial and human.) the opportunity structure includes presence and operation of formal and informal institutions. Hence degree of empowerment is measured by existence of choice, use of choice and achievement of choice.

## III. INDICATORS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The Human Development Report of 1995 by UNDP introduced two new complementary indices: Gender Related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). Inequalities between Men and Women for basic needs are measured through GDI and GEM measures women access to political and economic posts. GDI focuses on extension of capability and GEM is concerned with those advantages that are accrued by the uses of capacities through opportunities in life. UNDP suggest strong correlation between these two indices. Apart from these indices, Women's household decision making capacity and freedom of mobility are considered to be indicators of Empowerment. Besides several other indicators, women's control over resources is the most debatable aspect of women empowerment. Some scholar like Blumberg (2005) suggest, women's control over income and other key economic resources is imperative for gender equality, empowerment and development. The empowerment indicators; decision making capacity, freedom of movement and control of resources are in tuned with the paradigm of

Inclusive growth. And does Employment leads to empowerment? Is again debatable! Empirical evidences from Bangladesh, Kabeer (1997), envisages access to earnings did not in itself serve the as evidences in improving bargaining power at household, but wages accrued to women helped them to support themselves and their children, if in any eventuality they left their husbands and returned to their natal family as earning member. Control over resources, as many empirical studies revealed may not to a substantial extent result into a women's empowerment or change in patriarchal setup of the society. Hashemi, Schuler and Riley (1996) investigated the change in women empowerment through an ethnographic study and quantitative methods. The women empowerment indicator was built by them on following criteria: mobility, economic security, ability to make small purchase, large purchase, involvement in household decision and relative freedom from domination of family, political and legal awareness, participation in political and public campaign.

#### IV. EMPLOYMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

The general argument say women's access to employment or income generating activities leads to women empowerment as it increases their decision making and bargaining power thus leading to control over economic resources. On the other hand there are scholars who suggest that income generating activities are not sufficient, as the barriers that stand in the way of empowerment are too strong to be overcome by employment alone. However even with the incidence of positive outcome of employment and market activities on women's capacity decision making and resource allocation (Acharya and Bennett 1983), drastic changes in women empowerment as result of employment is limited. In fact several empirical studies in developing economy elucidate employment does not leads to total empowerment though it may be instrumental in paving the way to the process of empowerment. Empowerment is impeded as women employment is merely for

survival and does not bring positive changes in gender equation. Gender disparity in earnings elucidates the persistence of women work force in labour market. According to ILO estimates women's earning fell short of men's by 22.9% in 2008-09. Women's low earning does not entitle them for social protection neither relieves them with the burden of household drudgery. Socio-demographic structure directly affects empowerment and indirectly employment opportunities. Younger women, less educated women, women from rural areas and women those of lower class and caste are more likely to be less empowered. Education may be one of most important influences on women employment as it is more in tuned with the concept of empowerment. A more educated and employed women may have greater financial liberty but they do not necessarily have more say in house hold decisions. In India women are in jobs of all occupational classifications but are largely concentrated in low-income and in lower position. They are mostly engaged in agriculture, domestic work and unskilled manual labors. For those who have privileged to education and to work in non-manual position, find themselves in feminized occupations in service industry (ILO 1998). Jobs available to women in manufacturing sectors are labor-intensive poorly paid and surrounded by bad working environment, without hope of career advancement. Women in agriculture, either working on their own land or someone else land, in both ways are ill paid combined with long working hours. They are denied of ownership right to resources and on income generated by them. Not only socio-economic background but position associated with occupation and working condition determines empowerment. Proximity to work place and working from home also determines the degree of empowerment. According to Kantor (2002), norms of female seclusion limits women's mobility in public place thus constraining their economic opportunity by limiting choice of work, location and ability to interact in market. Whereas mobility associated with work outside home is important to economic

outcome and women empowerment. Financial contribution leads to incidences of women empowerment depends upon the burden of financial liability undertaken. If a women contributes half or even more to family income, her voice is more likely to be heard in family decision.

#### V. CONCLUSIONS

Women empowerment is all inclusive in Inclusive growth. And there exist a deep and complex relation between employment and empowerment. Some broad conclusion based on this study can be drawn while assessing the role of employment in empowerment outcomes. 1) Types of occupation determines the degree of empowerment. 2) Proximity to work place determines the mobility of women worker which indirectly supports in attaining independence from controlling power of males in concerned household. 3) More financial contribution results in more autonomy and empowerment. Employment undoubtedly provides impetus to the process of women empowerment but there still numerous barriers in underdeveloped economies need to be overcome. Structural impediments to women's right and equality should be addressed in the households, communities, states, countries and globally.

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