
UNIT 10 GENDER PLANNING AND POLICY MAKING

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10.1 INTRODUCTION

Gender planning emerged from the recognition of existing gender inequalities in society and helps to formulate policies to mitigate gender inequalities in society. It aims to improve the status and conditions of women by formulating appropriate policies,

programmes. The existing planning approach treats all as equals without considering the inequalities existing in society. Gender planning helps to expose, analyze and resolve the inequalities existing in social, economic, cultural, legal and family structures and serves to initiate the process of change to address such inequalities in such structures and processes. According to Robert Chambers, researchers and practitioners have biased attitudes when they visit the countryside. This includes seasonal bias (visiting during dry, cool, and often less hungry times of year); people bias (meeting only more influential persons in the village); and roadside bias (visiting villages only located conveniently along the road side). Of course, these biases are not an accident. They reflect the social and conceptual debate between planners and the disempowered sections of the society. Like Robert chambers that identified poverty biases, the status of Women in India Report, 1974 and other key documents related to status and conditions of women reflect how women are kept away from the planning process. This Unit will examine how women have been excluded and included in past development planning and the need for integrating women into development planning. It also briefly examines the existing assumptions in development planning. Lastly this Unit will discuss the frameworks to be followed at the grassroots level to develop gender planning.

10.2 OBJECTIVES

On studying this Unit, you should be able to

- Analyse the relevance of gender planning;
- Explain how gender planning is different from existing conventional planning methods and strategies;
- Describe steps in the Gender Planning Process; and
- Differentiate practical gender needs and strategic gender needs.

10.3 RELEVANCE OF GENDER PLANNING

The existing development approach and planning is based on assumptions that benefits of planning would percolate to the entire society. Existing planning also concentrates more on things rather than people. For example, the development of infrastructural facilities will benefit the entire society since not only men but women also use those facilities. In an effort to highlight gender blindness, researcher like Waring advise “Always use non-specific or generic categories such as labour force, producers, consumers, holders, heads of household, reference persons, poor, homeless, malnourished, illiterate, unemployed”. Researchers can also use terms like the people, the peasants, the community, the workers, the masses, the proletariat, or the reserve army of labour. By dividing society into the above said categories, we can discuss how women are invisible in the planning process. According to Naila Kabeer in her paper titled “Gender, development, and training: raising awareness in the planning process”, by placing people in those categories for planning and implementation, planners assume that they are dealing with a harmonious and internally undifferentiated category of people. They also assume needs of a particular category of people are the same. If they implement a project, it will address the needs of the all members of the particular category. In reality poor, the community, the labour force is internally differentiated categories of people, unified only by definitional fiat. By considering the poor as unified, the economic generating programmes and poverty alleviation programmes are implemented in such a way that programmes targeting men would generate employment and women-targeted programmes would generate only income.

Like the above discussed examples, the conventional way of measuring poverty also targets households’ income. In this measurement it assumes that if all the members of poor households share income equally then each member of a household would be equally in a

state of poverty. According to Naila Kabeer the alternative way of measuring poverty does not rely solely on household income, but conceptualises poverty in a broader sense of deprivation and vulnerability. This measures the distribution of poverty within communities and households, strongly pointing to gender as factor in explaining individual welfare differentials.

Conventionally, households are treated as a homogeneous and harmonious group of people. The head of the household is assumed to have the best interest of its members. Yet when we look at the affairs of household, the elder male member of the household will take decisions. Based on such discussion, the planners assume that benefits of development will trickle down to the households; this will trickle across other members of the households from male heads of households. But according to Amartya Sen (1990) , in South Asia, there is data to show that women and children especially young girls are likely to be discriminated against in the distribution of food and other life-preserving resources. From Sub-Saharan Africa, there is evidence that children are often nutritionally better-off in households where women have control over income or crops.

Another assumption is that women are considered as a homogeneous group. This assumption needs to be transformed. Another important issue is, instead of assuming women's needs it has to be investigated by involving women themselves. Planners are also having pre-conceived notions of categorizing occupations as feminine and masculine. In the process planners also omit women's unpaid work, seasonal work and subsistence production. Finally, all activities whose products do not enter extensively into the market are omitted from GNP (Gross National Products) accounts since they cannot be given a monetary value. The figure 10.1 gives an understanding of the consequences of Gender inequalities.

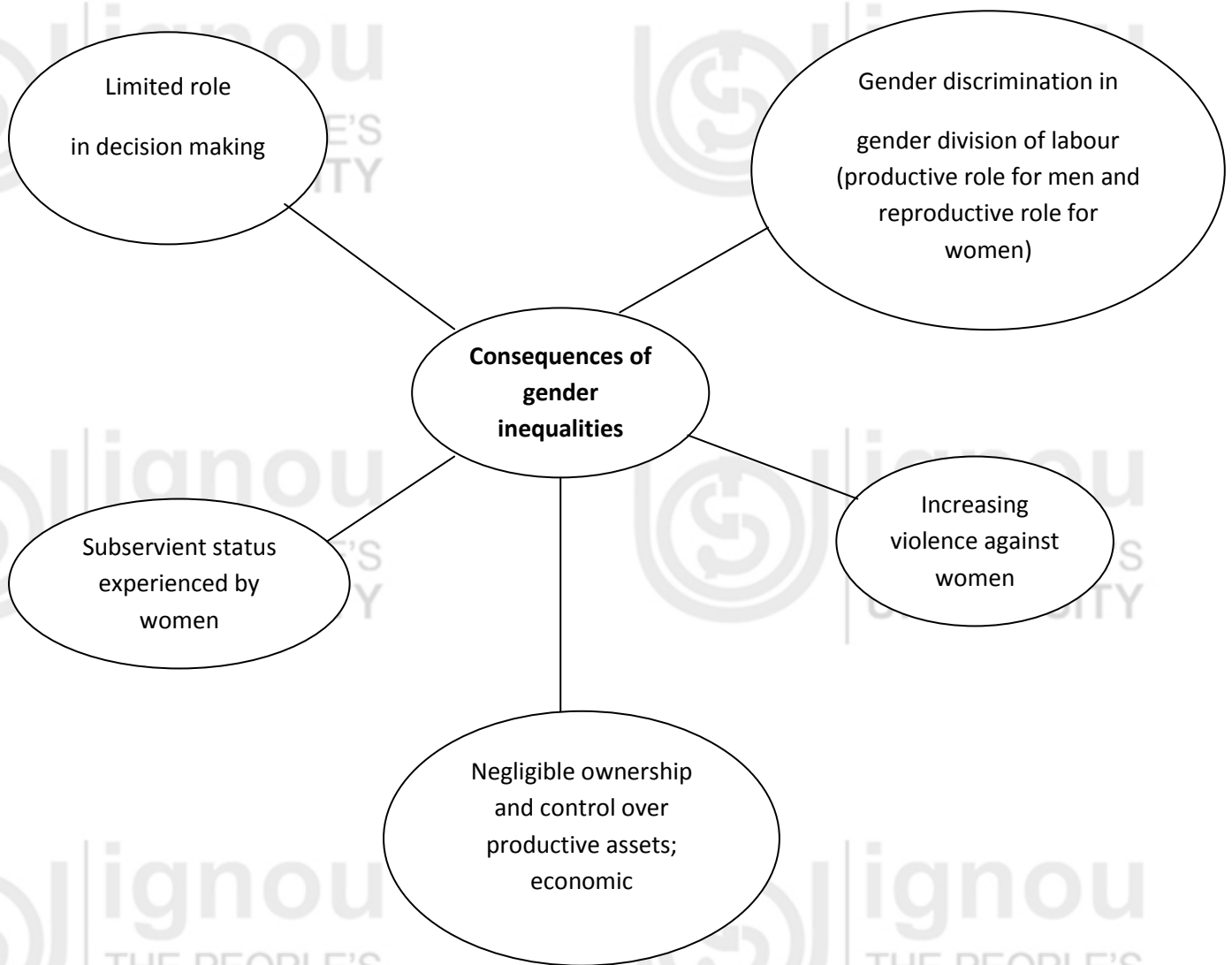


Fig 10.1 Consequences of gender inequalities

Source: Gender Planning, Budgeting and Auditing, Sakhi, 2006

What are the common assumptions in the planning process? Let us take the Kerala example.

Box 1: Existing Assumptions in Planning Process

Assumption 1: In Kerala all women are educated

- Literacy rates indicate that literacy rates of women are lower than that of men.

Those who have obtained primary education but have then become dropouts have also turned illiterate. The literacy rates among women in the fishing, dalit and adivasi communities are lower than the State average.

- Among women who have obtained technical education, only a few have taken up non-conventional subjects like electronics, automobile engineering etc.
- The existing system of education reinforces gender inequalities and domesticates women.

Assumption 2: All women's issues will be solved if economic equality is ensured.

- Women's issues arise not only out of economic dependence. Women may work for income generation but this alone does not ensure that she will be able to control the income thus earned. Existing inequalities in the cultural and family realms cannot be done away with economic gains.

Assumption 3: Men are the main bread winners and providers.

- This is often not true. In a large number of cases income earned by men does not benefit the household. However the income earned by women in the majority of cases is utilised for households and related purposes. Men use their income to increase assets/ recreation purposes but women use the income earned for day-to-day household needs.

Assumption 4: The family is a socio- economic unit where women have equal access and

control over resources.

- Hierarchical power relations exist in families. Generally men have access to control over resources. Men have a key role in decision making in households.

Assumption 5: All households are headed by men.

- This is not completely true. There are families headed by women, there are families with only women, destitute and old people. The structure and composition of families is varying.

Assumption 6: Since Kerala is a highly literate state, domestic violence is less.

- Studies conducted by INCLEN and Sakhi prove that the incidence of domestic violence in the State is increasing. In male dominated power hierarchies and in caste, ethnic and religious power hierarchy, violence is used as a weapon. As such it is assumed that a man has a right to beat his wife. As a consequence, women suffer from mental health problems and there are many cases of unnatural deaths.

Source: Sakhi, 2006.

The stereotyped assumptions discussed earlier perpetuate gender inequalities. Gender planning requires that these stereotypes be re-examined. There was an attempt made in Kerala to prepare Gender Budgeting-based Gender Planning. Based on the Kerala experience, the following discussion will give you an idea of Gender planning prerequisites and process.

10.3.1 Gender Planning Prerequisites

The prerequisites of Gender planning are listed below:

- Increasing participation of women in all decision making bodies, committees, working groups, grama sabhas, organizations and institutions;
- Equipping women to raise their needs and priorities in the decision making bodies by providing them necessary capacity building exercise;
- Sensitizing women self help groups, Mahila mandals on the importance of participating planning process at the grassroots level;
- All public and private organizations should admit more women to their highest decision making bodies;
- Public presence and participation of women needs to be made strong and the experience gained and the active involvement of women in grassroots process would be an asset to the planning process'
- Women leaders of Municipalities and panchayats should be provide training to equip themselves in gender analysis and technical skills in planning;
- Components of Gender training programmes include power relations in the society, gender related concepts, budget making, gender budgeting and budget analysis;
- Making elected representatives understand that gender planning is process and it will not be a onetime affair is also important;
- In the planning process, power relations will change over a period of time. This may lead to some conflict in the society. For example, through the process of improving the status of women, the women become independent. This may create some rift in the family as well as society. The elected representatives and decision makers have to be trained to handle these types of situations in the society.

10.3.2 Steps in Gender planning at Grassroots Level:

Key Phases in Gender planning are cyclical as depicted in the Fig.10.2

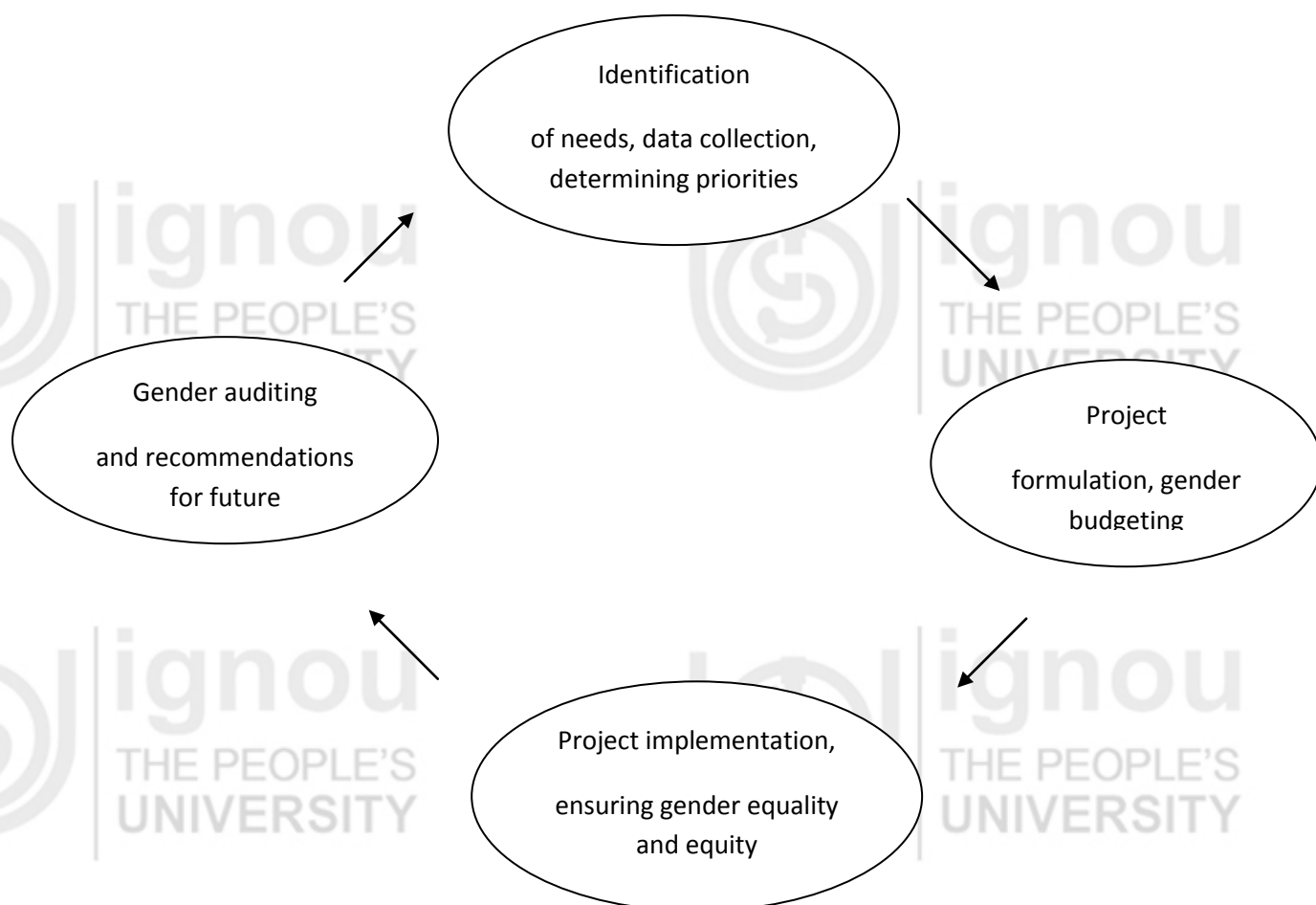


Fig 10.2 Gender Planning Cycle

Source: Gender planning, Budgeting and auditing, Sakhi, 2006

In this context, it is needful to delineate the steps in the gender planning process.

Step 1: Sensitising Officials and Elected Representatives:

With the help of the officials, elected representatives, people have to be mobilized for the task of preparing a Gender plan. In that exercise, the leaders of elected representatives, communities, officials at the local level should be sensitized and conscientized on the

potential of Gender planning and they have to built perspectives on this issue in the first step. Discussions can be initiated in the gram sabha. Once community get sensitized, core gender planning group can be formed. Group members include Panchayat leaders, self help group members, ward members, clerks, Non-governmental organisations staff and others who are willing to involve in this process. Gender planning group members can be trained on various aspects of planning including the need for gender planning, collection of data, preparation of budget, project formulation and implementation. Further, they can be oriented in empowerment, potential of local gender plan, issues of social development, economic development, gender justice and rights based development.

Step 2: Obtaining Government Orders:

The State Government should issue necessary guidelines to prepare a plan in a gender perspective. In India, Local bodies are depending on Central and State Government for finances. The Centre transfers funds related to programmes to the panchayat account. Apart from scheme funds for specific programmes, Local governments are depending on State Government for their revenue. It is the responsibility of the State Government to issue guidelines for gender planning. The guidelines should contain the necessary details about the directions on how gender components can be incorporated in to its planning process; training the officials and non-officials; and the guidelines to prepare budgets.

Step 3: Identification of Practical Gender needs and Strategic Gender Needs:

The planning process needs to be based on accurate data. The types of data to be collected for gender planning are important. Thus, data collection has to be done at the local level. A committee may be constituted for data collection. One has to ensure that

representatives from all sections of society are included in the committee and it has to be made mandatory that 50 per cent of the committee members should be women. Primary data have to be collected by different methods like Interview schedule, Questionnaire, Focus group discussion and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods. The secondary data have to be collected from Census report, Record from police stations, Schools, Health centres, Ankanwadis, and other government and development reports. Data have to be collected with the gender perspective in mind. By giving gender training to the committee, they should be oriented to the fact that, the women themselves are not homogeneous entity. They are also divided on the basis of caste, religion and other entity. The needs of different categories of women are different. Based on these perspectives, members have to be trained to collect the data. The basic objective of Gender planning is to identify the needs of the women and these needs have to be fulfilled by preparing plans and implementing the same. From 1970 onwards low status and condition of women was brought into focus. In order to improve their status and conditions gender planning is an important tool. Gender planning concerns the fact that women and men not only play different roles in society but also their strategic and practical needs are different. After identifying different interests of women this can be translated into planning needs and their concerns may be satisfied. "Gender interests are those that women (or men for that matter) may develop by virtue of their social positioning through gender attributes. Gender interest can be either strategic or practical each being derived in a different way and each involving differing implications for women's subjectivity".

Women's needs are often divided into strategic gender needs and practical gender needs. For example, the strategic needs more concerned about equality in society. On the other hand practical gender needs talk about day to day survival like getting drinking water, fuel, fodder etc.

Strategic gender needs (SGN) are the needs women identify because of their subordinate position to men in the society. SGN vary according to particular context. They relate to gender division of labour, power and control and may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages and women's control over their bodies. Meeting SGN helps women to achieve greater equality. It also changes existing roles and therefore challenges women's subordinate position. With regard to Practical Gender Needs (PGN) are the needs that women identify in their socially accepted roles in the society. PGN do not challenge the gender division of labour or women's subordinate position in society, although arising out of them. PGN are a response to immediate perceived necessity, identified within a specific context. They are practical in nature and often concern with inadequacies in living conditions such as water provision, health care and employment.

Table 10.1 Continuum of Human Needs in relation to Gender Specific Needs

Human Needs	General	Gender Specific/Intensified
Subsistence	Village to Village Roads, electricity, basic education, primary Health care	Food, water, child care, care of the sick and elderly, fuel, roads to water points
Protection	Need for protection, from all major threats to human body and mind including violence and conflict	Protection from gender based violence
Affection	Need for interpersonal relationship of warmth and intimacy	The need for affection irrespective of adherence to gender norms

Understanding	Awareness of unequal structure of society and interconnectedness of self others and society	Awareness of patriarchal norms of gender in society and those that have internalised.
Freedom	Ability to make decisions with regard to play, worship, education etc	Ability to make decisions on one's labour, mobility, household resources, marriage, political participation, reproduction and sexuality
Leisure	Time and space to relax, reflect, heal and recreate	The time and space to relax at home and visit friends, natal family and places outside.
Identity	The ability to define and live one's identity with regard to religion, nationality and language	The ability to define and live one's sexual and non traditional gender identities.
Transcendence	The need to find an ultimate reality that gives meaning and purpose to one's life.	The ability to be rooted in an understanding of spirituality beyond religion, gender and other divides.

Source: Caroline Moser, Gender Planning and Development; Theory, Practice and Training, 1993.

Women and men have different positions within a household and they have different control over resources. They not only play different roles in the society but they have different needs. These needs and roles differentiation are the basis for gender planning. So the planning process needs to disaggregate households and families on the basis of gender when identifying planning needs. Planning for low income women in the Third World must be based on their interest. Maxine Molyneux makes a distinction between women's interest and gender interest. The concept of women's interest assumes compatibility of interest based on biological similarities. In reality the position of women in society depends on a variety of different criteria such as caste and ethnicity as well as gender. Consequently the interest they have in common may be determined as much by their class position or their ethnic identity as by their biological similarity as women. Molyneux has argued that women may have general interests in common but this should be referred to as gender interest, to differentiate them from homogeneity imposed by the notion of women's interest.

Similarly, within the planning context, women's needs also vary according to their socio-economic condition, class, ethnic and religious structures of indigenous society. Planners while considering women's needs in the planning process have to consider all the aspects mentioned earlier.

Table 10.2 Differentiation of Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Needs

Practical Gender Needs	Strategic Gender Needs

Tend to be immediate and short term Varies with economic and social background of women Related to daily needs, food, housing, income, health, child care etc Arises out of the existing gender division of labour Easily identifiable by women Can be addressed in a top down manner by planners or demanded by women themselves through their mobilization	Can be met mainly in a long-term Common to almost all women Related to disadvantaged position, subordination, lack of resource and education, vulnerability to poverty and violence etc Basis of disadvantage and potential for change. Not always identifiable by women Can be addressed by conscious raising, increasing self confidence, education, strengthening women's organization, political mobilization.
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Strategic Gender Needs

“Strategic gender needs are the needs women identify because of their subordinate position to men in their society. Strategic gender needs vary according to the particular context. They relate gender divisions of labour, power and control and may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages and women's control over their body.

Meeting strategic gender needs helps women to achieve greater gender equality. It also

changes existing gender roles and therefore challenges women's subordinate position". Strategic gender needs are those needs that are formulated from the analysis of women's subordination to men. While formulating strategic gender needs it also considers the nature and structure of relationship between men and women in the society. It also considers sociopolitical cultural context. By deriving from these analyses, strategic gender needs provide equality in the society. According to Molyneux, the following are the strategic gender needs:

"The abolition of the sexual division of labour, alleviation of the burden of domestic labour and child care, the removal of institutionalized form of discrimination such as the right to own land or property, or access to credit; the establishment of political equality; freedom of choice over child bearing; and the adoption of adequate measures against male violence and control over women".

Strategic gender needs have to be identified consciously because it is embedded culturally and religiously. Many governments, especially in the developing countries took efforts to identify strategic gender needs and it is included in the planning and implemented through top-down approach. But this top-down approach did not bring many changes at the grassroots level. Local governments, Community-based Organizations and local tiers of Governments should adopt conscious efforts to include strategic gender needs in their planning process. This bottom-up approach will bring changes in the society particularly in men-women relationship.

Practical Gender Needs

"Practical Gender needs are the needs women identify in their socially accepted roles in the society. Practical gender needs do not challenge the gender division of labour or women's subordinate position in the society although rising out of them. Practical gender

needs are a response to immediate perceived necessity identified within a specific context. They are practical in nature and often are concerned with inadequacies in living conditions such as water provision, health care and employment”.

Unlike strategic gender needs, practical gender needs are formulated from the experiences of women. It includes their day-to-day survival like food, fuel, fodder, water, access to health, etc. The practical gender needs can be sorted out at the grassroots level if local governments and the decision making structure closest to the society are sensitive towards women's issues. As Molyneux has written they do not generally entail a strategic goal such as women's emancipation or gender equality..... nor do they challenge the prevailing forms of subordination even though they arise directly out of them. As women they have dual roles by managing household chores as well as earning. When the planners make policies to meet practical gender needs they have to consider both women's needs with reference to the domestic as well as income earning activities and also requirements of the community like access to health and sanitation, access to education, proper connectivity to basic services, opportunities to participate in community life. These needs concern not only the women, but also for the entire community needs. Yet, due to the gender division of labour, society imposes these activities on women. So planners consider these issues and effectively implement practical gender needs at the grassroots level. Among the developing and transition countries nearly 75 countries have adapted decentralization of power to the local governments. If this decentralized local governance can effectively include practical gender needs in their plans, status of women will be enhanced.

Reservation at the grassroots level provides an opportunity for women to occupy decision making positions at the grassroots level. Apart from reservation, active mobilization of women by non-governmental organizations as Self help Groups and their involvement in

local governance will give them ample space for negotiation and including their agenda in the planning process.

With regard to Strategic Gender Needs, it is very difficult for women themselves to identify the needs and formulate plans. Even if policy makers formulate plans for strategic gender needs, others may label these programmes as feminist ideology and sometimes there may be a rift among planners regarding these issues. Understanding strategic needs and practical gender needs are very important. This will help the planners to plan for the low income rural women beginning with their practical needs. Since the vast majority of the women belong to this category, fulfilment of their practical gender needs is more important in the short term. Once their practical gender needs are fulfilled they can understand their strategic needs and Government can intervene in fulfilling strategic gender needs.

So we have understood the practical gender needs and strategic gender needs. In the planning process collection of data to identify SGN and PGN is important. Gender disaggregated data is available in many fields. If we do not have gender disaggregated data, collection of gender disaggregated is the next step.

State and its Control over Women's Strategic Needs

The State not only mediates with civil society but also within family by addressing strategic gender needs through a number of policies and programmes. At the international level a number of agencies like UN influenced countries to sign in international conventions which promulgate the rights and needs of women. These countries being the signatories of these conventions implement policies and programmes at the national level. In India the

Government brought radical changes in Hindu Marriage Act; legal provisions regarding rape and abortion; population control policies; laws governing wages; taxation and social security benefits; reservation at the grassroots level.

Step 4: Policy formulation:

After identifying needs of women through different methods of data collections as mentioned in the previous section, Gender policies should be formulated based on the need identification. Needs of the local women like practical gender needs (drinking water, toilets facilities, women's health, women's mobility and security, fuel and fodder, food security and day practical needs of the women are included. Collected data should be divided on the basis of sector wise. Subcommittee should be formed for the each sector. Each sector wise committee should consolidate the convert the data into sectoral policies. In the process, subcommittee can consult experts in the field. Drafted subcommittee plan can consolidated as a gender plan. Once draft gender plan is formulated, this can be put forth in the Gramsabha for the approval of entire population.

Step 5: Creating a Development Strategy:

The development should be based on the women's of the state. As we discussed earlier, development strategy should be addressed both practical gender needs and strategic gender needs separately. Based on the development strategy, an action plan should be made.

Step 6: Action Plan Formulation:

Once the development strategy is formulated, an action plan should be developed. The Action Plan should contain the following steps:

- Development plan should be divided sectorwise like agriculture, education, health etc.
- The needs to be prioritized.
- Sector-wise plan again has to be divided into long-term and short-term plan.
- Plan has to be converted into projects.
- Resources have to be mobilized for the implementation of projects.
- The departmental resources should be matched with needs.
- Panchayats can mobilize funds from different sources apart from government transfers.
- Practical gender needs can be implemented on an immediate basis.
- Based on the fund transfer and local government capacity to mobilize funds, projects can assigned on an annual basis and it can be implemented.

Apart from the above discussed steps, once the plans are converted into projects, beneficiaries can be selected in the gram sabha. Criteria for the selection of beneficiaries should be finalised with the active participation of communities. Apart from formulation, the project monitoring committee should be formed. All the committees should contain 50 per cent women representation. The following components are also more important in Gender planning:

1. Selection of beneficiaries.

2. Doing cost-benefit analysis
3. Technical review of the projects
4. Gender Auditing.

Box 2: Policy making: Through feminist Lens

Radical Feminist

There are different interpretations of the origin and dynamics of female subordination. The radical feminist identifies sexual politics as the basis of struggle and traditionally biological imbalance of power between men and women is the basis of subjugation. Men dominate women by physical subjugation. Due to this sexual superiority men possess superior power, and economic privilege. This, in turn gives, privilege to men in the areas of politics, industry, religion and military forces.

Marxist Feminist

According to them the capitalist state is the root cause for women's oppression. The capitalist form of economy forces women to involve themselves in both the productive and reproductive work. They consider women as cheap labour and women are a vulnerable part in the labour force and they are paid very low wages. They are mostly involved in the informal economy like domestic labour, construction workers, agricultural labour etc. Their labour force is harnessed in the interest of the State. Engels first identified women's particular subordination as being derived from their position within the monogamous family. He argued that women's emancipation comes only if they involve themselves in productive work and their domestic reproductive work being taken over by the State. According to Molyneux there are three main areas where the aims of capitalist and socialist States in principle do differ.

First, socialist states officially recognize women's oppression and identify it as a social and political problem. It requires official intervention. This will be done through a top-down approach. Secondly, socialist States ensures high labour force participation through top-down approach. This will ensure the meeting of practical gender needs. In contrast, capitalist States make women a reserve employment force. Thirdly, capitalist States ensure social security measures for the productive labour force like child care facility, health education and community level services. The degree of intervention is more with regard to socialist States than capitalist States.

The **socialist state** challenged the traditional landholdings and brought in legislation with regard to land reforms through a top-down approach. This was done in West Bengal also. Land reform measures, in turn, brought a number of changes with regard to gender relations and family relations between both men and women and parents and children. Reforms like banning of polygamy, child marriage, marriage payments, caste differences, social security, food security etc. Despite all these efforts by the socialist States women continue as less skilled, lower paid, lower status and they continue to concentrate more on "reproductive" work and they continue to undertake domestic work. For example in the previous communist regimes of eastern European countries the percentage of women occupied at the decision making level were high and their labour force participation was also high. Once the socialist regimes collapsed in the eastern European countries this trend has reversed. This shows that in the socialist countries women's participation in the productive labour force and decision making level are forced. The socialist feminist argued that this is because of the gendered allocation of task, considered most crucial for the perpetuation of existing relations of marriage, procreation and filiations. It is within these that male dominance and control over female sexuality is incorporated. Consequently it is around human reproduction that gender

division of labour is most strongly as natural. Any changes are perceived as a serious threat to established forms of masculine and feminine gender identity. Thus the perpetuation of women's subordination lies in the interrelationship between their position in the marriage based household and in the wage sphere. Women work not for capital but also they work directly for women. Thus men have a vested interest in women's subordination. Even national liberation in many developing countries did not liberate women's subjugation, even though many women actively participated in the national struggle. Apart from this, religion also imposes women's subordination. The disintegration of socialist States in many countries (eg. Afghanistan) paved the way for growing religious fundamentalism.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. What are the steps involved in planning process?

2. What are the important components in gender planning?

10.4 STATE POLICY TOWARDS WOMEN'S NEEDS

The existence of public and private dichotomy (definition of public and private sphere dichotomy) limits the state's intervention. How far can state intervene in the life of the woman in the private sphere is a question. Even the socialist States did not destroy the family structure but they try to establish a special family form as the basic unit of the society to ensure productive and social stability. The status of women in the family is complex at the same time when women enter into the private sphere. Due to the masculine nature of the society they face different sets of problems. In this situation the State has to look at meeting both practical gender needs and strategic gender needs. As we have discussed earlier practical gender needs like water, fuel, access to education, access to health are being addressed by the State. These needs not only address the needs of the women but it also addresses the entire society. Once it is effectively implemented women will benefit more. Apart from this, the strategic gender needs like domestic violence, female fertility and women's reproductive rights, legal status of women in marriage, benefit rights and welfare policy are taken care of by the State through number of legislations.

At one level the family is seen as the private sphere and the question arises about extent of the State intervention in the family. Society sees family as a private business and once women get married men sees this as a license to treat women violently behind closed doors. But women are seen as a problematic area in the domestic violence and sexual abuse. This violence happens due to women's economic dependence on men and perpetuates gender dominance over centuries on women. By looking at this issue the State brought number of legislations to safeguard the lives of women. For example, protection of Women against

Domestic Violence Act, Dowry Prohibition Act, Hindu adoption and Maintenance Act 1956 were passed to protect strategic gender needs.

10.4.1 Female Fertility and Women's Reproductive Rights

The state actively intervened women's reproductive rights including the control over female fertility. Anti-natalist policies to limit population in countries such as China and India are implemented due to economic growth priorities and the fear of population explosion. Pro-natalist policies can relate to demands for labour in the economy as has happened in the Europe and the then Soviet Union. Nationalism and the concern with survival are expansion of particular group based on ethnic, religious or other criteria in countries as diverse as Malaysia and Israel has also resulted in Pro-natalist policies. Whether it is pro natalist or anti-natalist population policy it never recognized the strategic needs of women. Female fertility and reproductive rights given to women they have right to have children or not. Lack of fertility rights also affects women's right to education, access to employment etc. Different states intervene differently for example China followed one child family policy and targeting both the parents. If they have more than one child salary cuts in both the parents, limiting job promotion, imposing fine etc. More than economic burden suffered by both the parents, such a policy affects women's health like more number of abortions, sterilizations etc. In India limiting female fertility and women's reproductive rights impose burden on women. They were forced to conceive male child in the pregnancy. This top-down government policy does not change the traditional male preference and women were forced to abort female fetus. Government of India has brought Pre Natal Diagnostic Technique Act 1994 to prevent diagnosing female fetus for the sake of abortion.

10.4.2 Legal Status of Women in Marriage

State, society and religion impose morality on women. Society views marriage as an important supporting structure for women and also it is a legal status within the family to control over property and other family rights. Unlike society and religion, state brought number of reforms in the institution of marriage but it looks marriage as a basic requirement of family life. Religion oppressed women through marriage. According to Afshar (1997) Islam is interpreted by the male religious leaders in Iran and it is the root cause for the women oppression. The Quoran itself guarantees certain economic and religious rights to women, even though it treats women as inferior to men and it defines women only as mothers. The revival of religious fundamentalism in Iran in the post revolution state of Khomeni after 1977 identified women's liberation as an export of western imperialism. This shows that if state and religion coexist it automatically suppresses women. The constitution of India guarantees equal rights for all its citizens under civil law but religious law for each religious group has jurisdiction over all family matters such as marriage, divorce, child custody and dowry. In Indian society traditional institutions eg; traditional Khap panchayats influences women's marriage and impose restrictions on women's autonomy.

Table 10.3: Women's triple role and Practical and Gender Needs

Type of Intervention	Women's role recognized			Gender Need met	
	R	P	CM	PGN	SGN
1.Employment					

policy					
a)Skill training					
Cooking angel cakes	X			X?	
Dress making					
Masonry/carpentry		X		X	X(a)
b) Access to credit					
Allocated to house hold		X		X	
Allocated to women		X		X	X(b)
2. Human Settlement Policy					
a)Zoning legislation					

Separate residence and work	X				
Does not separate residence and work	X	X		X	
b)house ownership					
In men's name	X			X	
In women's name	X	X		X	X(c)
3. Basic services					
a)location of nursery					
Located in community	X	X	X	X	
Mother's work place	X	X		X	

Fathers work place	X	X		X	X(d)
b)transport services					
Only peak hours bus service		X		X?	
Adequate off peak service	X	X	X	X	
c)timing of rural extension meetings					
In the morning		X		X	
In the afternoon/evening	X	X	X	X	

Source: Caroline O.N.Moser, Gender Planning and development: Theory, practice and training, 1993

R:reproductive, P:productive, CM: Community Managing, PGN: Practical Gender Needs, SGN: Strategic Gender Needs, (a): Changing the gender division of labour, (b): Control over

financial services, (c): Overcoming discrimination against women, owning land, bylaw or tradition, (d): Alleviation of the burden of domestic labour.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. What is Practical and Strategic Gender Needs?

10.5 SUMMING UP

This Unit discussed practical and strategic gender needs and State intervention. The examples discussed in this Unit show the role of state, society and religion in recognizing ----- and the women's role and needs. The strategic intervention of society, community-based organizations and the State are required to balance the triple roles of women as discussed earlier. Understanding the women's needs and roles and constantly encouraging their participation in the planning process at the Centre, State and the local level is the need of the hour. PGN can be fulfilled through policies and programmes. SGN requires attitudinal change in society and among the policy makers. The way State intervenes in the life of women over centuries is commendable but still we have a long way to go to bring considerable changes in the life of the women as well as to establish gender-neutral society.

10.6 GLOSSARY

Gender Division of Labour: Segregating the labour as men's work and women's work. This division is based on gender socialization process

Top-down approach: Planning is made at the higher level and implemented through agencies created by the top management without consultation at the bottom.

Bottom-up Approach: Planning is made by the people at the bottom and resources were mobilized both at the bottom and top for the implementation.

PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal): PRA is an approach used by agencies to incorporate the knowledge and opinions of rural people in the planning and management of development programmes and projects.

10.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1:

1. Sensitising Officials and Elected Representatives
 - Obtaining Government Orders
 - Identification of Practical Gender needs and Strategic Gender Needs
 - Policy formulation
 - Creating a Development Strategy
2.
 1. Action Plan Formulation
 2. Selection of beneficiaries.
 3. Doing cost-benefit analysis
 4. Technical review of the projects
 5. Gender Auditing.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2:

1. Practical Gender needs are the needs women identify in their socially accepted roles in the society. Practical gender needs do not challenge the gender division of labour or women's subordinate position in the society although rising out of them. Strategic gender needs (SGN) are the needs women identify because of their subordinate position to men in the society.

10.8 REFERENCES

Sakhi women's resource centre, *Gender planning, Budgeting and auditing*, Trivandrum:

Sakhi women's resource centre, 2006.

Caroline Moser, *Gender Planning and Development; Theory, Practice and Training*, New York: Routledge, 1993.

10.9 QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PRACTICE

1. Distinguish between PGN and SGN.
2. Explain how policy making is viewed from the feminist perspective.
3. Examine the planning cycle at Grassroots level.

UNIT 11: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: INCLUSIVE POLICY AND SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY

Structure

11.1 Introduction

11.2 Objectives

11.3 Affirmative Action

10.3.1 Role of Non-Governmental Organization

11.4 Inclusive Policy (Gender Mainstreaming)

11.5 Substantive Equality

11.5.1 Social and Legal Empowerment of Women

11.5.2 Economic Empowerment

11.5.3 Political Empowerment

11.6 Social Protection and Social Security

11.6.1 MGNREGS

11.6.2 Women's property rights under new slum policy

11.6.3 NCW unveils its NRI cell

11.6.4 Widow Pension

11.7 Special Provisions

11.8 Summing Up

11.9 Answers to Check your Progress Exercise

11.10 Glossary

11.11 References

11.12 Questions for Reflection and Practice

11.1 INTRODUCTION

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination stipulates (in Article 2.2) that affirmative action programmes may be required for countries that have ratified Convention, in order to rectify systematic discrimination. The United Nations Human Rights Committee states that the principle of equality sometimes requires State parties to take affirmative action in order to diminish or eliminate conditions which cause or help to perpetuate discrimination prohibited by the covenant.

11.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to

- Describe the meaning and importance of affirmative action;
- Explain the affirmative policies of Government; and
- Discuss the role of Civil Society Organizations in framing and implementing affirmative action.

11.3 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Affirmative action is not a right that is equally available to every one. It is a special need only for people who have been the victims of institutionalized inequality. The framers

of the Constitution of India were conscious of the fact that the pitiable condition of women can not be improved only by prohibiting discrimination on the ground of sex. They felt that special protection should also be given simultaneously to women. Thus it was provided under clause (3) of Article 15 that:

“Nothing in Article 15 clause (1) shall prevent the State from

making any special provision for women and children.”

The clause empowers the State to make laws in favour of women. On the strength of Article 15(3), a number of statutory provisions in favour of women which were challenged as violative of Article 14 have been upheld by the Courts. These include provisions exempting women from punishment of adultery, provisions giving special rights to women in respect of bail, provisions authorizing service of summons on men only, provisions for maintenance of women only and provisions for reservation of seats for women in local bodies or educational institutions.

The framers of our Constitution have advanced two justifications for laws discriminating in favour of women.

Firstly, the discriminations were not based solely on sex but also on other factors such as the weaker position occupied by women, and

Secondly, these laws were framed to compensate for past discrimination and disabilities suffered by women as a class.

The framers of the Constitution have recognized the disparities in economic conditions between men and women. The Constitution of India under Articles 38(1), 39, 42 lays down the guidelines for legislations through Directive Principles for providing socio-economic justice to women.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. What do you mean by affirmative action?

11.3.1 Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Women's empowerment is a task to be accomplished by the joint effort of the State and the NGOs activists. The NGOs can play an important role in (i) promoting human rights; and (ii) checking their violation. Such roles of NGOs were appreciated by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993. Here, mention may be made of the famous case of **Saheli v. Commissioner of Police**. A Women Civil Rights Organization, known as **Saheli**, filed a writ petition on behalf of the deceased's mother for the recovery of compensation consequent to police custodial death of her 9 years old son. The Supreme Court ordered the State to pay Rs. 75,000/ as compensation to the deceased's mother. The role of NGOs has been given due recognition by Indian Parliament when it enacted the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. Section 12(i) of the Act, creates an obligation on the part of the Commission to encourage the activities of NGOs in the field of human rights. In this context, some attractive incentives may be given to the NGOs to accomplish the organization's objectives.

11.4 INCLUSIVE POLICY (GENDER MAINSTREAMING)

The Fourth Conference on Women was convened in Beijing in 1995. In that Conference, delegates agreed to denote the UN bodies that have played a catalytic and expert role in developing standards especially with respect to women. They also sought to engage all other programmes of the UN in examining gender-related aspects of their ongoing work. This solution, commonly called “**gender mainstreaming**,” involves a process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. This definition links gender with other issues, such as violence, health care, or political participation, and also makes a point emphasizing that gender is not only about women but also about women and men and the way either sex is affected.

The UN human rights staff explained in December 1999 that **gender mainstreaming** is the process of creating awareness of the status of women in the society. In the field of human rights, such awareness means that there is a gender dimension to every occurrence of a human rights violation. Mainstreaming also requires increasing and equal participation of women in the human rights mechanisms and, to ensure that mainstreaming has an enduring effect on the way human rights work is carried out, resolving a core bureaucratic problem of coordination and cooperation among the many parts of the United Nations system.

The incorporation of a gender perspective in the work of the United Nations is fundamental to the process of **mainstreaming gender**. Gender mainstreaming is an acknowledgement of the different ways in which gender roles and gender relations shape women’s and men’s access to rights, resources and opportunities, within and between cultures, and at different stages of their life cycles. Its aim is to achieve the advancement of

women through correcting disparities in different policy sectors and ensuring their enjoyment of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

Since 1997, mainstreaming a gender perspective into policies and programmes has become an objective of the United Nations system. The Agreed conclusions at the 1997 Economic and Social Council Meeting (ECOSOC) outlined the basic components of the process as follows:

- formulating specific strategies for ensuring that gender issues are brought into the mainstream of organizational activities,
- systematically using gender analysis of information disaggregated by sex and age,
- carrying out sector-specific gender surveys and gender-sensitive studies on particular issues in preparation of reports and operational activities,
- preparing medium-term plans and programme budgets in such a manner that a gender perspective is apparent.

In the human rights system, gender mainstreaming is achieved through an assessment of the enjoyment of human rights by women as well as men within the frame of objectives of agreed norms and the human rights monitoring of treaty bodies.

In practice, this requires the collection of data that assesses the implementation of human rights norms and identifies the obstacles that each gender experiences compared to the other in achieving the full realization of their rights. Gender mainstreaming also requires action to identify areas where gender constitutes a risk factor for a violation or abuse of human rights. An example of this is gender-based violence. On a wider scale, mainstreaming gender in the human rights system requires the system to revisit not only institutional practices but also cultural views and beliefs.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. What is meant by gender mainstreaming?

11.5 SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY

The Government of India, as a follow-up to the “**Further Actions and Initiatives to Implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**”, enacted the “**National Policy for Women, 2001**” (hereinafter the **National Policy**). The **National Policy** has described under 16 major heads the measures to be taken by the Government of India. Those

16 major heads are:

- i. Policy Prescriptions;
- ii. Decision Making;
- iii. Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in the Development Process;
- iv. Economic Empowerment of Women;
- v. Social Empowerment of Women;
- vi. Violence against Women;
- vii. Rights of the Girl Child;
- viii. Mass Media;

- ix. Operational Strategies;
- x. Institutional Mechanisms;
- xi. Legislation;
- xii. Gender Sensitization;
- xiii. Panchayati Raj Institutions;
- xiv. Partnership with the voluntary sector organizations; and
- xv. International Cooperation.

In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as a critical issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission for Women Act 1990 was enacted by the Parliament to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. Their current status and the various efforts can be examined under the following heads:

- A. Social and Legal Empowerment of women;
- B. Economic Empowerment of women; and
- C. Political Empowerment of women.

11.5.1 Social and Legal Empowerment of Women

A. Education

Equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured. Gender- sensitive curricula will be developed at all levels of the educational system in order to address sex stereotyping as one of the causes of gender discrimination.

B. Health

A holistic approach to women's health which includes both nutrition and health services will be adopted. The reduction of infant mortality and maternal mortality which are sensitive indicators of human development is a priority concern. The social, developmental

and health consequences of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases will be tackled from a gender perspective.

C. Nutrition

In view of the high risk of malnutrition and disease that women face at all the three critical stages, viz. infancy and childhood, adolescence and reproductive phase, focused attention should be paid to the objective of meeting the nutritional needs of women at all stages of the life cycle.

D. Drinking water and sanitation

Special attention will be given to the needs of women in respect of safe drinking water, toilet facilities and sanitation within accessible reach of households, especially in rural areas and urban slums.

E. Housing and Shelter

Women's perspectives will be included in the housing policies, planning of housing colonies and provision of shelter both in rural and urban areas

F. Environment

Women will be involved and their perspectives reflected in the policies and programmes for environment, conservation, restoration and control of environmental degradation.

G. Science and Technology

Programmes will be strengthened to bring about a greater involvement of women in science and technology.

H. Legal Empowerment

As regards enactment of laws for the achievement of the **National Policy**, many substantive and procedural laws have been amended, and new laws have been enacted. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 has been amended in 2005 to make men and women have the same right to property. The Parliament amended Sec. 5(C) and 8 of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 and it came into effect in May 2006. Against men's oppression of women, the Parliament enacted the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, which came into force w.e.f. 26.10.2006. The Parliament has also enacted the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006. Law is the most vital tool for bringing about social and economic changes. Wisely used and effectively implemented, law can provide the most peaceful and smooth means to change.

11.5.2 Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment is one approach to enable women to realize their inherent knowledge, skills and competencies for creation of enterprises. Their contribution to socio-economic development as producers and workers will be recognized in the formal and informal sectors (including home based workers). In India, various Ministries, Institutions and Organizations have been working for the uplift of women through implementing various schemes like- SGSY, SGRY, NORAD, erstwhile IMY, RMK, MK, BSY, STEW etc. A few big NGOs like AWAKE (Karnataka), MAITRI (New Delhi), SEWA (Gujarat), UMEED

(Ahmedabad), CARE (West Bengal) etc. have been engaged in social and economic uplift of women.

11.5.3 Political Empowerment

The one-third reservation for women in Panchayats came through the 73rd constitutional amendment. In a path-breaking move to empower women at the grass root level, the Government of India has approved a proposal to increase reservation for them in Panchayats by 50% of the total seats. Government has decided to bring a Bill to amend Article 243(D) of the Constitution to enhance reservation for women in Panchayats in all tiers from the current level of one-third to at least 50% of the total seats.

According to Article 243G of the Constitution, State legislatures may endow Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary (i) to enable them to function as units of local self-government (LSG), and (ii) to prepare and implement plans/ or schemes for economic development and social justice including those in relation to matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution. Panchayats as such have a vital role to play in the welfare and development of the weaker sections of the society, viz. women, SCs and STs. Greater representation of these sections would enhance their voice in these bodies and promote inclusive governance which is critical to inclusive growth.

The enhanced reservation will be applicable to the total number of seats to be filled by direct elections, the offices of chairpersons, and the seats and offices of chairpersons reserved for scheduled castes and tribes. Enhanced reservation for women in Panchayats will facilitate entry of more women into the public sphere. This will lead to further empowerment of

women and make Panchayats more inclusive institutions, improve governance and the public service delivery system.

The extension of democracy at the grassroot level signifies the constitution of a democratic government not merely at the top but also at the foundation level of the political system. Thus, democratic decentralization or Panchayati Raj aims at making democracy real by bringing the millions into the functioning of their representative government at the lowest level. At present, out of the total elected representatives of Panchayats numbering approximately 28.1 lakhs, 36.87% are women. With the proposed constitutional amendment, the number of elected women representatives is expected to rise to more than 14 lakhs. The amendment will cover all States and Union Territories except Nagaland, Mizoram, tribal areas of Assam, Tripura and hills of Manipur.

Emancipation of women through politics

Gender representation in politics was one of the many topics that the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly touched upon. Under the title, “Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century”, the five-day meeting reviewed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Delegates agreed that while progress had been made towards the full implementation of the goals set out in Beijing, barriers still remained. Thus, the final outcome document, containing the Political Declaration and “Further Actions and Initiatives to Implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”, was adopted at this special session.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. What is empowerment of women?

11.6 SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SECURITY

The issue of gender justice and the need to protect women's rights has global recognition. The concern became profound with the adoption of Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979. Some countries have incorporated provisions of the Convention into their national law, and the courts have cited CEDAW in decisions ranging from requiring protection from domestic violence to enabling women to inherit property. CEDAW has made a tangible impact on women's lives in countries where it has been ratified.

In India, though the courts have been receptive to the idea of taking assistance from the Convention, yet the limitations flowing from the inconsistency with the national laws are not encouraging. In the case of **Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan [(1997) 6 SCC 241]**, the Court observed that in the absence of domestic law occupying the field, to formulate effective measures to check the evil of sexual harassment of working women at all work places, the content of international Conventions and norms are significant for the purpose of interpretation of the guarantee of gender equality, right to work with human dignity in Articles 14, 15, 19 (1)(g) and 21 of the Constitution of India. The judges placed reliance on

some of the provisions of the CEDAW for the purpose of construing the nature and ambit of constitutional guarantee of gender equality in India.

In **Ms. Githa Hariharan v. Reserve Bank of India, (AIR 1999 Sc 1149)**, it was emphasized by the Court that the domestic Courts are under an obligation to give due regard to international conventions and norms for construing domestic laws when there is no consistency between them. In **Apparel Export Promotion Council v. A.K.Chopra,(AIR 1999 SC 625)**, it was held by the Supreme Court that the message of international instruments such as the CEDAW and Beijing Declaration which directs all state parties to take appropriate measures to prevent discrimination of all forms against women besides taking steps to protect the honour and dignity of women is loud and clear. These instruments cast an obligation on the Indian state to gender sensitize its laws and the Courts are under an obligation to see that the message of the international instruments is not allowed to be drowned.

In India, due to the intense desire of the framers of the Constitution, the Constitution guarantees equality to women in all respects. Further, to secure the objective of gender justice and to remedy the traditionally established inequalities, the provisions for affirmative action were incorporated in the Constitution.

11.7 SPECIAL PROVISIONS

Some of the special provisions implemented by Government of India are as follows.

11.7.1 MGNREGS- a unique chance for women

Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), anyone who is willing to do manual labour at the statutory minimum wage is

entitled to being employed on local public works within 15 days, subject to a limit of 100 days a household a year.

In many areas, the MGNREGS offers a unique employment opportunity for rural women, who rarely get a chance to earn their own income (as opposed to working without wages at home). In MGNREGS work, women earn the same as men. The MGNREGS also seems to play a useful role as a “health line” for rural households. The majority of the workers have used a part of their wages to buy medicine or treat an illness in the family.

It is also worth noting that a large number of women workers collect their wages and also keep them. Thus, women are not just sent to MGNREGS worksites to earn money on behalf of male family members; they are individual workers in their own right. For many women, however, participating in MGNREGS work is a major challenge, for reasons ranging from hostile social norms to the lack of child-care facilities. Widows and single women were especially appreciative of this opportunity to earn close to their homes. Often, social norms do not permit them to migrate and paid work is hard to find in the vicinity of their homes except possibly for abysmal wages.

Among the MGNREGS’s achievements is a major reduction in the exploitation of labour in public works. The MGNREGS is bringing about radical change. It is considered as an alternative to migration. The MGNREGS is also seen by many rural labourers as an opportunity for dignified employment. Under the MGNREGS, contractors are banned and gram panchayats are the main implementing agencies. The ban is not without loopholes, but it has certainly dislodged many contractors, with more on the move. It is observed that contractor-free worksites were less exploitative than contractor-run worksites. These developments are of special relevance to women. Even the fact that the MGNREGS is

considered “government work” is associated, for many of them, with a certain sort of dignity (especially in areas where social norms prevent them from participating in the labour market).

11.7.2 Women’s property rights under new slum policy:

The Government of India has decided to grant land patta and occupancy right of dwelling units in the name of a woman member of the beneficiary household under the Rajiv Awas Yojana for slum dwellers and the urban poor. Alternatively, property rights can be allotted in the name of both wife and husband. Launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, the Yojana aims at making India slum-free in the next five years. Targeting “inclusive growth”, the scheme will support States that are willing to assign property rights to people living in slums for provision of shelter and basic infrastructure and civic amenities.

11.7.3 NCW unveils its NRI cell:

The National Commission for Women (NCW) on twenty fourth September, 2009 inaugurated its NRI cell to tackle the rising number of cases of abandonment and divorce of women married to Indian men abroad, and received eight complaints on its first day. The project is jointly carried out by NCW and UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women).

11.7.4 Community radio:

Sangham Radio went on air on October 15, 2008. It is India’s first rural radio service completely owned, managed and operated by women from the marginalized sections. A dalit woman called “General” Narasamma sat at the controls and began broadcasting from

Machnoor village in the Medak district of Andhra Pradesh. It has become the first all-women rural community radio station in Asia. So far only two community radio stations are operational, one in Orchha, Madhya Pradesh and the other in Medak, Andhra Pradesh.

11.7.5 Food Stamps:

The United Progressive Alliance Government (UPA), in its previous tenure introduced the Common Minimum Programme (CMP). Herein, the UPA Government endorsed that it would develop a "comprehensive medium-term strategy for food and nutrition security." After stating that "Fair Price shops constitute the backbone of the food security system," Mr. P. Chidambaram, the then Finance Minister, went on to suggest a food stamp scheme, a sure way of dismantling the system of fair price shops.

Food security is defined as physical and economic access, at all times, to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for people to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. India, today, has more people living in hunger than any other country, whether that hunger is measured by consumption indicators or by anthropometric indicators of malnutrition. The experience of other less developed countries clearly shows that if the objective is to achieve food security for the people, a targeted food stamp programme is a dangerous path to tread. Such a scheme will exclude a large number of needy persons from the food distribution system, erode the value of the subsidy to those who receive benefits and undermine the existing network of fair price shops.

The food stamp scheme proposed in the Tenth Plan document of the Planning Commission recommends that each eligible household be given a subsidy entitlement card that specifies the number of household members, their age and entitlement. Family size and composition will determine the number of stamps a household is entitled to get each month.

The food stamps have to be collected every month from a prescribed distribution centre. The household can then use these stamps at any food store to "buy food grain (rice and wheat) at a price below the market price." The State Government is to reimburse retailers.

In judging whether or not the public distribution system (or indeed any welfare programme) should be targeted or universal, our first concern must be the size of the needy or vulnerable population. We know that about 50 per cent of the Indian population is malnourished. In the United States, the only industrialized country with a major food stamp programme (the programme has an annual budget of over \$18 billion), a household is eligible for food subsidy when its income is roughly three times the cost of a nutritionally adequate diet. In other words, if a family spends more than one-third of its total expenditure on food, it qualifies for subsidised food. By this criterion, more than 95 per cent of the Indian population should be eligible for a food security scheme.

In a country like India where the target group is very large, and where it is clearly important to focus on ensuring that the malnourished are reached, a universal scheme is better than a narrowly targeted scheme.

International Scenario:

Food stamps (and food coupons) have always been a means of narrow targeting or reducing the coverage of food distribution programmes. In all countries in which food stamps have been introduced, there has been a sharp fall in the number of recipients of food subsidy. The major consequence, carefully documented in countries such as Sri Lanka, Jamaica and Tunisia, was a rise in nutritional risk among the worst-off sections of national populations.

The international experience shows that the real value of the food subsidy is eroded when food stamps are introduced. In Jamaica, the real value of food stamps fell by 17 per

cent within a year. In Zambia, the expenditure on maize for an average household of six persons increased 417 per cent in three years, while the value of food stamps remained unchanged. In Sri Lanka, the per capita food subsidy, at constant prices, fell from Rs.62 in 1979 under a system of rations to a third of its value, Rs.20, in 1982 after a shift to food stamps.

It should be clear that the distribution of food stamps does not ensure the physical availability of food or access to food. In Zambia, many stores did not stock the commodity that could be purchased with stamps, as they did not want to participate in the programme. There is nothing to ensure either that there will be a retailer at a suitable location (once the fair price shops close down) or that the nearest retailer will stock rice and wheat at a subsidised price.

Drawbacks of the system:

Targeted schemes are more difficult to administer than universal schemes, and the administrative costs involved are proportionately higher than for a universal scheme. The administration of a food stamp scheme is complex and costly. The experience of other developing countries shows huge problems in respect of issuing food stamps regularly and in respect of retail stores accepting stamps and being able to reimburse them easily. A delivery mechanism for the regular issue of stamps and extensive bookkeeping are required. Stamps have to be re-validated from time to time; the possibility of exchanging them at various stores has to be worked out. The occurrence of fraud (such as by printing counterfeit stamps) has to be checked, and so on. The administration of food stamps is not an easy matter.

The Planning Commission appears to believe that these administrative problems are "minuscule compared to the problems of physically procuring, storing and transporting and

delivering grain to Fair Price shops." On the contrary, all official and independent evaluations of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) agree that, whatever its weaknesses, the FCI has succeeded in the task of physically procuring, storing, transporting and distributing food grain throughout the country.

The food stamp scheme also puts an additional burden on consumers, who have to collect the stamps at regular intervals, and store them carefully. If the collection centres are not in the vicinity, this will entail time and expenditure on the part of the consumer.

A critical problem with food stamps is that it is a means of reducing the real value of the food subsidy. In all countries that have food stamp schemes, food stamps entitle a household to a fixed value of purchase, not to a fixed quantity of grain. Food stamps are denominated in nominal terms and with inflation, the real value in terms of grain that can be purchased by the consumer falls. Even without inflation, there is no guarantee that all retail stores will sell grain at the specified subsidized price. The Planning Commission document on food stamp programmes does not deal with this issue of inflation at all.

In Andhra Pradesh, a food coupon system was started a few years ago, and, as expected, the introduction of coupons became a means of targeting food assistance. The Tenth Plan document notes that the coupon system led to a reduction of 8 lakh white (BPL or Below Poverty Line) cards. Coupons could be collected only by the member of the household whose photograph was on the ration card, thus causing further inconvenience and potential under-utilization. Coupons for 18 months were issued at one go to a cardholder. Women's activists found that poor families faced enormous problems in acquiring and preserving these flimsy paper coupons without damage or loss. Following strong people's protests against the food coupons, the scheme was withdrawn before the general elections of 2004.

11.7.6 Widow Pensions:

The Union Cabinet approved the expansion of the scope of the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) to provide pension at the rate of Rs 200 per month to every widow in the age group of 40-64 years and also to persons with severe disabilities between 18-64 years of the BPL category. Widows above 65 years of age are already covered under the Indira Gandhi Old Age Pension Scheme.

During his interim budget speech on 16.02.2009 , Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee announced an assistance of Rs. 200 to the widows in the age group of 40-64 years under Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme. “Severely” physically disabled in the age group of 18 years to 64 years will also get Rs. 200 pension under the Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme. The speech also included “preference” to young widows (18 to 40 years) in the admissions to Women ITIs along with a stipend of Rs 500 to them. The announcement is an expansion of the existing scheme, Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme which was launched in 2007. Sources said that the Finance Ministry's Expenditure Secretary was the first to oppose the proposal and had said that expanding the pension scheme to all BPL widows would make it “open-ended” and rob young widows of the enterprise to work.

The announcement of the expansion of the welfare scheme in the social welfare sector of the Interim budget has evoked mixed response from among the beneficiaries and the general public. While some consider it to be positive sign on the part of groups like differently abled, widows and the old, there are a few who feel it is a mockery of their problems.

The Government has also proposed giving priority to young widows (in 18-40 years age group) in admission to Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), Women ITIs and National Regional ITIs with a view to empowering them. The Government will bear the expenses of their training and provide them a monthly stipend of Rs.500. The beneficiary of the Scheme, however, observed that Rs. 200 is nothing, it will not make a substantial difference for widows.

11.8 SUMMING UP

Law is being used as an important instrument for transforming the status of women. Women all over the world have launched powerful movements to reverse centuries of discrimination and injustice. They are mobilizing against violence and oppression, are demanding equal rights, greater opportunities for development, equitable laws and control over their earnings and bodies. They have focussed their attention on equalizing strategies, which represents attempts to improve women's access to existing education, employment, health care, credit and other resources.

The concept of gender has increasingly informed policy programming and treaty interpretation both within and outside the United Nations system. Much of the impetus came from the consensus on the need to address gender inequality that was reached at the United Nation's global conferences of the 1990s. But the global conferences were only one step in a long process of considering the concept of gender within the UN system.

The principle of the equal rights of women and men was recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, and is contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all subsequent major international human rights instruments. Confirmation of the principle of equality in these instruments was an important step in the recognition of the rights of women.

Yet traditional exclusion of women from the public domain has persisted in many countries -- relegating women to the private domain.

The need for women's participation in all spheres of society - in both the public and the private domains – and the recognition of inequality and discrimination in the private domain, led to the creation of specific standards for the protection of women's rights. In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**. CEDAW establishes women's right to non-discrimination on the basis of sex, and affirms equality in international law. It provides that women and men are entitled to the equal enjoyment and exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in civil, cultural, economic, social and political fields.

The 1993 Vienna Conference on Human Rights, the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development and the 1995 Beijing Women's World Conference, recognized the need to build on these principles to assert women's rights. These global conferences promoted the review of policies and programmes from the perspective of their impact on women and men – in other words, a re-evaluation of policies and programmes from a gender perspective.

Thus, gender mainstreaming seeks to empower women by removing obstacles that have been constructed by societies that operate to the disadvantage of women. By evaluating laws, policies, programmes, customs, practices, and an array of inequalities from a gender perspective, women and men can identify those areas in which women have been discriminated against and develop new policies to overcome that discrimination.

Effective change can not be brought without a simultaneous movement to change the social and economic structures and the culture (values, ideologies and attitudes) of society.

Thus law can empower women only if it is preceded by public demand for change and followed by public support in favour of this change.

11.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise1:

1. The terms affirmative action and positive action refer to policies that take race, ethnicity, or gender into consideration in an attempt to promote equal opportunity or increase ethnic or other forms of diversity. The focus of such policies ranges from employment and education to public contracting and health programs. The impetus towards affirmative action is twofold: to maximize diversity in all levels of society, along with its presumed benefits, and to redress perceived disadvantages due to overt, institutional, or involuntary discrimination.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2:

1. Gender mainstreaming has been defined by the United Nations as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, and programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes, in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3:

1. Women's empowerment is defined as a process through which women acquire knowledge, skills and willingness to critically analyze their situation and take appropriate action to change the status quo of women in society.

11.10 GLOSSARY

Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY): It is a self employment scheme implemented by Government of India. This scheme targets Self Help Groups of women and other disadvantaged people

Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY): It is a wage employment scheme of Government of India.

Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD): It is an international Aid agency of Royal Norwegian Government.

Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY), Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), Mahila Samkhya (MS), Balika Samriddhi Yojana (BSY) and Support to Training cum Employment for Women (STEW): All these programmes are meant for women and disadvantaged group for their economic upliftment.

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11.12 QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PRACTICE

1. Why is political empowerment of women necessary?
2. Write an essay on different types of women's empowerment.
3. List two Affirmative actions taken by the Government of India.
4. Write short note on Food Stamp Programmes in different countries of the world.

UNIT 12 ENGENDERING GOVERNANCE

Structure

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Objectives
- 12.3 Concept of Engendering Governance
 - 12.3.1 Meaning and Concept
 - 12.3.2 Need for Engendering Governance
 - 12.3.3 Instruments of Engendering Governance
- 12.4 Initiatives for Engendering Governance
- 12.5 Policy Decisions for Engendering Governance
 - 12.5.1 Grassroots Women's Networks
- 12.6 Summing Up
- 12.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercise
- 12.8 Glossary
- 12.9 References
- 12.10 Questions for Reflection and Practice

12.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces the concept of Engendering Governance, i.e, how women can become a part of the governing process and the various institutions which are responsible for policy decisions of various kinds. It also dwells upon the grassroots movements which originated from the informal gatherings of women in response to gender insensitive policies and programmes and have now concretized to formal groups with a definite agenda.

Box: 1 *Development policies cannot succeed if they are not “engendered.”*

Sarojini Naidu's spirit lives on in thousands of Indian women today. Some years ago, Rojamma, a poor woman from the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, attended a literacy class. Here, she read a story which described a life very like her own. It talked about a poor woman, struggling to make ends meet, who was regularly beaten by her husband. Whatever he earned, he spent on liquor, and then, drunk and violent, he attacked her because she had no food to give him. Unable to stand the continuing violence, the woman went from house to house, to find every other woman who had the same story to tell. They got together, and decided they would pitch their attack where it hurt most: they would picket liquor shops and stop liquor being sold. Their husbands then would have no liquor to drink, and the money they earned would be saved. Inspired by the story, Rojamma collected her friends together, and they began to picket liquor shops. The campaign spread like wildfire. In village after village, women got together, they talked, they went on strike, they beat up liquor shop owners, they refused to allow their husbands to squander money on liquor. And, they succeeded. The sale of liquor was banned in Andhra Pradesh, reluctantly, by the government for liquor brings in huge amounts of money. As a result, savings went up, violence levels dropped, and the lives of poor women began to improve.

12.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you would be able to

- Describe the concept of engendering governance;
- Discuss the need for engendering the process and institutions of governance;
- List the reasons for engendering the governance process;
- Provide examples of engendering governance as policy decision; and
- Discuss grassroots examples of women as a collective force.

12.3 CONCEPT OF ENGENDERING GOVERNANCE

The concept of Engendering Governance is recent origin. The meaning and concept of engendering governance is discussed below in detail.

12.3.1 Meaning and concept

Governance is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs. It is the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences. Governance encompasses every institution and organization in the society, from the family to the State and embraces all methods - good and bad - that societies use to distribute power and manage public resources and problems.

Women, who represent nearly half of the total population are, by and large, excluded from the process of Governance. The institutions of governance are predominantly occupied by males who plan and decide the various economic and social agendas or in other words, manage and control the resources of the country. As a result, women are not only sidelined but are also neglected in the matters relevant to their own growth and development as well

as that of their community and country. The policies and programmes supposed to be taken for their well-being are, by and large, taken without taking into consideration their needs and requirements. It is with an 'outsider's approach' that women are expected to be benefitted under the various state-sponsored programmes. This approach leads to one-sided growth strategy for women all over.

By the process of engendering governance, we mean to bring women into the decision making and policy formulation areas with an aim to bring in gender-just governance where women not only get fair participation in the institutions of governance but also actively take part in the decision making process. Therefore, it may be argued that engendering governance is not something which has to be achieved but is a continuous process whereby women's voices / concerns are accepted in policy decisions on a regular compulsory basis.

Engendering governance is not a goal, but a process of governance that is equitable and ensures that the voices of women are heard in decision making over the allocation of development resources.

12.3.2 Need for Engendering Governance

The gender gap in governance is evident almost all over the globe. In South Asia, in particular, it is very high despite the fact that many associated nations have been headed by women, who primarily reached the top positions through hereditary succession. Otherwise the South Asian countries have an extremely low representation of women in the management and political positions. As per an estimate, there are only 7 percent women in parliament and 9 percent in cabinet, 20 percent in local governance, 9 percent in civil services and 6 percent in judiciary. This poor representation of women may be seen in the context of subordinate status being accrued to women in all private and public domains namely household, state, market and civil society.

In India, women's effective participation in politics got a boost in 1993 after the 73rd and 74th Amendments in the Constitution of India. The change in legislation brought women into the realm of local self governance. The village panchayati raj institutions are bustling with women members in local panchayats. There are examples of women panchayat leaders who have brought forth women's concerns, issues and problems before the concerned authorities and solutions have been found for the same. However, the journey has not been smooth. It has not been easy for the women to get outside their veils and work in the public domain for the well-being of the community. The women have faced many socio-cultural constraints originating out of patriarchy, besides caste and class hierarchies as prevalent in our social system. In the public domain, women's acceptance has been a major challenge particularly in the context of sharing/transfer of power with male members.

The engagement of women and their concerns in every aspect of governance is essential for a multitude of reasons:

Innately and environmentally, the women's needs are different from those of men. The difference originates from the distinct roles that either plays in social arenas. The expectations from both the gender groups are different and may be contradictory to each other.

Women have been, by and large, excluded from community decision-making on key issues such as housing, credit and infrastructure. It is these areas that affect women's lives directly. So remaining outside these areas keeps them at the receiving end.

The contemporary scenario is marked by increased participation of women in the labour force. This calls for redefining their roles to suit their changing profiles that have taken place particularly in public spheres. Alongside there has to be created a space for women to

participate and learn and bring in reorganization of communities and renegotiation of gender roles.

It is important to have a gender perspective on issues of not only basic sustenance but also that of general growth and development. These may take place in the form of gender-sensitive policies and programmes that are conceptualized with women's issues kept in mind.

Women's concerns revolve around practical issues. Their innovations address a range of issues including housing, health care, service delivery, childcare and other family services, safety, community building and social cohesion in neighborhoods, environmental sustainability and local governance. These initiatives designed from the ground contain the seeds for future systemic change.

In order to bring gender equity/quality, it is important to bring gender sensitivity in the process of governance. Unless there is an element of gender sensitivity in governance, the women's basic survival and its quality, knowledge and skill base, control over resources and participation in public spheres and security are very likely to suffer.

12.3.3 Instruments of Engendering Governance

The various experiences in the field show that 'given the space and support, poor women can articulate their position and challenge injustice. They can break out of their situation of powerlessness and gain control of their lives (IDS 1991). It has also been observed that when women's groups / collectives address community issues such as access to water and other natural resources, they acquire skills of designing and managing programmes. These initiatives allow women's groups to test their ability to tackle multiple issues, with multiple stakeholders and build capacities as advocates of change.

There have been identified two instruments for bringing women into the forefront of decision making and governance:

The opening up of spaces in local government institutions for which reservation strategy has been adopted by the government through legislation and its implementation. In 1993, the Government brought 73rd and 74th amendments in the constitution with the aim to reserve seats for women in local self government bodies. At present there are more than one lakh women elected representatives at village, taluka and district level panchayats.

The Self-Help Groups (SHGs) bring women together for a common cause, be it money or livelihood. The women assemble and work as a collective which provides them an opportunity to exchange their concerns and raise them collectively. These are so widespread that it has taken the form of a movement which has ensured emerging leadership among poor women. The Kerala state sponsored Kudumbshree mobilization has made collectives of women from the marginalized strata very proactive in contrast to relative passivity of women of the new elite.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. What is engendering governance?

2. How has legislation helped women gain political participation?

12.3 INITIATIVES FOR ENGENDERING GOVERNANCE

Over the last three decades, the Indian State and international agencies have been trying to 'integrate' women into mainstream development, with special emphasis on inclusion of women from poor communities having either been left out of these processes or having derived little benefit. This long term attempt to institutionalize women's concerns within structures of governance evolved out of three main approach:

Women in Development (WID) approach dealt with women in the role of a beneficiary, as someone, who needs to be given alms in charity. The women were not expected to voice their concerns at any forum.

Women and Development (WAD) approach dealt with women as partners in the development process. The women were allowed to become a part of the development process.

Gender and Development (GAD) approach is based on contemporary thinking where gender-based power relations are considered within the realm of governance.

12.4 POLICY DECISIONS FOR ENGENDERING GOVERNANCE

Mainstream development is equated with promoting economic growth models. Recognizing that the process of growth bypasses the poor in the short run, the government has formulated

specific poverty alleviation programmes for generating a certain minimum level of income for groups in poverty (The Planning Commission 1992).

Amongst the poor, women are seen as doubly disadvantaged by their class and gender identity and since, the 1980s, special programmes have been designed for them. These anti-poverty programmes seek the participation of women and poor communities as beneficiaries.

12.5.1 Grassroots Women's Networks

Among the Government's initiatives to engender the governance process, the Mahila Samakhya programme is one such programme that was launched in the year 1988. Since Independence, provision of educational opportunities for women and girls had been an important part of the national endeavour in the field of education. Though such endeavours did yield significant results, gender

disparities persisted, more so in rural areas and among disadvantaged communities.

The Mahila Samakhya programme was introduced in pursuance of the goals of the New Education Policy (1986) and the Programme of Action for the education and empowerment of women in rural areas, particularly of women from socially and economically marginalised groups.

“The empowerment of women is possibly the most critical pre condition for the participation of girls and women in the educational process”.

The National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986)

The programme aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To create an environment in which education can serve the objectives of

- women's equality.
- To enhance the self-image and self-confidence of women and thereby
- enabling them to recognize their contribution to the economy as producers
- and workers, reinforcing their need for participating in educational
- programmes.
- To create an environment where women can seek knowledge and information and thereby empower them to play a positive role in their own development and development of society.
- To set in motion circumstances for larger participation of women and girls in formal and non-formal education programmes.
- To provide women and adolescent girls with the necessary support structures and an informal learning environment to create opportunities for education.
- To enable Mahila Sanghas to actively assist and monitor educational activities in the villages – including elementary schools, AE, EGS/AIE Centres and other facilities for continuing education.

- To establish a decentralized and participative mode of management, with the decision making powers devolved to the district level and to Mahila Sanghas which, in turn will provide the necessary conditions for effective participation.

The programme recognizes the centrality of education in empowering women to achieve equality. The Mahila Samakhyas programme is working to conscientize and organize women in groups. It works through **Sanghas**, which are all small groups of local women. These groups are able to address issues concerning women and their participation in a two-fold

manner which together serves to build a culture of questioning, critical thinking, collective decision-making and mobilization on public issues.

They organize intensive training programs for women PRIs to make them effective functionaries. Their capacity building is needed to help them plan, prioritize their needs, determine strategies to address their needs and concerns, and for both women and local government to partner effectively to address these needs.

They devise their own programmes together with its members. They as a group discuss, evolve and prioritize their needs and formulate various programmes to be undertaken by women themselves.

The programme works through **Mahila Sanghas** or women's collectives at the village level which provides the women a space to meet, reflect, ask questions and articulate their thoughts and needs and make informed choices. The process of mobilizing and organizing women is done by a **Sahayogini** who looks after ten villages. This is not an easy process since the programme does not have any tangible services or benefits to offer. The process of rapport building is done through regular visits, gaining the confidence and faith of the women and listening to what they have to say. The sahayogini assists the women to resolve small problems during the course of which the need for women's collectives and the role they can play in ensuring a better quality of life for the women and their families is stressed. In this context then, a variety of issues are raised by the women which later on form the formulation of programme strategies and interventions.

The Mahila Sanghas through various programmes and awareness campaigns have brought about a change in the outlook of rural women and the effects can now be seen in various facets of life at home within the family, the community and at the block and panchayat

levels. The programme has also focused on awareness of the need to educate the children, especially girls, to give the equal status and opportunities. This approach has resulted in a direct impact on enrolment and retention of girls in schools.

The Mahila Samakhya programme follows the programme of Action (POA, 1992), as given in the *section “Education for Women’s Equality”* (Chapter-XII, pages. 105-107), which focuses on empowerment of women as the critical precondition for their participation in the education process. It states that education can be an effective tool for women’s empowerment, the parameters of which are to:

- enhance self-esteem and self-confidence of women;
- build a positive image of women by recognizing their contribution to the society, polity and the economy;
- develop ability to think critically;
- foster decision making and action through collective processes;
- enable women to make informed choices in areas like education, employment and health (especially reproductive health);
- ensure equal participation in developmental processes;
- provide information, knowledge and skill for economic independence;
- enhance access to legal literacy and information relating to their rights and

entitlements in society with a view to enhancing their participation on an equal footing in all areas.

The programme is based on certain principles which must be followed at all stages of implementation., these are:

i) All processes and activities within the programme must be based on respect

for women's existing knowledge, experience and skills.

ii) Every component and activity must create an environment for learning, help women to experience and affirm their strengths, create time and space for reflection and respect individual uniqueness and variation.

iii) Women and women's groups at the village level set the pace, priorities, form and content of all project activities.

iv) Planning, decision making and evaluation processes, as well as all levels of personnel must remain accountable to the collective at the village level.

v) All project structures and personnel play facilitative and supportive, rather than directive roles.

vi) A participatory selection process is followed to ensure that project

functionaries at all levels are committed to working among poor women and are free from caste/community prejudices.

vii) Management structures must be decentralized, with participative decision making and devolution of powers and responsibilities to District, Block and village levels.

The programme has responded to the needs of the women which range from, educational

demands, livelihood and health concerns, accessing resources and participation in panchayati raj, to gender problems. Sanghas in all the States have taken initiatives to address wide ranging issues / problems such as:

- Struggling for equal and minimum wages;
- Improving civic amenities;
- Health of women and children;
- Actively accessing resources from DWCRA, DRDA, DPAP, Forest Department

Etc.;

- Ensuring educational opportunities for their children especially girls;
- Entering the political sphere through election to panchayati raj bodies;
- Articulating their concerns and tackling social issues like violence against women, child marriage;
- Seeking and obtaining literacy and numeracy skills for themselves and their children.

The outcomes of this process have been:

- A demand for literacy and education for children especially for girls has been generated; Educational inputs - AE, NFE, Vocational Training, Support Services, Mahila Shikshan Kendra, DRU & ECCE Centres are introduced in a phased manner, responding to the needs of the programme.
- Working towards accessing facilities like hostels, scholarships, etc

Box 2: Case Study

Making the System Work

When Sangha women in Karnataka learnt that scholarships are given to tribal students, they asked the teacher about the modalities. Initially, he resisted their queries; later he asked male members of the students' families to come and collect the scholarship. He also deducted Rs.5/- from each one's scholarship. Sangha women protested and insisted that he purchase a dholak, a wall clock and another musical instrument from the collected fund. They also checked the receipt of the purchase made.

The Sangha then ensured that the scholarships were given in full to the

Mothers of the students. Now, the Sangha women are invited for school functions and the flag hoisting ceremony.

The Mahila Samakhya programme has brought about many changes in women. The groups/Sanghas have provided the collective strength for women, usually from poor & marginalized groups, to overcome barriers to their participation in and access to education and development.

As a collective the women have gained the strength to overcome obstacles and to articulate demands for themselves and their daughters, which individually they have been unable to do.

Women can now speak and clearly articulate their problems. They understand the problems which are common to them and opt for a collective solution.

The women's recognition and visibility within the family, community and block levels has increased -- leadership qualities have been developed and a cadre of village level organizers and activists are emerging.

The women's collective strength and ability to demand accountability of government delivery systems has been demonstrated.

Sanghas have taken decisions to postpone the age of marriage of their daughters and have actively prevented child marriages taking place in their villages.

In States like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh sanghas have ensured that no girl is initiated as a jogini in their villages.

In Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat, Sakhis and sahayoginis have received intensive training in laws relating to women and have started Nari Adalats / Mahila Panch, which are informal courts run by women.

Many innovative programmes have emerged such as in Banda, UP, women got trained as handpump mechanics. Region-specific curricula have been developed around the concerns of women like violence, health and herbal medicine, wages, environment, forests among many others. Women have begun to effectively address the issues of girl child education in addition to their own education.

Sanghas are active partners in the diverse educational initiatives of the programme. The ECCE centers in Gujarat, the **Bala Mitra Kendras**, **Jagjagi Centres** (NFE) for girls in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, the **Udan Khatolas** in UP all provide a creative learning opportunity. Sanghas assist in selecting teachers, monitoring the centres, mobilizing the community for education and in some cases (as in Andhra Pradesh) making some financial contribution as well.

An innovative initiative in the area of girls/ women's education has been the **Mahila Shikshan Kendras**. These are residential courses, aimed at developing a pool of aware, trained and literate women at the village level.

The curricula followed are diverse, imparting life skills, skill development to enabling the learners to join the mainstream education system. The MSK has been able to draw in girls and young adults who for a variety of reasons do not benefit from the usual schools/ AS centers. The demand for these Kendras is on the rise.

In many districts, MS is publishing newspapers/ broad-sheets. The popularity of these papers among the neo-literate women is immense and these newspapers enjoy a large circulation. In fact some districts in UP and Assam have now made these priced publications.

While the direct impact of the MS educational strategy is yet to be fully felt, its impact is most visible in the confidence with which Sanghas are playing an active role in village education committees, making schools work, ensuring the teachers come regularly and in many instances ensuring that in their villages, children, particularly girl children, have access to formal education.

The following case studies show the grassroots level initiatives by women themselves.

Box 3: Case Study

BREAKING BARRIERS

The MS programme in Banda district, UP has effectively demonstrated the ability of poor and illiterate women to master technology and move from strength to strength. Scarcity of water was the issue around which poor women of SCs/STs and Kol communities were enabled to break the technology barrier. Overcoming caste hierarchies, social ridicule and official cynicism, the women mastered difficult terminology and learnt the technical aspects, remembering through songs which they orally constructed as they went along. For the women becoming mechanics was more than acquiring a skill or redressing a need, it was a continuous process of struggle and self assertion in their families and communities..... success in Banda has inspired similar efforts in AP and Gujarat. In Banda, the issue of water led to recognition of the need to learn to read and write. Moving from pictorial odes to letters, a team of handpump mechanics and sahayoginis have learnt screen printing, material production and now write, design and produce a popular and widely acclaimed broad-sheet called the “Mahila Dakiya”.

Box 5: India: Reservation Express's Final Stop: The Indian Parliament

By Amrita Nandy

www.wfsnews.org

All these women want is to ensure the Women's Reservation Bill - that gives women 33 per cent reservation in Parliament and state assemblies - is passed in the Lok Sabha. And so they mounted a nationwide campaign that took them to 60 towns and cities across India. Meet the members of the Reservation Express, a first-of-its-kind attempt conceived by Delhi-based NGO, ANHAD (Act Now for Harmony and Democracy), which brought together internally displaced women and victims from the Gujarat carnage, girls from a remote village in Kashmir, activists from states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, among others.

Interactive public meetings were organised at various stops, with audiences displaying a lively interest in the Bill.

* "Our political arena is packed with 'elite' male politicians. Such vehement questioning about their elite status was not done when they came to power. Why does this become such a huge issue when women have to enter politics?"

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12.5 SUMMING UP

Engendering governance has come as a priority issue after a lot of deliberations at the levels of Government, women's groups and the grassroots. The State took the legislative route only after the issue was pressed upon by the women's groups and the right to participate in governance and decision-making processes was demanded by them. The appropriate legislation has brought about a positive change in the grassroots scenario whereby women from backward communities can be seen actively engaged in solving local problems and contributing to the well-being of people. There are many instances where women have shown

exemplary courage to face the public domain the way men have been doing over the centuries.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. What are Grassroots women networks?

2. How can women's networks bring about change?

12.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1:

1. Participation, decision-making
2. Amendment, panchayat

Check Your Progress Exercise 2:

1. Togetherness, common voice
2. Common cause, collective voice

12.8 GLOSSARY

73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act: The Government of India enacted 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act in the year 1993. The provisions of the Acts include 33.3 % reservation in the Urban and Rural Local Bodies. It is an important milestone in engendering governance. This paved the way for taking initiatives for providing reservation in the Parliament and State Assemblies.

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12.10 QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PRACTICE

1. Define the term “Engendering governance” with suitable examples.
2. Is engendering the governance process a necessity? Explain.
3. Why should women be a part of the governance? Discuss your arguments on practical examples.
4. Write short notes:
 - a. Women in public sphere
 - b. State support to engendering governance
 - c. Philosophy of Mahila Smakhya programme