Gender Inequality: A Comparison of India and USA

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1 Introduction

Social inequality is the existence of unequal opportunities and rewards for different social positions or statuses within a group or society, on the basis of this, gender inequality refers to the differential ability of men and women to access society's resources and to receive its privileges. Because historically men have garnered greater social power, gender inequality has systematically disadvantaged women. According to Collins, gender inequality is complicated, moreover, by the intersection of gender with race/ethnicity, social class, age and sexuality. That is, every individual, categorized as either male or female, also falls somewhere within a matrix of domination that includes these other dimensions.

Gender inequality is therefore a form of inequality which is distinct from other forms of economic and social inequalities. It dwells not only outside the household but also centrally within it. It stems not only from pre-existing differences in economic endowments between women and men but also from pre-existing gendered social norms and social perceptions. Gender inequality has adverse impact on development goals as it reduces economic growth. It hampers the overall well-being because blocking women from participation in social, political and economic activities can adversely affect the whole society.

Many developing countries including India have displayed gender inequality in education, employment and health. It is common to find girls and women suffering

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from high mortality rates. India's ranking on various gender indices present a very grim picture, India ranked 125 on Gender Development Index, out of 188 countries in 2015 (UNDP, HDR—2016). As per Global Gender Gap Report (2017) (WEF 2017), India stands at a rank of 108, out of 144 countries, showing that Indian women are at a disadvantage in several important ways. The index focuses not only on empowerment of women but on the relative gap between men and women in four fundamental categories—economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. India ranks 139 on economic participation, 112 on educational attainment, ranks world's fourth lowest at 141 on health and survival and 15 on political empowerment. India's ranking has improved from 113 (among 135 countries polled) to 108 (of 144 countries polled) largely due to its ranking in political empowerment.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Social Institutions Gender Index (SIGI) ranked India at 56 out of 86 countries in 2012, which was an improvement from its 2009 rank of 96 out of 102. The SIGI is a measure of discriminatory social institutions that are drivers of inequalities, rather than the unequal outcomes themselves, showing that social institutions can be a reason for gender inequalities in India.

According to a large number of studies, gender inequality impedes economic growth (Klasen 1999; Dollar and Gatti 1999; King and Mason 2001). Gender inequality in education lowers the average quality of human capital and thus negatively impacts economic growth. According to Mitra, labour market inequality spills over to inequality in education, health and political involvement (Mitra 2010). It is an accepted academic stand that sexism is systematic and structural, and that it involves the subordination of one group as a whole by another group which enjoys power and advantage in the system (Benatar 2012).

Despite numerous government and nongovernmental initiatives, laws that have being enacted for empowerment and protection of women from discrimination have not been able to make remarkable difference to position of women.

The present paper makes an attempt to compare gender inequality in India and United States of America (USA). USA was chosen for comparison with India first because both of them are largest democracies in the world and second because USA plays a dominant role in gender policymaking at international level and India on the other hand is a strong growing economy with a highly skewed sex ratio and having had women at both Prime minister and Presidential level in Government. For the purpose of comparison, data has been taken from Gender Data Portal of World Bank. Indicators related to Education, Health, Labour Force Participation and Political Involvement have been used. The focus is on data for the period 2007–2017.

There are many reasons to be concerned about existing gender inequalities in well-being-related dimensions such as education, health, employment, labour and politics. From a well-being and equity perspective, such gender inequalities are

problematic as they lower well-being and are a form of injustice in most conceptions of equity or justice.

2 Education

Education is the basic requirement for human development, equally important to improve the women's status and autonomy. With education, employment opportunities are broadened and income levels are increased. The development of an individual and the progress of a nation depend on education.

The development of a society can be judged by measuring the issues related to educational inequality prevalent in the society. The prevalence of unequal distribution of education among male and female students hinders the development of a nation. In this section, we will look at few educational indicators to assess gender inequality in India and USA.

2.1 Government Expenditure on Education

Figure 1 shows government expenditure on education (as % of GDP) by India and USA for the year 2010–2014.

From the figure, one finds that USA spends much more than India on education; however, the expenditure on education shows a constant decline in USA while for India there has been increase in expenditure from 2011 to 2013, while the expenditure dropped by 0.03 points in 2014.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), India has the lowest public expenditure on higher education per student in the world.

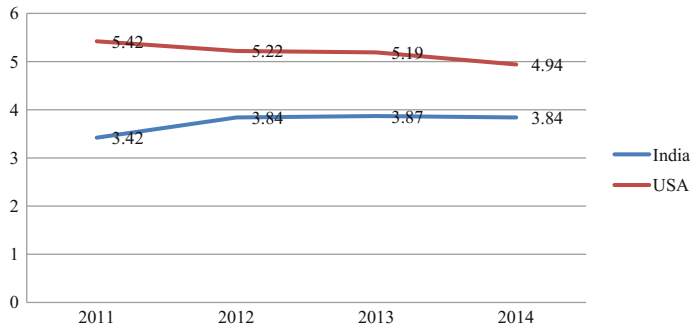

Fig. 1 Government expenditure on education (% of GDP)

2.2 Out of Schoolchildren

This is an important indicator to assess the situation of education in any country. A comparison of children out of school (primary) in both the countries is presented below in Table 1.

India has been able to reduce the number of female children out of school to 9.31 lakhs in 2013 from 22.48 lakhs in 2007, thus showing about 41% decrease in out of school female children, while the number of male children has increased from 15.43 lakhs to 19.55 lakhs during the same period.

In USA, one finds an increase in out of schoolchildren for both males and females. The number of out of school females was 2.49 lakhs in 2007 while it increased to 7.44 lakhs in 2013, an increase of about 33%. In the case of males, the total number was around 4.24 lakhs in 2007, while it was 7.73 lakhs in 2013, around 55% increase.

To have better understanding of situation of education, let us look at school enrolment in primary and secondary school.

2.3 School Enrolment—Primary

Enrolment of all eligible children of school-going age is an important step towards achieving 100% literacy.

A look at Table 2 also shows that female school enrolment at primary level has increased from 111.46% in 2008 to 114.95% in 2015 in India, while in USA the enrolment has decreased from 102.27% in 2008 to 99.4% in 2015. For male children, there is a decline in school enrolment for both India and USA; however, the decline is more sharp for India as compared to USA (Table 2).

Table 1 Out of school children (primary)

Year	India		USA	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2007	15.43	22.48	4.24	2.49
2008	23.8	14.06	3.61	2.4
2009	36.36	18.65	6.13	3.41
2010	31.38	16.88	6.86	5.76
2011	36.9	16.95	8.44	6.37
2012	24.58	13.85	7.36	7.07
2013	19.55	9.31	7.73	7.44

Table 2 School enrolment—primary (Gross %)

	India		USA	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2008	110.36	111.46	102.02	102.27
2009	108.39	110.93	101.01	101.56
2010	108.15	110.37	100.06	99.17
2011	106.9	110.04	98.53	99.12
2012	108.01	111.74	99.02	97.7
2013	104.85	116.98	98.62	97.99
2014	102.35	114.03	98.65	98.48
2015	102.71	114.95	99.16	99.4

Table 3 School enrolment—secondary (Gross %)

	India		USA	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2008	64.01	56.76	94.52	94.22
2009	62.09	57.28	93.23	94.63
2010	65.5	60.87	92.51	93.58
2011	68.24	64.43	93.49	94.98
2012	70.79	67.39	93.92	94.35
2013	68.61	69.25	94.71	94.77
2014	73.82	74.8	95.41	96.38
2015	73.55	74.46	96.69	97.7

2.4 School Enrolment—Secondary

A look at secondary school enrolment figures (Table 3) shows nearly a 20% increase for Indian females from 2008 to 2015, while female enrolment in USA has increased only by about 2%. Male enrolment in secondary school has also shown an increase in both the countries. However, the increase is around 9% for India and only 2% for USA.

From the above figures, one can infer that initiatives of Indian government to increase enrolment of girl child in schools have shown positive results. Levy (1971) using data from 42 less developed countries tried to explore the relationship between social, political, economic and educational variables and the dropout rate from primary schools. It was found that school systems with high rates of repetition also have high dropout rates over the primary cycle. This suggests that automatic promotion may reduce educational wastage. Automatic promotion in form of non-repetition till class VIII was adopted by Government of India under The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, which came into effect on 1 April 2010, this might be one of the reasons for drop in number of out of schoolchildren, mid-day meal scheme for children might be other reason. A UNESCO (2014) policy paper shows that increasing education expenditure and social cash transfers have

led to increase in school enrolment. Increased enrolment of girls in India might be due to increased expenditure on education and government schemes like 'Ladli' which gives monetary benefits to parents of girl child.

In 2012, there were an estimated 1.8 million homeschooled students in the United States, which is an increase from 850,000 in 1999, when estimates were first reported. In addition, the estimated percentage of the school-age population that was homeschooled increased from 1.7% in 1999 to 3.4% in 2012 (US Dept. of Education). There was significant increases in homeschooling between 1999 and 2003 and between 2003 and 2007 (Redford et al. 2017).

2.5 *Female Teachers in Educational Institutions*

It is widely observed that dropout rates for girls are higher as compared to boys in most parts of the world. Chimombo (1999) observes that though the enrolment in school is almost same for girls and boys, boys have a higher likelihood of continuing school compared to girls. Holmes (2003) also found that girls overall attain less education and tend to drop out earlier as compared to boys. Secondary school enrolment is an indicator of this phenomenon.

From above tables on primary and secondary school enrolments, one finds that secondary school enrolment shows a decline when compared with primary school enrolment for both the countries. However, this decline is much more pronounced for India than USA.

Holcamp (2009) found that some socio-cultural factors highly impact girls dropout rate though those factors also contribute to boys dropout rate but to a lesser extent.

One of the factors that impact girls participation and enrolment at schools is availability of female teachers. Solotaroff et al. (2007) found that in Afghanistan, lack of female teachers is an obstacle to girls participation and enrolment in schools.

A look at availability of female teachers at Primary, Secondary and Tertiary education in India and USA (Table 4) shows that there is very wide disparity among both countries in percentage of female teachers at primary level, India has nearly 40% less teachers at primary level when compared with USA. At Secondary level, the gap has decreased to 17–19%, and around 9–11% at tertiary level.

Table 4 Availability of female teachers at primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions (%)

	India			USA		
	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Primary	48.184	49.488	49.49	87.156	87.159	87.147
Secondary	45.145	43.213	43.152	62.036	62.029	62.009
Tertiary	39.046	39.028	38.614	48.591	49.106	49.106

This is, however, in contrast to studies which state that one of the major factors that might affect enrolment of girls in primary schools is non-availability of female teachers, as the primary school enrolment in India has been increasing despite fewer number of female teachers.

From above, one can say that government expenditure on education is higher for USA. Primary school enrolment in USA is on the decline for both male and female, while India shows an increase in primary enrolment for girls and decrease for boys. Secondary school enrolment for girls and boys is on the increase; however, there is a gap of about 23% when compared with USA. The gap between female teachers in USA and India is maximum at primary level, which reduces at secondary and tertiary level.

3 Health

Economists and health experts have known for years that people who live in poorer societies live shorter lives. But research also points to an additional factor in explaining life expectancy: a society's level of inequality. People live longer in nations with lower levels of inequality.[1]

Thus, gender inequality continues to have a negative impact on many health outcomes. Gender-related power imbalances contribute to excess female mortality across the life cycle, and harmful gender norms affect men and boys by encouraging risk-taking and limiting health-seeking behaviours.

While gender equality has made the most progress in areas such as education and labour force participation, health inequality between men and women continues to plague many societies today. While both males and females face health disparities, girls and women experience a majority of health disparities. This comes from the fact that many cultural ideologies and practices have structured society in a way whereby women are more vulnerable to abuse and mistreatment, making them more prone to illnesses and early death. Kawachi et al. (1999) found that societies with high gender inequality are unhealthy for men and women.

Although women around the world share many similarities in terms of the health-impacting challenges, there are also many distinct differences that arise from their varying states of socio-economic conditions. The type of conditions in which women live is largely associated with not only their own socio-economic status but also that of their nation.

We use three measures of gender inequality in health outcomes, viz. the life expectancy advantage of women relative to men, infant and under-five mortality rate and the maternal mortality.

[1]For details refer https://inequality.org/facts/inequality-and-health/.

3.1 Life Expectancy at Birth

Research has shown that if men and women received similar nutrition, medical attention and general health care, women would live longer than men (Dennerstein et al. 1977). According to a WHO report (2009), females generally live longer than males—on average by 6 to 8 years. This difference is partly due to an inherent biological advantage for the female. But it also reflects behavioural differences between men and women. Newborn girls are more likely to survive to their first birthday than newborn boys are. This advantage continues throughout life: women tend to have lower rates of mortality at all ages, probably due to a combination of the genetic and behavioural factors.

Table 5 shows life expectancy at birth for males and females in India and USA.

A look at life expectancy table shows it to be true for USA but for India this biological advantage of women is for about 2–3 years. According to Waldron (1983) when social discrimination decreases, women's life expectancy increases.

3.2 Infant and Under-Five Mortality Rate

However, Table 6 contradicts the above statement as one finds that female infant and under-five mortality rate in India is higher than male mortality rate under both categories, thus indicating that the natural biological advantage of girls is outset by social disadvantage accorded to them.

The statement, however, holds true for USA where the female mortality rate for infants and under five is lower than that of males, though the difference is not of 6–8 years as indicated by WHO. Thus, one can infer that apart from biological and behavioural factors there are socio-cultural factors that affect mortality rate.

Table 5 Life expectancy at birth

	India		USA	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2008	64.84	66.83	75.6	80.6
2009	65.18	67.34	76	80.9
2010	65.49	67.84	76.2	81
2011	65.79	68.33	76.3	81.1
2012	66.08	68.78	76.4	81.2
2013	66.35	69.19	76.4	81.2
2014	66.61	69.56	76.5	81.3
2015	66.86	69.88	76.3	81.2
2016	67.09	70.17	76.3	81.2

Table 6 Mortality rate (per 1000 live births)

Mortality rate—infant					Mortality rate—under 5			
	India		USA		India		USA	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2010	44.8	46.3	6.8	5.6	56	61.8	8	6.6
2015	36	36.3	6.2	5.1	43.9	46.7	7.2	6
2016	34.5	34.6	6.1	5.1	41.9	44.2	7.1	5.9

3.3 Maternal Deaths

It is often argued that number of maternal deaths [generally measured through Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)] is a reflection of gender inequality. Bhalotra and Gomes (2014) argue that as MMR is a woman-specific condition, public policy attention directed at MMR, and, accordingly, differences in life expectancy between women and men across countries are a reflection of differences in gender inequality across countries.

Maternal mortality reduction has been a priority under MDGs and now under SDGs. Sen, who in 1990, pointed out the phenomenon of 'missing women' further highlighted in 2001 that '[i]n some regions of the world inequality between women and men directly involves matters of life and death, and takes the brutal form of unusually high mortality rates for women …'. In fact, 'other than pre-birth and in early childhood, women are most likely to be missing relative to men in child-bearing years' (Duflo 2011).

A phenomenon clearly visible from data for India in Table 7 showing high incidence of maternal deaths. Although the number is continually declining over the years, it is alarmingly higher than USA, thus showing the gender disadvantage of women in India.

Bhalotra and Gomes (2014) in their study found that maternal mortality rates and female life expectancy advantage are significantly related to different measures—gender prejudice in society over and above income differences across societies, and shows that income by itself is insufficient in explaining cross-country differences in gender-unequal health outcomes. This has also been shown by Jayachandran (2014)

Table 7 Number of maternal deaths

	India	USA
2008	64,000	580
2009	60,000	600
2010	57,000	580
2011	54,000	580
2012	52,000	570
2013	49,000	570
2014	47,000	560
2015	45,000	550

who argue that poor countries have cultural features that exacerbate gender prejudice. 'Being poor is insufficient to explain parents' strong desire to have a son in China and India, for example'.

4 Labour Force Participation

As per ILO, last few decades have seen an increase in women's labour force participation across the globe. However, most of it is aimed at increasing women's employment but not necessarily improvement in quality of employment. The number of women in top positions is few and rare. Thus, gender equality at work is still a distant dream for many countries of the world.

For LFP, we compare India and USA on the following indicators: Labour force participation rate, wage and salaried workers, employment in agriculture, industry and services and self-employment.

4.1 Labour Force Participation Rate

Labour force participation rate (LFP) is the ratio of labour force (employed and unemployed but seeking work) to the population of respective age cohort. It is, therefore, a key determinant of the currently active population or an indicator of the magnitude of the supply of labour in the economy and a crucial component of long-term economic growth (Fig. 2).

Figure 2 shows that labour force participation rate has declined for all the four categories from 2008 to 2017. Labour force participation rate for Indian males is highest while for females is lowest. If economic growth was the only criterion for labour force participation, then there should not be disparity among LFPR of males and females in USA. However, one finds that LFPR for females is lower than that of males in USA reflecting disparity in LFP among males and females. In case of India, there is a wide disparity in LFPR of males and females reflecting that there are

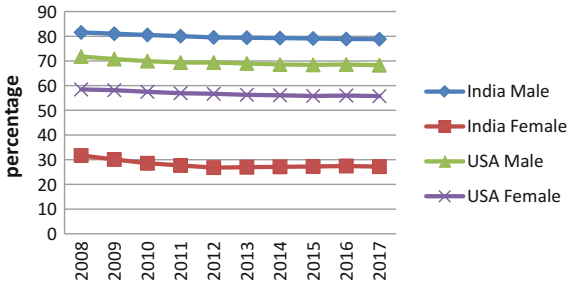

Fig. 2 Labour force participation rate

number of other factors than economic that may affect participation of women in labour force.

4.2 Sector-Wise Employment

Table 8 gives sector-wise employment for males and females in India and USA.

From the table, one finds that in India, highest percentage of women are employed in agriculture, although there is a decrease in their employment from 68.17% in 2008 to 56.36% in 2017. Their participation in services and industries shows an increase from 16.71% in 2008 to 25.94% in 2017 and 15.12% in 2008 to 17.69%, respectively. The same trend is seen for Indian males. A look at data for USA shows that service sector is dominated by females, as more than 90% are employed by services, followed by around 8% by industry and only 0.9% are employed by agriculture sector. This is understandable, USA being a developed country has moved from agriculture to service sector while India is still dependent on agriculture.

One interesting observation is that in USA the percentage of females in industries is much lower as compared to males, while percentage of females in services is much higher when compared with males, an examination of the same would make a good study.

4.3 Wage and Salaried Workers

A comparison between India and USA shows that more than 92% of females in USA are wage and salaried workers as compared to around 87% males (Table 9). India presents a very dismal picture as only around 21% of its males and 18.06% of females worked with wages and salaries in 2017. India has seen an increase in its wage and salaried workers since 2008 for both males (from 16.66% to 21.9%) and females (11.79%–18.06%); however, the increase is more in case of Indian females. No such phenomenon is observed in case of USA where the percentage of workers has remained more or less static during the studied period.

4.4 Self-employment

Table 10 presents interesting fact that about 81.94% of females in India were self-employed in 2017 as compared to only 7.34% in USA. The same is true for Indian males; this is an interesting finding as it explains the low percent of wage and salaried workers (both males and females) in India. However, a large number of these self-employed (more than 90%) run petty, unregistered enterprises/business

Table 8 Sector-wise employment (% of male/female employment)

Year	Agriculture				Industry				Services			
	India		USA		India		USA		India		USA	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2008	47.7	68.17	2.17	0.77	22.75	15.12	29.95	9.06	29.55	16.71	67.88	90.17
2009	47.15	67.48	2.22	0.76	23.36	15.45	28.32	8.15	29.49	17.06	69.46	91.09
2010	46.49	66.75	2.31	0.84	23.83	15.68	27.72	7.92	29.68	17.57	69.97	91.25
2011	44.27	62.88	2.33	0.86	25.33	17.61	27.53	8.21	30.4	19.52	70.15	90.94
2012	43.01	59.7	2.19	0.84	26.05	18.96	27.26	8.24	30.94	21.34	70.55	90.92
2013	42.57	59.58	2.14	0.78	25.57	18.19	27.72	8.25	31.86	22.23	70.14	90.97
2014	41.31	58.73	2.2	0.81	25.79	18.14	28.02	8.41	32.91	23.14	69.78	90.78
2015	40.06	57.74	2.34	0.86	25.79	18.01	27.73	8.38	34.15	24.26	69.93	90.75
2016	39.07	56.92	2.32	0.88	25.68	17.7	27.73	8.25	35.26	25.38	69.95	90.87
2017	38.35	56.36	2.33	0.88	25.75	17.69	27.82	8.35	35.9	25.94	69.86	90.77

Table 9 Wage and salaried workers (%)

	India		USA	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2008	16.66	11.79	87.09	92.51
2009	17.12	11.94	86.94	92.37
2010	17.97	12.53	86.84	92.28
2011	19.78	16.66	87.25	92.44
2012	20.03	16.83	87.47	92.33
2013	20.46	17.1	87.79	92.42
2014	20.86	17.29	87.92	92.61
2015	21.35	17.61	87.86	92.66
2016	21.86	18.03	87.94	92.76
2017	21.9	18.06	87.82	92.66

Table 10 Self-employment (%)

	India		USA	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2008	83.35	88.21	12.91	7.49
2009	82.88	88.07	13.07	7.63
2010	82.03	87.47	13.16	7.71
2011	80.22	83.34	12.75	7.56
2012	79.98	83.17	12.53	7.67
2013	79.54	82.90	12.20	7.58
2014	79.15	82.71	12.08	7.39
2015	78.65	82.39	12.14	7.34
2016	78.14	81.97	12.06	7.24
2017	78.10	81.94	12.18	7.34

thus providing poor returns to the owners. On the other hand, the percentage of self-employed males and females is very low at 12.18 and 7.34%, respectively, in 2017 for USA.

In developing world, women continue to form a large majority of the world's working poor, earn less income and are more often engaged in the informal sector of the economy, thus affecting them by long-term unemployment when compared to men. Women often have less access to productive resources, education, and skills development and labour market opportunities than men in many societies. Furthermore, women continue to undertake most of the unpaid care work, which has become an increasing challenge in their efforts to engage in productive work, both in subsistence agriculture and market economy. This seems to hold true for India.

Duncombe and Marsden (1995) argue that women are subjected to 'triple shifts' this involves paid labour, domestic labour and emotional labour. The emotional labour refers to the care and attentiveness of the family unit, i.e. the social role of the woman being a wife and a mother towards the children and husband. According

to Barren and Norris (1976), women are employed in unstable employment that is based on short-term contracts, lower pay and entail unskilled work with fewer prospects, they are therefore more likely to be made redundant and thus suffer from a decline in the labour market (cited in Sociology An Interactive Approach 1997).

Few theories emphasize that women's disadvantaged position in the labour market is caused by, and is a reflection of patriarchy as well as the subordinate position of women in society and in the family. In other words, the role of gender stereotypes held by employers and societies at large affect differential occupational attainment of men and women. These theories predict that women gravitate towards occupations that are most consistent with their 'female' characteristics, e.g. caring, nurture (Anker 1998).

Gender pay gaps persist around the world, including in the United States. In 2010, American women on average earned 81% of what their male counterparts earned (BLS 2010; DOL 2011). Women are 50% more likely to work in the public sector. Women surpass men on education attainment among those employed aged 25 and over: 37.1% of women hold at least a bachelor's degree compared to 34.9% for men (DOL 2011).

In 2010, there were approximately 65 million women in the labour force and 53% of these women were concentrated in three industries (a) education and health services, (b) trade, transportation and utilities and (c) local government (BLS 2011).

Women were overrepresented in several industries and underrepresented in others. For example, in 2010, women represented 79% of the health and social services workforce and 68.6% of the education services workforce. However, women represented only 43.2% of the professional, scientific and technical services sector and 8.9% of the construction sector (DOL 2011).

In terms of women in leadership positions, in 2009 only 24% of CEOs in the US were women and they earned 74.5% as much as male CEOs (BLS 2010, p. 9).

http://www.ilo.org/washington/areas/gender-equality-in-the-workplace/WCMS_159496/lang–en/index.htm accessed on 15 May 2018.

5 Political Participation

Countries with increased women's participation and leadership in civil society and political parties tend to be more inclusive, responsive, egalitarian and democratic.

Yet, women around the world are still largely absent from national and local decision-making bodies; struggle to have a voice in peace building transitions and

Table 11 Proportion of seats held by women in National Parliaments (%)

	India	USA
2008	9.1	17
2009	10.8	16.8
2010	10.8	16.8
2011	11	16.8
2012	11	18
2013	11	17.9
2014	11.4	19.3
2015	12	19.4
2016	12	19.4
2017	11.8	19.4

are excluded from political processes. Despite representing half the global population, women comprise less than 20% of the world's legislators. From discrimination and violence to a lack of support and resources, women face countless challenges to participation in the civic and political life of their countries (USAID).

Let us look at political participation of Women in India and USA (Table 11).

The table shows that India has less than 12% women representation in national parliament, while USA has around 19.5% representation of women in 2017.

Women's participation and access to formal political power structures vary across countries. Only three countries in the world have more than 50% representation of women in lower or single house, i.e. Rwanda (61.3%), Cuba (53.2%) and Bolivia (53.1%) (IPU 2018).

Many scholars have tried to explain the lack of women participation in politics. Rai maintains the conceptual basis of liberal theory that is inherently gendered in ways, which perpetuates patterns of patriarchy and ignores gender subordination in both polity and society (Rai 2000:2). Feminist theorists also challenged the notion of abstract individual in liberal theory and argued it is not a gender-neutral category. This is why despite women had the right to vote they were not able to impact public policy and could not bring private sphere in the preview of the public. Even western democracies left them dislocated on many fronts.

Bari (2005) argues that women's historic exclusion from political structures and processes is the result of multiple structural, functional and personal factors that vary in different social contexts across countries. However, beyond these specificities of national and local contexts, there is a generic issue in women's political participation that relates to the wider context of national and international politics, liberal democracy and development. The common pattern of women's political exclusion stems from (a) social and political discourses, (b) political structures and institutions, and (c) the socio-cultural and functional constraints that put limits on women's individual and collective agency.

Male domination of politics, political parties and culture of formal political structures is another factor that hinders women's political participation. Often male-dominated political parties have a male perspective on issues of national

importance that disillusions women as their perspective is often ignored and not reflected in the politics of their parties. Also, women are usually not elected at the position of power within party structures because of gender biases of male leadership. Meetings of councils or parliamentary sessions are held in odd timings conflicting with women's domestic responsibilities (Bari 2005).

6 Conclusion

Gender equality (GE) is a critical component for societal and economic progress. Gender equality can promote economic performance through education, health and labour force participation. Gender equality in education increases human capital which in turn increases labour force participation of women.

As there is no country with perfect gender equality, all countries suffer some loss of human development due to gender inequality. India's goal of economic progress and development for all remains marred by a consistent rise in the level of gender inequality. This is evidenced by India's poor performance across various socio-economic indicators, reflecting a low female–male labour force participation rate, high maternal deaths, low educational achievements and a low representation of women in parliament as compared to USA. The government's low social and economic investment in promoting the freedom of women in both individual and social capacities, and ensuring equitable development, remain the key factors responsible for a rising gender imbalance (Deepanshu Mohan 2017).

India needs to pull up its efforts to bring about gender equality in education health and labour force participation because education inequality affects the average quality of human capital and reduces growth (Klasen 1999). Female education contributes to improvements in children's health, reductions in fertility rates and increases in labour force participation rates, and better quality of human capital of future generations (Mitra et al. 2015).

Annexure

Definitions of Indicators Used

1. Government expenditure on education: General government expenditure on education (current, capital and transfers) is expressed as a percentage of GDP. It includes expenditure funded by transfers from international sources to government. General government usually refers to local, regional and central governments.
2. Children out of school, primary (Number in Lakhs): Children out of school are the number of primary-school-age children not enrolled in primary or secondary school.

3. School enrolment in primary (%): Gross enrollment ratio is the ratio of total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown. Primary education provides children with basic reading, writing and mathematics skills along with an elementary understanding of such subjects as history, geography, natural science, social science, art and music.
4. School enrolment in secondary (%): Gross enrollment ratio is the ratio of total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown. Secondary education completes the provision of basic education that began at the primary level and aims at laying the foundations for lifelong learning and human development, by offering more subject- or skill-oriented instruction using more specialized teachers.
5. Female teachers in educational institutions: Share of female academic staff in education.
6. Maternal death refers to the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes.
7. Employment is defined as persons of working age who were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit, whether at work during the reference period or not at work due to temporary absence from a job, or to working-time arrangement. The agriculture sector consists of activities in agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing, in accordance with division 1 (ISIC 2) or categories A-B (ISIC 3) or category A (ISIC 4). The industry sector consists of mining and quarrying, manufacturing, construction and public utilities (electricity, gas and water), in accordance with divisions 2–5 (ISIC 2) or categories C-F (ISIC 3) or categories B-F (ISIC 4). The services sector consists of wholesale and retail trade and restaurants and hotels; transport, storage and communications; financing, insurance, real estate and business services; and community, social and personal services, in accordance with divisions 6–9 (ISIC 2) or categories G-Q (ISIC 3) or categories G-U (ISIC 4).
8. Labour force participation rate is the proportion of the population ages 15 and older that is economically active: all people who supply labour for the production of goods and services during a specified period.
9. Wage and salaried workers (employees) are those workers who hold the type of jobs defined as ‘paid employment jobs’, where the incumbents hold explicit (written or oral) or implicit employment contracts that give them a basic remuneration that is not directly dependent upon the revenue of the unit for which they work.
10. Self-employed workers are those workers who, working on their own account or with one or a few partners or in cooperative, hold the type of jobs defined as a ‘self-employment jobs’, i.e. jobs where the remuneration is directly dependent upon the profits derived from the goods and services produced. Self-employed

workers include four sub-categories of employers, own-account workers, members of producers' cooperatives and contributing family workers.

11. Women in parliaments are the percentage of parliamentary seats in a single or lower chamber held by women.

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