

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

**1. Critically analyse how women empowerment is vital for poverty alleviation?**

- 1) Women constitute almost half of the country's population, therefore improving their condition in the country can immensely contribute to poverty alleviation.
- 2) Women's empowerment plays a catalytic role towards the achievement of transformational economic, political and social changes required for sustainable development.
- 3) Empowerment of women and eradication of poverty is very critical for the development of the country since it will enhance both the quality and the quantity of human resources available for development. Failing in these efforts will deprive both men and women in getting the fruits of development.
- 4) Many reports and studies suggest that women typically spend their income on food and healthcare for children, which is in sharp contrast to men, who spend a higher proportion of their income for personal needs.
- 5) Increasing gender equality and women's empowerment, as a means of accelerating growth and development, is an end in itself. It allows individual women and girls to enjoy their full human rights, and it leads to more stable economies and stronger societies.
- 6) Access to family planning and maternal health services, as well as education for girls, typically results in improved economic opportunity for women and lower fertility.
- 7) Healthy, educated girls with equal access to opportunities can grow into strong, smart women who can take on leadership roles in their countries. This will help in having a better view of women perspective in the government policies which will in turn help in poverty alleviation.
- 8) Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that if women farmers had the same access to tools and credit as men, agricultural output in 34 developing countries would rise by an estimated average of up to 4%, translating to up to 150 million fewer hungry people.

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**2. Describe the challenges in women empowerment and suggest the steps to be taken for women empowerment?**

Women empowerment is a movement that strives to eliminate the social, economic, and political divide between men and women. The term 'women empowerment' only came into existence in the 19th century. Empowerment itself means 'giving power out.' Women have been considered a weaker gender worldwide for thousands of years. Although India gained independence, women were still not given equal socio-economic status. Therefore, the Government of India and other non-government bodies work toward the overall development of women in our society.

**The following challenges are faced by women in India:**

- 1) **Education:** The literacy gap between women and men is severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. The gender bias is in higher education, specialized professional training which hit women very hard in employment and attaining top leadership in any field.
- 2) **Health and Safety:** The health and safety concerns of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country and are an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned.
- 3) **Professional Inequality:** This inequality is practiced in employment and promotions. Women face countless handicaps in male customized and dominated environs in Government Offices and Private enterprises.
- 4) **Morality and Inequality:** Due to gender bias in health and nutrition there is unusually high mortality rate in women reducing their population further especially in Asia and Africa.
- 5) **Household Inequality:** Household relations show gender bias in infinitesimally small but significant manners all across the globe, more so, in India e.g. sharing burden of housework, childcare and menial works by so called division of work.

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**Steps to be taken for women empowerment:**

**Social Factors:**

- 1) **Health:** Improvement in the health indicators of women can significantly contribute to overall health of family and the new borns. Since the significant amount of earnings of underprivileged are spent on medical treatment, improved women's health and their newborns can drastically reduce household expenditure.
- 2) Education is the major tool for eliminating poverty. Educated women are more sensitive toward their children's education and contribute more to their development.

**Economic factors:**

- 1) **Equal Wages:** Wage disparity between men and women has serious implications on poverty. Equal wages for females would ensure increased household income and productive expenditure on health and nutrition of the whole family.
- 2) **Skill Development:** Women are significantly involved in collecting minor forest produce and household based industries. Enhancing their skills can directly reduce their economic dependence on their husbands, which in-turn will increase their decision making power in productive expenditure and family matters.

**Political factors:**

- 1) A society where the female voice is sought and heard, where the principles of equity (fairness) and equality (opportunity) co-exist, is a more powerful and effective society.
  - 2) Increasing due representation of women in decision making at grassroot level can effectively help better targeting government poverty alleviation programs.
- 3) **“Empowering women is an important tool to limit population growth”- Discuss**
- 1) Empowerment should be viewed as a process in which all voices are encouraged to be heard for ultimate goal of securing mutually beneficial solutions. Women empowerment is not only a solution to check population growth but is also important for overall progress of the society.



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- 2) Spouses, partners and mother-in-laws are central to make decisions for women on contraceptive choice and use. India needs to empower women so that they can decide on the size of the family and thus help the country curb the growth of its population. Improved women status would help in making better decisions towards small family choice.
- 3) Women are needed to be financially empowered to pay for needed family planning and health services. An economically empowered women is free to take decisions better for herself and her family.
- 4) The forces that have helped Kerala achieve population stabilisation with a crude birth rate of 15.9 per 1000 are two-child norm, universal primary education, emphasis on girl child, economic equality and better health care. Thus it is clearly evident that women empowerment would help in limiting population growth.
- 5) It is evident that when women are empowered to improve their own lives, they tend to have smaller families, and population growth slows. When population growth slows, governments and families can more easily invest in opportunities for women and girls, and women can more easily invest in opportunities for themselves and their families.
- 6) Education empowers women and girls to plan their lives. Not only are educated women better equipped to understand their reproductive health options, but they also have greater social and economic opportunities that may lead them to have smaller families. Studies have shown that literacy, especially reading comprehension, profoundly impacts family size.
- 7) When the status of women advances, population growth slows, and the quality of life improves for everyone. The lower social status of women in many places bars them from having control over their own lives and bodies.
- 8) If society limits a woman's opportunities, parents with inadequate resources will not invest in a daughter's future, and she will have no options beyond marriage and childbirth at a young age. In addition, women's relative powerlessness to refuse sex or negotiate safe sex, especially in the context of marriage, leaves women vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies.

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- 9) Women empowerment allow them to exercise their fundamental right to choose the number of children they will have, when, and with whom.
- 10) Capacity-building efforts should pay particular attention to the needs of women in order to ensure that their skills and experience are fully used in decision-making at all levels. The core themes of education for sustainability include lifelong learning, interdisciplinary education, partnerships, multicultural education and empowerment. Priority should be given to ensuring women's and girls' full and equal access to all levels of education and training.

