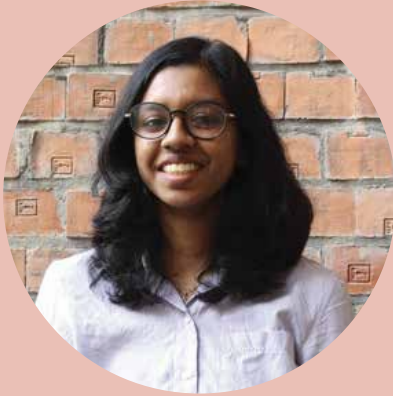




EDITORIAL COMMENT

Why does SDG 5 Matter?



Aparna Sivaraman
Senior Programme Officer
Public Affairs Centre

Gender inequalities present an evident obstacle in achieving sustainable development in its truest sense. However, gender inequality is not a new concept and can no longer be ignored. What is unique and urgent about gender inequality that sets it apart from the other goals is the inter-linkages it has with different facets of development. While the 2030 SDG Agenda categorises SDG 5 as Gender Equality, gender related targets and indicators are visible in several other goals as well. Hence global, national and sub-national efforts to achieve gender equality must take a holistic approach that targets the cross-cutting nature of gender in the development process.

In India, similar to the rest of the world, women face a triple jeopardy of discrimination of gender, caste and socioeconomic status. All of these forms of intersectional discrimination render women and girls marginalised in their agency and access to resources. While India has made significant progress in addressing issues of poverty, malnutrition and access to education, what is needed is a more gender sensitive approach to the above issues. The burden of unpaid care work, the increasing violence against women, declining female labour force participation and token political participation are some of the factors that impede gender equality in the country.

The CODR team working on SDG 5 has aimed at understanding these factors at the most granular level to deconstruct gender inequalities into tangible and actionable areas for government intervention. The team has undertaken an analysis to identify the most common areas that hinder gender equality and specific indicators that require action. One of the findings of the team has been the role of female labour force participation in ensuring gender equality. Literature available on the subject and the CODR SDG 5 team's work points to the fact that across India and in Karnataka as well, there has been a rapid decline in women's participation in the workforce which has been further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors are significantly responsible for the state's performance in gender equality.

The team will continue to work closely with the government to understand the ground realities of gender discrimination and the use of data science to tackle this important development challenge.



EDITORIAL COMMENT

Role of Data in SDG 5

One of the biggest challenges in achieving gender equality is the absence of consistent gender disaggregated data on various social, economic and political parameters. While this serves as an obstacle for gender sensitive policy design and formulation it also hinders research on how different development outcomes affect different genders differently. The inherent social nature of gender inequality is also a challenge to the team.

There is data at the global level that points to how gender inequalities have manifested in our day to day lives. The World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index 2021, which measures gender equality in four areas (Economy, Politics, Health and Education) points to the fact that given the current trends, it would take 135 years to achieve gender parity in the world. The report has ranked India 140th among 156 countries, behind most of its South-East Asian neighbours. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened this gap.

According to the Niti Aayog's SDG Index, most states across the country struggle with indicators under SDG 5, calling for action on parameters to achieve gender equality. However, the challenge that the SDG 5 team has observed is the absence of timely data on these indicators of gender equality. This is more so true at a more granular levels which is where the interventions are required. The absence of such data not only makes the use of data science difficult but also creates a challenge in providing recommendations that are region and context specific.

To address these challenges, the team has been using machine learning techniques to disaggregating data from sources such as the National Family Health Survey 4 at the village level. This data has been used for the development of gender equality indices similar to global indices to identify specific talukas that are poor performing. The specific indicators facilitating this performance can be analysed to provide actionable recommendations.



INTERVIEW



Dr. Jyotsna Jha
Director

Centre for Budget and Policy Studies
(CBPS)

Q: Are there any gaps in the way governments address the issue of gender equality?

A: Yes, in my view, there are some gaps in the way governments address the issue of gender equality. These relate to two aspects: one is the need for an unequivocal clarity and commitment through a long term vision of a transformed society where men and women and other persons of other identities, have an equal place and rights and the other is possible pathways towards that goal, which aligns the short-term objectives with the long-term goals. For instance, the presence of education curricula that help boys and girls to question the unequal gender roles and relations from an early age, or health programmes that also address women's health issues going beyond reproductive roles.

Q: What should be the priority areas for Karnataka in terms of achieving gender parity. In order to move towards equality by 2030?

A: Karnataka has made good progress on many fronts in terms of achieving gender parity but there is a need to (a) deepen the notion of equality in many areas and act accordingly act (b) enable and facilitate the process of gender segregated monitoring of public programmes and schemes to be able to identify areas where we need to strengthen the intervention and areas where we are doing well. It is

important to see and understand the differentiated impact of any policy/scheme and not assume that since it is available to all, both women and men are able to access it. Integration of an embedded periodic gender review process using the department monitoring/information data for all departments and schemes will be a good step towards this. This should apply to all - including social and economic sector departments.

Q: What are some of the ways to address the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work that women face?

A: One long-term strategy could be to include this issue in the school and college curriculum and orient both girls and boys towards the importance of joint responsibility of care work. Monetisation of care work in the GDP estimates can also go a long way in recognising women's contribution to the economy but that alone will not be sufficient to transform the situation. Forced paternity leave and other such measures could also help but only in combination with others such as very clear schemes on working with both men and women collectives to break the prevalent notion of masculinity, where care work is perceived as feminine and sissy.

Q: How does the lack of gender disaggregated data pose a challenge in holistically measuring and addressing gender equality?

A: It is a big impediment in both measuring and taking corrective action towards gender equality. We need to develop scheme/department/programme specific Management Information System (MIS) that is segregated by both gender and social groups, so that we can analyse not only gender but also intersectionality of use and impact. Right now, most of the MIS is guided by financial norms of the scheme and their monitoring rather than its use and impact on change. It is an extremely important first step towards embedding a gender review process in governance.

CODR Bits & Bytes



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UPDATES

June 21, 2021

Revised Approach Notes on SDP, SDG1,8,10,2,3,4 and 5 were sent to the Task Force for review and feedback

July 2, 2021

A review meeting of all projects done by CODR was conducted by Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) Planning, Government of Karnataka was attended by the PAC-CODR team and other Task Force members

July 3, 2021

The PAC-CODR team visited the Planning Department to meet the Task Force to clarify all the points related to the approach, methodology and deliverables of SDG, Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) and malnutrition analysis

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