

Gender Empowerment through Millennium Development goal in central Asia

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Abstract- I explore discrimination faced by women in the world because of their Gender. Gender includes a range of physical, biological and behavioral characteristics pertaining to and differentiating between masculinity and femininity. Gender inequality still exists globally despite of substantial national and international measures that have taken towards Gender equality. At least one in three women around the world is estimated to have been coerced in Sex, physically beaten or otherwise abused in her life time. Far reaching commitments to gender equality and women's human rights are capsulated in core international human rights instrument, including the CEDAW, Beijing Declaration etc. The greatest step taken by the United Nations is in form of Millennium Development Goal.

The study wants to establish that what Millennium Developmental Goal is contributing in improving the condition of women in central Asia. From this overview, this article outlines the place of Gender in the context of Central Asia regions. If much initiative on Gender Development is in place, the study of Gender development through MDG is the most relevant in the region.

Index Terms- Gender, sex, Millennium Developmental Goal, Women in Central Asia, Human Rights, Gender stereotype

I. INTRODUCTION

Sex can categories a person in to male, female or intersex (category of human beings having features differentiated from male or female). Sex can be indicated by a number of indicators such as Sex chromosomes, gonads, reproductive structures, etc. Culture on the other hand associates with a person attitude, feelings and behavior that refer to gender. Gender normative behavior is behavior that is compatible with the cultural expectations; behaviors that are observed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender non-conformity.ⁱ

The distinction between sex and gender was first developed in 1950s in English language by the British and American psychiatrists working with intersex and transsexual patients. From now on wards, the gender has been increasingly used to distinguish between sex as biological and gender as socially and culturally constructed. Feminists have used to argue against 'biology is destiny,' line, and gender and development approach have adopted this system of analysis.ⁱⁱ

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Women throughout the globe lack support for fundamental functions of a human life. They are under nourished than men, less healthy, more susceptible to physical cruelty and sexual abuse. They are much less likely than men to be literate, and still less likely to have paraprofessional or technological education. They face great hurdles, including pressure from family or spouse, sex intolerance in hiring, and sexual aggravation in the workplace-all, frequency, without effective legal recourse.^{iv} Also in case of political position they face much discrimination as women occupy only 18% of parliamentary seats around the world. Regional averages of percentage of women in parliament vary greatly: Nordic countries - 41.4%, Americas - 21.8%, Europe (excluding Nordic countries) - 19.1, Asia - 17.4%. Sub-Saharan Africa - 17.2%, Pacific - 13.4%, Arab states - 9.6%.^v All this gave rise to feministic movement.

II. WHAT IS FEMINISTIC PERSPECTIVE?

Women face injustice from womb to tomb, Women's movement is one of the many efforts seeking justice and freedom from the shackles in which women of central Asia has been bound for centuries. Their collective dream crystallized in the form of feministic movements. Virginia Saprio^{vi} argues that, 'feminism is both a way of thinking about the world, and a way of acting in it...it is a perspective that views gender as one of the most important bases of the structure and organization of the social world' A feminist approach focuses on the historical oppression of women and stress on the interaction of theory and practice to eliminate it. Susan Okin categorises^{vii} feminists as those who believe that sex based discrimination is unacceptable and women should have the same rights and opportunities that men benefit from. All feminists agree that gender based discrimination still exists and need to be addressed.^{viii}

III. CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Women in Central Asia like elsewhere in the world have gone through different stages of development the first is Russian conquest (1860s-1917), Soviet colonization (1917-1991), and new period was post-Soviet transition to market economy since 1991^{ix}. In pre Soviet period the family structure was patriarchal in which father stands at top of hierarchical position who was to be followed by all members of family. The women went veiled

outside home. However, in the section of nomads and semi nomads women enjoy a little freedom for they contributed to the economic activity. They enjoyed greater degree of freedom in interacting with men and also went unveiled outside. Women was subjected to practice of Kalyum (bride purchase and bride price). She does not have right of property. She also lacks education. However, with the coming of the soviet period they experience a little change in their status. It becomes a part of soviet reconstruction programme to improve the condition of women in social, economical and cultural fields.^x Due to transition in central Asian Republics from socialism to liberalism the women experience different stages of development.^{xi} The consequences of transition in the Central Asia were that category of gender suffers most. One of the major aspects that have gained silence is the Gender nature of post-Soviet transition.^{xii}

As indicated by the fact that in 2002, ten years after independence, all of the former Soviet republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus are listed in the "Medium Human Development" category on the United Nations Development Program Human Development Index (HDI). This shows the categorization of these countries in 'developing' world. This "de-development," or 're- primitivization', as it has been variously called, has created a great deal of worry, irritation, and disturbance for the citizens of the former Soviet Union. International aid and development agencies, including the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the World Bank, among others, have begun to address de-development in former socialist states, and their policies. Scholars of nationalism have demonstrated the gendered nature of nation-state building and nationalism. In the current post-Soviet period, nation-state building processes in each of the former republics have led to elimination of certain previously held rights as women have lost representation in local and national governments. Although women had been crucial in the independence movements, immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, women in all of the former Soviet states found themselves excluded from the new governments.^{xiii}

The United Nations had been using the "Gender in Development" paradigm to analyze socio economic situations in Third World countries, in order to direct attention to changes that will benefit women such as increasing education for girls and providing lending programs so that women can enhance livelihoods. With the opening of nongovernmental organizations in Central Asia in early 1990, began with focused the attention on issues of importance of women. Gender works in Central Asia, emerged from practical concerns, with practical goals, in nascent civil society organization. Any particular culture's gender concepts are hegemonic, and are reproduced in social interactions. In practice, analyses of gender in society have led in two directions. Among development experts, like Amartya Sen, using gender as a lens for analysis permits new thinking about how resources can be most successfully used to struggle against poverty and disease, and to increase capacity for creating improved living standards, by enhancing women's equality with men. In a seemingly less practical but perhaps more fundamental direction, Judith Butler's radical questioning allows the possibility of analyzing the performance of gender,^{xiv}

IV. ADDRESSING THE DISCRIMINATION BY UNITED NATIONS

Thus achieving Gender Equality is a goal has been accepted by governments, regional and international organizations. Any new developmental structure must prioritize Gender empowerment primarily because of persistent injustice faced by women around the world with women disproportionately representing among the poorest and most marginalized. It is enshrined in international agreements and commitments. The creation of a body of international human rights law is one of the United Nations' great achievements. The United Nations has helped negotiate more than 70 human rights treaties and declarations—many focused on the rights of vulnerable groups such as women, children, persons with disabilities, minorities and indigenous peoples. Together, these treaties and declarations have helped create a 'culture of human rights' throughout the world, providing a powerful tool to protect and promote all rights.^{xv}

The most important Declarations towards gender empowerment include the UN convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) as well as Beijing Declaration also in UN Security council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889.^{xvi}

The greatest step taken by United Nations is in the form of Millennium Development Goal. The greatest gathering of the heads of states in September 2000 adopted the declaration of Millennium Development Goal. The declaration was signed by 189 countries then was translated into a road map by setting out goals to be reached by 2015. The goals set out for development and poverty eradication were known as Millennium Development Goals. The eight goals represent commitments to reduce poverty and hunger, to take ill health, gender inequality, lack of education, lack of access to clean water, and environmental degradation.^{xvii}

V. MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS

The Millennium Declaration and the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) collectively herald a vision for a more just and equal world. Social, political and economic equality for women is integral to the achievement of all Millennium Development Goals.^{xviii}

Among all the international agreements on gender empowerment the MDG was important because of a number of factors. The Goals were signed by a large number of governments (189) giving them the high profile. They were signed by the highest international organization that is UN giving equal voices of donor and recipient governments, thus endowed them with greatest international legitimacy. Finally MDG were backed by measurable indicators that allowed the international community to monitor progress.^{xix}

VI. MILINNIUM DEVELOPMENTAL GOAL 3

Among all the goals the goal MDG3, to promote gender equality and empower women empowerment is significant the global agreements to include this goal was very positive. The member states believe that gender inequality not only decrease the livelihood of achieving other goals, but also that advancing

gender equality and women's empowerment depends on progress made on each other goal.^{xx}

VII. PROGRESS OF NATIONS TOWARDS MDG-3

According to the data provided by the antiparliamentary union, the women share of seats in parliament in 1990/1991 and most recent year available for following categories: high (30 percent), medium (20-29 percent), low (10-19.9 percent) and very low (0-9.9 percent). In 2002, in only 11 of 161 countries did women hold 30 percent or more of seats in national parliament: Mozambique, Denmark etc. Women held between 20-29 percent seats in 2002. Yet women have made notable progress in political life since 1991, of the 122 countries they have longitudinal data, women have increased share of seats in parliament in 99 countries, compared to 18 countries where women's representation declined over the decade and five countries experience no change.^{xxi}

VIII. ASSESSING THE IMPACT ON CENTRAL ASIA

Keeping in view the success of MDG throughout world in Central Asian region it will also help in achieving Gender empowerment. As Gender parity in schools supported by IDA (World Bank funds for the poorest) increasing from 91 to 96 for every 100 boys enrolled, women as of Oct. 2013 were 21.8% of parliaments in single house and 14.4% in upper house. As far as Central Asia is concerned there is also significant progress in primary, secondary and tertiary education Gender parity achieved and also girls surpass boys and the share of women are gaining ground in the labour market also proportion of seats held by women in single or lower house of national parliament in the year 2000 to 2013 increased from 7 to 77.7%.^{xxii}

Although the access of women to political decision-making has improved in a number of EECCA and SEE countries, this progress seems to have been achieved mainly with the aid of temporary measures that have increased the numbers of female elected representatives. Female ministers tend to be concentrated in social-cultural functions and rarely head the ministries responsible for the economy, infrastructure, home affairs, foreign affairs, and defense. Although government is a large employer of women, they tend to be less represented in the higher administrative posts, especially in Western Europe where the share of female senior civil servants often does not exceed 30 per cent. However, in a number of transition economies (e.g. the Baltic States, Kazakhstan) this share exceeds 50 per cent. The significant and persistent under-representation of women in decision-making positions is not limited to the political sphere but can be also found in the business sector.^{xxiii}

However, despite these legal and policy provisions women empowerment is still a serious problem and progress is still uneven on MDG3 in many sectors. Still Central Asia faces many challenges in overcoming Gender inequality which is a serious problem due to various stereotypes that negatively affect women's advancement. If MDG should implement effectively in Central Asia significant progress could have been achieved. It involves a joint effort by both the governments and other stake holders and to look into risks faced by the country to effectively

implementation. The whole discussion helps us in critically examine the role of MDG in achieving Gender Empowerment in Central Asia.

IX. CONCLUSION FOLLOWED BY SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of gender discrimination, unfavorable treatment of individuals denies those rights, opportunities or resources. Throughout the globe, women are treated unequally and less value as compared to men. Women's degree of difference, right to use to power and control of possessions is central to this discrimination in all institutional spheres, i.e. the family circle, community, market, and state. Women's lack of demonstration and say in decision making bodies in the community and the state perpetuate discrimination, in terms of access to public services, such as schooling and health care or discriminatory laws.

Central Asia is generally considered to be third world region where the women have given the secondary status. Despite the legal and policy provisions women empowerment is still a serious problem and progress is still uneven on in many sectors. Still Central Asian Countries faces many challenges in overcoming Gender inequality which is a serious problem due to various stereotypes that negatively affect women's advancement. It is observed that Gender empowerment is a concern of research. Central Asia starts and still passing through stages of Gender Empowerment and the cause is lack of knowledge. It has been deduced that in many regions of Central Asia the problem is still prevailing where in this kind of discrimination has various dimensions. In order to solve this issue following suggestions can go long way in bringing about a change in entire belt.

- 1, All the practices related to discrimination against women may not be controlled wholly or negated completely with the formulation and application of the relevant social legislation only. There is also a need of broader social support through the organization of social movement against these inhuman practices. Thus the legal and social efforts at various levels jointly may lead to the resolution at various levels.

- 2, the social legislation must be implemented sincerely and completely without any bias by the law implemented.

- 3, Establishment of sufficient number of courts in the state to deal with the cases related to women and to resolve chronic as well as fresh cases of discrimination.

- 4, Develop among women awareness about their rights and obligations in all the fields of life. While this process may be carried out in the schools, Families and education

- 5, the need to widen the circle and strengthen our alliance: In the last decade, it has become increasingly apparent that the involvement of younger generation in women's rights, development and social justice works is absolutely necessity. Many activists and professionals are reaching the last stretches of their carriers, making it essential to foster the transfer of knowledge between generations and regions in order to sustain and built upon efforts of date.

- 6, marketing feminism: In many parts of the world, there is a negative stigma associated with feminism: some say, for example, it is too angry and anti-male, it is about victims and complaints, or worse, it is irrelevant. This image problem

inhabits our success. We need to broaden the movement by attracting new alliance from all sectors, ages and identities.

Nothing will happen without institutional change: Related to these tensions, a significant number of gender and developmental and women's rights proponents have turned their focus to organizational and institutional change issues. After years of promoting gender equality through organizations using gender training methods, gender policies and other bureaucratic tools, these actors now claim that equality will depend more on

changing the structures of organizations and, most importantly, the institutions, or rules of the game, that embody them.

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