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## **Women Empowerment In India: A Study Of Uttarakhand**

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### **Abstract**

[ *The empowerment of women means the equal representation of women in the followings as:*

- i. *Education*
- ii. *Health & Nutrition*
- iii. *Economic Independency*
- iv. *Organizational support*
- v. *Legal awareness*
- vi. *Intervention Programmes*

*But none of the above seems to be equate for woman. While women in India have shown their potentialities in every field including politics, literature and education since Independence but the status of the women in rural India is daunting and pathetic. The women in villages of India lead a tough, torturous and disconcerted life. They are the victims of a whole plethora of violence committed against them such as domestic violence, rape, molestation, forced marriage and dowry death. Female infanticide, early age pregnancy, sexual harassment and rejection are still prevalent in villages and suburbs of India. Though the schemes launched by government of India, has elevated the status of few women, but there seems no sign of women empowerment in rural India. They are still kicked, killed, subdued and humiliated every day. The situation of women in Uttarakhand is also more deteriorated. They have to work very hard. Women in the hills are seen working so much and so often, tat her health is taken for granted. Dominated by men and guided by traditions, women on hills have to pass a very hard life. They have to cover a long distance to carry the drinking water for family and collect fodder for their cattle. As a result their health remains ill. More than fifty percent women suffer from anemia etc. On one side our governments are running the various programmes to empower the women but these are not sufficient. The State as well as Indian government needs to take strict efforts to*

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*make rural women educationally and financially independent ensuring their equal participation everywhere. If we are succeed to empower the women then there will be magnificent growth of India both in terms of economy and political stability.]*

**Keywords:** Education, empowerment, violence.

## **Introduction**

Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today.

Gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. Equality between men and women exists when both sexes are able to share equally in the distribution of power and influence; have equal opportunities for financial independence through work or through setting up businesses; enjoy equal access to education and the opportunity to develop personal ambitions. A critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women. The empowerment of women means the equal representation of women in the followings as:

- i. Education
- ii. Health & Nutrition
- iii. Economic Independency
- iv. Organizational support
- v. Legal awareness
- vi. Intervention Programmes

We should not forget that if women are empowered, whole families benefit, and these benefits often have ripple effects to future generations.

## **Present Scenario of Women in India**

Women in India have shown their potentialities in every field including politics, literature and education since Independence. However, the status of the second sex in rural India is daunting and pathetic. The women in villages of India lead a tough, torturous and disconcerted life. They are the victims of a whole plethora of violence committed against them such as domestic violence, rape, molestation, forced marriage and dowry death. Female infanticide, early age pregnancy, sexual harassment and rejection are still prevalent in villages and suburbs of India. A woman is considered to be the sole property, first, of her father and brother and then her husband and she does not have any will of her own.

This mindset of rural people has created a vicious circle around women giving rise to evils such as child marriage, sati, and jauhar. Since birth, women are considered as misery and a burden in Indian villages. In this 21st century, girl education has not yet received its due share of attention in rural India. They are still debarred from attaining education, though they have a lot of interest for it. Women need to get just household education and fulfill domestic duties. For them education always stands secondary whereas it is considered to be very important for boys. In few cases women contribute to household income through work as agricultural labourers. But women's work as family labour is still underestimated. They face high degree variations in gender roles in agriculture, environment and rural production, in terms of ill behaviour, unsecured position and salary.

Though the schemes launched by government of India, has elevated the status of few women, but there seems no sign of women empowerment in rural India. They are still kicked, killed, subdued and humiliated every day. The Indian government needs to take strict efforts to make rural women educationally and financially independent ensuring their equal participation everywhere. This would, in turn, add to the magnificent growth of India both in terms of economy and political stability.

### **Government's Women- Empowerment Programmes in India**

The concept of empowerment flows from the power. It is vesting where it does not exist or exist inadequately. Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities. The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision making. In India, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD- 1985) and the National Commission for Women(NCW) have been worked to Women Empowerment in India with their following programmes:

### **National Policy for the Empowerment of Women – 2001**

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of State Policy. The Constitution not only guarantees equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Since the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78), India has been making a marked shift in its approach to women's issues from welfare to development while keeping the empowerment of women as the central issue in determining their status in the society. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution in 1993 have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision-making at the local levels. India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the

ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.

### **Goals and Objectives**

The goals of the National Policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The objectives include creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for development of women to enable them to realise their full potential, access to health care, quality education, employment, equal remuneration and social security. They also include elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child and changing societal attitudes.

### **National Mission for Empowerment of Women**

The Government has set up a National Mission for Empowerment of Women early this year and the same has been notified on 8th of March, 2010. The Mission aims at implementing the women-centric programmes in a mission mode to achieve better coordination. The Ministry of Women and Child Development is administering the Support to Training and Employment Programme of Women (STEP) scheme with a view to help assetless and marginalised women become economically self-reliant. The scheme also aims at providing training for skill upgradation, development of entrepreneurial skills, asset creation, mobilisation into small viable groups to enable beneficiaries to take up employment-cum-income generation activities. The Ministry has also launched the “Priyadarshini” scheme to empower vulnerable groups of women in a holistic and sustainable manner by addressing their social, political, legal, health related and economic problems through vigorous capacity-building by organising them into Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

### **Swarjjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)**

The Ministry is also implementing the Centrally sponsored scheme. The scheme is designed to promote self-employment oriented income generating activities for the BPL households in the rural areas. Special safeguards have been provided for vulnerable sections by way of reserving 50 per cent benefits to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 40 per cent for women, 15 per cent for minorities and 3 per cent for disabled persons. Since its inception, about 37 lakh SHGs have been formed and 134 lakh swarozgaris assisted, out of which, approximately 70 lakh (52 per cent) are women. The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) scheme extends micro-credit support for income generation to poor women grouped into SHGs in unorganised sector.

### **Government’s women- empowerment programmes in Uttarakhand:**

At the state level, there is Department of Women’s Empowerment and Child Development that has the overall responsibility for formulating and implementing schemes relating to Women’s Empowerment. As the nodal agency, the Government of Uttarakhand has given the responsibility

for preparing the Women's Policy to the Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Development. The Department, in turn, mandated that the draft be prepared by the State Commission for Women that was set up in 2003. The Commission prepared the draft policy in 2006 which was also circulated among the various women's groups. However, the draft policy has still not been passed by the State Government. This has happened due to various reasons.

Presently the Government of Uttarakhand is running various schemes/ programmes through the different departments of the Government to bring about women's development and their empowerment. Some of them are as follows:

### **I Welfare Schemes/Programmes for Women/Girls**

Overall, some of the schemes run by the Department of Women's

Empowerment and Child Development, those of the State Social Welfare

Board, and Department of Health would fall in this category

#### **1.1 Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Development**

(a) *The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme*: This is a flagship programme of the department. While providing 'anganwadi' services and health and nutritional supplements to infants, ICDS also provides pre- and post-natal care for pregnant and lactating mothers. The anganwadi workers have to dispense iron tablets and iodine-fortified salt to pregnant and lactating mothers. The pregnant and lactating mothers also have to receive dry rations from the anganwadi workers.

(b) *Kishori Balika Yojana* (scheme for the adolescent girls): As part of the

ICDS programme, a special scheme for the adolescent girls was initiated from 2001 onwards, with assistance from the Government of India as well as from the World Bank. The scheme is intended for adolescent girls in the 11- 18 age group who belong to the BPL (below poverty line) households. The scheme intends to provide training to these girls in order to bring about their overall development. The areas in which training would be provided would include information about how to take care of their bodies, the meaning of a balanced diet, importance of family welfare, beside providing them interpersonal skills and making them self-confident and training them in vocational skills so that they can become independent. During 2005-2006, besides starting the scheme in 40 blocks, 59 additional blocks received sanction from the Government of India. The ICDS programme is run by the Department itself.

(c) *Old Age Pension Scheme*: This scheme is applicable to both men and women and is meant for both urban as well as rural areas and provides Rs 400 per month to those who are above 60 years of age.

(d) *Pension scheme for widows/homeless/aged/disabled*: The scheme is applicable only in rural areas and is implemented by the District Social Welfare Officer on the basis of the recommendation received from the Pradhan of the Gram Panchayat as well as the Minister, Panchayats, and forwarded through the Block office..

(e) *Financial assistance to destitute widows*: Destitute widows are entitled to receive a sum of Rs. 400 per month. This is a scheme for rural areas and is to be implemented by the Gram Panchayats,

(f) *Financial assistance for re-marriage of widows*: A sum of Rs. 11,000 is provided for the re-marriage of a widow below the age of 35 years.

(g) *Grant to female student who has passed intermediate from BPL (below poverty line) family to enable her to pursue her studies*: A one time grant of Rs. 25,000 is given to a female student to enable her to complete her graduation. This scheme was started in 2006-2007.

## 1.2 Social Welfare Board

The State Social Welfare Board was set up in 2003. The Board receives funding from the Central Government to run its schemes and has six representatives from the Central Social Welfare Board and six from the State Social Welfare Board. The state government has the responsibility to provide maintenance for the day-to-day functioning of the Board. All the schemes of the Board are implemented through the NGOs. These schemes include:

- (a) *Hostels for working women*
- (b) *Women's Helpline*
- (c) *Family Counseling Centres*
- (d) *Campaign against female foeticide*
- (e) *Vocational training programs*
- (f) *Creches*
- (g) *Condensed courses for women*
- (h) *Short-stay homes for women*

The Social Welfare Board has a Secretary who is a government official. The President is a nominee of the political party in power at the state level and has a three year term but her term comes to an end with the change of government.

## 1.3 Department of Health

In order to reduce the maternal and infant mortality rates, there is a scheme for the safe delivery of pregnant mothers as well as care of their infants. The scheme is applicable to women who belong to the BPL (below poverty line) households and who are taken to the government health centre or hospital for their delivery. A pregnant woman can be accompanied by an ASHA (health) worker or by the local 'dai' (midwife) and an allowance is paid to this person. In case a

pregnant woman delivers her baby in a hospital in the rural area, she is paid an amount of Rs. 1400/ and Rs. 1000 if she is taken to a hospital in the urban area. The pregnant woman is also provided the tetanus injection and the newly born infant is provided vaccinations against six dangerous diseases at periodic intervals.

## **2. Empowerment and gender equity schemes**

### **2.1 Department of Education**

Under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All), several schemes have been initiated to reduce the gender gap in the education of children. These have been set up by the Department of Education. These are:

**(a) *Early Child Care Education Centres:*** These Centres are set up to ensure better enrolment and retention of girls in the primary schools.

Since the girls child has the responsibility to look after the young siblings and is therefore deprived of school education, an ECCE centre attached to the school, would ensure that girls would come to school. It is intended that if school-going girls have access to such centres, they would get enrolled in schools, and would be retained in schools. The scheme also envisages provision of good quality education to such girls. At the ECCE centres, the physical and psychological growth and development of all children in the 3-6 age group, is provided for. The education department at the district level has the responsibility for the Education for All programme (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) and Department of Social Welfare (through the Integrated Child Development Services Programme) have the responsibility for running the ECCE Centres.

### **(b) *National Programme on Education for Girls at Elementary Level***

**(NPEGEL):** Since education is a concurrent subject, this national programme is also being implemented at the state level in some select districts and blocks since 2003. It is intended to increase the enrolment rates of girls belonging to SC/ST communities at the elementary stage.

The scheme intends to focus attention on the educationally deprived sections and to encourage the enrolment, retention and quality education of the girls belonging to the SC/ST communities. It offers materials incentives such as stationery and introduces additional incentives like awards, remedial teaching and bridge courses as well as development of a model upper primary school in each cluster

**(c) *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV):*** The scheme draws its legitimacy from the thrust in national policy documents as well as international discourse that refers to bridging the 'gender gap.'

Following this thrust, the scheme is being implemented in educationally backward blocks with a wider gender gap. The scheme is intended for girls belonging to the scheduled castes (SCs),

scheduled tribes (STs), other backward classes (OBCs), religious minorities and below poverty line (BPL) households. Funded by the Government of India, under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All), the basic idea behind the scheme is to give a second chance for mainstreaming rural girls belonging to deprived social backgrounds who could not study up to or beyond class V. The second opportunity consists of the facility to stay in a hostel while studying for the upper primary stage of elementary education namely classes VI to VIII. They are set up in areas where there are a minimum of 50 school going girls who are school drop-outs. As all the girls are primary school drop-outs, they are above 10 years of age and are mostly in their teens. Presently, there are 13 KGBV hostel-cum-schools running in Uttarakhand.

*(d) Innovative scheme for the adolescent girls:* In order to create and sustain the interest of girls in education, they are trained to produce items that can be used in their daily lives. They are also offered components of empowerment strategies such as personal development, confidence building abilities, and life-skills oriented education.

## **2.2 Women's Empowerment Schemes**

Presently, there are two main types of schemes that are operational in the state of Uttarakhand. Mahila Samakhya is a major project of the Government of India, with funding support that is now provided by the Department of International Development (DFID), U.K.. The second type consists of state-funded schemes.

### **2.2.1 Mahila Samakhya (Education for Women's Equality)**

The first major scheme that was launched by the Central government was the Mahila Samakhya (Education for Women's Equality) that owed its genesis to the National Policy on Education (1986) that recognized the empowering potential of education and stated 'education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women.... The National Education system will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women.' Mahila Samakhya as a major programme for bringing about women's development as well as empowerment, was launched by the Education Department of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, in 1989 on a pilot basis in 6 states of India, with funding from the Netherlands Government. Mahila Samakhya was launched in Uttarakhand in 2002 and is presently operational in 2163 villages in 21 blocks of six districts of the state, namely, Pauri, Tehri, Uttarkashi, Nainital, Udhamasinghnagar, and Champawat.

The basic objectives of Mahila Samakhya in the state of Uttarakhand are:

- As a gender-based programme, to create an ambience in the society for tolerance and mutual respect for women;
- To ensure that education becomes accessible to the socially and economically marginalized women and girls;
- To encourage and promote a gender-based discourse in society;



- To enhance the self-image and self-confidence of women and enable them to critically analyze their role as individual women and as members of society so that they can begin to challenge that role collectively and initiate a process of social change;
- To collectively participate in decision making and seek equal rights and opportunities for a more egalitarian society;
- To enhance participation of women and girls in formal and nonformal education programmes and to create an environment in which education can serve the objectives of women's equality;
- To ensure physical, psychological, social, economic development of women so that they become self-reliant and can participate in all aspects of societal development;
- To form women's groups at the village level so that the 'sanghas' (women's groups) can take collective action to start the process of social change;
- To create an environment whereby women can seek knowledge and information and enable them to recognize their contribution to the economy as producers and as workers, and enable them to play a positive role in their own development and in the development of society. Mahila Samakhya forms women's groups at the village level, known as 'sanghas.' It is these 'sanghas' that address issues that affect women's everyday lives. The 'sanghas' have addressed issues relating to education, health, law, panchayats, and local issues such as 'jal,' 'jungle,' 'jameen' (water, land, fodder). Mahila Samakhya runs residential camps for adolescent girls to ensure that they become literate. Mahila Samakhya has also been running the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya in 63 clusters on behalf of the state government. 'Apni Adalat' or 'Our Court' is a novel experience of Mahila Samakhya whereby the local issues have been taken up by the people's courts to resolve them.

Mahila Samakhya, however, suffers a marginal status in the state of Uttarakhand. It is largely perceived as a project of the Central Government. Also, rather than an empowerment programme, it is perceived as an educational programme since it comes under the Ministry of Human Resource Development. While Mahila Samakhya receives praise and publicity, it is not accorded the status it deserves as a major programme for women's empowerment by the state government.

### **2.2.2 State Government's schemes for Women's Empowerment**

*Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Development:* Women's empowerment schemes are being run by the Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Development in the state of Uttarakhand. While the ICDS programme is run by the department, the women's empowerment schemes are being run entirely by NGOs. The main thrust is to form selfhelp groups (SHGs) of women. Various schemes are thus implemented through the SHGs. In each SHG, members have to make a saving of a fixed amount every month. The NGO facilitates the linkage of the SHG with a bank and ensures access to credit for the SHGs.

**(a) Uttarakhand Mahila Samekit Yojana (an integrated scheme for the women of Uttarakhand):** This scheme was formulated in response to the special problems that women of Uttarakhand face in coping with their everyday lives. It is the intention of the scheme to utilize the resources that women have and to design programmes that would be beneficial to them and would help in empowering them. A registered society has been set up within the Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Development known as the Uttarakhand Women and Child Development Society. Under the aegis of this society, funds are provided to the NGOS that have to set up SHGs.

Some of the main objectives of the scheme relate to

- Lightening the burden of women's lives
- Providing training for women's self-employment
- Bringing about a change in gender-related issues
- Increasing women's participation in Panchyati Raj institutions
- Encouraging use of technology to lighten women's back-breaking work
- Encouraging use of better sources of energy for cooking purposes
- Encouraging use of common village land for production of fuel and fodder
- Bringing about awareness regarding legal provisions
- Providing help to women to end gender discrimination
- Helping women to exercise their rights and providing protection to them
- Developing entrepreneurial skills among women
- Encouraging research, evaluation, documentation, publication on women-related issues

It is intended that 80% of the beneficiaries would belong to the SC/ST and

the BPL (below poverty line) groups.

**(b) Swayam Siddha Pariyojana:** With assistance from the Ministry of

Human Resource Development, Government of India, this scheme is being implemented by the Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Development since 2001 in Uttarakhand. It is the intention of this scheme is to make credit accessible to the SHGs so that small enterprise can be set up.

As per the scheme:

- Women's SHGs are formed
- Leadership training is provided so that women can maintain daily accounts for the SHG and can ensure smooth functioning of the group

- By linking the SHGs to the banks, women can initiate a small enterprise that can later be scaled up. The aim of the scheme is to bring about the overall development of empowered women by
  - i . Enabling them to demand their rights within the family, in society as well as from the government
  - i i . Making them aware and self-reliant so that they can run an SHG efficiently
  - i i i . Bringing about their economic, social and political development
  - i v . Enabling them to raise issues of common concern by strengthening the collective
  - v . Enabling rural women to access credit
  - v i . Enabling women to participate in local programmes as equal partners

The special characteristic of this scheme is that it is partnership programme between the state government and the NGOs and would be implemented through the SHGs. The scheme also envisages federations to be formed at the block, district and state levels so that the SHGs can function effectively.

**(c) State Women's Commission:** The State Women's Commission was formed in 2003 in order to deal with the problems of gender-related disparities, violence against women, and to provide legal counseling services to women. At the state level, there is a President, a Vice-President and a Secretary. One member is nominated from each district. The tenure of the Commission is for a period of three years. The budget provision is made by the Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Development.

The State Women's Commission has not been functioning in the manner in which it was intended to function for various reasons. For one, while the Commission was mandated to prepare the Women's Policy, it has not been able to get the draft policy passed so far. The Commission also suffers due to inadequate funding. Since the Commission has political nominees rather than women who are reputed social workers, the commitment of the office bearers of the Commission is not commensurate with the nature of work involved. The Commission has not been able to appoint the district level nominees as yet. Also, since the office of the Commission has a larger male rather than female staff, the truly marginalized and poor women have inhibitions in approaching the male staff.

Some of the state government departments also run women's empowerment programmes. These are as follows:

**2.2.3 Department of Rural Development:** The Panchayat department, with the collaboration of NGOs, provides training programme for the political empowerment of women through their participation in the Panchayats. During the Panchayat elections in 2003, out of the total number of elected members of 58143, women constituted a total of 21564 at the three levels at the gram, block and district levels, making almost 33.08 per cent of the total. In April 2008, due to the

mounting pressure from the elected women's representatives from 13 districts of Uttarakhand, with support from PRAGATI, an all women's unit based at Dehradun that strives towards attaining gender equity, as well as other women's organizations, a bill was passed by the State Legislative Assembly to provide for 50 % reservation for women in the three tiers of Panchayati institutions.

**(a) Aajivika (Women's Livelihood Scheme):** Women of Uttarakhand play a very important role in the agriculture sector. In the mountainous terrain of

Uttarakhand, women perform all the agriculture-related operations. Hence, for enhancing agricultural production, women are trained in the new agricultural practices and techniques, use of scientific methods, use of improved tools and implements, use of pesticides, better quality seeds, etc.

In order to improve their productivity, 20 women, in groups of 5 in a group, are provided training by the Department on improved practices, methods, techniques. Special attention is provided to women belonging to the SC/ST communities.

The Aajeevika project in Uttarakhand, under the Rural Development

Department is funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The activities of the project have been initiated in 5 districts and 17 development blocks from October 2004 and envisages covering a total of 42,690 poorest household in 959 villages. Up to March 2007 the project activities had been initiated in 618 villages. As part of the initial project interventions, the focus of activities was on community mobilization and their empowerment. The project strives to work for the livelihoods enhancement of vulnerable and poor households through the approach of convergence and collaboration, especially in the field of livelihood support through enterprise and business promotion. In the initial two years, Aajivika especially focused on practical gender needs by concentrating mostly on drudgery reduction, health, nutrition and basic education. Twelve case studies have been put under four areas of key issues pertaining to the project. These are women's empowerment and gender, SHGs and bank linkages, Livelihoods and creation of linkages, and Convergence and collaboration with line departments.

**(b). Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana (Total Rural Employment Scheme):**

This scheme intends to provide employment to those who are unemployed or under-employed and is also aimed at dealing with the problem of poverty and chronic hunger. The share of the Central Government and that of the State Government is 75:25. The aim is to provide employment and make available food grains whereby the nutritional levels can go up. As per the scheme, a laborer would be entitled to 5 kilos of food grain as part of wages and the remaining 25% would be paid in cash. It is at the meeting of the Gram Panchayat that those who are

interested in participating in this scheme, are selected. The scheme is intended for all the below poverty line groups. Women form an important category for this scheme.

**(c) National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS):** This is a national scheme for poverty eradication and guaranteeing employment for a period of 100 days in a year. In the first phase, only Tehri, Champawat and Chamoli were included in the scheme. Presently, the scheme has been extended to the entire state of Uttarakhand. It is the Gram Panchayat that has the authority to make a list of those who wish to be registered under the scheme. Under the scheme, local development work has to be undertaken for which the laborer is paid the minimum wage stipulated by the State government. Women and men have to receive the same wages as per the scheme. Women are known to participate enthusiastically in the NREGS.

**2.2.4 Department of Horticulture:** The Horticulture Department has a special

scheme for training women in fruit preservation and for the production of pickles, jams, chutneys, fruit juices, etc. The aim is to give fillip to local production and to ensure that women become economically self-reliant.

**2.2.5 Dairy Department (Women Dairy Development Scheme):** This scheme originated in 1994-95 and its main aim was to bring about rural women's economic and social development as well as ensure that they assume leadership positions. Presently, the scheme is operational in all the districts of the state and receives funding from the Department of Women and Child Development of the Government of India, as well as from the state government. The scheme envisages 100 per cent participation of women and ensures that the women's milk cooperative would be run and managed entirely by the women themselves. For the Women's Dairy Development scheme, women are formed into groups at the village level by the department. A milk collection centre is then opened at the village level and it is the responsibility of the women's group to ensure that the milk that is collected at the centre, is then sent to the dairying plant. The department arranges for the technical training of the women's group that includes how to measure the fat content in the milk, how to measure the purity of the milk (with the use of Lactometer). Each group has a President and a Secretary and it is their responsibility, in addition to measuring the fat content and the milk purity, to maintain daily accounts and at the end of the month, to submit the accounts to the department. It is they who also make the payment to each member of the group. Since cattle rearing is an occupation traditionally followed by the hill women, dairying is linked to their traditional occupation to make it economically attractive to women.

Aside from dairying, rural women are also provided training in such related issues such as first aid for the cattle, grass cultivation, seed production, setting up kitchen garden, use of smokeless chullah (stove), production of organic manure, setting up `sulabh sauchalayas (community toilets), as well as health related issues that are relevant to the lives of women.

**2.2.6 State Silk Board:** The Board provides training to women's groups and also provides the silk cocoon to the group. After the cocoon is raised, it is bought by the Silk Board from the women's groups. The section above has attempted to provide a broad overview of the Women's Empowerment Schemes/Programmes at the State level in Uttarakhand. These are mainly schemes of the Central and State Governments and do not include those by the national, bi-lateral and international agencies that directly fund NGOs as well as those that come under the private-public partnership programme. It is still possible that some salient schemes have been left out. In the first phase of the environmental scan, it was intended to broadly identify the types and range of schemes that have been specifically designed by the government for the empowerment of women.

#### **KEY ISSUES BEFORE SOCIETY :**

**1. Reproductive health:** Women, for both physiological and social reasons, are more vulnerable than men to reproductive health problems. Reproductive health problems, including maternal mortality and morbidity, represent a major – but preventable -- cause of death and disability for women in developing countries. Failure to provide information, services and conditions to help women protect their reproduction health therefore constitutes gender-based discrimination and a violation of women's rights to health and life.

**2. Economic empowerment:** More women than men live in poverty. Economic disparities persist partly because much of the unpaid work within families and communities falls on the shoulders of women and because they face discrimination in the economic sphere.

**3. Political empowerment:** Social and legal institutions still do not guarantee women equality in basic legal and human rights, in access to or control of land or other resources, in employment and earning, and social and political participation. Laws against domestic violence are often not enforced on behalf of women.

**4. Educational empowerment:** About two thirds of the illiterate adults in the world are female. Higher levels of women's education are strongly associated with both lower infant mortality and lower fertility, as well as with higher levels of education and economic opportunity for their children.

**5. Stewardship of natural resources:** Women in developing nations are usually in charge of securing water, food and fuel and of overseeing family health and diet. Therefore, they tend to put into immediate practice whatever they learn about nutrition and preserving the environment and natural resources.

**6. Empowerment throughout the life cycle:** Reproductive health is a lifetime concern for both women and men, from infancy to old age. UNFPA supports programming tailored to the different challenges they face at different times in life.

Experience has shown that addressing gender equality and women's empowerment requires strategic interventions at all levels of programming and policy-making

### Suggestions

1. Education is very important factor to empower the women. Therefore literacy programmes should be properly implemented.
2. In the families the attitude of male members should be changed. They can provide a chance to their ladies to participate in the political activities. A healthy environment should be created by eliminating the parda system, dowry system, and caste system.
3. Generally it is also observed that women representatives of the Panchayat do not participate in the meetings. Those must be motivated to participate in the meetings.
4. In the last I would like to say that there is an urgent need of the cooperative and positive attitude of the bureaucrats and government to empower the women.
5. The safety of women victims must also be provided so that they can effectively bring before the law the offenders, especially in criminal cases. Thus, in holding trial of child sex abuse or rape a screen or some arrangements may be made where the victim or witness do not see the body or face of the accused.

This situation of gender discrimination requires an immediate attention of the society at large since the problem is societal in nature. The mindset of the society has to be changed by both voluntary and involuntary measures. The positive and voluntary measures consist of public awareness, public education, public motivation, etc. The involuntary measure can be achieved through instrumentality of criminal law.

The plight of the women, however, cannot be improved till they are duly represented in the "power structure" of the nation. In a democratic country the voice of women can be heard only to the extent they are sharing the power structure in the supreme governance of the country

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