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Contribution of Efficiency Approach to Women Empowerment and Economic Development

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Abstract

Women's empowerment and economic development are mutually reinforcing processes that contribute to inclusive and sustainable growth. This paper examines the contribution of the Efficiency Approach to women's empowerment by recognizing women's participation as an economic necessity as well as a matter of social justice. It discusses the relationship between women's labour-force participation, entrepreneurship, productivity, household welfare, and national economic development. The increasing female Labour Force Participation Rate and Worker Population Ratio in India demonstrate the expanding role of women in economic activities. The paper also compares the Efficiency Approach with the Social Welfare, Equalization, and Anti-Poverty approaches to women's development. It highlights that greater access to education, skill development, employment, financial resources, entrepreneurship, and decision-making opportunities enables women to contribute more effectively to economic growth. Nevertheless, structural discrimination, unequal wages, restricted access to capital, gender-based occupational segregation, inadequate childcare facilities, and prevailing social norms continue to limit women's economic participation. The study concludes that gender-inclusive policies, equal employment opportunities, financial inclusion, entrepreneurial support, family-friendly workplace arrangements, and investment in women's education and skills are essential for implementing the Efficiency Approach. Removing these barriers can enhance productivity, strengthen economic resilience, reduce poverty, and promote equitable and sustainable development.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Efficiency Approach, Economic Development, Female Labour-Force Participation, Gender Equality, Women Entrepreneurship, Economic Inclusion, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Economic development and women empowerment are closely linked with each playing a vital role in the progress of economy. Economic development and provide resources and infra structure necessary to support women's participation in the economy, while women empowerment can drive broader economic growth by unlocking their potential in the workforce, entrepreneurship and decision making process Ensuring that women are empowered to contribute fully to the economy we can ensure stronger, more sustainable communities and national economies. This transition, however, requires collaboration among government, business, civil society, and international

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organizations. In many regions, women have less access to education and specialized skills training than men, which limits their opportunities in higher-paying, formal sector jobs. Many women face difficulties in accessing capital, credit, or training to start or expand businesses in the formal sector. Without these resources, their opportunities to scale up in the formal economy are limited. Even when women manage to enter the formal workforce, they often encounter issues like unequal pay, lack of advancement opportunities, and sexual harassment.

Participation of women in workforce

As per the latest available Annual PLFS Reports, the estimated Worker Population Ratio (WPR) and Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) on usual status for females of age 15 years and above during the years 2017-18 to 2022-23 are as follows:

Years	LFPR (in %)	WPR (in %)
2017-18	23.3	22.0
2018-19	24.5	23.3
2019-20	30.0	28.7
2020-21	32.5	31.4
2021-22	32.8	31.7
2022-23	37.0	35.9

Source: PLFS, MoSPI, Posted On: 08 FEB 2024 5:33PM by PIB Delhi

The above table shows that the women's participation in work force has significantly increased last six years. In 2022-23, the women participation in work force has remarkably increased to 37.0%. Employment generation and enhancing employability should be key priorities for the Government to continue this trend. To promote and increase women's participation in the workforce, various initiatives and measures should be implemented. Additionally, several training and skill provisions should be incorporated into labor laws to ensure equal opportunities and conducive work environment for women in future also.

Approaches for Women Development: The approaches to Women Development are all significant strategies within the broader framework of Women in Development. Each approach plays a distinct role in addressing gender inequality and empowering women, especially in the context of development. The major approaches are:

1. Social Welfare Approach: This approach has focus on the provision of social services to improve the quality of life for women, particularly those in disadvantaged or marginalized situations. The primary goal of the Social Welfare Approach is to improve the well-being of women and their families by addressing basic needs such as healthcare, education, and housing.

Challenges: While welfare programs can provide immediate relief, they do not always address the root causes of inequality or create sustainable long-term change. There's also a risk of dependency on aid, rather than empowerment or independence.

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2. Equalization Approach: This approach emphasizes increasing women's participation in all spheres of development, including the economic, political, and social domains, with the ultimate goal of achieving equality between the sexes. The Equalization Approach aims to bridge the gap between men and women by focusing on gender equality in the development process.

Challenges: This approach can sometimes be limited by societal norms and institutional structures that may resist gender equality efforts. While it focuses on equality, it may not fully address the structural barriers that women face in achieving true equality.

3. Anti-Poverty Approach (WID Approach):

The Anti-Poverty Approach is focused on reducing poverty through equitable distribution of resources, with an emphasis on addressing the specific needs of women. It recognizes that poverty disproportionately affects women, particularly in developing countries, and aims to reduce gender disparities in income, wealth, and access to services.

Challenges: While it targets poverty directly, the Anti-Poverty Approach can be limited by inadequate resources and the need for broader systemic changes. Without addressing broader structural inequalities, poverty may persist even if immediate needs are met.

4. Efficiency Approach is an important element within the framework of Women Development because it recognizes that women's contributions are not only a matter of social justice but also a critical factor for enhancing economic efficiency and development. This approach views gender equality as not just a moral imperative, but also an economic necessity, especially in the context of the changing global scenario.

Challenges: Discrimination, unequal access to education and training, gendered labor markets, and social norms can limit women's ability to fully contribute to the economy. These barriers must be addressed through targeted policies and systemic changes.

So we state that Social Welfare, Equalization, Anti-Poverty and Efficiency approaches serve important role in advancing women development. The Social Welfare approach addresses immediate needs, the Equalization approach ensures women are included in all development processes, and the Anti-Poverty approach directly tackles the economic disparities women face as well as efficiency approach discusses gender as not just a moral imperative but an economic necessisty. By combining these strategies, we can work toward creating a more equitable and just society where women have the resources, opportunities, and power to achieve their full potential. The Efficiency Approach is an important element within the framework of Women Development. Following is thorough analysis of the Efficiency Approach and how it contributes to women empowerment and economic development:

1. Objective of the Efficiency Approach:

- The primary goal of the Efficiency Approach is to emphasize the economic benefits of integrating women into the formal economy and recognizing their contributions in various sectors. It aims to highlight the fact that women's involvement in economic activities enhances overall productivity, economic growth, and social development.

- **Focus on Women's Economic Contribution:** This approach seeks to increase participation of women in economic activities because women are seen as essential contributors to economic growth. Their labor, whether in the formal or informal sector, has significant value that directly impacts the efficiency and competitiveness of the economy.
- **Maximizing Potential:** The Efficiency Approach stresses that when women are excluded or underrepresented in the workforce, economies fail to fully capitalize on their potential. By improving access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making roles for women, this approach argues that both women and the economy as a whole will benefit.

2. Key Features of the Efficiency Approach:

- **Recognition of Women's Economic Role:** Traditionally, women's work, especially in the domestic sphere and informal sectors, has been undervalued or invisible in economic analyses. The Efficiency Approach seeks to address this by recognizing that women's labor contributes significantly to household income, production, and the broader economy. By formalizing and valuing this labor, economies can be more efficient.
- **Focus on Labor Market Participation:** The approach encourages the integration of women into the formal labor market by reducing barriers to entry. This could include advocating for equal pay, better working conditions, and greater access to employment opportunities across all sectors.
- **Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship:** Supporting women as entrepreneurs is a crucial part of the Efficiency Approach. Women-led businesses can drive innovation, create jobs, and increase market diversity. The approach suggests that by empowering women entrepreneurs, economies can become more dynamic and competitive.
- **Economic Multiplier Effect:** When women are economically empowered, they tend to invest back into their families and communities, creating a positive feedback loop that boosts economic development at the local and national levels. This approach recognizes that empowering women is an efficient way to stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty.

3. Types of Efficiency: Main types of efficiency are as follows:

- Technical Efficiency: Producing maximum output with given inputs like, improving manufacturing techniques.
- Allocative Efficiency: Allocating Resources where they create the most value, like investing in sectors with high returns.
- Dynamic Efficiency: Long –term improvements through innovation and technological progress.

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- X- Efficiency; Reducing in efficiencies within an organization or system like eliminating waste and improving management.

4. Economic Justification for the Efficiency Approach:

- **Increased Productivity and Growth:** Women make up half of the global population, yet their participation in formal economic activities often remains below its potential. The Efficiency Approach unlocks full economic potential of women which can lead to higher productivity and stronger economic growth. This includes increased labor force participation, greater innovation, and a more diversified economy.
- **Reducing the Gender Gap:** Economies with higher gender equality tend to perform better. By reducing the gender gap in access to resources, education, and job opportunities, the Efficiency Approach contributes to a more productive and sustainable economy. This includes supporting policies that ensure women have equal access to education, health services, and labor market opportunities.
- **Enhancing Economic Resilience:** The global economy faces challenges like economic recessions, demographic shifts, and environmental crises. By actively engaging women in the workforce and supporting their economic activities, the Efficiency Approach advocates for building more resilient and adaptable economies. This is especially important in economies that are heavily reliant on traditional industries or vulnerable to external shocks.
- **Economic Empowerment:** The Efficiency Approach encourages the idea that economic empowerment of women directly contributes to economic growth. By recognizing and investing in women's roles in the economy, countries can boost productivity, foster innovation, and achieve higher standards of living for their populations.
- **Social Progress:** As women participate more actively in the economy, the broader social implications include better education for children, improved health outcomes for families, and greater community development. Women's economic empowerment has positive multiplier effects across society.
- **Global Competitiveness:** In a globalized world, economies that harness the full potential of their populations are more likely to remain competitive. By promoting gender equality in economic participation, countries can build a more diverse and dynamic workforce, helping them adapt to the changing global economy.

5. Challenges and Limitations of the Efficiency Approach:

- **Structural Barriers:** Although the Efficiency Approach underscores the importance of women's participation, many structural barriers remain. Discrimination, unequal access to education and training, gendered labor markets, and social norms can limit women's ability to fully contribute to the economy. These barriers must be addressed through targeted policies and systemic changes.

- **Unequal Access to Resources:** Women often face unequal access to financial resources, land, and capital, which limits their ability to start or grow businesses. Without these resources, the potential for women's economic contributions remains untapped. The Efficiency Approach advocates for removing these barriers and ensuring that women have equal access to the tools they need to succeed.
- **Workplace Inequality:** Even in sectors where women participate in large numbers, they often face unequal wages, lack of career advancement opportunities, and discrimination. Efforts to ensure pay equity, equal representation in leadership roles, and better working conditions are crucial to realizing the full economic potential of women.

6. Policy Implications and Strategies for Implementing the Efficiency Approach:

- **Gender-Inclusive Economic Policies:** Governments and organizations should implement policies that promote gender equality in the labor market, such as equal pay for equal work, non-discrimination laws, and measures to ensure women have access to decent work opportunities.
- **Investment in Women's Education and Skills Development:** For women to be effective contributors to the economy, they must have access to education and skills training. This includes not only formal education but also vocational training, entrepreneurship programs, and digital literacy courses that enable women to thrive in various industries.
- **Support for Women Entrepreneurs:** Providing financial services, mentorship, and access to markets for women entrepreneurs is key to improving economic efficiency. Programs that address the specific challenges faced by women in business — such as access to capital and networks — will be essential in unlocking their potential.
- **Family Support Policies:** The introduction of family-friendly policies, such as paid parental leave, affordable childcare, and flexible work hours, can facilitate women's greater participation in the formal economy and reduce gender disparities in labor force participation.
- **Removing Barriers to Financial Access:** Women often face significant challenges in accessing credit and loans, which limits their ability to expand businesses or invest in education. Policies that facilitate women's access to financial resources, such as microcredit or women-focused loan schemes, can help unlock women's entrepreneurial potential

Conclusion:

The Efficiency Approach within the Women Development framework makes the case that full participation of women in the economy is not just a matter of social justice but is also a critical economic strategy. By recognizing women as key economic contributors and supporting their integration into all sectors of the economy, this approach can drive higher productivity, greater economic resilience, and a more sustainable and inclusive growth model. To realize these benefits,

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however, it is essential to address structural barriers and ensure that women have the access, resources, and opportunities necessary to succeed in the modern economy.

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