

Intervention made by Smt Rupa Dutta, Director, Ministry of Women and Child Development, at the Commission on the Status of Women on February 23, 2011

Draft intervention at the panel discussion on Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work: Key policy initiatives and capacity-building on gender mainstreaming: Focus on education and training



Mr Chairman,

India is amongst the fastest growing economies in the world today and our guiding philosophy is 'inclusive growth'. We recognize that the high levels of growth can be sustained only if women are empowered to contribute their full potential towards nation building.

Our planning process has moved from merely welfare oriented programmes for women to mainstreaming gender in all the policies and programmes of all Ministries.

Education is one area that directly affects the ability of women and girls to realize their full potential. This has been given the utmost priority in the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012).

Our flagship Education for All Campaign (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan) addresses the needs of 192 million children and has special focus on girls' education. It aims to target the 'hardest to reach' girls through residential schools, mid-day meals and other incentives in order to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education.

The interventions include gender sensitive pedagogy, separate toilets for girls, bridge course for older girls, recruitment of 50% women teachers and an innovation fund in every district for need based interventions for ensuring girls' attendance and retention.

With the coming into force of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act from April last year, all children between the ages of 6-14 will have access to education. With a budgetary commitment of over 50 billion dollars this legislation has special relevance for out of school girl children and disabled children, who will find place in mainstream schools.

Yet another initiative to improve literacy levels is the National Literacy Mission which aims to target 70 million adults in the next 5 years, out of which 60 million will be women.

Speaking of employment, training and decent work, regrettably, I must state that nearly 90 percent of women in India work in the unorganized sector. These women do not have the benefit of job security which is available in the organized sector.

Women working in the unorganized sector are more vulnerable to reduction in employment options. Recognizing the need for social security for the workers in unorganized sector, Government enacted the Unorganized Workers Social Security Act 2008 which provides for the constitution of Social Security Boards at the central and state levels to recommend formulation of social security schemes for unorganized workers, especially women.

Moreover, Government of India has instituted various income generation as well as skill training and skill up-gradation schemes for the development of women.

Our National Skill Development Mission of 2008 contribute significantly to the overall target of skilling / up-skilling 500 million people in India by 2022, mainly by fostering private sector initiatives in skill development programmes and providing viability gap funding.

The policy aims to raise women's participation in skilled jobs to at least 30%. It also includes proactive measures in order to overcome barriers and facilitate participation. These include hostels for women, scholarships, transport, training materials and financial loans.

Government of India also supports an exclusive programme for women, namely Skill Training and Employment (STEP), for skill up-gradation in identified sectors.

Thank you.

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