

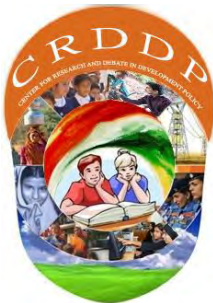
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## Gender Empowerment in India

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# Gender Empowerment in India: Concept, Measurement and Policy

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## Abstract

Contour of gender discrimination and empowerment are not well understood in the context of India. The UN's human development reports identified concepts and variables for computing a „gender empowerment measure (GEM)“; but a closer look suggests that they lack in accurately capturing socially and culturally sensitive woman empowering factors that reflect accurate situation for masses. GEM indices are in fact not computed for India due to want of relevant data. This paper articulates gender empowerment within the Indian socio-economic and cultural context and identifies six dimensions and measured using multiple empirical data drawn from three different nationally representative sample surveys for the reference year 2004-5; and resourceful government source. A composite „Gender Empowerment Index (GEI)“ is computed for major Indian states, economic and socio-religious groups. The dimensions and variables are easy to measure and reflect gender empowerment efficiently. Such indices can be estimated even for levels lower than the states, such as at districts. Similar data can be generated for computing national level gender empowerment facilitating international comparison as well.

Key Words: Gender, Women's Empowerment, India, State level estimates, Gender policy framework

May 2011

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DP+(1) | Failure of  
Group Equity  
Policy



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# Gender Empowerment in India: Concept, Measurement and Policy

## I: Introduction

Gender sensitive inclusive development has become a national goal in developing economies such as India (GOI 2008, 11<sup>th</sup> plan document, GOI; 2009). The gender sensitivity was heralded to be essential in assessing social and economic development by the UNDP which computes a „human“ and another „gender (adjusted) development“ index, and presents a conceptual scheme on „gender empowerment measure (GEM)“ (HDR 1995). In the following we present a set of variables which integrate both the „gender adjustment“ and „empowerment measures“ and compute a single user friendly „gender empowerment index (GEI)“. The GEI has three distinctive advantages over the UNDP“GEM; firstly that the GEI aggregates multi-dimensional concepts and dimensions of empowerment; secondly the variables are socio-culturally sensitive to India; and lastly the new index can be estimated not only at the level of a nation but also for States and lower levels of geographic units within a country.

Practically all countries in the world that are identified as ‘*developed*’ are in unison for having provided equality of opportunity and access to women in all spheres of economy, society and polity. Such inclusiveness was possible not only through formal legal provisions but also as a matter of democratization of political system. Further, the process of inclusiveness of women in development was concurrent to increase in real incomes of households which was controlled and managed by women themselves; often such income was individually earned by them. In the context of developing societies such as the democratic India, where patriarchal social values are still in vogue, understanding women’s empowerment is somewhat complicated. Given a large canvas of social, economic, political and household level

dimensions, empirically measuring women’s contributions across India and many States is not easy. This paper identifies the core concepts that are socio-culturally relevant and uses the empirical measures to compute a GEI, for the mid-period of first decade in 21<sup>st</sup> century. The variables identified are those which capture the essence of the six main dimensions which together define gender empowerment efficiently, namely; (i) women’s level of human capital formation, (ii) women work participation, (iii) women’s capacity for household decision making, (iv) women’s control over resource and self assertion, (v) women’s control over reproduction, and (vi) woman’s political participation.

What follows in section 2 is a description of the generic concepts relating to empowerment found in literature; the gender relevance in the Indian context within which gender empowerment is articulated in section 3. Section 4 introduces the dimensions which encompass gender empowerment and the variables which help measure them; and estimates of the index values and state ranks as well as ranks according to social and economic characteristics are discussed in section 5. Section 6 concludes and discusses policy implications.

## II: Generic Concepts and Empowerment

International literature on gender often highlights an important facet of societal decision making namely *agency* which is a desire and ability of the society and households to delegate responsibility to woman so that they take decisions independent of men and traditional- institutional support. The role of women's agency in the expansion of social opportunities for both women and men is considered to eliminate gender inequality

(Dreze and Sen, 1999, 2000). Empirical research has found out that household decision attributed to women especially when interacted with education yield better human capital formation through investments in children's education and health and also reduce gender bias (Schultz 1995, 1999; Shariff and Ahn 1995). Further evidence has been feminization of agriculture, in the Indian context the skeptics use this as an evidence of distress but this phenomenon also empowers women instead (see Duvvury 1998, Shariff 2009). A related issue is of control - over resources <http://www.un.org/womenwatch>; for example, women normally use number of resources but they do not own or have control over them. For example, research highlights as to how little control women have over resources; none at all in case of land and only limited control over food crops for example in Uganda (FAO, 2008). The situation in India is not any better in this regard since the rules of asset ownership is governed by complicated patriarchic system of inheritance and also because women move over husband's place of co-residence after marriage. In its first ever gender gap study covering 58 nations, the World Economic Forum (<http://www.weforum.org>) ranked India a lowly 53. Titled 'The Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap', the report measures the gap between women and men in five critical areas namely economic participation, economic opportunity, political empowerment, access to education and access to reproductive health care.

Since the gender dimensions are far too many and condition of women varies according to different social, economic and political settings, it is not ordinarily possible to standardize the number and type of variables, measurements and framework of analysis to be used. The UNDP methodology of international comparisons chose variables that are easy to collect and at high levels of aggregation such as a country. Although many countries are adopting the UNDP method to create disaggregated measures at lower geographic units, it is argued in this paper that these efforts do not adequately capture the socio-cultural context of the gender

empowerment within a nation. Any adaptation therefore should take the conceptual application inherent in choice of variables and their national and sub-national level appropriateness in to account.

The framework of analysis and choice of variables in this paper are guided by the evolving ideas on gender deprivation over time (more below) as well as availability of dependable data to empirically estimate gender empowerment at the level of the states. The six gender dimensions newly identified broadly conform to the generalized gender empowerment framework for India enunciated below. The choice of variables and measures are compatible for similar estimation even at lower levels of geographic/ administrative units such as the districts within a state in India. In this regard it is important to state that since the UNDP considers elected representatives in the parliamentary and assembly levels as the proxy for gender empowerment, these indicators are not suitable benchmarks if one is considering disaggregated level analysis. In the Indian case, appropriate indicator is intensity of participation in local level institutions such as the panchayats and *nagrpalikas*; and over 17 years have elapsed since the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Indian Constitutional amendments which devolve democratic powers for local governance, and such data are now available to academic use. Since August 2009 it is mandatory to compulsorily elect women for fifty per cent of the *panchayat* membership posts in India. Unlike all other variables in this paper which are extracted from unit level records, information on political participation is accessed from relevant departments of the government of India.

### Alternative Analytical Frameworks

A number of analytical frameworks are in vogue for undertaking a gender enriched analysis; the prominent are identified below. The frameworks are not mutually exclusive and there is ample scope for academics to formulate new analytical models so as to contextualize the country specificity and / or incorporate socio-culturally relevant new data. The following listing is arranged in a broad

chronological order although the refinements in the concepts and frameworks are a continuous process.

**UNDP's Gender Empowerment Measure:** Assessments and measures to evaluate bias based on sex of individual was in vogue in research amongst the applied economists, sociologists and demographers since long, yet what made the gender discrimination prominent knowledge was the UNDP's human development index which brought sex-differentials to fore in parameters such as literacy and health outcomes through the Human Development Reports, the first of its kind published in 1991. Subsequently in 1995 the UNDP formalized the gender dimension by computing a separate „gender adjusted index“ and expanded the scope not only to understand gender bias in common parameters but also to assess „gender empowerment“ using the political, economic and societal factors of highest order. But the UNDP's choice of variables capture empowerment at a high level of geographic aggregation and less conducive for disaggregated measures at states, districts and other social and economic criteria.

**Gender Roles Framework:** An analytical framework developed by the Harvard Institute of Development, is a grid for collecting data at the micro-level, mapping the productive and reproductive work of men and women in a community, and highlighting the differences between them. This approach utilizes a number of tools such as, an activity profile, an access and control profile of resources and benefits, and lists influencing factors. This framework:-

- argues for an economic case for allocating resources to women as well as men, what is known as the efficiency approach to gender and development;
- resources, not power relations, are central to this approach;
- adapts well to an analysis of agriculture or other rural production systems; and
- relies on micro-level analysis and data collection at the household/individual level.

**Gender Planning Framework:** Developed by Moser (1994) this framework links the examination of women's roles to the larger development process and questions the assumption that planning is a purely technical task. It employs three main concepts; women's triple role of productive, reproductive, and community work; and practical and strategic gender needs. This approach:-

- disaggregates control of resources and decision-making within the household;
- uses concept of triple role and analyzes linkages between them; and
- conceptually focus on emancipation of women from their subordination.

**Social Relations Approach:** Developed by Kabeer (1994), this approach uses concepts instead of tools to concentrate on the relationships between people, their relationship to resources and activities, and how these are re-worked through the institutions of state, market, community, and family. More recently the institutional linkages for gender empowerment are well argues in global context for example in Roy et. al., (2008). One finds the framework helps to examine social institutional parameters that explain how gender inequality is formed and reproduced at the individual level leading to inequalities. This approach utilizes qualitative and contextual information which is often difficult to quantify.

- The framework concentrates on institutions and challenges the ideological neutrality and independence of institutions;
- links institutional analysis at all levels;
- views development as a process for increasing human well-being; and
- employs a holistic analysis of poverty, recognizing the cross-cutting inequalities of class, race, ethnicity and so on.

**Gender Analysis Matrix:** Developed by Parker (1998), this method attempts to determine the differential impact development interventions have on women and men, by providing a community-based technique for identifying and analyzing gender differences. It supports -

- participatory approach/fosters bottom-up analysis and qualitative in nature;

- use community for self-identification of problems and solutions;
- excludes macro-and institutional analysis; and
- capture change over time but through repetition of the analysis.

Since the UNDP's efforts to sensitize the gender issues has been commendable and also the one with high reach and visibility, it is quite normal to benchmark any further work on it. However, the present paper is aligned more with the other frameworks due to its focus on empirical measurements within in social and economic contexts, and suitability of variables for disaggregated assessment.

The UNDP spearheaded in 1995 gave a methodology to compute a „gender empowerment measure“ (GEM). The GEM uses a set of variables namely, (1) seats in parliament held by women (% of total), (2) female legislators, senior officials and managers (% of total), (3) female professional and technical workers (% of total), (4) estimated earned income of women, and (5) women's share of population (Human Development Report, 2004). Thus GEM attempts to capture women's participation in higher political offices (political empowerment), employment in high offices (economic empowerment), and macro-economic participation. The GEM indices thus fail to capture socially and culturally sensitive factors which are relevant to assess gender empowerment amongst the masses. In fact the GEM is not even computed for India let alone for its many states due to want of appropriate data (HDR, 2007).

There are other critiques of the UNDP's GEM as well. For example, Beteta (2006) argues that the UNDP concept do not account non-economic dimensions of decision-making and appear to measure empowerment only of the better-offs. Another critique argues that while normally the GDI & GEM are being used to highlight gender discrimination, but these measures do not reflect discrimination *per se* (Schuler, 2006), rather the GDI measures only the objective gender inequality when compared with the HDI. The GDI is

not an independent and stand alone measure as it has to be interpreted always in conjunction of the HDI. There are also methodological issues relating to the estimations as found in Bhardan and Klasen (2000).

The adaptation and recasting of the India GEM methodology undertaken by the „ministry of woman and child development“, Government of India could not eliminate these deficiencies in spite of efforts to rationalize the variables and data inputs in computation of GEM (GOI, 2009). Rather it carries forwarded the UNDP suggested variables which are topical in nature and only captures very high and idealistic level of empowerment. Further the measures do not reflect the status linked to a specified state, for example, in India the national level services such as the IAS, IPS, the Judges and so on do not generally belong to the state of birth as matter of policy. Similarly, due to skewed prevalence of educational infrastructure, the professional women need not necessary belong to the state of their birth for practicing their services, rather they move over to places of higher demand and to megacities.

### III: Gender Relevance in the Indian Growth Context

Establishing interlinks between economic growth, reduction of poverty and profiling livelihood opportunities is topical given the progressive context of ongoing economic reforms and global integration of economies. Drawing a gender perspective is essential as women stand at the cross road of economic growth and human development burdened with multiple activities in both reproductive and remunerative roles. Gender poverty is far bigger a challenge that confronts developing societies as much as the issues of equity. It is essential to recognize that although women and men are born equal, the changing social and agrarian structure, development policies and growth trajectories impact them differently. The socio economic dynamics reveal that while impact of growth processes have not been completely gender neutral, that of poverty and its deepening has had its worst



impact upon women. It is well documented and acknowledged that women suffer most in conditions of deepening poverty and unless existing inequalities in opportunities, capabilities and differential rights are eliminated, the agenda of poverty reduction cannot be achieved. Female disadvantage reflected in unequal access to household resources, economic opportunities, household decision-making power and lack of control over reproduction or child care have large perpetuating intergenerational implications.

It is, therefore, essential to discuss gender disadvantage in a holistic framework, tracing the various facets of inequality and how poverty renders women doubly disadvantaged and vulnerable to economic shocks and adjustments. Refer to a diagrammatic presentation (Figure 1) of a *„generalized framework’* explaining the factors which render women poor and the manifestation of it. These linkages may have substantial variation depending upon which state or region one lives in. It is well understood that inequalities originate from the household at very early stages of lifecycle continues to reflect in several social and economic spheres. The discussion therefore should revolve around the multiple dimensions of inequality and how poverty worsens the situation from a gender disaggregated perspective.

Normally, since men being the sole breadwinners of the household had to go out and earn their living; they also have control over all resources and assets and the right to better nutrition, healthcare and education. Men, therefore, both at the household and community at large emerged as the decision makers and exhibit strong bargaining powers, favoring their own interests. Gradually this logical following of things matured and because of males’ supreme command over assets, particularly land and other economic resources resulted in increasing gender inequality. Women all along derived their identity through their kinship and household relationships. There is a vicious circle where things originated and went wrong because of the influence of socio cultural stereotypes and poverty has had a compounding impact.

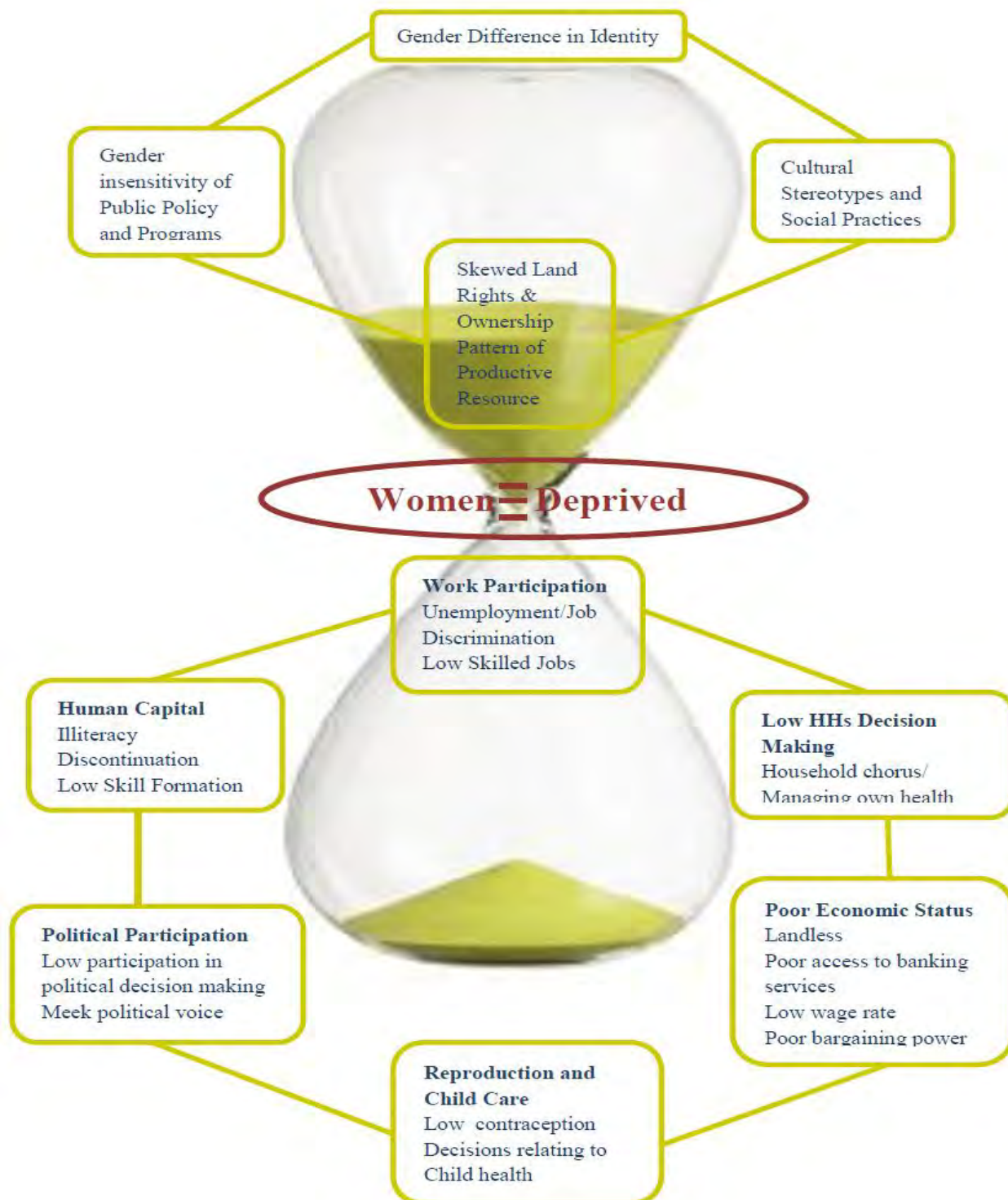
With the passage of time, when women increasingly took to education and economic activities, such participation stood in conflict with the dominant socio cultural practices. Subsequently, all growth and adjustment processes have neglected the issue of gender or rather touched upon marginally and failed to recognize women as potential partners. Whereby, in conditions of inequality and deepening poverty, women have had to bear the brunt of it, balancing both reproductive and remunerative activities. Gradually what was considered a way of living took different forms and some of these inequalities; unequal access to food, nutrition, healthcare, market seclusion and voicelessness of women has become resilient to change.

In examining the gender relationships at the household level, it is observed that nutrition biases are in favor of men and boys in the family. This pattern is aggravated in conditions of scarcity arising out of cyclical seasonal effects and differential entitlements wherein women and girls eat less and last as a coping devise. Although women are responsible for ensuring food security of the family, they themselves are the most food insecure. This results in under nourishment of women in their reproductive age and young girls. For women, poor nutrition, severe anemia levels and poor quality or nonexistent reproductive health services contribute to high maternal mortality and low child survival.

Such biases are observed in healthcare systems as well. Women have lesser access to healthcare services. They rarely seek health services during sickness or ill health compared to men. This is yet another expenditure saving mechanism. Health seeking behavior of females is also guided by their educational levels whereby they are informed and understand the necessity to be healthy. Women in rural areas are more vulnerable to respiratory disease owing to their prolonged exposure to harmful and toxic fuels and gases. Women are at greater risk of disease and morbidity living in unhygienic conditions, which lack sanitation and access to pure drinking water, as observed in growing urban slums.



**Figure 1: Understanding Gender Discrimination**



There has been a lot of advocacy in ensuring female education and employment is considered critical means of liberation. Although reducing female illiteracy has been part of every development agenda, there exist strong biases against female education and more so continuation in school. It is also true that although girls are sent to school at an early age, their continuation rates are poor compared to boys. Often it is the poor penetration of schools in rural areas that deter parents from sending their daughters to schools at far off distance. Again given the restricted opportunities in the labor market, the alternative is better to save upon the resources spent in educating a girl for marriage. When poverty strikes, girls are withdrawn from school such that their male siblings can continue.

Also in families where the mother is engaged in some wage work to eke out a living, young girls are kept at home to take care and nurse their younger sibling or else join their mothers to contribute to the family pot.

Division of labor is highly skewed to the disadvantage of female and more so poor women are caught in a double whammy; balancing both reproductive and productive activities. Although globalization had broadened employment opportunities in most of the developing countries, it has set in trends of informalisation and women have been increasingly a part of it. Although women form a large part of the labor force, most of them are tied to the lower rungs. There is an increasing trend of feminisation of informalisation of the labor force. The informal sector is characterized by low wages, no contract and no fixed workplace. Women who are not educated enough and lack skills form part of this informal workforce. This has added to their workload, the returns from which are not at all remunerative. Often it is the economic distress that compels them to join the labor force and does not help them in enhancing their well being. As found in rural agrarian communities, women work either as unpaid family laborers or agricultural laborers as opposed to men who enjoy ownership rights. Despite the fact that the agrarian

structure is undergoing enormous diversification and the role of women in dairying, fishing, horticulture can be improved; the efforts lack the appropriate gender sensitiveness. Although empirical evidences suggest that women through self help groups and community management approaches can lead in some of these spheres, the progress is too slow.

It is common practice that women have less access to ownership of land, credit and other productive resources. The law of inheritance in a south Asia study found men's supreme command over land rights. Women derive their land rights by virtue of their relationship with men and have barely any role in using it as a resource. In agricultural communities, men are the landlords and own the assets as well as revenue accruing from land based activities. Women mostly work as wage or family labor and do not enjoy entrepreneurial rights. Differential access to credit has its roots in land ownership, wherein land is used as a mortgage for loans and it is only men who have the benefit of using it to access credit facilities. Hence women have very little access to credit which impedes their participation in any kind of technological innovation critical for agricultural growth. The self-help group approach to micro credit has mixed results in India unlike its roaring success in Bangladesh. Unequal access to resources has resulted in limited and restricted participation of women in both farm and non-farm activities.

Gender gaps in education, health care and employment opportunities have resulted in the voiceless of women in decision making and bargaining for a better livelihood. This has rendered women poorer and more vulnerable to shocks and adjustment processes. Inequality and poverty are two reinforcing elements and is seen as aggravating one another. In other words, unequal access to resources and opportunities is the major obstacle to women's economic liberation and opportunity to break free from the poverty trap. Similarly, poverty aggravates inequality wherein female in early stages of their life cycle adopt expenditure saving mechanisms such as eat less, drop out of schools and live unhealthily life and as

women take to income earning measures by taking up any low paid insecure odd jobs.

Modern economic reforms and associated dynamics with respect to work and income earning mechanisms are promoting empowerment of women even in rural areas of India. Besides remittances promote participation of women in agriculture which in turn improves agriculture productivity and household income. The new evidence suggests considerable increase in rural income from remittances (Shariff, 2009) due to an increase in rural-rural and rural-rural migration within India (WDR, 2009). Gender empowerment has received strong empirical support across the globe since it further enhances investments in education, health and nutrition that build stock of physical capital formation, thereby yielding durable poverty alleviating effects. Therefore, it is important to bring to fore the fact, that even in India the formative abilities of women are being enhanced due to higher education, participation in workforce, democratic participation and learning from programs such as micro-credit and national rural employment guarantee scheme. It is imperative, therefore, that women demand a rightful place in household and societal level decision making. Figure 2 below provides a pictorial depiction of gender empowered economy in India.

#### **IV: Gender Empowering Characteristics and Measures**

After an understanding of the multi-dimensional general framework within which one need to understand gender issues and a number of approaches that are in vogue enunciated above; in the following we identify selected measurable characteristics which all together will form a comprehensive and wholesome measure of gender empowerment. Since these entire variable set are empirically measurable, an index derived out of them is described as GEI; which will be a useful policy instrument to both governments and civil society alike. Note that this index is a mix of the gender adjustment which UNDP's GDI performs as well the gender empowerment; and conceptually evaluates

empowerment of masses as opposed to a measure of higher order which is inherent in UNDP's gender empowerment measure.

The selected indicators measure empowerment within the contemporary Indian socio-economic outlook and are compatible with the debate on mechanisms to reduce gender bias in society and political decision making. Note that the dimensions and factors used in this paper are very different from those identified by the Government of India (2009) which is aligned with the UNDP concept as well as weak data support due to want of relevant information.

An empowered Indian woman is the one who is literate, works (often outside home) and contributes measurable household income, independently decides for example, as to what kind of food needs to be prepared and ingredients to be purchased; do not wait for husband to seek paid care for a sick child, owns some property by herself and also manages a bank account. Above all she decides as to how many children she can bear as well as ensure full immunization of all her children. She executes her right to vote and also participates in local *panchayats* and committees. Statement 1 below lists the identified dimensions and variables that measure them.

Compare this with a concept in which she is an IAS/IPS officer or a judge in a High Court, or can also be doctor or an engineer, or someone who can borrow at least Rs. 2 lakhs from a bank, or an MP, MLA or a Panchayat president, have immovable property and so on. In such a measure the focus is on individual instead of societal achievements and therefore can be aggregated only at national level. On the other hand the multi-dimensional attributes can be created at lower geographic levels and they reflect empowerment of all women in specified locales.

There are also serious data problems in case of the UNDP linked GOI approach; for example, in India the top level services including judiciary have national relevance. At the level of the state, a women born and education elsewhere will normally be posted in a specified state, thus her empowerment do

not reflect empowerment of women of that state. Similarly, a large number of professional for example get education in states where educational infrastructure is better and often begin to reside and work in that state. Under such circumstance the gender measures will over estimate the true level of empowerment and may go inimical to women in that state/district. Another measurement issue is that all the measures are to be accessed from secondary sources often of poor and questionable quality. On the other hand the alternative variables proposed are extracted from unit level records of large household surveys which are known to be dependable data for measurements of societal dynamics at least in India. Further the proposed concepts and method can estimate a „gender empowerment value/index“ at any level of disaggregation even upto a village level and also estimated can be separately provided for the rural and urban areas separately. The data occurrence and coverage of the universe is almost all women in a defined areas in case of the alternative set of variables; where as in case of the GOI recasted method only a miniscule proportion of women may be covered, for example, even at the state level women in top level services, judiciary and polity can be only a handful countable in single digits and s on.

Thus, in the Indian context a comprehensive measure of gender advantage needs to incorporate indicators that capture culture-specific dimensions of agency and control over resources, through measures having relevance at the level of individual, household and society. Since aspects of gender empowerment are complex and multidimensional the variables and data needs are diverse and needs to be debated as to their appropriateness. Ideally the variables that measure a social situation and dimension should have the following qualities – (a) robust outcome indicators are the best; but since such indicators are difficult to gather and also as they change slowly, indicators highlighting the process and proximate to the concept of the index measure, in this case „gender empowerment“ can be used; (b) that the indicators are easy to collect and that they are collected from independent survey data rather

than from service statistics which often lack quality; (c) easy to update frequently such as annually or at the most once in two years, for example, the annual national sample surveys in India can collect required data regularly, and (d) as much possible relevant to whole or majority of population.

We have identified six dimensions of which five dimensions extracts data directly from large sample surveys using the primary unit level records for individuals and households. A gender empowering dimension namely „political participation“ uses data from the government sources since sample surveys so far have not collected information on these issues. Many dimensions are aggregates of multiple measures and wherever appropriate incorporate gender gaps as well.

The national sample surveys (NSS), national family health surveys (NFHS) and human development Surveys of the national council of applied economic research (NCAER) are well known data source in India.

(i) *Human Capital (Education):* Most commonly used human capital indicator, along with its gender gap captures human capital formation, namely, literacy. Absolute measures of female literacy amongst the population ages 7 years and above in percentage and the gender gap ratio are used to capture this dimension. Data from the human development survey of NCAER for reference year 2004-5 supplies data to measure literacy.

(ii) *Female Work Participation:* Female work participation rate and associated gender gap for adults 15-64 year was assessed using the „usual principal activity status“ (UPS) over a reference period of one year. Further the gender gap in work participation is also incorporated into the computation. A woman is classified as a participant in labor force, if she had been either working or looking for work during a longer part of 365 days preceding the survey. The UPS measure excludes from the labor force all those female who are unemployed and employed for a period of less than six months. The data are drawn from the 61<sup>st</sup> round employment and unemployment survey of the NSSO for the reference year 2004-05.

**Statement 1**  
**Measuring Gender Employment in a Socio-Cultural Framework:**  
**Multi-Dimensions and Variable Measures**

| Choice of Dimensions and Variable measurements |                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dimensions                                     | Measures                                                               | Source and Quality of Variables                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Human Capital</b>                           | Adult (7+) literacy                                                    | Estimated from a nationally representative survey of 41,554 households namely the Human Development (HDPI) 2004-05, undertaken by NCAER New Delhi.                             |
|                                                | Gender gap in literacy                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Work Participation</b>                      | Work Participation Rate (15-64 Year)                                   | Estimated from a nationally representative survey of 1,24,680 households namely the National Sample Survey (NSSO) of Employment and Unemployment, 2004-05.                     |
|                                                | Gender gap in WPR                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Household Decision Making</b>               | Capacity to decide matters alone relating to daily household purchases | Estimated from a nationally representative survey of 1,09,041 households namely National Family health Survey (NFHS)-3 of 2005-06.                                             |
|                                                | Capacity to independently undertake the decision for own health care   | NFHS- 3 (2005-06)                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Economic Resources /Assets</b>              | Individual/shared ownership of immovable assets                        | HDPI (2004-05)                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                                                | Manage independent bank accounts                                       | NFHS-3 (2005-06)                                                                                                                                                               |
|                                                | Earned Cash wages as a regular salaried/wage employee                  | NSS (2004-05)                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                                                | Gender gap in wages as a regular salaried/wage employee                |                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                                                | Earned Cash wages as a casual wage labor                               | NSS (2004-05)                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                                                | Gender gap in wages as a casual wage labor                             |                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Reproduction and Child Care</b>             | Use of modern contraceptives                                           | NFHS-3 (2005-06)                                                                                                                                                               |
|                                                | Women having fully immunized children in ages 12-23 months             | NFHS-3 (2005-06)                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Political Participation</b>                 | Cast their vote in the last general election                           | Statistical Report on General Elections, 2004 (14th Lok Sabha) – Vol. I, Election Commission of India.                                                                         |
|                                                | Gender Gap in the vote casting                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                                                | Panchayat members                                                      | Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India: Number of women elected representatives in the three tiers of panchayats as on 31.03.2008 are available in the Annexure 1(A). |

(iii) *Household Decision Making:* This is an aggregation of two variables namely, (a) women's capacity of „making purchases for daily household needs“ and (b) women's participation in decision making for own health care, both extracted from NFHS-3 survey 2005-06 ([www.measuredhs.com](http://www.measuredhs.com)). The variables together measure women's participation in decision making; those who usually make specified decisions on their own or independently. Those reporting joint decision making along with men or husbands are excluded from these measures. These variables selected to reflect woman's capacity for independent decision making in the domain of household are well recognized even in studies undertaken in other developing economies around the world.

(iv) *Economic Resources and Assets:* Aggregates of two variables namely, women's ownership of (a) immovable assets and (b) bank account are used to reflect her control over resources. The first variable is measured as the proportion of women who have their name on immovable properties owned or rented. Normally such names are incorporated on to the contract or registered property documents. For the first time such data have become available for all India and many states from the NCAER's Human Development Survey -2004-5. Women having a bank / savings account are drawn from the NFHS-3 data set. Give that these data have longer-term relevance and are important aspects of households, both individually owned and jointly owned (along with husbands/other household members) are considered appropriate to reflect control of respective resources.

It is useful to state both these variables have become prominent in the Indian context in reflecting the independent nature of women and their empowerment. Besides a number of states in India have passed laws which favor joint (registration) ownership of land or properties which are rented. Often properties jointly owned are given tax concessions by law. So far as the ownership of bank accounts we bring the attention of the readers to the fact that the microfinance programs in India are

over two decades old and upto 25 million households are enrolled into such program through the self-help group formations; and they are in a way enrolled in to a informal banking scheme. Further since about a year millions of bank accounts are opened in the names of women across India through a wage employment program known as „national employment guarantee scheme“. Thus there is a revolution of sorts which is enabling women even in rural areas to open and operate their own bank account. However the data used to assess these variable have the reference year 2004-5, and conditions during recent years are expected to more women friendly. Given this background these variables are India specific and they capture a dominant part of women's empowerment.

(v) *Reproduction and Care:* This dimension is an aggregation of two variables, (a) one reflecting women's capacity to choose and use a modern contraceptive method which is a reflection of control over reproduction; and (b) her capacity to ensure that her own children are completed with all essential doses of immunizations. This second variable is constructed linking all children aged 12-36 months with the respondent women and identifying the completeness of all immunizations.

(vi) *Political Participation:* Participation of women in political sphere is indeed a dominant evidence of empowerment. For example, Indian historically has been in the forefront in this benchmark as it has had considerable world recognition when Mrs. Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India. Contemporary situation has enabled Smt. Pratibha Patel to be the President of India, and another high position of the „Speaker“ of the Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament) is occupied by a woman. The list of world's powerful women contains many more entries from India. In spite of such feat one finds the condition of women in India is deplorable, mostly due to strong patriarchy and men favoring social and public policies. Therefore, we believe what is relevant to capture the political empowerment of women in India is their participation in Indian

democratic system. We capture these traits by using two variables whose data are available from government sources. Percentage of women exercising franchise during the last general election is one variable used and dependable data are available from the Election Commission of India. Another positive woman favoring policy in India has been the democratic decentralization of governance to a third tier identified as the *Panchayats* in rural areas and *nagar palikas* (municipalities) in urban areas. Percentage of women members in the *panchayat* councils is used to represent political participation in this indexing exercise.

#### **V: Gender Empowerment Index: Values and Rankings**

This is an exercise to cumulate the multi-dimensionality of gender empowerment inherent in the six identified dimensions enunciated in the previous section and create an index at the level of the Indian states, economic standing and social identities, and place of residence. All six dimensions are considered equally important; for example literacy and work are two equally important attributes expressing pedagogy and economic independence. Similarly, control over physical assets, using banking services, independently taking routine household decisions as well as control over her own reproduction and take decision about child care are all equally important in expressing the power a women exercise so as to change her immediate environment to benefit her own welfare, and the derived welfare of the household. So is the ability of women to participate in political system especially in the modern context of decentralized democratization process especially in India. Therefore, we believe assigning equal weights to each of the six dimensions should be noncontroversial, also because one expects systematic improvements occurring concurrently across all these dimensions over a period of time. The variables chosen to reflect the above aspects of empowerment are carefully selected from across the multiple sources of data, and wherever necessary gender differentials are also factored in the computations. Normally the

index values and rankings are created for over the time comparisons; it should not matter much as to what the definitions, measurements and weights (implied) are so far as they remain constant over time. Even to assign equal weights care must be taken by making all variables and dimensions scale free so that the level difference between selected variables do no influence the values and subsequent rankings. A comprehensive discussion about the scaling, normalization, weighing and indexing in the Indian context can be found in Kundu et. al (2007) and Shariff (2009).

#### **Gender Empowerment Index for Major Indian States**

The gender empowerment values/index and associated ranks for all six identified components/ dimensions according to major states of India can be found in Table 1 and the last column assigns a GEI ranking.. The upper and lower benchmarks for comparisons are taken from within the state distributions and therefore the absolute values are not comparable with other international benchmarks. Measuring empowerment requires country specific qualitative variables as described above and therefore no effort is made to undertake international comparisons although such indices can be crafted should a situation demands.

The GEI index values reflect the levels of achievement to the maximum possible of 1 and the least value being 0. Thus if a state takes the maximum value of 1 in six dimensions then the aggregated index value will be 1 which is the perfectly women empowered situation and if it is 0 then it is the worst scenario. At the All India level the overall GEI value has worked out to be 0.424 which is less than even the half of the level mark, and the inter-state comparisons show that the bottom most value 0.238 is recorded for Uttar Pradesh and the top most value 0.646 for Kerala. We have categorized states in four segments taking the mean of all states as the first dividing line and further the mean of each segment as the other dividing line to distribute states in all four segments. This



method of ordering states in segments provides useful analytical advantage. One can find that states with relatively better or „high GEI“ besides Kerala are Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Karnataka in that order, followed by Gujarat, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and West Bengal which can be considered as states with „moderate GEI“. States which have „low“ index are Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh; followed by the „very low GEI“ states namely, Jharkhand, Assam, Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (refer Table 1). Refer also to a composite map (Map 1) and six other maps one each of the specified dimensions of empowerment identified in this empirical exercise (Maps 2- 7).

In case of Gujarat while it ranks as low as 8<sup>th</sup> in human capital formation, it is on the top on „control over assets, and second on „capacity for household decision making“; but it ranks too low at 16<sup>th</sup> of the 17 states in political participation. On the other hand Kerala which is on top on human capital formation, but as low as 8<sup>th</sup> in household decision making as well as woman's work participation and 6<sup>th</sup> in political participation. Thus, Gujarat and Kerala stand out as states with large contrasts that are puzzling in the context of gender empowerment.

### **Gender Empowerment Index according to Socio-Economic Categories**

The type of the data used allows estimating the GEI using the first five dimensions, since disaggregated data for woman's political participation is not available, according to place of residence (rural or urban residence), socio-religious categories and economic groups based on per capita income quintiles (Table 2). It is surprising to note lack of GEI differential according to place of residence, namely the rural and urban areas; although we are aware that there are noteworthy gender differentials if only an absolute level of a particular variable is evaluated. Thus while there may be huge level differentials in the measurement of

variables in absolute terms, when one takes the relative gender differentials it does not matter whether one resides in rural or urban areas, the gender bias seems as strong. This is a very important empirical finding.

Further the values and rankings are evaluated for economic classification and socio-religious groups and one notices some perfect association. The GEI index has a perfect match with the per capita income quintiles in such a way that relative economic prosperity indeed promotes gender empowerment. The only dimension which has inverse relationship from within the six considered is women's work participation suggesting that poorer women work relatively more so as to supplement household income; yet overall economic prosperity promotes „gender empowerment“.

The data bases used, namely the national sample surveys, the NCAER's human development survey and the national family health surveys contain variables that are amenable to create exclusive socio-religious categories which are generally so identified in day-to-day discourses in India. One finds considerable variations in the GEI according to the socio-religious categories as well. For example, it is residual others (minority religions other than Muslims but less than 5 % of population) category which has the highest value of 0.763 followed by the high caste Hindus with 0.675 and these two communities are class apart and reflect large inequity in society. The subsequent values are far too low at 0.410 for OBCs, 0.366 for SCs, 0.281 for the STs and least for Muslims at 0.276. There is a notion that the tribal communities offer fairly egalitarian social system which, but such common understanding and does not stand the empirical test, thus making ST women extremely vulnerable as well along with the SCs and the Muslims. The socio-religious exercise provides excellent leads for public policy formulation in the area of effecting group-equity in India.

Table 1: Women Empowerment Index 2005-06; All India and Major States

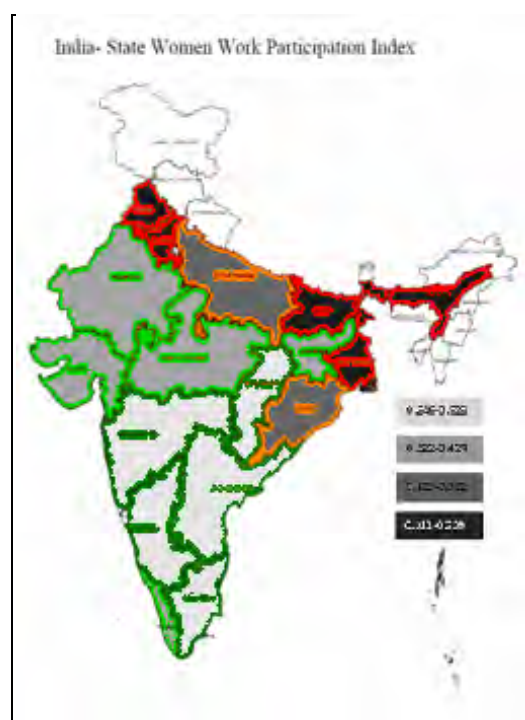
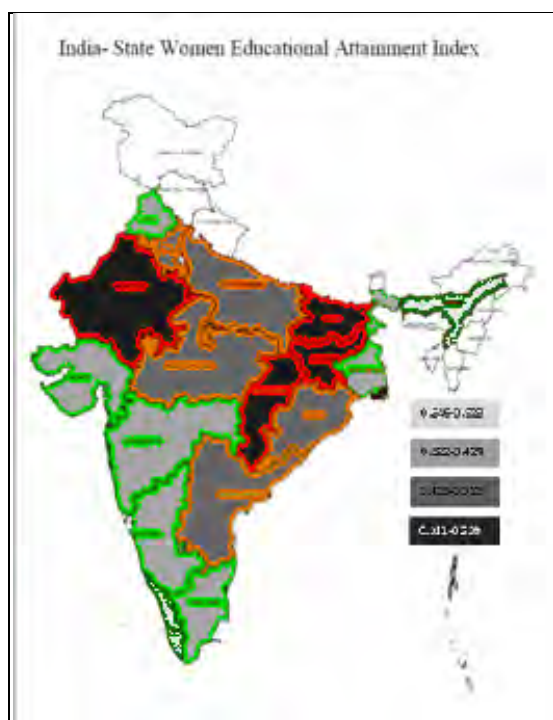
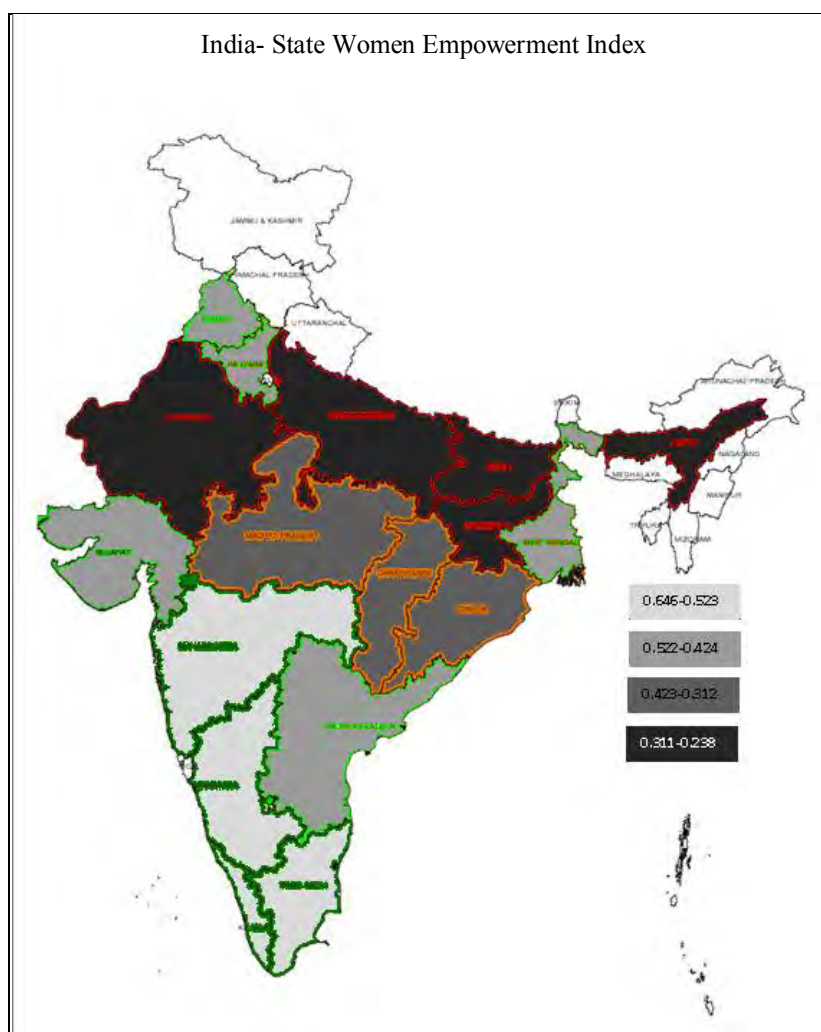
| State                         | Women's Educational attainment |      | Women Work Participation |      | Women's Capacity for Household/ Societal Decision Making |      | Women's Control over Asset & Income |      | Women's Control-over Reproduction/ Child Care |      | Women's Participation in Governance |      | Composite Women Empowerment Index |      |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|----------------------------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|------|-----------------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|------|-----------------------------------|------|
|                               | Score                          | Rank | Score                    | Rank | Score                                                    | Rank | Score                               | Rank | Score                                         | Rank | Score                               | Rank | Score                             | Rank |
| All India                     | 0.415                          |      | 0.479                    |      | 0.428                                                    |      | 0.344                               |      | 0.487                                         |      | 0.390                               |      | 0.424                             |      |
| High Relative Empowerment     |                                |      |                          |      |                                                          |      |                                     |      |                                               |      |                                     |      |                                   |      |
| Kerala                        | 1.000                          | 1    | 0.544                    | 8    | 0.435                                                    | 8    | 0.589                               | 2    | 0.821                                         | 2    | 0.487                               | 6    | 0.646                             | 1    |
| Tamil Nadu                    | 0.563                          | 6    | 0.836                    | 3    | 0.745                                                    | 1    | 0.234                               | 14   | 0.912                                         | 1    | 0.317                               | 11   | 0.601                             | 2    |
| Maharashtra                   | 0.615                          | 4    | 0.763                    | 5    | 0.569                                                    | 5    | 0.395                               | 6    | 0.772                                         | 3    | 0.258                               | 12   | 0.562                             | 3    |
| Karnataka                     | 0.490                          | 7    | 0.779                    | 4    | 0.340                                                    | 11   | 0.464                               | 4    | 0.665                                         | 6    | 0.630                               | 3    | 0.561                             | 4    |
| Moderate Relative Empowerment |                                |      |                          |      |                                                          |      |                                     |      |                                               |      |                                     |      |                                   |      |
| Gujarat                       | 0.445                          | 8    | 0.518                    | 9    | 0.742                                                    | 2    | 0.627                               | 1    | 0.570                                         | 9    | 0.122                               | 16   | 0.504                             | 5    |
| Punjab                        | 0.625                          | 3    | 0.000                    | 17   | 0.694                                                    | 3    | 0.507                               | 3    | 0.688                                         | 5    | 0.442                               | 9    | 0.493                             | 6    |
| Andhra Pradesh                | 0.279                          | 11   | 0.915                    | 2    | 0.285                                                    | 15   | 0.282                               | 12   | 0.639                                         | 7    | 0.419                               | 10   | 0.470                             | 7    |
| Haryana                       | 0.348                          | 10   | 0.129                    | 14   | 0.584                                                    | 4    | 0.397                               | 5    | 0.721                                         | 4    | 0.463                               | 8    | 0.440                             | 8    |
| West Bengal                   | 0.593                          | 5    | 0.106                    | 15   | 0.458                                                    | 7    | 0.244                               | 13   | 0.635                                         | 8    | 0.558                               | 4    | 0.432                             | 9    |
| Low Relative Empowerment      |                                |      |                          |      |                                                          |      |                                     |      |                                               |      |                                     |      |                                   |      |
| Orissa                        | 0.368                          | 9    | 0.475                    | 11   | 0.495                                                    | 6    | 0.200                               |      | 0.420                                         | 12   | 0.474                               | 7    | 0.405                             | 10   |
| Chhattisgarh                  | 0.213                          | 14   | 1.000                    | 1    | 0.340                                                    | 12   | 0.097                               | 17   | 0.488                                         | 11   | 0.146                               | 15   | 0.381                             | 11   |
| Madhya Pradesh                | 0.216                          | 13   | 0.659                    | 6    | 0.325                                                    | 14   | 0.179                               | 16   | 0.500                                         | 10   | 0.031                               | 17   | 0.318                             | 12   |
| Very Low Relative Empowerment |                                |      |                          |      |                                                          |      |                                     |      |                                               |      |                                     |      |                                   |      |
| Jharkhand                     | 0.201                          | 15   | 0.479                    | 10   | 0.133                                                    | 16   | 0.298                               | 11   | 0.107                                         | 14   | 0.643                               | 2    | 0.310                             | 13   |
| Assam                         | 0.783                          | 2    | 0.144                    | 13   | 0.062                                                    | 17   | 0.300                               | 10   | 0.010                                         | 17   | 0.519                               | 5    | 0.303                             | 14   |
| Rajasthan                     | 0.000                          | 17   | 0.573                    | 7    | 0.360                                                    | 10   | 0.326                               | 9    | 0.217                                         | 13   | 0.191                               | 14   | 0.278                             | 15   |
| Bihar                         | 0.056                          | 16   | 0.056                    | 16   | 0.339                                                    | 13   | 0.333                               | 8    | 0.077                                         | 15   | 0.704                               | 1    | 0.261                             | 16   |
| Uttar Pradesh                 | 0.266                          | 12   | 0.159                    | 12   | 0.370                                                    | 9    | 0.380                               | 7    | 0.030                                         | 16   | 0.223                               | 13   | 0.238                             | 17   |

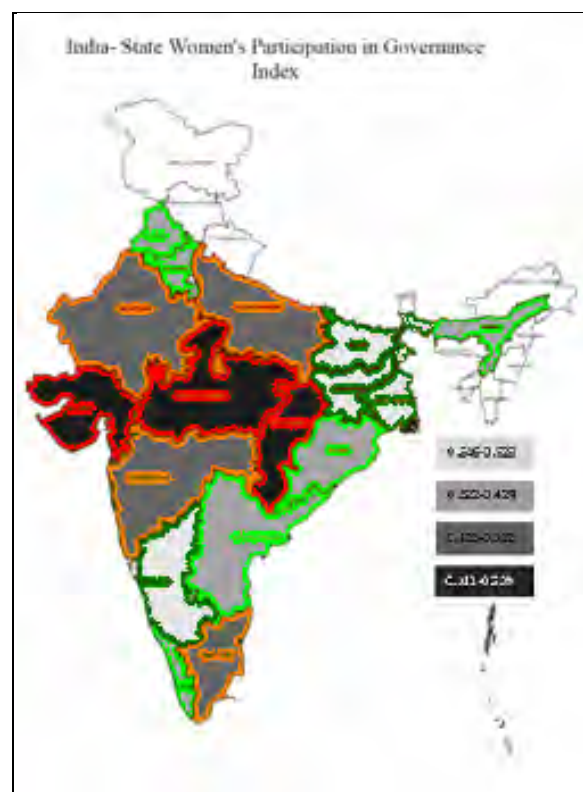
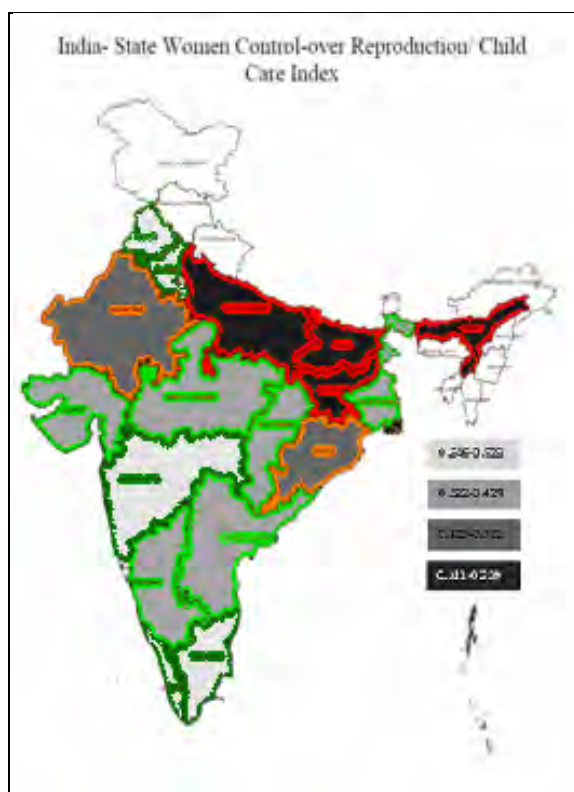
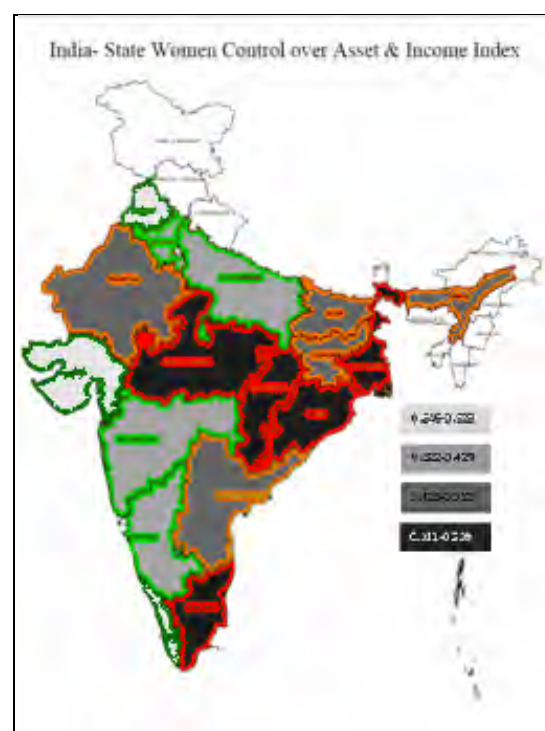
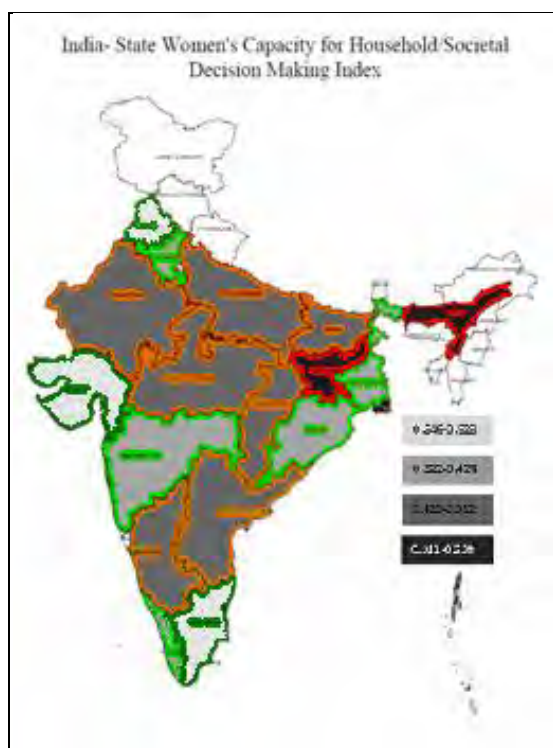
Table 2: Women Empowerment Index 2005-06 according to Place of Residence, Socio-Religious and Economic Groups

| Socio & Economic Group | Women's Educational attainment |      | Women Work Participation |      | Women's Capacity for Household/ Societal Decision Making |      | Women's Control over Asset & Income |      | Women's Control-over Reproduction/ Child Care |      | Composite Women Empowerment Index |      |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|----------------------------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|------|-----------------------------------------------|------|-----------------------------------|------|
|                        | Score                          | Rank | Score                    | Rank | Score                                                    | Rank | Score                               | Rank | Score                                         | Rank | Score                             | Rank |
| Place of Residence     |                                |      |                          |      |                                                          |      |                                     |      |                                               |      |                                   |      |
| Rural                  | 0.385                          |      | 0.53                     |      | 0.442                                                    |      | 0.406                               |      | 0.488                                         |      | 0.450                             |      |
| Urban                  | 0.525                          |      | 0.441                    |      | 0.413                                                    |      | 0.358                               |      | 0.527                                         |      | 0.453                             |      |
| Socio-Religious Groups |                                |      |                          |      |                                                          |      |                                     |      |                                               |      |                                   |      |
| Others                 | 0.945                          | 1    | 0.396                    | 4    | 1                                                        | 1    | 0.585                               | 2    | 0.887                                         | 2    | 0.763                             | 1    |
| H/Others               | 0.935                          | 2    | 0.222                    | 5    | 0.459                                                    | 2    | 0.76                                | 1    | 1                                             | 1    | 0.675                             | 2    |
| H/OBCs                 | 0.445                          | 4    | 0.516                    | 2    | 0.223                                                    | 5    | 0.351                               | 4    | 0.518                                         | 3    | 0.41                              | 3    |
| H/SCs                  | 0.272                          | 5    | 0.476                    | 3    | 0.393                                                    | 4    | 0.3                                 | 5    | 0.39                                          | 4    | 0.366                             | 4    |
| H/STs                  | 0                              | 6    | 1                        | 1    | 0.031                                                    | 6    | 0.149                               | 6    | 0.223                                         | 5    | 0.281                             | 5    |
| Muslim                 | 0.527                          | 3    | 0                        | 6    | 0.414                                                    | 3    | 0.357                               | 3    | 0.079                                         | 6    | 0.276                             | 6    |
| Economic Groups        |                                |      |                          |      |                                                          |      |                                     |      |                                               |      |                                   |      |
| Q5                     | 1                              | 1    | 0                        | 5    | 1                                                        | 1    | 0.875                               | 1    | 1                                             | 1    | 0.775                             | 1    |
| Q4                     | 0.566                          | 2    | 0.151                    | 4    | 0.672                                                    | 2    | 0.402                               | 2    | 0.784                                         | 2    | 0.515                             | 2    |
| Q3                     | 0.274                          | 3    | 0.251                    | 3    | 0.299                                                    | 3    | 0.29                                | 3    | 0.565                                         | 3    | 0.336                             | 3    |
| Q2                     | 0.166                          | 4    | 0.692                    | 2    | 0.051                                                    | 4    | 0.134                               | 4    | 0.29                                          | 4    | 0.267                             | 4    |
| Q1                     | 0                              | 5    | 1                        | 1    | 0                                                        | 5    | 0.129                               | 5    | 0                                             | 5    | 0.226                             | 5    |

Note: Due to lack of disaggregated data the GEI according to place of residence namely rural/urban areas, social groups and economic groups can be calculated using the first five dimensions only.

## Maps 1-7





**VI: Conclusions and Policy Implications**

It is common knowledge that the UNDP promoted the concept of human development index which is now widely used all over India. One finds that many states in India have brought out human development reports highlighting district level variations as well. We consider it useful to compare the state HDI ranks with the GEI estimated by us (see Table 3). There are a few unexpected relationships between the two in a few states.

For example Assam and Uttar Pradesh have recorded relatively better HDI ranking compared with the GEI which are far too low. Other states with higher ranking differentials and having lower GEIs are Bihar, Haryana and Punjab. On the other hand state which have improved over their HDI rankings considerably are Maharashtra, Karnataka, Orissa, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. However, it will be instructive to know as to what factors have pulled the state of Assam and Uttar Pradesh considerably low in the GEI measures.

**Table 3: Gender Empowerment Index (2004-5) and Compared with HDI (2000)**

| States         | Gender Empowerment Score/Index | Rank | Kundu, Shariff & Ghosh 2000 (HDI)* | Rank |
|----------------|--------------------------------|------|------------------------------------|------|
| Kerala         | 0.646                          | 1    | 0.853                              | 1    |
| Tamil Nadu     | 0.601                          | 2    | 0.538                              | 4    |
| Maharashtra    | 0.562                          | 3    | 0.353                              | 9    |
| Karnataka      | 0.561                          | 4    | 0.43                               | 8    |
| Gujarat        | 0.504                          | 5    | 0.445                              | 7    |
| Punjab         | 0.493                          | 6    | 0.675                              | 2    |
| Andhra Pradesh | 0.470                          | 7    | 0.432                              | 6    |
| Haryana        | 0.440                          | 8    | 0.625                              | 3    |
| West Bengal    | 0.432                          | 9    | 0.178                              | 13   |
| Orissa         | 0.405                          | 10   | 0.11                               | 15   |
| Chhattisgarh   | 0.381                          | 11   | 0.1                                | 16   |
| Madhya Pradesh | 0.318                          | 12   | 0.1                                | 17   |
| Jharkhand      | 0.310                          | 13   | 0.168                              | 11   |
| Assam          | 0.303                          | 14   | 0.43                               | 5    |
| Rajasthan      | 0.278                          | 15   | 0.115                              | 14   |
| Bihar          | 0.261                          | 16   | 0.168                              | 12   |
| Uttar Pradesh  | 0.238                          | 17   | 0.188                              | 10   |

\* Since recent HDI for states in India are readily available we compare the GEI for reference year 2004-5 with HDI computed by Kundu et. al (2000) (Table No. 2.6, p81).

The correlation between the GHI and HDI rankings has worked out to be only 0.58 suggesting that HDI do not reflect the true gender vulnerability and therefore it is essential to create a separate series of data that reflect women's empowerment. As mentioned earlier, we have used six dimensions and associated measures for which dependable data are available from sample surveys and government records. Although we believe that dimensions and variables chosen for this exercise are efficient in capturing empowerment of women in India, one can add other concepts provided quality data are

available so as to contextualize indexing to local situation and needs. It is most appropriate to create the gender indices at the level of districts, and according to socio-religions communities within the state for a better understanding of the problem of gender discrimination and seek policy response to address them.

A number of policy implications will emerge from research and analysis on gender empowerment, and a few of them are listed below:

- Enable policy makers to understand the process that facilitate empowerment of women.
- This research will enable recognition of the significant role gender empowerment play in improving incomes especially in rural areas and thereby poverty alleviation.
- Help formulate policy support to sustain empowerment of women, for example, through strategies to establish and sustain ownership rights, enhance participation in local governance and undertake market based activities.
- Promote fiscal and financial products which suits formation of household capital, assets and insurance against risks in rural areas of India.
- Effective policies can be designed to so that economic resources transferred through micro-credit programs can promote micro-enterprises and local markets.
- Promotes regionally balanced economic growth through wage and labor market effects especially factoring increased female participation in labor force.

We believe that this paper raises a major issue of appropriateness of the factors and measures that reflect gender empowerment and hope that the methodology presented will help generate an informed debate on the topic in India and other developing societies.

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## Discussion Paper + | A Short Policy Note

### Failure of the Group Specific Equity Policy – The case of the Scheduled Tribes

An opportunity to get a ring side view and observe, assess and evaluate public policies is rare. I was fortunate, as a member of Committee to assess the situation in Andhra Pradesh in the context of separation of state, got to visit many tribal and primitive communities living in interior outback's. The ST population in AP is expected to be over 7 million and close to 10% of the state's total. In India, the ST communities are expected to be over 100 million or about 8% to 9 %; with high concentrations in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, and in the northeast. Overall, the STs is a highly diverse group, over 700 have been notified under Article 342 of the constitution of India; of these 75 have been identified as „primitive tribal groups (PGTs)“. In spite of additional protection of public policy, the PGTs spread over 17 states/UTs seem to live a marginal life nearing destitution. The following narration from two village clusters highlights the plight of STs in India.

**Consider a village** with two distinct tribes living side-by-side in Vijaynagram district. The non-primitive tribe namely Kondavara dominated with 81 households and the Savara primitive tribe with 48 households.

The Kondavara were either marginal farmers or agricultural wage workers. They reported some cultivation rights over half an acre to three acres of rain fed land on the hilly terrain with no clear title to such land. Fortunately all had MG-NREGS job cards and the community was satisfied with work availability as well as wage payments averaging Rs 100 per day. The MG-NREGS work itself was land improvement on their plantations in a cooperative basis - which is working on each other's farms. They also received about the

same wage if worked on private basis and being non-primitive tribe often travelled to plain areas on wage work and market exchange.

Whereas the Savara were serviced under the government's ITDA, and practically all had complaints about it. These primitive households were provided wage work under the forest development program of the ITDA with daily fixed wages, but work was available for a limited number of days in a year. The MG-NREGS wages offered to them averaged less than Rs. 20 per day, and therefore they have boycotted this work offer. The private wage work within the limited area around this village also gets them much lower wage rate that vary between Rs. 60 to Rs. 70 for males and Rs. 40 for females. They rear small ruminants and cattle. Savara's rarely travel to outside areas and their marriage linkages are within about 10 Kms range and amongst their own tribe. They did not report a clear ownership or assignment of land on which cultivation could be undertaken, rather they were offered employment in the forest and hilly terrain unfit of cultivating cereals and other food stuffs.

There was a clear contrast in living conditions of the two tribal communities living in the same place; as non-primitive settlement is better off. A contrasting differentiation of these communities was physical location of their living quarters. Once in the village area, the non-primitive tribes occupied a street horizontally, and on both sides were relatively well built and neatly kept dwellings. One also noticed many women and children around in the family and on the street during the time of our visit about late morning. On the other hand the primitive tribes lived in homes built

vertically climbing up on the rocky terrain towards the hills. The street was full of rocks exposed due to the rain water gushing vertically through the street. It was not easy to climb up to homes on the higher end even for wellbuilt men let alone women and children. There was hardly a dwelling which looked neat and tidy as was the case in the horizontal street. At the time of visit (same time as was to the other locality) one found none around in these homes, excepting an old woman and youth who was suffering from fever on that day. All others were reported to have gone in to the forest area for work!

**Another visit** was to a tribal village cluster in Prakasam district which had 56 primitive households in a settlement and another settlement a quarter kilometer ways had 23 non-primitive households. The primitive settlement was created by resettling families from inside the forest area extending over 30 kilometers. Under the ITDA program 36 acres of reclaimed land from the forest was allocated to 36 families. The other families were in waiting for their turn of allotment. However, all the resettled families were given semi-finished single room residential quarters under the AP's Indiramma program but without a kitchen and toilet in them. A single phase energized bore well provided drinking water for the whole settlement at a distance which often did not function either due to bread known or non availability of electricity. Some internal roads are semi-pucca constructed with Panchayat funds. Women from this main settlement collected minor forest produce such as medicinal herbs and roots, and honey; men undertake bamboo cutting and honey collection under the government program. A Girjan Society (GCC) purchased the forest produce for a predetermined price; yet the forest department created problem for them in the collection of forest produces.

Many expressed satisfaction with the public programs such as the PDS and social security pension scheme; but none of them were issued with the MG-NREGS job cards nor were they aware of the self help group program. One reason could be because the resettlement

has not yet been granted the status of the normal village and not part of any panchayat. The government's small loan facility for self employment was made available to only two members in this settlement. Most of the dwellers took loans from private sources at exorbitant interest charges on a weekly basis. This primitive community wanted supply of small ruminants such as goat and sheep through government scheme. The crop failure is a common feature and no insurance scheme covered such losses. Drinking water shortage is severe and no street light was provided. Post resettlement, the community reported ITDA to be inactive. The settlement is on un-even land and the villagers wanted to close the pits in the village under some program and construct pucca streets and approach road. No family in the village had Rajeeve Arogya Sri Card, but they were happy with the emergency health service provided under the 104 and 108 mobile health vehicle scheme. While about 40% of deliveries are institutional, there is only one teacher primary school in the area.

However, the neighborhood ST settlement was occupied by the original inhabitants but non primitive tribe (not the ones who were resettled). They lived in thatched hutments with no supply of electricity, water and not even a road leading to the settlement from the main road. None of the households were serviced by the ITDA, nor were they linked with the Girijan Society. Unlike in the resettlement neighboring locality, many women were involved in basket making in this settlement. But all of them were under sever fear and threat from the forest officials since many men are impounded by them for having taken bamboo from the forest. Neither the state government agencies nor the ITDA have covered this settlement for the provisioning of welfare schemes, nor are their programs such as the MG-NREGA and SHG. To my understanding this bunch of 23 households had in fact no identity and lives a highly vulnerable and deprived life.

The above examples present highly contrasting scenarios, the primitive tribes were under penury even with the presence of ITDA compared with the non-primitive groups in

the former; where as in the latter case it was the non-primitive group which has been totally left out of any welfare coverage. The main difference however, emerges from differentiated treatment of the government policies for the primitive and non-primitive tribes living on the same location. How, why and who make these sharper differentiation between the communities and for what purpose is not very clear. A fact to stress is the freedom and choice that the non-primitive group had to travel and visit the plain areas for work and market which has increased their wellbeing. In the second example, the primitive group which was resettled are given better coverage compared to the original but not-resettled group which were far away from the plain areas and not serviced by the ITDA.

It appears there is a need to reconsider the policies which are intended to protect the interest of the tribal and indigenous communities in India. Firstly there is too much a differentiation as who is an eligible ST for a specific program and who is not. For example, two set of ST communities living exactly in the same place and exposed to similar economic and locational environment are treated differently. It is almost impossible as to how these differentiations are made and why? Secondly, it gives an impression that in the name of protecting the ST communities, they are getting isolated and may even getting excluded from the mainstream development taking shape across India.

Further, one finds that practically all the officials, bureaucracy including the school

teachers working in the tribal areas belong to non-ST communities and they also do not reside in the place of work. They are seen travelling on a daily basis to the work place on their ultramodern expensive motorcycles; and many inaccessible locations are bereft of institutions and personnel. Even the ST hostels for girls were found not having running water and the adolescent girls were seen using brooks and streams nearby for their daily routine, bathing and washing.

Note that a number of locations are covered under the Schedule 5 policy established in 1950 which is directly overseen by the Governor of the state with the help of the „tribal advisory councils.“ The Tribal sub-plan, the ITDA, the MADA and mini-MADA cluster program are all subsequent innovations with the aim of racing out the tribal groups which are spread out, yet the living conditions of even those who live in specified locations and easily identified have not improved since last half a century of concerted policy efforts! It gives an impression that since many tribal communities work under harsh conditions, often with no physical safety offered to them just for a pre-set meager wage; a kind of bondage has developed between the government agencies and the tribal workers (families). This is like running an enterprise with bonded labor who can be brought to books under the „bonded labor act“. It also appears, in the name of protecting these communities; opportunities are denied for them to access the fruits of the modern development.

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## Discussion Paper Series

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Chief Economist at the National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi from 1994-2008 and 2010-11. He also worked as Senior Research Fellow at the Asia office of Int. Food Policy Research Institute, New Delhi during early 2008 to early 2010. He was member-secretary of the Indian Prime Minister's High Level Committee during 2004-6 to review the inclusive growth policies favoring the minorities. He was a Member of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India - Committee on the Andhra Pradesh Indian States during 2010. He has secured a Ph. D from the Australian National University, Canberra and undertook post-doctoral research at Yale Economic Growth Center, New Haven, USA. Research focus includes poverty and inequality, human development, labor markets and demographic dividends, social sector budgetary analysis, micro-impact of economic reforms and review of safety net public programs. He has authored/edited 11 books mostly published by Oxford University press and published over 50 articles in refereed journals of international /national repute.



He was selected as one of the India Today Magazine „faces of millennium (Economist)“ in January 2000 issue; and one of the 25 identified in the Outlook Magazine's Alternative Power List (23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2007 issue) as a recognition of his ability to influence public policy in India. Often he is a panelists on various Indian TV channels and has been interviewed and quoted in magazines of high repute such as the Times of India, Hindustan Times, The Hindu, New York Times, The Economist, Financial Times of London, *La Monde*, Paris, Washington Post, India Today and Outlook. He was a member of the award selection committee of the Global Development Network in its annual meetings held in Senegal in 2006. Also a member of numerous official committees of the Government of India. Has address a number of professional bodies such as the Annual Global Development Conference at Dakar, the Global Forum for Health Research in Mexico City, World Health Organization at Geneva, UN Headquarters in New York and the World Bank Headquarters at the Washington DC, Harvard University, Duke University, Cambridge University, Oxford University, University of Maryland at College Park, London School of Economics, and many other universities both in India and abroad. Being an expert on various issues of development economics, rural development and demography he has evaluated a number of proposals seeking funds, examined Ph. D theses and reviews a number of journal articles for example for World Development. Has been an advisor to a number of graduated students in India and abroad. He has work experiences in Africa South of the Sahara, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Maldives, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, South Asia and Central Asia.

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