



Theme 3

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The approach of 'empowerment' and 'gender aware programmes or planning' for gender development emerged in the 1980s. This approach recognises that women and men have a differential impact of development policies and calls women an 'agent of development'. In recent years, after the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by most of the countries in the world, where SDG 5 envisaged gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls, and SDG 8 aims to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all by 2030. These goals, however, remain to be distant from being equal for both men and women in the labour market. In this regard, ILO has signaled that the labour market indicators are likely to discriminate against women more than men in the labour market. As a result, women are likely to either remain unemployed or find low-quality jobs in the informal economy, which falls outside the scope of labour legislation, social security regulations and relevant collective agreements.

Women have achieved significant advancements in diverse areas such as education, health, and employment. Nevertheless, persistent challenges still exist. Various women empowerment schemes and initiatives have been implemented, including Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme, One Stop Centre Scheme, Ujjawala Scheme for trafficking prevention, Working Women Hostel, NARI SHAKTI Puraskar, and Mahila Shakti Kendras. These programs aim to address the diverse needs of women in difficult circumstances, provide support and resources, and recognise their contributions to society.

Governments at the central and state levels have made substantial efforts that have greatly influenced the lives of numerous women at the grassroots. A deep understanding of women's issues has led to the development of empowering initiatives. However, there remains disparity between the envisioned goals set forth in the constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programs, and the actual situation concerning women's status.

There are several barriers to women's empowerment which are highlighted under the themes given below:

- ❖ Women's education
- ❖ Access to productive assets
- ❖ Political participation
- ❖ Access to quality health
- ❖ Women's leadership and empowerment in the workplace
- ❖ Women's rights and legal frameworks
- ❖ Intersectionality and multiple forms of discrimination
- ❖ Women's entrepreneurship and access to finance
- ❖ Sexual and reproductive health
- ❖ Addressing gender-based violence and harassment
- ❖ Women's empowerment and climate change resilience
- ❖ Addressing cultural norms and stereotypes
- ❖ Gender-responsive education and skills development
- ❖ Women's empowerment in marginalised communities
- ❖ Engaging men and boys in women's empowerment efforts
- ❖ Expanding access to justice
- ❖ Gender-responsive social protection
- ❖ Unpaid care and domestic work
- ❖ Gendered digital divide