

GENDER AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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Abstract: *Gender related to development is a increasingly discussed topic, especially in the post-development theories, because the development process affects women and men differently. The paper examines the influence of sustainable development on the status of women in India, through development programs for the women's emancipation. Two research methods were considered in addressing the topic: the qualitative method of document analysis and the quantitative method of statistical data analysis. The paper concludes that joint efforts and resources of the government and non-governmental organizations are necessary for women's emancipation and that providing minimal access to public services, especially in rural areas, where a patriarchal society still predominates, can be considered an important step in this direction.*

Keywords: *Women in Development (WID) theory; India; gender discrimination; women status; emancipation*

1. Introduction

Gender related to development is a topic more and more discussed and subject to research, mainly within the post-development theories, due to the fact that the development process affects women and men in different ways. Gender is a term many times wrongly understood, either in connection with sex or with women, and gender identity vary in each region. Everywhere, the gender is influenced according to class differences, race, ethnicity, religion and age. Also, gender relations were interpreted according to the way development politics have changed or have influenced the power balance between women and men. Thereby, the most critical separation between Western women and other women, between white and coloured women, between colonizer and colonized, is arrogant and simplistic. The gender role in economical development has been recognized as essential, both in terms of success and the impact of certain development strategies and programs (Zosuls *et al.*, 2011)

The topic of this paper is the influence of sustainable development on the status of women in India, through development programs for the emancipation of women. If the status of women is to be changed in a traditional, male-dominated society, then the government, certain associations and non-governmental organizations must take action and implement development programs for the emancipation of women locally and for their access to public life.

This topic is approached from the perspective of feminism, through two main methods: the qualitative method of document analysis and the quantitative method of statistical data analysis. The paper analyzes the sustainable development programs undertaken in order to emancipate women, which must start at the local level, by ensuring access to minimum services of education, health, food, by exercising the right

to property, free speech, control over one's own body and reproduction and by increasing women's participation in public life.

2. Gender and development

The issue of women's development in the world has been addressed by several authors, such as Easter Boserup, Adelle Mueller and Chandra Mohanty, who insist on the feminine side of the Third World, which appears in feminist literature as having needs and problems, but without having the freedom to choose.

The theory that analyzed the issue of women's development in this article is Women in Development-WID, which appeared as a reaction to the theory of well-being, The Welfare Approach, which will be defined in the first part of the paper.

It can be said that, with the beginning of development in Third World countries, gender is becoming an increasingly discussed and analyzed topic, especially by supporters of women's emancipation, who want to put more emphasis on the introduction of gender in development programs in these areas.

An effect of development and interest in gender are also the Millennium Development Goals, which take into account gender differences, and through equal opportunities, want a society in which women and men have equal living conditions, depending on the needs, priorities and aspirations of each. These goals include: women's empowerment, equal opportunities, reducing women's mortality and improving maternal health. Reducing maternal mortality is one of the important goals, because its global rate is, unfortunately, quite high, especially in poor countries. Almost 99% of maternal deaths occur in poor countries, and half a million pregnant women die each year. The causes in this sense are multiple, among which are: poverty, malnutrition, the early age at which the pregnancy takes place, the short time between pregnancies, and many others (Momsen, 2004).

Hence the growing interest in including women in emancipation projects in developing countries, precisely because the emancipation of women is one of the above objectives. The issue of women's development in the world has been discussed and interpreted through the prism of several theories. One of them is the theory of women's development, or in its original terms, Women in Development - WID, published in 1970, as a reaction to the theory of well-being, The Welfare Approach, through which women's development policies focused only on their role as spouses and mothers, on their health and that of their children, on reducing the fertility rate and the dependence of women on men's income (Gill and Brown, 2000). At the same time, the development process was considered to affect women and men in the same way and productivity was equated to the economy, ignoring women's work. WID theory criticizes the interest in the role of women in society and wants to introduce them in the programs carried out by governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other associations in this field (Koczberski, 1998).

It is known that in many societies, especially in the patriarchal ones, women had only one social role, that of housewife, and the only responsibilities were related to domestic activities and raising children. Therefore, the WID theory criticizes this perspective of the role of women and wants to change the image of women, by introducing them in local development projects.

A well-known and representative author for this theory is Easter Boserup, with the work *Women's role in Economic Development*, which signals the problem of unequal

distribution of resources among the population and the fact that economic development does not reduce poverty, very important problems in the development process. Women and men are affected differently by economic change and development, and active public policies are needed to fill gender gaps (Momsen, 2004).

Indeed, development has different effects on women and men, because their resources are unevenly distributed, and this contributes to the deepening of poverty, which makes the development process difficult. Easter Boserup also highlights the role of women in agricultural economies (accounting for ~ 80% of agricultural work, with a significant role in annual trade), but their absence from development projects is noticeable.

According to the 1971 census, in India women accounted for 48.2% of the population, but only 13% are part of the economic activity. Women were excluded from several fields of work, so 94% of the female force was employed in the unorganized sector: agricultural, agro-forestry, fishing, handicrafts and others, representing 60% of the illiterate population. According to a UN (United Nations) report, women make up 70% of the world's poor and only 1% own property. They suffer not only from unequal access to education and training, but also from discrimination against employers, earning less than men for the same work done outside the agricultural sector. This is important because gender equality would help reduce poverty. Studies show that if women have income, they spend more money on food, medicine and housing, and children are healthy. For every dollar earned, a woman invests 80 cents in her family, as opposed to men who invest only 30 cents (Tripathy, 1996).

In this situation also, women are much more discriminated against in society, both in private and in public life, because in the labor market they receive a lower payment for the work done, and at the same time women are more likely to invest the money earned in household expenses, children's health and upbringing.

This publication by Estern Boserup also addresses the concerns of development experts on gender discrimination. An important aspect of the subsequent literature refers to women's strategies in dealing with discrimination or the barriers they face in the workplace, in the community and in society. Therefore, in the years 1980-1990, researchers and practitioners focused on the emancipation of women, when they hold leadership positions in the workplace or in the community. Thus, various groups, NGOs and international organizations, such as the UN, have been influenced to assess the status of women and, at the same time, have offered governments recommendations on emancipation strategies and the reduction of gender discrimination at all levels (Datta, 2003).

It seems that the theories that analyzed the status of women in society had beneficial influences on various organizations, associations, but also on governments, because they managed to introduce the issue of gender in the public agenda and take certain public decisions and policies to reduce gender discrimination.

WID theory has been discussed and analyzed by many feminist researchers such as Adelle Mueller and Chandra Mohanty, who insist on the feminine side of the Third World, which appear in feminist literature as having needs and problems, but very few choices and no freedom to act. Third World women are characterized by ignorance, poverty, illiteracy, as traditional, domestic, family, victims, etc. Instead, Western women are characterized as educated, modern people who have control over

their own bodies, sexuality and reproduction, free to make their own decisions (Escobar, 1995).

The discrepancy between developed and developing countries is also visible on the image of women's status, which have only the role of reproduction, production and domestic.

Another aspect of development in the West is the evolution of modern technology, because, on the one hand, the successful treatment of infertility, the ability to identify disabilities, artificial insemination, in vitro insemination, were methods praised by women in this region. In contrast, the technology of reproduction in the Third World, on the other hand, was focused on reducing the fertility rate. In this area, in order to have access to better jobs and higher wages, women need equal opportunities for education and qualified training at the local level (Saunders, 2002).

Once women's issues are realized, development representatives try to integrate them more and more into their projects, so that women can be more active.

At the same time, we want more research on the role of women's activities and their inclusion in development projects. Microfinance institutions are an economic resource for women and are more successful in Asia than in Africa. For example, in Bangladesh, the Grameen bank is a widely followed model that provides loans to people living in extreme poverty. About 94% of people who have loans are women, and the repayment rate is 98% (Joekes, 1990).

It seems that the interest in the emancipation of women has become a global topic, which has come to the attention of many organizations, as it analyzes the current situation and tries to find the best methods for the emancipation of women. At the same time, it is desired to ensure the sources of income for women, through micro-credits.

It can be said that gender is the basis of many aspects of society and power relations, and that is why it is such a controversial and analyzed topic, because it does not only refer to women, but also has influences on the economy and social status. Therefore, WID feminists aim to identify and highlight the problems that women face and to introduce the dimension of women's emancipation in development projects. (Khoreva, 2011).

Economic inequalities refer to differences in economic resources (income or wealth), and castes refer to social rank. The castes system is considered a rigid and oppressive form of inequality. In India this system comprises four main castes and several sub-castes (Subramanian, 2011).

Emancipation refers to the process of making someone strong, so that the weak have access to power and can face oppression and injustice. The process is done through awareness, capacity building, participation in decision making, information acquisition, self-confidence and employment. At the same time, the emancipation of women refers to the increase of power, through activism and local movements. Therefore, women must be active both in discovering strategies and in implementing them at the level of national policies. They must continue the fight for equality and the implementation of these measures (Ghose, 2007).

In terms of microfinance, women face two forms of authority, namely that related to the social authority of borrowers (if the woman does not meet her debt obligations, she loses both confidence and her relatives) and patriarchal authority within the household, both of which have a negative effect on the woman. In general, women are seen and considered, first, as mothers, and then individual abilities are

pursued, with the help of which women can develop as workers, farmers and professionals. A major factor in this regard is the patriarchal system, which places women and men in different and unequal positions (Torri and Martinez, 2014).

Entrepreneurship is the key to a new development model for developing countries. More recently, the focus has been on improving the lives of the poor and women, training them to start their own small businesses (micro-enterprises) and acquiring these micro-entrepreneurial skills. These skills are addressed in development projects, through consultancy and technical assistance provided by NGOs which, in most cases, help to obtain the necessary capital, through various microfinance strategies (Tripathi and Sharma, 2012).

3. The status of women in India and the role of development programs

The Republic of India, located in South Asia, is a democratic state that gained independence from British rule on August 15, 1947. In terms of politics and administration, India is a federation of 28 federal states and 7 federal territories, which are divided into administrative districts and localities. Until 1977 the political regime was dominated by the Indian National Congress (CNI). The 1990s marked the end of the domination of a single party, the CNI, and the rise of coalition governments, followed by a period of political oscillation, the government being led for 5 years by various coalitions.

The political regime can influence the development process in the sense that when the political scene is dominated by one party and society is patriarchal, the influence of socio-economic development on women's status is diminished and development program activists face many obstacles.

In this context, the issue of gender inequality was defined as a collection of disparate and interconnected issues, issues related to inequality of birth, fertility and maternal mortality, girls' access to education, age of marriage, vocational training and access to certain professions, the right to ownership, and the sharing of tasks within households. Women's mobility is limited by the concept that girls and women should take responsibility for domestic tasks and men should be employees of the family. This perception is beginning to change with modernization, and the attempt to restrict women's access to education and the labor market is seen as evidence of a return and preservation of the patriarchal mentality (Arora, 2012).

With the entry into force of the Constitution, on January 26, 1950, it was desired that all citizens enjoy: social, economic and political justice, freedom of thought, expression, faith and worship, equality of status and opportunity, but also of fraternity. However, the Constitution of India recognizes the unequal social position of women and through a special clause empowers the state to make special provisions for women and children. Thus, special laws have been adopted for the protection of female workers inside factories, mines and plantations, as well as the provision of maternity aid within the organized sector. At the same time, it is noted that Article 15 (3) does not provide equal legal protection to Indian women, regardless of ethnic and religious background, due to the absence of a uniform civil code in India (Patil, 2002).

Thus, the status of women in India is debatable, due to the lack of a coherent and precise legislative framework to support gender equality, which results in a patriarchal society where women are dependent on men, both economically and socially.

Regarding the percentage of women in the labor market, it has decreased since 1990 from 34.1% to 27.2% in 2011 (Verick, 2014). Another aspect in this sector refers to the high illiteracy of women, which suggests that most women were employed in low-skilled and low-wage occupational categories, such as marginalized or secondary agricultural workers. Development has affected different classes of women in various ways. Therefore, in rural areas, a large number of women, especially those who are employed as agricultural workers or in various traditional domestic services, have not enjoyed the benefits of development in the last 50 years. In many cases, technical change in the agricultural sector has only negatively affected the employment opportunities of women in rural areas. Although women enjoy legal rights to own property, there is a difference between law and practice, as most women do not own arable land and those who own it cannot exercise control over its actual use, leaving it to their brothers (Ratnam and Jain, 2002).

In terms of the urban environment, development has led to the formation of a middle class in India, estimated at 200-300 million people. Thus, modernization, social change and education have enabled women to take up new professions and develop new social attitudes for educated women. The growing presence of women in public services and in the tertiary sector is accepted as part of the social reality in India. Educated and employed women have a better status than those who are limited only to domestic duties and do not have an independent economic status (Ghosh and Roy, 1997).

In this regard, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), founded in 1972 in the western Indian state of Gujarat, operates as a trade union and organizes women's cooperatives. This association also offers various services such as banking, childcare, legal assistance and vocational training. The association has worked with national governments to recognize the self-employed. Thus, in 1995, other unions joined to form the National Labor Center. Two main objectives of this center refer to the minimum wage and the social security of the workers, but also to the elimination of male domination (Ransom, 2002).

All these measures are taken to facilitate and support the emancipation of women, and by ensuring financial gains women can contribute to the economic stability of the family, but also of society.

Another important aspect of this association is that women have acquired a sense of emancipation, which results from active participation in decision-making and leadership. This has beneficial effects, as the skills acquired help them regain confidence in the family and the community, and men begin to respect them. Also, women who take on the leadership role in the association prove to be much more aware, with more compassion and able to respond to the needs of the family and the community. However, government assistance is also needed to continue these core activities of women's empowerment.

4. Gender discrimination and the obstacles of women in the process of emancipation

In India, the exploitation and discrimination of women is significant, as poverty is combined with the lack of basic elements of life to highlight inequities and, therefore, a continuous struggle of women for survival persists. In this area, the poor and women are still exploited. Migration has led to a rupture of obligations between castes and

gender, for various reasons, such as: autonomy in the workplace, support for social groups, spatial and temporal factors by which women in urban areas can reduce dependence on men. Thus, these women can get the help of men in household chores, such as help with shopping or increase the contribution of men in household expenses. This is due to the fact that women in urban areas have power and control in the public area (Kumar and Das, 2012).

It seems that migration has also had positive effects on the status of women in urban areas, as they enjoy some autonomy and the help of men in family responsibilities.

In contrast, in rural areas, development programs have maintained traditional relationships and castes, and thus worsened women's living conditions. Development programs were based on the principles of Western modernization, without taking into account the inherent structures of Indian society. If the development process reaches rural areas for women to benefit from this process, then planners and decision makers must promote women's autonomy and take into account gender relations in this patriarchal society (Srinivasan, 1997).

Gender discrimination prevents the emancipation of women, and the causes of this discrimination are multiple and come from within society. Among these causes are those related to: lack of education, religious beliefs, culture, family history, customs, low income. The main role of women is that of housewives and that is why the formal education of girls is not one of the priorities of parents, because their occupations in the future are agricultural and breeding. In the family and in society, and especially in political life, the power of women to make decisions is denied, and the most important decisions are made by men, women having limited access to all socio-economic resources (Shaikh, 2012).

This makes women have less willpower and self-confidence, and they feel less important in the family and in society. That is why the recognition of women's rights is essential for their emancipation.

It is noted that in the process of women's emancipation in India, four factors must be considered, namely: education, employment, economic independence and emancipation. Education develops skills, knowledge, attitudes and self-confidence. Employment provides income for women and provides them with an economic position in the family and society. Through economic independence, women have confidence in their own strengths, they no longer depend on their father, husband and children and, above all, they also help the development of the national economy. All this will determine the emancipation of women and their acceptance in society on equal terms with men (Gille, 2012).

Therefore, for the initiation of a women's development program at the local level we must not forget the essential element, providing access to education, because it is necessary as long as we are talking about a predominantly illiterate female society, where parents have no interest in taking the girls to school. From the access to education will arouse the interest for employment, for economic independence and emancipation, conditions very necessary for the rural environment.

Thus, the positive effects of modernization and education have led to new professions and the emergence of social attitudes for educated women, and their presence in the tertiary sector is accepted as part of the social reality in India.

North India tends to be more patriarchal and feudal than South India, and therefore women in the north have more restrictions on their behavior and access to work is limited. In contrast, in the southern part, women have more freedom and a more prominent presence in society. Cultural restrictions are still changing, and women are free to participate in the economy, although there are few jobs for them. Much of women's work is undocumented and does not appear in official statistics. As Indian culture impedes women's access to jobs in shops, factories and the public sector, the informal sector is very important for women. This sector, in which about 90% of women are employed, includes jobs such as civil servants, small traders, handicrafts, or agricultural or farm workers. Most of these jobs are unskilled, low paid, which do not provide benefits to workers (Ramaswamy, 2010).

Gender inequalities also differ geographically, but also in terms of wages, with women being paid less than men. At the same time, not all women work with an employment contract and therefore it is not possible to establish the exact percentage of employed women, most women belonging to the informal sector.

With modernization and technological change, the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry includes activities such as call center, data management and input, secretarial services, online transcription and technical support, accounting and software. Technological and regulatory changes have led to the growth of this industrial sector in India with an annual average of 30-40% between 2000-2008. In particular, call center services are preferred by employed women at a rate of 45%. It is found that technological changes have contributed to the development of the industrial sector, becoming favorable to women, among the services most sought after by women are call-center, which helps them achieve greater autonomy. [Dube *et al.*, 2012].

For poor women in rural areas, education or literacy also means the involvement of daily experiences in order to demand and access resources. This would increase the courage and confidence of poor women. Women's issues have been the focus of the development process since the 1980s, and as a result, a number of women's empowerment programs have been set up in India. The *Mahila Samakhya Program* is a partnership initiative, where *Mahila* means women, and *Samakhya* is a compound of the words *sama* meaning equal and *akhya* meaning evaluation. The program is an assistance program and is the responsibility of the federal government for the implementation and monitoring of the literacy mission in India. This program was born at the initiative of the government's New Education Policy in 1986, for the formation of education programs, having a positive interventionist role in promoting women's equality (Subramaniam, 2003).

The program supports poor women because they need the education and skills needed to earn a living, to have some autonomy and to no longer be materially dependent on men.

Another initiative is safe motherhood, as India accounted for a quarter of all maternal deaths globally (136,000 out of a total of 536,000 maternal deaths). Therefore, India's goal is to reduce maternal mortality to less than 100 per 100,000 births. One factor in these deaths is geographical variety and socio-cultural diversity, and it is therefore not possible to uniformly implement health sector reforms. The status of women in India is low, except in the southeastern states, where women's literacy is estimated at 54% (Salvi, 2009).

In addition to these factors, in many rural areas women do not have the freedom to make decisions about their own bodies, to use health and reproductive services. Among the leading causes of maternal mortality in India are hemorrhage, at 38%, and anemia, 60%. Maternal care during pregnancy and after childbirth is influenced by the educational and economic status of women, so that illiterate and poor women used very little health care services, only 18%, unlike women with a high level of education and a more favorable economic status, of which 86% benefited from these care services. Therefore, in order to increase access to medical services in rural areas, the government has developed a health care system at local/village, urban and regional level, by expanding public health infrastructure [Montgomery et al., 2014].

However, the health system has received very little funding from the government, which has invested only 0.9% of GDP in health services, and other financial contributions have come from various donors, programs and NGOs. Despite government initiatives, almost half of health care has taken place at home lately, and the percentage of antenatal care services is small (Vora *et al.*, 2009).

5. Conclusions

The hypothesis from which this work started was verified, because with the emergence and influence of development in India, the government, various non-governmental organizations, associations and groups, introduced the issue of women's emancipation on the political and public agenda, starting this process locally. Most of the measures taken by these organizations for the emancipation of women have been related to ensuring access to education, health, food, contraception and family planning, treatment of certain obstetric diseases, providing medical services, observations and treatment during pregnancy and after birth, to reduce the rate of maternal mortality and morbidity, but also the construction and modernization of public institutions. At the same time, there has been an attempt, through development programs, to raise awareness of the fact that women have the right and can enjoy autonomy in the family and society, can participate in public life, and their social role is not limited to domestic, but can play an important role in society, in the labor market, and in political life. The measures and projects implemented in those areas have encountered obstacles from a rigid and traditional society, but have had positive effects on women's status, as some women have managed to form groups and start their own businesses. The beneficiaries of the development programs also had access to education, health services, vocational training, and other measures initiated in this regard.

Although the Constitution of India seeks the equality of all citizens, the unequal social status of women in a patriarchal, male-dominated society is recognized. Even if there are certain laws, they are not very clearly formulated, and women cannot exercise their right to property, especially in rural areas, where castles and tribes predominate, and through marriage property inherited from the woman's family falls directly under the authority of the husband. There is also a legislative framework for the protection of women's wage rights, but basic wages are lower for women than for men. Here is also the law on the protection of women against domestic violence, which is more or less applied, depending on the area and socio-economic context, and many women out of fear of male authority do not report cases of domestic violence.

Although women face discrimination in access to many areas of public life, there has also been positive discrimination in the labor market, with young women being encouraged to work full-time because they have relatives to take care of and educating children, while older women only have to work part-time to raise children and fulfill household responsibilities.

Among the problems often encountered in rural areas are those related to lack of control over one's own body and reproduction, and the preference of male children. Because of this, many women resort to illegal abortion methods, which can affect their health and in extreme situations can lead to their death. Other situations encountered, for which we are trying to find solutions, are those related to poverty and nutrition problems, which affect the health of women, and which are also an indicator of socio-economic development.

Given the worrying situation of women in this area, especially in rural areas, where a patriarchal society still predominates, it is more difficult to enforce and implement development programs, but providing minimal access to public services can be considered a start of the process of empowerment of women, which requires resources from the government and various non-governmental organizations.

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