

## **Chapter – IV**

### **Government Policies and Programs for Empowerment of Women in India**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Women play a very important role in our society in their whole life. They are given so called first priority in our society, but in reality they are not treated with respect by their family members and outsiders in the society. Their works were limited to household boundary and they are unaware about their social, economical and other rights. The committee on “status of women”, in its report “Towards Equality”, has mentioned that social norms and moral values perceive women to be deficient and, therefore, social care programs have especially tried to rehabilitate them (Gupta, 1986). Women constitute nearly half of the country’s population (Census of India, 2011). Despite of the planned economic development after independence, human development and the achievement in case of empowering women is considerably discouraging and in rural areas it has clearly shown. The overall growth of the country also hampered due to these causes. Without empowering women no country can become powerful and developed. Third world countries have achieved fast development because women’s participation is a collective group in a form of co-operatives of women in rural areas. ‘Empowerment’ is basically the expansion of freedom of choice and action, meaning thereby increasing one’s authority and control over resources and decision that affects one’s life. India is a country in which gender equality and women's status enhancement are explicitly defined as a core theme of growth and social policy. The Government of India has implemented various policy and programs in reducing the gender discrimination, providing ways and means towards women development and empowerment since independence. After the independence Government of India decided to bring some social changes such as constitutional, legal reforms and planned development, to create a democratic and prosperous society. These three steps have their impact on the improvement of status of the women in India. In the earlier chapter the researcher has discussed about the constitutional rights of women. T. N. Kitchlu (1991) has rightly stated that the constitution of India has paid much attention to women's needs to encourage them to assert their rights on equality with men and participation in national growth. In this chapter the researcher wanted to discuss various policy and programs that has implemented to improved and empower the women since independence. The researcher has described all the programs and scheme which have been

taken during various five year plans and then discussed each of the programs and schemes in details.

#### **4.2 Policies and Programs for Women Empowerment during various Five Year Plans (FYPs)**

After the independence 'The Planning Commission' (now NITI Ayog) defined three major areas for women's development i.e. (a) Education, (b) Social welfare and (c) Health as a transitional approach . The researcher has briefly discussed major policies and schemes related to welfare and empowerment of the women which were adapted from first five year plan to twelfth five year plan.

##### **4.2.1 First Five Year Plan (1951- 1956)**

In this Plan period focus was put on women's wellbeing in general and, more explicitly, on the welfare of under-privileged communities and vulnerable groups such as the desperately poor, disabled, elderly, etc. Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was set up with the object especially of assisting voluntary agencies in organizing welfare Programs for women and children and the handicapped groups by central government. The necessity for women to be coordinated into Mahila Mandals or Women's Club has been recognized as an approach to community development. The board has, in turn, in collaboration with state governments, organized State Social Welfare Boards (SSWB) throughout the country in 1954. India was the first country who has started National Family Planning Program (NFPP) in 1951 as a state program.

##### **4.2.2 Second Five Year Plan (1956 – 61)**

The focal theme of the Plan was concentrated on intensive agricultural development. Despite of this the welfare approach for women continued and the issues was determined recognizing women as workers. It was suggested immediate implementation of equal pay for equal work, training provisions that encourage women to compete for better job opportunities, protection against injuries at work, maternity benefits and crèches for children.

##### **4.2.3 Third Five Year Plan (1961-66)**

In this Plan education for women has been recognized as a major welfare strategy for women. The distribution fund is spending on the social welfare and simplified education courses were exceptional. Besides emphasis was given on welfare of maternal and child, health education, for enhancing nutrition level of women and family planning.

#### **4.2.4 Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74)**

As a continuation of earlier plan emphasis was given on women's education. The basic policy was to promote women's welfare as the base of operation. The outlay on family planning was increased to reduce the birth rate through education, immunization of children and to increase the nutritional level of mothers through supplemental feeding.

#### **4.2.5 Fifth Five Year Plan (1969-74)**

It was happened to be during the decade of International Women's decade and the first report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) "towards equality" was placed. (Government of India, 1974). The CSWI had comprehensively examined the rights and status of women in the context of changing social and economic conditions and the problems relating to the advancement of women. Necessity for training women for improving their income got priority during the plan period. Besides emphasis was given to improve the skill of women through functional literacy. Emphasis was also given to provide Provision of minimum public health facilities integrated with family planning and nutrition for vulnerable groups, children, pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.

#### **4.2.6 Sixth Five Year Plan (1980 – 85)**

The Plan emphasized on the educational advancement, financial stability and healthcare facility and family planning are necessary for women's growth and development. So the strategy was threefold: of education, employment and health. The shift in the approach from 'welfare' to 'development' of women could take place only in this Plan, which made the Planners, and Policy-makers recognize women not only as partners but also as stakeholders in the development of the society. The Sixth Plan document stated that the objective of population control could not be achieved without improving the status of women. The "administrative innovation" and "collection of sex-wise distribution data on development assistance" was suggested in this plan. It was observed that women were neglected earlier and now they should get their due share of attention by government and "equal opportunity for growth and distributive justice".

#### **4.2.7 Seventh Five Year Plan (1985 – 90)**

The Seventh Plan sought to generate awareness among women about their rights and privileges. The long term objectives of the plans were to raise women's economic and social status and recognized the importance of contribution of women in the various socioeconomic, political and cultural activities. The plan stressed the need to develop new

ways of working for women and to see them as a key resource for the country's growth (GOI, 1985-90). Another salient and crucial recognition was the need for organization of women workers and unionization. “Women’s Development Corporation” scheme has started in this plan for assisting programs by women's organizations and women from disadvantaged parts of society to encourage employment-generating activities. Education for women got priority to reduce the disparity through National Policy on Education.

#### **4.2.8 Eighth Five Year Plan (1992 – 97)**

The prime focus of the Plan was on “human development” which played a very valuable role in the development of women. It promised to ensure the implementation of some special programs to complement the general one and to monitor the way of benefits to women in three core areas i.e. education, health and employment. Women must engage in the planning process as equal partners and representatives. This approach of this plan marks a significant shift from ‘development’ to ‘empowerment’ of women. The main aim of this plan was to extend the reach of services to women both qualitatively as well as quantitatively (GOI, 1992-97). Panchayati Raj institutions are involved in the designing and implementation of women’s Programs. The approach of the in order to fulfill women’s need and children, there had been a steady rise in the outlays of the programmers over time, of eight five year plans.

#### **4.2.9 Ninth Five Year Plan (1992 – 97)**

The Ninth Plan adopted the ‘empowerment of women’ as one of the nine primary objectives of the plan. It also included the transition of public-sphere social infrastructure power to women's organizations as a tactic for the program. The Ninth Plan made a major commitment of empowering women as the agents of socio-economic change and development, through the following strategies –

- a) To create a suitable environment for women to exercise their rights, for both within and outside home as equal to men with the help of National Policy for Empowerment of Women.
- b) At least one out of three seats is reserved in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for the women and ensures adequate representation in decision making.
- c) Minimum 30 percent fund of in all benefit schemes should be allotted for women.
- d) Empower women making Self-Help Groups and organized them

- e) Give high priority to reproductive child health services with ensuring easy access to maternal and child health care services
- f) To ensure easy and equal access to education for women and girls;
- g) Plans for free education till higher education i.e. college level, including professional courses;
- h) Easy access to credit through setting up of a 'Development Bank for Women for small industrial sector.

#### **4.2.10 Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007)**

The Tenth Plan aims at empowering women through adaptation of National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001) into action. The plan also emphasized on the following –

- a) Creating a positive environment for the women through economic and social policies,
- b) Allowing the de-jure and de-facto enjoy the full freedoms and practice their fundamental rights of the women in all spheres of life- political, economic, social, cultural and civil
- c) Ensuring equal access and participation and decision-making
- d) Ensuring equal access to health care, quality education, employment, equal remuneration and safety.
- e) Eradicate all types of abuse against women and children; and
- f) Establishing and enhancing relationships with civil society, particularly with women's groups, corporate and private service providers.

#### **4.2.11 Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012)**

The Eleventh Plan aimed to raise the sex ratio. In addition, this initiative seeks to ensure that 33% of the direct and indirect beneficiaries of all government programs are women and girls.

#### **4.2.12 Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017)**

Under different government regimes, the Twelfth Plan had given importance to single women, especially those who are single by choice. In response to reserving the certain proportion of single women's employment under centrally funded schemes, the proposal suggested the promotion and reinforcement of single women's federations at block and district level. For giving due care to women who are associated with farm sector, The Mahila Kisan Sahakatiaran Pariyojana (MKSP) was launched to remove feminization of poverty from society.

### **4.3 Welfare Programs for Women Empowerment in India**

Empowering women basically means enhancing women's social, economic and political status by creating an atmosphere where women are physically, emotionally and mentally free from abuse exploitation and prejudice that they are most vulnerable section in the society. Recognizing the importance of women in the economic growth of the nation, the Government of India along with State Governments has been taking several efforts since independence to uplift women socially, politically and economically (Pandey & Parthasarathy, 2019). The researcher has categorised the schemes in to two groups, which discussed below –

#### **4.3.1 Centrally Sponsored Schemes**

##### **4.3.1.1 Hostel for Working Women (WWH)**

The Government of India launched the working women's hostel scheme in 1972-73 in order to provide safe accommodation to working women. The goal of the program is to provide secure, accessible and comfortable accommodation for working women living far from home, with day care facilities for their children's. The hostels are situated in urban, semi-urban or even rural areas where women are given job opportunities. The scheme implements through the voluntary organizations, registered societies, public trusts, schools, colleges and universities and local bodies - for construction of new hostel or expansion of hostels for working women. At present total 916 hostels have been sanctioned under the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) and Working Women's Hostel scheme all over the country, benefitting about 68,656 working women. The evaluation study covered 126 working women's hostels across 11 cities financially supported by the MoWCD, Government of India by Dr. Walokar. As per the report in West Bengal 37 such kind of hostel is running. Under this scheme Koch Bihar district have two hostels for working women among them one is for backward class women and both the hostel are situated in the district town (Dept. of Housing, WB).

##### **4.3.1.2 Integrated Child Development Services Scheme**

The scheme was introduced in 1975 under national policy for women and discontinued in 1978, again it was re-launched in tenth five years plan and it was link with Anganwadi centre. The main aims of the scheme are to provide nutrition to the pregnant and lactating women in the age group of 15-44 years and the children up to the age of 6 years to reduced infant mortality rate, to reduce the under five years mortality rate, immunization and pre-

school educational facility to the children. According to the 2011 census, India has around 164.5 million children below the age of 6 years, constituting 13.6% of the population. Forty three percent children under 5 years of age in India are underweight. The program has grown from 33 projects to 5171 blocks in the last 27 years. ICDS is a multi-sectoral initiative involving many agencies of government. Presently the ICDS scheme is the widely spread throughout the country, in 2018-2019 Government sanctioned of Rs. 16,335 cores for the program. As per the data provided by the district profile of Koch Bihar district total 1276 ICDS centre are functioning in the district during 2011-2012.

#### **4.3.1.3 Family Counselling Centres (FCCs)**

The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) conceived the idea of family counselling in the 1980s, while there was a spate of dowry deaths. The Family Counselling Centre (FCC) was introduced in 1983 by CSWB through voluntary organizations across the country, inspired by the mobilization around issues of violence against women especially dowry related case by the women's movements across India. The aim of the FCC was to provide treatment and prevention services to women, especially those who are victims of family violence. FCCs also create awareness and mobilize public opinion on social issues. It works closely with local authorities, police, courts, free cells for legal support, medical and mental hospitals, vocational training centres, etc., short-stay homes, etc. At present, 651 FCCs are functioning in different States and Union Territories in all over the country (MoWCD, Govt. of India). Total 40 FCCs functioning in West Bengal at present, among them one is found in Koch Bihar district run by an NGO name New Bharati Club at Banerwar in Cooch Behar II Block (Dept. of Housing, WB).

#### **4.3.1.4 Support to Training & Employment Programs for Women (STEP)**

The Support to Training & Employment Program for Women (STEP) scheme was launched by the Central Government in 1986-87 with an objective to provide skills and competencies to women that give employability and enable them to become self-employed or self dependent. The Scheme is intended for the women in the age group of 16 years and above across the country. The grant-in-aid scheme is provided to organizations, including NGOs, in the agricultural sector, horticulture, food manufacturing, handicrafts, tailoring, sewing, embroidery, handloom, machine & IT, enabling services along with technical skills and professional skills such as spoken English, gems & gold jewellery, travel and tourism, hospitality which increase the employability and entrepreneurship rural and urban women especially for SC/ST community and the families of below poverty line.

#### **4.3.1.5 SWADHAR GREH Scheme**

In 2002, the Ministry of Women and Child Development introduced the Swadhar programme to rehabilitate women in difficult circumstances. It provides temporary shelter to the distressed women and girls. The beneficiaries include widows, women prisoners released from jail, women survivors from the natural disasters, women victims of terrorist/extremist violence and mentally challenged women those don't have their family support. In addition to providing food, clothing and emotional support and advice to women, to socially and economically rehabilitate destitute women through education, knowledge, skills enhancement and personality development, to arrange for relevant clinical, legal as well as other support for females without any economic and social support through the interventions by linking and networking with other organizations in both Government and non-Government sectors. Earlier the scheme was known by Short Stay Homes (SSH) scheme which started in the year 1969. As the objective of SWADHAR scheme and Short Stay Homes is similar, it has been merged and start a new scheme called SWADHAR GREH from the 2011 financial year It is build in the cyclone affected areas like in Orissa; the war affected areas like of Kargil in Jammu & Kashmir; the earthquake affected areas in Gujarat and the Tsunami affected areas of Tamil Nadu and Andaman & Nicobar Islands and for the women and girls who are suffering from HIV in Chennai (MoWCD, India). Under the scheme total 34 SWADHAR GREH is working in West Bengal, among them Koch Bihar district get one and it is run by an NGO named New Bharati Club at Baneswar in Cooch Behar II block.

#### **4.3.1.6 Gender Budgeting Scheme (GBS)**

Gender Budgeting Scheme is not an accounting exercise but an ongoing process to ensure whether the man and women are equally benefited from the Government development program. The main objective of the scheme is to see the gender gap or gender difference in budget allocation of various policies and programs implemented by the government. It does not advocating for the separate budget but advocating the equality on the budget allocation on gender perspective. Gender Budgeting Cells (GBCs) was mandatory in all Ministries/Departments by the Ministry of Finance in 2004-05 for the institutionalisation of Gender Budget. In 2004-05, the MoWCD adopted "Budgeting for Gender Equity" as a Mission Statement. But the Scheme for Gender Budgeting was launched in the year 2008 .The Ministry has been following a three pronged strategy to pursue the process of Gender Budgeting in the country:

- a. To advocating for setting up of gender budgeting structures/mechanisms in all Ministries/Departments of the Government
- b. Strengthening internal and external capacities and building expertise to undertake gender mainstreaming of policies/schemes/Programs; and
- c. Initiating the exercise of gender auditing of existing Programs, which would then feed into addressing gaps and strengthening service delivery mechanisms.

#### **4.3.1.7 Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)**

Janani Suraksha Yojana is a centrally sponsored safe motherhood scheme under the NRHM Program and was launched in 2005 in India. The primary aim of this method was to reduce maternal and infant mortality by providing cash assistance for special care of the women and the child during pre delivery and post delivery to promote institutional delivery among poor women. This scheme is similar to Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahayog Yojana (IGMSY). ASHA workers have identified as the link between Government and poor pregnant women in 10 low performing states, which includes 8 Empowered Action Group (EAG) states and Assam, Jammu & Kashmir and remaining NE states.

All women in these states irrespective of socioeconomic status are eligible for the cash benefit. The cash incentive is higher in these states than in the other states: Rs.1000 in urban areas and Rs. 1400 in rural areas. In the non-high focus states, the women get cash benefit only for two life birth and they must have BPL card and belongs to SC and ST. JSY also continues to offer a small amount of financial assistance of Rs. 500 for home births for pregnant women (over 19 years) living below the poverty line for the first two births, similar to the national maternity benefit scheme (Devadasan, et. al. 2008). In Koch Bihar district the amount is from Rs. 200 to Rs. 500. As per the data on district profile 4669 women get Rs. 500, 7 women get Rs. 400, 5547 women get Rs. 300 and 5597 pregnant women get Rs. 200 in the year 2010-11 along with the scheme Referral Transport Scheme also included and 3662 women benefited by the scheme and the total expenditure is Rs. 726000.

#### **4.3.1.8 Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA):**

Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGEAG), commonly known as 'SABALA' is a centrally sponsored programs which was initiated on April 1, 2011, for the development of adolescent girls of the country. The MoWCD implemented the program in 205 selected districts on ICDS platforms. The Program has replaced two

existing schemes, i.e. Nutrition Program for Adolescent Girls (NPAG) and Kishori Shakti Yojana (KSY) which was launched in 2007. The main objective of the scheme was an all-round development of adolescent girls of the age groups between 11–18 years to make them self reliant by providing opportunity to learning, access on health and nutrition through various interventions such as health, education, vocational training, etc. The scheme is mainly divided in two part, Nutritional and Non-Nutritional. In nutritional part each girl gets 600 calories, on daily basis for 300 days in a year. It could be given in the form of ‘Take Home Ration’ or ‘Hot Cooked Meal’ to 11–14 years age groups school dropout girls and all girls of 14–18 years age groups. In the Non-Nutritional part, Adolescent Girls 11–18 years those who are out of school, provided ‘Iron Folic Acid’ supplementation, Health check-up and Referral services, Nutrition & Health Education, Counselling/ Guidance on family welfare, Adolescent Reproductive Sexual Health (ARSH), childcare practices and Life Skill Education and vocational training.

#### **4.3.1.9 Women Empowerment and Livelihood Programs in Mid-Gangetic Plains (Priyadarshini)**

The Ministry of Women and Child Development have promoted 4745 Self Help Groups (SHGs) under its project ‘Priyadarshini’ is covering states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar initially and afterwards West Bengal was also included under this scheme.

‘This Program aims to provide assistance to the women of vulnerable groups and adolescent girls for empowerment through formation of women’s Self Help Groups to improved livelihood condition of the women in the selected blocks. Total 48 Community Service Centres (CSCs) is the target in entire project period. NABARD has also established 3 fully operational CSCs per block which makes total 39 CSCs under the project. The estimated cost of the Program is at \$ 32.73 million, a loan of \$ 30 million is funded by IFAD and \$ 2.73 million contributed by the Government of India. Such type of Community Service Provider is found in the Tufanganj Block I of the Koch Bihar District and the namely Bipasha Mahila Sangh. The main objective of the organization is to linkage between all SHGs within the block and links them with bank.

#### **4.3.1.10 Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)**

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) is the welfare and awareness scheme of Government and India introduced in October, 2014. This initiative was taken for

improvement of child sex ratio and promotes the education and protection of girl child. The child sex ratio is declining from 1961 to 2011. In 1961 the child sex ratio of India was 945 girls per 1000 male child but in 2011 it was 918 girls per 1000 male child. The decline trend of child sex ratio clearly shows that till now women are disempowered and neglected in our society. The main reason behind the lowering of the sex ratio is the pre birth and post birth sex selection or sex selective elimination and discrimination against women. So for increasing the child sex ratio and living condition of the girl child, aware the people and support the girl's education Government of India introduced the scheme BetiBachaoBetiPadao. The scheme is being implemented in 100 selected districts having low in Child Sex Ratio across the country. This is a joint initiative of MoWCD, MoHFW and MoHRD.

#### **4.3.1.11 Sukanya Samridhi Yojana**

The scheme is launched in the year 2015 by the Government of India. It is a saving scheme to support the parents of a girl child for her higher education or for the marriage expenses. Under the Scheme an account is to be open in any bank and post office by the parents of a girl child in her name at any time from birth to 10 years age of the child. Maximum two accounts can be open from one family in the name of two girl child. They can deposit minimum Rs. 250 to maximum Rs. 1, 50,000. The rate of interest of the deposited amount varies in every financial year. In the year 2015-16 it was maximum 9.2% but presently rate of interest is 7.6%. After 10 years of age, the girl will operate her account and can draw 50% from her account after reaching 18 years for her higher education or for marriage purpose. The balance reaches maturity after 21 years from the date on which the account was opened. Within 2 months of the launched of the scheme 1, 80, 000 accounts have been open in the various part of the country and 28.38 billion rupees have been deposited in these accounts in the name of their girls (MoWCD, Govt. of India).

#### **4.3.2 State Sponsored Schemes**

##### **4.3.2.1 West Bengal Widow Pension Scheme**

West Bengal Widow Pension Scheme launched in 2010. This scheme provides financial assistance of Rs. 750/- per month to widows who are residents of West Bengal and lack support and care. This scheme shall apply to widow girl/woman of any age groups if they fulfill some condition. The conditions are the widow must be a citizen of India and a

permanent resident of the state and family income should not exceed Rs. 1000 per month from all sources.

#### **4.3.2.2 Anandadhara**

In West Bengal, NRLM has been launched as Anandadhara by in 2012 the Government of West Bengal is the anti-poverty initiative for rural poor people which is implemented through the self-help groups (SHG) organised by the women. Under the scheme, the number of SHGs has increased from 3.18 lakh during 2012-2013 to 4.58 lakh in 2016-2017.

#### **4.3.2.3 Shishu Aloy**

Strength of a Nation is depending on the health and education of the children. Hence, Government of West Bengal launched a scheme for better health care facilities and pre-school learning with well educated teachers, advance teaching technique and equipments. The scheme namely “Shishu Aloy” is launched in 2012, an advanced Anganwadi Centres aimed to make children ready for school at the age of 6 years. Shishu Aloy literally means the abode of children, where they can get security and a stimulating environment for their growth and development. The scheme is launched because several studies indicated that the Pre-School Education of ICDS could not reach up to the mark. The children of the ICDS centre are not ready for school at the age of 6 years (ASER, 2017). The aim of the scheme is to upgrade each and every AWC to that of ‘Shishu Aloy’, so that whole population can avail Early Childhood Care and Education at their door step without any further financial investment. This step is aimed at creating a society without school dropout which will increase literacy rate with standard education and make society with better societal values and health.

There are 10,581,466 children in West Bengal between the age of 0-6 years or 11.07% of the state population, of which 51% are male and 49% are female. There are 1,19,418 operational Anganwadis under the ICDS Scheme. Currently 13000 Anganwadi centres are functioning as ‘Sishu Aloy’, in the state.

#### **4.3.2.4 Kanyashree Prakalpa**

The KanyashreePrakalpa, introduced on 8th March 2013 by the Govt. of West Bengal, to improve the life and social and economic status of girls belonging to economically backward families and reading in classes from VIII to XII through cash transfer to them

.and by delaying their marriages until the legal age i.e. 18 years. Under the scheme the unmarried girls between the age group of 13 to 18 years gets annual scholarship of Rs. 500 of class VIII to XII presently Rs. 750 in any Government recognised regular or equivalent open school or vocational or technical school or institutes. The One time Grant of Rs. 25000 is provide to the unmarried girls who completed 18 years on or after 2013 and enrolled themselves open school/college recognized in the state or undertaking vocational/technical training or athletic activity or is a Home prisoner enrolled under J.J. 2000 Act. Annual family income of the girl should not more than Rs. 1, 20,000. If the girl has lost parents the bar for family is not applicable. If the girl is physically challenged (40% disability) then the income bar is not applicable. This scheme bring some hope to reduced child marriage and improve the educational status, health status and contribute towards the empowerment of the girls in the State. Under the scheme approximately 18 Lakhs girl students get annual scholarship every year and approximately 3.5 Lakhs girls get one time grant each year. The total allotted fund is Rs. 408526220 and total utilised amount is Rs. 408519220 as per the Kanyashree annual report of 2015- 2016 published by Government of West Bengal. For Koch Bihar district the target for annual scholarship of Rs. 750 is 70000 each year and the already sanctioned number of scholarship is 76619 which are more than the target during 2015-16 years. Target for one time scholarship of Rs. 25000 is 14000 and already sanctioned number is 13316 (Kanyashree Annual Report, 2016). In Koch Bihar district, 43.48% of girls utilized their one-time grant for higher education.

#### **4.3.2.5 Swabalamban**

Swabalamban is a scheme by the Government of West Bengal has introduced vocational training for oppressed and abused women, victims of trafficking, sex workers, the transgender community and women in moral danger in the 18-35 age groups through NGOs and companies. If required, the upper age limit could be reduced to 45 years. The scheme has following broad objectives these are i) Developing skill for generating income of the women & girls in crisis situation. ii) Providing various facilities with the help of Local Government for all round development of the women & girls. iii) Create alternative source of employment to women & girls in tribal areas, closed tea gardens, hills, islands and slums without any overlapping of similar Program. For creating employment opportunities to the women for successive plans have emphasised. This assistance mainly aims at providing skill development training to rural & urban women & girls for employment generation leading to income generation.

#### **4.3.2.6 Shiksha Shree**

The scheme is launched by Govt. of West Bengal in 2014. 'Shikshashree' scheme of providing assistance to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe day-scholar students of Class V-VIII. The combination of the current Book Grant and Maintenance Grant programs is included. The method of offering aid to the targeted population is formulated in the name of 'Shiksha Shree' in order to provide the best assistance to SC and ST students in a smooth, clear and successful manner. It is available in any state, government-aided and all government recognised schools in West Bengal to the day scholar students studying in class V-VIII. The aim of the program is to provide financial assistance of Rs. 500 to Rs. 800 per annum to the Scheduled Caste students and Rs. 800 per annum for the Scheduled Tribe students, reading in Classes V to VIII to enhance their participation in pre-matric phases and minimize the drop-out rate, especially in the case of girl students.

#### **4.3.2.7 Sabooj Sathi Prakalpa**

In a country like India, the bicycle can potentially change the quality of lives of the people, particularly women, in a radical way. A bicycle can reduce not just time but also the severity of threats to women's health. And, perhaps the most important possibility that the bicycle offers is to enhance educational opportunities of students attending high schools or failing to attend them owing to the problem of accessibility (Muralidharan & Prakash, 2013). So the Government of West Bengal announced the scheme Sabooj Sathi in the financial year 2015-2016. Under the scheme bi-cycles was distributed among students of class IX to XII studying in Govt. run and Govt. aided Schools in the State. The main aims of the scheme are to encourage and empower to the young students to study and to achieve new feats in future especially girls and reduce drop outs in higher education.

In case of receiving bi-cycles in Sabooj Sathi Scheme, the general trend of girls' outnumbering boys at high school level (Pratichi Trust, 2017) is very much reflected in the gender wise disaggregated number of the recipients of bicycle. Of the total 3,423,004 number of recipients in the first two phases the ratio of girls and boys stands at 51 and 49. While among the total recipients girls outnumber boys (51 girls to 49 boys), and indicate towards higher girls' participation at high school level. In Koch Bihar district total 154470 cycles is distributed among them 46.5 percent boys and 53.5 percent girls (MoWCD, Govt.of WB). A study was conducted by Biswas (2018) to examine the impact of Sabooj Sathi on Development of Girls Education in West Bengal. The study shows that the Sabooj Sathi scheme remove the maximum dropout of the Girls and to empower the girls' students in higher education.

#### **4.3.2.8 Sabuj Shree**

In 2016 by the Government of West Bengal launched an innovative scheme called as Sabujshree to fulfil the two noble causes of protecting and conservation of environmental and support for girls and children. Under the scheme a sapling is handed over to the mother of a new-born girl child for free of cost to plant in some place where it can be taken care of like her girl. During the marriage the tree could be helpful if they sold it. So this scheme is fulfilling some objectives such as increase in green cover, improving the awareness for environment and asset creation for girl child.

As per Government report in 2016-17 total 5,50,272 saplings has been handed over to the mother of new born children. In 2018-19 the number has increased to 9,07,049 saplings which has been handed over.

#### **4.3.2.9 Rupashree Prakalpa**

The Government of West Bengal launched “Rupashree” on 31st January 2018. This scheme provides one time financial grant of Rs. 25,000/- will be given to girls above 18 years old for marriage purpose. The eligible criteria of the scheme are the girl must be above 18 years, the family income of the girl’s should not exceed Rs. 1, 50,000 per annum and the applicant must be a permanent resident of West Bengal.

A study conducted on Murshidabad district to see how far the scheme helped girls in attaining their education. The study reveals that there is a significant impact to remove the child marriage, economically support the girl’s parents and increase the girl’s education through Rupashree scheme for college girls’ students in the study area (Biswas, 2018b).

#### **4.3.2.10 Pathsathi**

The scheme Pathsathi is launched by the government of West Bengal. The main views of the project to pay attention to the women deprive from toilet facilities during travelling by road which is minimum requirement of people in a civilised society. So Government of West Bengal gives emphasis on the important issue and implements this project. Under the scheme pay and use toilets, waiting rooms, night shelters and restaurants are being constructed by the side of road mainly beside National Highways, State Highways and other major roads at every 50 km. The Pathsathi is run by the self help groups, societies, NGOs and West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation (WBTDC). 67 such Pathsathi are already been constructed by the Government in various part of the State. The schemes improve job opportunities and also improve the economic and living condition of the

women of the SHGs and the societies who run these Pathsathi. In Koch Bihar district 2 Pathsathi have been found and both are found in Mekhliganj block near teen bigha corridor.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter intends to discuss the various schemes and programs which were initiated both by the central and state Government in India as the most of the women faced malnutrition, poor health condition, mistreatment in household, low educational status, less economic support, unsuccessful marriage and divorce are the main evil of their life. Various measures have been taken by the Government to solve these problems which were taken during different five year plans (one to twelve) has been discussed to understand the evolution of women empowerment in the country since independence. There have been various schemes taken by the both Union and State Government to empower the women in the country. To ensure better livelihood and equal opportunities to the women the Government of West Bengal has also taken different schemes and initiatives among all the schemes few are working properly and few of them is not visible in the ground as these are not implemented properly in the ground. Various legislations have enacted to protect women against any kind of discrimination although the situation is still same.

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