

A Person's Perspective on 'Gender Role in Development Governance'

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"There is no limit to what we, as women, can accomplish."
Michelle Obama

Photo: Mahesh Shrestha

Women play crucial role in the economic and social development. But the role of women is hidden, not counted. They are discriminated in the society and within household. Women's role remains undervalued, unrecognized and underpaid. Their role is still perceived as a secondary activity even when it is the main source of family income. Women themselves remain unaware of their rights, not presented in consultation and policy formulations and underrepresented in gender role in development governance and big position.

Women's historically disadvantage position has led to their limited access to education and employment opportunities compared to men and provide equitable solutions to encounter the equality by providing opportunities to empower women in the workplace and beyond.

The integration of women in all sectors of economy has become a matter of serious concern. The recent changes in governance system for example, witnessed a tremendous change brought about through women's political consciousness. The local election has changed the political landscape, at least at the local levels, for Nepali women. There is the fact that 91 percent of the deputy positions – deputy mayors in municipalities and vice chairpersons in rural municipalities were won by women, but men won 98 percent of chief positions- mayors and chairpersons (Election Commission 2017). This was because of the 753 mayors/ chairperson positions across the country; women were nominated for mayor/chairperson in only 190 positions, i.e. only 25 percent of the total positions. This can largely be attributed to an overarching patriarchal socialization that

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played out in the selection and nomination process for the two key leadership positions. The public perception towards elected women representatives remains clouded by the normative construct of gender roles and responsibilities. Reserved quotas still appear to be the only way Nepali women seem to be able to receive proportional nomination. For example, in the non- quota positions as ward members of 13,484 positions across Nepal, only 2 percent were won by women, mainly because they were not even nominated for such positions since quota nomination did not apply to these positions.² Despite decades of progressive policies- proposed and promoted by various Nepali governments as well as the international donor community aimed to uplifting Nepali women, Nepal remains to be a very patriarchy society. Patriarchy hurts the lives and forward momentum of Nepali women in several ways. It continues to hinder Nepal's attempts to become a truly liberal democracy. Increased female representatives in recent Nepali parliaments have been accompanied by criticisms of tokenism. The argument is that there is no meaningful participation from female elected representatives because nowadays many issues and violence against women are rampant. The victims are often girls between ages of 7 and 11, (age 3 babies also) and rapists are frequently close family members and relatives. Again actually we don't have official statistics on domestic violence but Nepali women mostly rural women are affected by gender violence. The domestic violence is on the rise. This shows the negative attitude of men towards women. Is this development activity or destructive development that have attacked women's rights and dignity? So, there is much more to be done.

When we talk of development, we must take into account the question of empowerment. This means empowerment of the socially, economically and culturally disadvantaged sections of our society. We must include professional women who need to be incorporated into higher decision making level that affect policies and program. Gender biases within the institution can't be ignored. In Nepal absence of women in different level is quite high. The new change in the policies and program will hopefully bring into focus these unconventional issues of gender bias.

Actually speaking, gender and development have become areas of concerns at global, regional and national levels. Building up a solid knowledge based on women and development is one of the main requirement for a sound gender approach to development. It is therefore much awareness these days in our country of the vital and potential role of women in Nepal's development.³

Being a women organization, Manushi's goal is to bring about a fundamental shift in the current assumptions, values and brief regarding women and their role in society and institution. We strive to create an environment in which women's potential will be effectively recognized and used. We also believe that gender relations can't be approached from female side alone. Dialogue on gender prospective requires a space where men and women with mutual interest can interact freely and share their professional experiences. The men's response has proved that many myths about men and women are result of conforming to traditional belief and that there is adequate space for a positive change in attitude Gender in corporate men and women.



2 Election Commission, 2017

3 Men, Women and Development, CWD, Kathmandu, 1991

We believe that internationalization of gender perspective in development programs and policies is an essential ingredient in the entire process of development. Not only it is essential for people to be aware of their potential, what is more important, they need to be sensitized about gender as an analytical tool to management of development. The creativity and commitment of the individuals provide the basis for social continuity and change.

Manushi is a Fair Trade Guaranteed Organization. World Fair Trade Organization has clear policy and plan to promote gender equality, 1) to improve the situation of women within member organizations through policies of equality and equal rights, 2) to ensure that all Fair Trade relationships between organizations and producers are examined with a gender lens, including identifying the differential impacts of business transactions to women and men and the gendered distribution of power and 3) to incorporate gender into the advocacy agendas of member organizations, as a s to influence policy and decision makers to address the structural barriers which keep women from realizing their inherent human rights. We hope all the efforts will promote a better understanding of gender relations.⁴

Gender is socially contracted not biologically determined. It is socially culture, history, and religious/customs and the process of socialization, our value system, behavior patterns by which are playing the crucial role in Gender and Development.

There is a great need for quantities and quality research to evaluate the current development situation and to analyze data in term of gender. All levels of community should be aware of gender issues. The most vital need is for all

changes in attitude to be accompanied by corresponding changes in people's behavior, minimize efforts would be rendered ineffectual.

Last but not least, we must keep in our mind, in our plans and projects, a way to target people without segregation, to develop an integrated approach. Men's and women's needs in the third world are neither the same nor different, we must use caution in our part of the world, to think that we have advanced so far that we are equal. The needs are simultaneously but not exclusively different.

The urgent needs for research in Nepal are gender inequalities in society, women and power structure; women and conflict in society, the allocation of work and resources in the family attitude towards women's work, forms of oppression; rape the implant issues, prostitution, human trafficking, migration patterns, mobility of women, legal research, family law system and property rights.

Women need to be incorporated and integrated to development planning and programing in all third world countries in order to appropriately allocate scarce resources among the diverse sectors of society. It is also imperative to develop our own perspective firmly about women's lives to explain the causes and nature of the existing inequalities and the social conditions that nature them, in order to obtain favorable result.

We need to support the development of women entrepreneurship from micro level to top level. Studies have shown that when women gainsaccess to their own financial freedom, they are lifted out of poverty, children begin to become healthier and overall economic status of a country improves.⁵ As for example, Manushi



4 WFTO Asia Gender Policy, 2016

5 Margarita Hakobyan, 2017

micro credit program has focused in their credit planning on micro enterprise development. The women are coming up. They have developed their micro business; have also established to promote women entrepreneurship which can be considered as good footsteps towards women as well as the country's development. Some of the indicators are:

- » Self confidence development
- » Power of decision making
- » Access to control over resources
- » Income increasing
- » Improved innovation
- » Reducing poverty scale

Through micro enterprise women can eventually build strong business, solidarity their position in the local business as well as in the economy.⁶

Men and women are equally responsible and can equally contribute to the enhancement of quality life of people. All of us should be able to understand the gender concept or at least familiarized with the concept. A forward looking gender plan is necessary for our lives and careers.

References:

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6 Micro Credit Summit, 2017

