

## **EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) AND NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020**

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### **Abstract**

Women's empowerment has emerged as a crucial topic that cannot be disregarded in the coordinated effort towards sustainable development through Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. It is frequently asserted that the finest approach to comprehending a civilisation, its advancements, and its flaws is to look at the standing and position of women in society. From women sages and intellectuals during the old era to the present-day women in the military, IT industry, politics, business, and other important fields while juggling their roles as mothers, wives, and daughters, Indian women have come a long way. Modernisation has not been a simple process. To become stronger and more autonomous, women in India have had to struggle against the country's conventional male-dominated society. Even if all of these are positive developments, there are still a lot of rapes, workplace harassment lawsuits, and dowry deaths. The bulk of the population is still illiterate and unaware of their rights. Giving women rights is only one aspect of women's empowerment; other aspects include economic independence, gender equality, women's rights, health and safety, and education. It is now a fundamental objective for any society that wants to advance holistically. India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 acknowledged the value of women's education and offered suggestions. Effective implementation is still in process. In light of this, this article emphasises women's advancement, position, and empowerment in India through the effective implementation of SDGs and NEP 2020.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, SDGs, Women, NEP 2020

### **Introduction**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to address major issues including poverty, inequality, and violence against women in order to alter the trajectory of the twenty-first century. With many targets explicitly acknowledging women's equality and empowerment as the goal and a component of the solution, women play a crucial role in achieving all of the SDGs. The SDG-5 is a stand-alone gender goal which is focused on accomplishing women's empowerment. To protect women's rights globally, significant legislative and legal reforms are required. By 2014, a record 143 nations had made gender equality a condition of their constitutions. Gender discrimination is still ingrained in social and legal conventions in many countries. In every aspect, women are entitled to equality. It needs to be ingrained in all legal systems and supported by laws and legal procedures, including preventative measures like quotas. Since gender equality affects every aspect of

life, efforts must be made to eradicate gender prejudice wherever it manifests. The main objective of SDG-5 is to promote women's economic development and political leadership. Moreover, United Nations (UN) Women encourages more women to vote, hold political office, and appear on ballots. While emphasising the need to acknowledge, lessen, and redistribute the burden of unpaid care on women, the United Nations also help women obtain respectable employment, build wealth, and have an impact on institutions and public policy. The UN support the leadership and involvement of women in humanitarian endeavours, such as measures to maintain peace and security and to avert war. Additionally, through the 'HeForShe' campaign of the UN, men and boys engage and urge them to become advocates for gender equality, while also making sure that governments take into account the needs of women and girls in their planning and budgeting. The United Nations Charter's ideal of equality serves as the foundation for UN Women's efforts to end discrimination against women and girls, empower them, and achieve gender equality.

Following its 1947 declaration of independence, India had to restructure itself and deal with the economic, social, and difficulties in education brought on by centuries of colonial control. The post-independence period has seen a number of initiatives to enhance raising literacy rates and promote education, especially measures with communist or socialist influences. Although these initiatives were intended to ensure universal access to education, the emphasis on gender equality, and women were not always sufficiently literate. As of now, India has made notable strides towards raising the literacy rates of women. and giving women more power via education and other endeavours. The government and other institutions have launched initiatives to support women's education and close the literacy gap between the sexes. The NEP-202 and SDGs of the United Nations have launched various policies to empower women education, rights, equality and power to work with inclusion.

### **Empowering Women through NEP-2020**

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to advance inclusive and equitable education for everyone, with a particular emphasis on those from low-income backgrounds. Despite initiatives to educate women, the enrolment ratio declines at the secondary and upper secondary levels, and the dropout rate for girls after secondary school stays high. The guideline acknowledges that among the factors causing females to drop out of school early are problems like the start of their periods and unclean restrooms. The NEP 2020 seeks to pinpoint distinct societal factors, like gender stereotypes, practices and attitudes that support the unfair treatment of girls, especially in the context of education. By tackling these problems, the strategy aims to stop concerns about girls and other marginalised genders from becoming less important after being appropriated by Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). The hiring of teachers, especially in rural regions, is a crucial component of tackling gender inequality in education.

The NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on implementing innovative approaches that take qualifications and merit into account while making sure that suitable recruitment platforms are available for female teachers. This action can support the development of an inclusive and diverse teaching staff. It is also believed that effective teacher preparation is

essential to guaranteeing high-quality education. In order to successfully counsel the families of female students, the policy acknowledges the significance of appropriately training educators and facilitators, including Anganwadi workers. It is important to involve the family in therapy since the disparity between an educated girl kid and her illiterate family can result in a variety of issues, such as opposition to the girl's continued education or decisions that may not be optimal for her education. The NEP 2020 suggests a number of actions and measures to accomplish these objectives:

1. **Gender Inclusion Fund:** The creation of a "Gender Inclusion Fund" to offer girls a fair and high-quality education. The fund will offer both discretionary and formula-based funding, with formula grants helping women and girls access education by concentrating on priorities set by the national government.
2. **Special Education Zones:** To guarantee education for educationally disadvantaged groups, such as those based on gender, sociocultural background, or geographic identity, areas designated as "Special Education Zones" will have sizable populations of members of these categories.
3. **Scholarships:** In order to streamline the application process, scholarships will be made available to students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups, including gender, through a single agency and website.
4. **Women Leaders in Education:** The policy answers that female teachers may be powerful role models for school-age girls and seeks to promote women's involvement and leadership in education.
5. **Gender-Neutral Curriculum:** In order to dispel gender stereotypes and advance equal treatment of the sexes in the educational system, NEP 2020 calls for a gender-neutral curriculum.
6. **Safety and Security Measures:** The policy places a strong emphasis on school girls' safety and security both on and off campus. Institutions of higher learning would have to offer a harassment-free atmosphere and hold awareness campaigns on gender issues.
7. **Gender-Sensitive Classroom Management:** Understanding pertinent laws, such as the Child Marriage Act, Maternity Benefit Act, POCSO Act, and Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace, will be part of the NEP 2020.

To empower women in the social and education sector, NEP 2020 is a thorough strategy to overcome gender inequality by recognising certain issues and putting focused tactics into place to make sure that all children, particularly girls from underprivileged homes, have access to high-quality education and are free to pursue their academic objectives without needless hindrance.

### **Empowering Women through Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Equality of gender is a right. The finest opportunity we have to address some of the most important issues of our day, such as the economic crisis, the lack of access to healthcare, climate change, violence against women, and the intensifying conflicts, is to fulfil this right. In addition to being more impacted by these issues, women also have the leadership and ideas to address them. Too many women are still hampered by gender

prejudice, which also hinders our globe. A path for sustainable progress that leaves no one behind is embodied by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were accepted by world leaders in 2015.

Achieving women's empowerment and gender equality is essential to all 17 objectives. We can only achieve justice and inclusion, inclusive economies, and the preservation of our shared environment for present and future generations by guaranteeing the rights of women and girls across all the objectives. UN Women's 2018 flagship report, "Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda," is included in this editorial bundle. It includes information, anecdotes, films, and publications that highlight the importance of gender equality for each of the Sustainable Development Goals and how they impact the lives of women and girls around the world.

1. **Economic Freedom:** The countries that are transcendent of gender roles and encourage women's economic engagement are by far more prosperous. One essential component of women's empowerment is economic freedom. The goal is to motivate women to make economic contributions in addition to their domestic duties. It gives people the freedom to decide for themselves and their kids what kind of lifestyle and standard of living they want. Several benefits can be seen when women are economically empowered and given equal opportunities to engage in the workforce and start their own businesses. Since women make up a sizable share of the world's population, their greater involvement in the workforce may result in a larger workforce, which may boost the economy. Economies may access a larger pool of human capital and increase productivity by leveraging the abilities and skills of women in the workforce. Women and other diverse teams contribute a range of viewpoints and ideas that can stimulate creativity and innovation and propel economic progress. Women are more inclined to invest in their own and their families' health and education when they have access to financial resources, which benefits economic growth over the long run. Because it goes against established gender roles and conventions, advancing women's economic empowerment is directly related to attaining gender equality and societal advancement. To close the gender wage gap and advance equity in the workplace, it is imperative that women be paid equally for equal labour. Giving women access to high-quality education and training opportunities is crucial to giving them the tools they need to contribute to the economy. For women to launch and expand enterprises, it is essential to make financial services like banking and financing more accessible. Women can engage more fully in the workforce by putting in place policies that promote work-life balance, such as paid parental leave and reasonably priced childcare. Creating an inclusive and fair economy requires addressing institutional and social barriers that prevent women from participating in the economy. Encouraging women to start their own businesses requires giving them access to capital, education, and networking opportunities.
2. **Women's access to education, training, and skill development** raises human capital overall, which is a major factor in economic expansion. Women's purchasing power rises in tandem with their economic empowerment. Consumer spending may rise as a result,

stimulating the economy. Supporting women in launching and expanding their own companies can result in the development of new industries and jobs, which will boost the economy even more. Because it gives them the ability to support their families and themselves, economic empowerment of women can aid in the reduction of poverty and income disparity.

3. **Women's Participation in National Development:** In many areas of society, women's contributions have historically been underestimated. However, the importance of women in the advancement of the country has gained prominence as we move into more modern times. Women are recognised for their significant contributions in a number of fields, including politics, education, health, community, environment, and peacebuilding. Women make a substantial contribution to politics with their viewpoint that supports diversity, inclusivity, and gender parity. They campaign for laws that promote gender equality and fight for equal rights and opportunities. **Participation in Policy Making:** It is crucial to include women in the policy-making process because their greater presence can result in reforms and policies that are sensitive to women's issues and have a direct impact on the development of the country. Additionally, in international political dynamics, women's leadership abilities—such as collaboration, problem-solving, and moral decision-making—are becoming more acknowledged and appreciated. The Important cogs in the empowerment wheel include allowing women to work in all professions, recognising their accomplishments, protecting their health and safety, defending their right to an education, and enacting legislation that protects them from harm. Respecting the complementary responsibilities that women play rather than dynamiting gender disparities is what equality is all about. Equal opportunities for women to demonstrate their abilities should be provided, free from ingrained prejudices and preconceptions. The first significant step towards women's empowerment is framed by valuing men's and women's skills and abilities while firmly acknowledging their distinctions. For women to develop and prosper, it is crucial to ensure their protection. The legal framework is provided by women's rights, which empower women, defend their rights, and shield them from abuse and discrimination. To reduce injustice, abuse, and prejudice, effective legislation protecting women's rights is crucial. The correct application of these laws should be prioritised in order to ensure justice and women's empowerment.
4. **The Role of Women in Education:** Ensuring that everyone has access to high-quality education is essential to accomplishing a fundamental component of national growth, and women are vital to this field. In addition to being able to improve her children's health and lifestyle, an educated girl also recognises the critical role that education will play in her future generations. In addition, educating a girl child will immediately lower rates of child marriage, domestic and sexual violence in families, and infant and maternal death. Additionally, a girl with greater education is more likely to take part in political debates, gatherings, and decision-making processes that result in the establishment of a more democratic and representative government. Additionally, educated women are more likely to make wiser choices about their marriage, health, and children, which benefits

social transformation. Women do in fact use education as a tool to free themselves from patriarchal conventions, which leads to a progressive change in society. Since education is the cornerstone of any progressive society, it empowers women to take charge of their own destiny. Whether it's improved health, lower crime rates, or economic prosperity, an educated woman can play a key role in bringing about a revolutionary transformation in her community. Therefore, promoting female education is a "no-brainer" when it comes to empowering women.

5. **The Role of Women in Health:** Another important area in which women have a major role is health. In their roles as physicians, nurses, midwives, and other healthcare professionals, women are spearheading the fight against illnesses and preserving the health of their countries. Women's roles are also vital in the fields of family planning, child health, and maternal health. Globally, women-led health initiatives and policy-making are improving health outcomes, especially for underprivileged and rural communities.
6. **The Role of Women in Community Service:** Women participate in community service in a variety of capacities, from leaders to carers. Around the world, women devote a disproportionate amount of time to unpaid caregiving and household chores compared to men. It is indisputable that women are capable of planning, coordinating, and spearheading community-based projects. By fostering communal development and strengthening the social fabric, these initiatives aid in the advancement of the country. Women's participation in national development also includes their contributions to conservation and environmental management. Research indicates that Indigenous women contribute significantly to conservation initiatives. These ladies are custodians of their surroundings and possess a profound grasp of biodiversity. Women are involved in conservation efforts, climate-smart agriculture, sustainable waste management, and lobbying for changes to environmental policies.
7. **Democracy's Essential Role in Women's Empowerment:** Women play an important role in politics because of their distinct viewpoint, which encourages variety, inclusivity, and gender parity. They campaign for laws that promote gender equality and fight for equal rights and opportunities. It is critical to include women in the policy-making process because their greater presence can result in reforms and policies that are sensitive to women's issues and have a direct impact on the development of the country. In addition, women's leadership abilities—such as collaboration, problem-solving, and moral judgment—are becoming more acknowledged and appreciated in international political dynamics. These days, it is impossible to separate the ideas of democracy and women's empowerment. Democracy, expressed as the voice of the people, provides a forum for women to speak their priorities, rights, and demands, resulting in changes to social norms and political outreach. Democracy provides the framework for passing laws that empower women, and legislation is a vital tool in this regard. In democracies, to protect women's rights, outlaw discrimination, and achieve gender equality, numerous laws have been passed. Both the creation of laws and the political and social commitment to carry them

out are crucial. This is where democracy's strength rests, enabling the development and implementation of laws and policies that promote women's empowerment and gender equality.

Sustainable Growth of society makes it difficult to accomplish sustainable development without empowering half of the population. Women make up the world's population. Democracy has a major role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN by promoting women's equality and rights. In order to promote sustainable development, women must be included in the political, economic, and social realms. Democracy encourages a common goal for a sustainable future because of its innate ideals of equality, inclusivity, and involvement. Achieving the interrelated objectives of social justice, economic development, and environmental sustainability that characterise sustainable development requires the active involvement and empowerment of women. Everyone lives in a more equitable, inclusive, and affluent society when women's roles and rights are acknowledged and upheld. In order to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, democratic processes of participation, representation, and legislation are essential. Democracy raises the profile of women's issues by having women in leadership roles. It makes use of its legislative authority to establish a space that is safe and welcoming for women, so promoting social equality and sustainable development. Creating a balanced world is a continuous task that is necessary for democracy to fully embody the idea of "government of the people, by the people, for the people" in its broadest sense.

### **Conclusion**

Women play a wide range of vital roles in the growth of the country. In addition to upholding human rights commitments, acknowledging and highlighting their efforts in these areas greatly advances economic growth, national development, international peace, and stability. Although there is still more work to be done in the pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment, there is hope as society grows to recognise the comprehensive contribution that women make to the advancement of the country. On the whole, acknowledging women as essential to the advancement of the country makes economic sense in addition to gender logic. Consequently, it is not only morally right but also wise to invest in women's economic, educational, political, and social empowerment. As a fundamental requirement for the collective advancement of society, women's empowerment must be ingrained in the social structure.

The foundations of our existence, advancement, and prosperity are knitted together with their contentment, growth, and prosperity. In light of this, it becomes our responsibility to secure their liberation, where women's empowerment is not only a goal but a reality. Future generations' sustainable behaviours and attitudes are greatly influenced by the contributions made by women to many facets of society, particularly in the areas of education, the home, and the community. Sustainable practices and environmental conservation initiatives can be more successfully pursued when women's participation in these fields is acknowledged and empowered. Women frequently play a major part in their children's education and socialisation. More opportunities for women should be made

available in the "green economy," which encompasses industries like eco-tourism, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy. This promotes ecologically responsible behaviours in addition to economic prosperity.

It takes ongoing efforts to give women equal access to education and support so they can prosper and advance the country in order to create an inclusive and empowered society. India can honour the accomplishments of its legendary women and advance gender equality by acknowledging and learning from its past. Encouraging more girls to finish their secondary school will allow India to capitalise on their potential to enhance the nation's social and economic conditions. There is a chance that NEP 2020 will significantly advance women's education and empowerment in India. It is crucial to remember that the NEP's implementation will determine its success. The government must guarantee that the NEP is implemented, that the policies and procedures put in place are truly successful in advancing gender equality, and that there are readily available resources. As a whole, the NEP 2020 is a step in the right direction for Indian women's education and empowerment. But it's crucial to remember that the NEP's implementation will determine its success. The government must make sure that sufficient funds are available to assist the NEP's implementation and that the laws and procedures put in place truly work to advance women's empowerment and gender equality.

In conclusion, acknowledging and promoting women's contributions to sustainable development is important for both gender equality and maximising the possibility of constructive social and environmental change. We can use women as catalysts for sustainable development by addressing cultural norms, offering education and training, and encouraging inclusivity in decision-making processes. A holistic approach to the development and empowerment of women is created; however, it becomes a primary responsibility of humans to treat them humanely by implementing these measures.

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