

Unit 11

Gender Perspective on Development

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Learning Objectives

In this unit you will critically analyse and understand:

- the importance of gender perspective in development;
- gender perspectives and development planning in India; and
- policies and strategies which address gender issues.

11.1 Introduction

This unit on gender perspectives on development, in a way, is a continuation of our previous unit, which is on social and human development. The human development approach goes beyond growth as an indicator of development, to assessing other more important indicators, which directly address the issue of well-being and empowerment. It asks the question who gets what from the development process. This unit too addresses the same question with reference to women.

Though women constitute nearly half of the total human population their share in the fruits of development is abysmally low. This low status has raised the issue of what development ought to be. Gender perspective, it is felt, has to be an integral part of any development process. Women have always been a part of the survival of any community.

Not only have they taken up the primary responsibility of rearing the young and integrating them into the ways of society they have also worked towards the fulfilment of the everyday needs of the family and the community. Women cook, clean, wash, gather food and fuel, till land, work in offices as labour, etc. However, only some of their work is acknowledged. This has been the root problem of looking at women as separate entities and not as an integral part of the development process. With increasing debates on these women's issues there has been an acknowledgement for the need to add a gender perspective into the development discourse. In this unit we will address issues related to this, we will also look at the Indian scenario and examine various planning initiatives to see how far we have reached in making women an integral part of development discourse. Before we go on to do that we will first try and understand what we mean by the term gender.

11.2 The Concept of Gender

When we use the terms male and female, we commonly refer to the anatomical differences between these two sexes. When we use the word gender, however, we are going beyond anatomical or biological differences between male and female to their socially constituted roles and status. For example when one uses the word femininity the social expectations of feminine qualities may be nurturing, caring, delicate, irrational intuitive, submissive, non aggressive, etc. When a woman does not meet these social expectations of feminine attributes, she may be considered not female enough or transgressing her role either as daughter, mother, sister, all of which have some role expectations. These roles as you might be aware are socially conditioned and arise of structures of power. In a patriarchal set up the entire system is geared towards keeping women at a lower level. The tilt of power and status in such institutional differentiation clearly favours the male, with the establishment of asymmetric relationships of dominance. However, despite such divisions being almost universal, nuances and impacts of gender varies significantly across situations and contexts. As a variable of social stratification, gender has to be analysed in association with other variables like class, race, ethnicity and caste.

Gender relations contribute to the social meaning of female and male and thus depend on the considerations of appropriate behaviour and activity for women and men. The focus of gender in practice is on social roles and the nature of interaction between women and men. The valid understanding then is that gender relations are also social relations and not biological or natural. When accessing development with reference to women we are in essence trying to understand this gender aspect of women.

Having understood the term gender let us now look at how women's issue came up in development discourse. Gender is one of key terms for social analysis. It is important to understand the social, economic, political and cultural forces that determine how men and women participate in and benefit from the development process.

Box 11.1: Simone de Beauvoir (1949) on "Second Sex"

In her book *Second Sex*, Simone De Beauvoir, a French writer and feminist wrote: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological or economic state determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilisation as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as another".

Like all other social relations, gender relationships are also affected by and have an effect on, how societies and economies change over time (Pearson, 1992). The processes of socialisation and social relations of production have a distinct impact on the location of women's lives across countries and regions.

11.3 Women, Gender and Development

Much of the formative intersection between the ideas of feminism and women in development took place during the context of the U.N. "Decade of Women" -1976-85. "Equality, Development and Peace was the slogan that was proposed at the International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City in 1975. Equality was seen as an issue that came from industrialised West, peace from the Eastern Bloc and development as a key issue that concerned Third World women. What exactly constituted key women's issue was constantly being debated and it was eventually realised that women's issue should not be kept as a separate section (see Box 11.2 for more details).

Box 11.2: Emerging issues in U.N. Decade of Women-1976-85

Women were proposing new visions of development towards which several international meetings in the late 1970s and 1980s made public declaration about feminist visions of development from a global perspective. Following are some of the major international meetings with their vision and plan:

Asian and Pacific Centre for Women and Development (APCWD), 1979, held in Bangkok was sponsored by UN. "It proposed one of the first global definitions of feminism as an ideology with two long term goals:(1) The achievement of women's equality, dignity and freedom of choice through women's power to control their own lives within and outside the home and (2) the removal of all forms of inequity and oppression through the creation of a more just, social and economic order nationally and internationally"(cf Tinker 1990: 77). One of the paramount goals of feminist vision of development was empowerment of women.

Workshop on "Developing Strategies for the Future: Feminist Perspectives", 1980, held in Stony Point, New York. It approached development as political process and stated dissatisfaction with limited definition of development, which confined itself to economic indices such as GDP. It asked for integrationist approach and empowerment of women.

"Dakar Declaration on Another Development with Women", 1982, was held in Senegal. The declaration "believed that the most fundamental and underlying principle of Another Development should be that of structural transformation, a notion which challenges the economic, political and cultural forms of domination, at the national, international and household level" (Ibid: 79).

Nairobi End of the U.N. Decade World Conference, 1985: A Third World Women's Group was formed to define the issues of development from the "vantage point of women"- DAWN(Development Alternatives With Women for a New Era). It called for cultural diversity of women's movement and issues but a structural unity in trying to understand subordination. It emphasized the active involvement of women in structural transformation and a deep commitment to self-reliance, which rests on indigenous culture rather than on Western models.

Source: Tinker 1999.

It is this continuous realisation of women's integral role in development process that brought in concepts such as "Women in Development". The Women in Development (WID) approach promotes women's integration in development efforts by focusing on women, looking at how the process of development has made an impact on the position of women in society. The study of women in development focus upon development and the economics of development i.e., the distribution economic benefits rather than its growth singularly. The key question in such contexts is essentially "who gets what". Indicators of human development show that women have an unequal share in the processes of development and they are often endowed with negative development merits. When resources are stretched, then, it is women, the most marginalized in the first place, who suffer first and most. Women have the smallest share of the resources pie of the world; when its pie shrinks women's losses are greatest". (Seager and Olson 1986). The World Bank's early Women in Development programme tended to treat women as a special target group of beneficiaries in the various projects and programmes. However "a major criticism of the Women in Development approach is that it treats women as beneficiaries. It starts from the premise that women have been excluded from development. But women's time, energy, work and skills are involved in every aspect of the development process; it is the inequality of gender relations and the continuing subordination of women that ensure that women's contribution is not matched by recognition and remuneration in social, political and economic terms" (Pearson 1992).

The problem with the women in development approach is that it targets women in order to make them a part of mainstream development while ignoring the fact that women are already an intrinsic part of the development process. Women are always there. The understanding of women's 'free labour' is that there is no need to compensate it, and subsequently there is no cost in terms of resources allocated. The 'real' picture, however, is that female domestic labour provides a critical and necessary support enabling the male workforce and society to function. Women's role in society is a combination of productive and reproductive role. Women's productive role includes all tasks that enhance the income and economy of the household and the community, e.g. crop and livestock production, handicrafts production, marketing and wage employment.

Reproductive activities are those carried out to reproduce and care for the household and community, including the activities involved in fuel and water collection, food preparation, child care, education, health care and home maintenance. These activities tend to be viewed as non-economic, generally carrying no monetary compensation and are usually out of the budgets of the national income accounts. Women's role in society in reality is life-sustaining. According to Sen and Crown (1988), "in every society women's daily invisible efforts to feed, clothe and nurture their families are the actions that sustain their communities". This reality of social reproduction, derives from a sexual division of labour that is tied to gender division and male dominance.

While sex is a physical distinction, gender is social and cultural. Moghadam (1994) finds that the division of labour between men and women is a matter of gender roles and not sex roles - determined by culture rather than by sex and the key to understanding the division of labour patterns is in the culture rather than in human physiology or anatomy. Moreover, culture is not a constant but a variable with the extent of its impact depending on factors like the depth and scope of development, state policy, the class and social structure.

While a woman in development refers to the current situation of people, it tends to demarcate "women" as a separate practice area. The frame of "Women in Development" (WID) has been supplanted by that of "Gender and Development" (GAD), since the late 1980s. The latter broadens the scope of intervention to include systemic relations of inequality involving the relations between both men and women, together with a critical look at the entire development perspective, process and the underlying assumptions. The gender and development approach to policy framework includes modalities of reflecting ways in which men and women relations constrain or advance efforts to boost growth. The gender empowerment approach as defined by the European Commission (1993) identifies "women's participation in decision-making. It seeks to increase self-reliance and self-confidence so that they will become more active players in society." Gender empowerment redresses the imbalance in the status of women through affirmative action to improve the quality of women's lives.

Reflection and Action 11.1

Women, as we have been mentioning, have always worked for the survival and needs of a family and the larger community and society. Yet they are paid wages or salaries for only some of the work that they are engaged in. Given this state of affairs attempt the following activities:

- 1) Make a list of work that women do for which they are not paid any wages.
- 2) To make this list we encourage you also to a) actively observe the women who do this work, in your everyday settings, and b) talk to them about how they feel about their work.
- 3) Based on this observations and your talk with the women, write a report on women's work and share it with your fellow students or coordinator/teacher.

11.4 Gender and the Constitution: Women in India

There is growing criticism against the top-down approach and growth oriented development perspectives, as they fail to consider women as an integral part of development and as they continue to add to the growing inequalities between the haves and have-nots, women being the have-nots. Let us see in what way India has been addressing women and development. To get a sense of where we are, we need to understand where the foundations are and for that we will first examine the constitutional guarantees and in our next section the planning and policy issues with regards to women.

The underlying principles of the gender role presumed by the Indian State are embodied in the Indian Constitution, which is foremost among the basic documents which declare the intention of the Indian State. The primary imperative for women's equality is rooted in Part III (Fundamental Rights) of the Constitution. The sub article of Article 15 dealing with the Right to Equality lays down:

"The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them."

Further, the Constitution in the same article at sub-article (3) lays down: "Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for women and children".

The Constitution thus gives equal status to women as citizens, while also taking into consideration some special disabilities which the State may come forward to rectify through affirmative action. Para IV of the Constitution of India, dealing with the "Directive Principles of State Policy" has references to the principles to be taken into account by the State wherein concern for women is exhibited (Desai 1994). Articles 39, 42 and 44 refer to certain principles which may not be enforceable in the courts of law, but provide guidance to the state treating women as equal citizens. However certain other sections of the Constitution like the Right to Freedom of Religion, as embodied in Articles 25 to 28, as interpreted by the State legislated in the form of personal laws, fundamentally deny equality to women in almost all basic facets of her life. They deny equality in personal, economic, sexual, social, educational, cultural and even with regard to her right to body as well as with regard to hold certain beliefs, values and norms and codes of personal conduct (Ibid).

Further, the economic assumption, embodied in the Constitution, as formulated in the Articles 23 and 24 in the Fundamental Rights, dealing with Right against Exploitation, does not consider the day-to-day immense and incessant appropriation of surplus labour of women, witnessed in every family, as exploitation, not to mention how women invariably are paid less for their work than men. Right to freedom of religion and right against exploitation are fundamentally discriminatory against women and while not agreeing to designate women's labour at home as exploitation, it has been supportive of gender bias of the state. The state permission to personal religious laws, permits the world on religious prescriptions of varied discriminately norms and practices towards women. Personal laws orient towards the domestic 'private' space. The Constitution mostly addresses itself to the 'public sphere' personal laws, having implications on the private life, essentially family life has holistic implications for shaping women's status, position, rights and obligations in society. The relegation of women in the private sphere through personal laws, has transformed the entire issue of gender justice and development into individualised and limited pathologies to be dealt with by specialised bodies.

The manner in which social policies discriminate against women and prescribe certain tasks and behaviour of development reveal the essence and values that are the guiding factors of the state. The understanding of what women's consciousness should be is conjured with the state's definition of femininity and this definition of femininity is not marginal but absolutely central to the purposes of welfarism (Elizabeth 1989).

Reflection and Action 11.2

We have a series of mandates and provisions that have been incorporated in our constitution that attempt to raise the social status of women in India, as well as number of legislations which have been enacted.

In what way do you think these constitutional provisions and enactments have helped to raise women's status in India? Illustrate your answer with an example from your own life's experience.

11.5 Development Planning in India

Early development planning in India, since the 1950s identified social welfare services as the only category which tackled problems of women, among the other target groups. Such an approach was the outcome of the understanding of women as a category for whom special (and separate) programs, services, safeguards, etc. were put in place. Social Welfare Services targeted to reach out to vulnerable groups divided into several categories.

The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB), set up in 1953, was confronted with the arduous problem of the lack of any governmental machinery and for welfare related activities it undertook the task of promoting welfare through voluntary organisations. It also encouraged women's organisations to take up such activities in partnership with government. As part of this strategy women's organisations were promoted, especially those working with the grassroots. *Mahila Mandals* were promoted as 'delivery mechanisms' for essential services like education, health, especially for maternal and child health, both by the CSWB and the Community Development Programme through the first and the second Five-Year Plans. According to Vina Mazumdar, this combination of institution building and woman resource development was also expected to prepare women to participate in the political and developmental processes. Thus though the language of these strategies reflected contemporary meaning of 'welfare', there was a conceptual thrust (even though inadequately articulated) towards actively involving and stimulating the participation of women's organisations in the process of change. However, increasing bureaucratic control, top-down designing and streamlining of programmes and declining resource support to organisational and institutional development from below both reflected and contributed to the low priority and non-serious approach to basic issues in promotion of gender equality.

The Third, Fourth and the Fifth Five-Year Plans saw a decline in support to strategies of organisation building and human resource development. The Report of the National Committee on Women's Education (1958-59) saw some priority being accorded to Women's Education. From the period of the Third Plan there was a distinct rise in the priority according to the issue of population control. Directives from the Planning Commission, from the 4th Plan onwards, failed to integrate Family Planning with Maternal and Child Health (MCD) planning for supplementary nutrition of children and nursing and expectant mothers from poverty groups were not integrated with MCH. The Community Development Programme (1952) was another significant step in the early years of development planning. It aimed at decentralised development in the rural areas through community efforts. In the sections to follow let us look at various plan strategies and policies to see how and what place women had in the development process.

11.6 The CSWI's Critique and Parliamentary Mandate

In the year 1971, the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India appointed a committee called Committee on the Status of women in India to study the status of women in India. The Ministry was acting on a UN request for a status of women report for International Womens' year in 1975. The Committee had two tasks: (i) to examine the constitutional, legal and administrative provisions that have a bearing on the social status of women, their education and employment and (ii) to assess the impact of these provisions.

The Committee came to the conclusion that there was an increase in the marginalisation of women in the economy and society. The CSWI report *Towards Equality* (1974) found demographic trends of declining sex ratio, disparities in the life expectancy and death rates between men and women; and the difficulties involved in women's access to literacy, education and livelihood. It was of the view that the Indian State had failed in its constitutional responsibility of gender equality. The planning process for development in agriculture, industry, fishery, livestock, etc. and other important sectors of the Indian economy, contained no acknowledgement of the millions of women involved in these sectors due to livelihood reasons. This process of marginalisation of the large majority of women in the economy, together with their neglect and devaluation by the society with the support of the state, definitely demonstrated gender bias. The increasing investment on education, health and the opening of public employment opportunities had benefited a very small section of the female population. This privileged section of women were again threatened by escalation of social practices like dowry, inequality meted out as a consequence of the personal laws, the non-enforcement of the existing laws, which sought to offer protection to women (like the labour laws or criminal laws) and lack of women's overall "visibility" in the sense of the inclusion of their needs, concerns and perspectives in the planning process.

Even though the parliamentary debate on the *Towards Equality* report sought the removal all disabilities that Indian women continue to suffer from. The declaration of National Emergency (1974-77) within a few weeks after it has been tabled in the Parliament pushed back any serious action on the CSWI recommendations.

11.7 Post-Emergency Planning of Women's Development (1977-80)

The period between 1977 and 1980 witnessed significant policy review exercises by the government. Among them were the Report of the Working Group on Employment of Women (1977-78), Report of the Working Group on Development of Village Level Organisations of Rural Women, 1977-78, Report of the National Committee on the Role and Participation of Women in Agriculture and Rural Development (1979-80). These review exercises constituted a substantive base to the conceptualising of fundamental problems and strategies for women's development in India. The Indian agenda of women's development got incorporated into the United Nations' mid-decade Programme of Action, mediated through the Non-aligned Movements, special Conference on Women and Development in Baghdad, 1979. India gained membership of the Commission on the Status of Women (1978-80) and the preparatory committee for Mid-Decade Copenhagen Conference (1980) and Programme of Action. India's contribution to the emphasis on Third World perspectives on development was acknowledged during the mid-decade conference and there was the consequent adoption of employment, health and education as a sub-theme of the decade's agenda.

Vina Mazumdar's examination of the conceptual approach enroled through these few years identified women's development needs as having multiple dimensions, cutting across economic, social and political sectors requiring explicit examination of women's situation on various sectors. She called for earmarking of a share of various sectoral allocations for women, instead of limiting it to women specific programmes or agencies. She also called for promotion of rural employment and development. Through women's own collective organisation, organisations such as SEWA, etc. which were paving the way towards such path.

The Sixth Five-Year Plan released in December, 1979, marked a new beginning as it included a separate Unit on women. Till this time, women's concerns were always subsumed under sectoral approaches in health, education, rural development, agriculture, etc. This Unit was a first attempt at a holistic planning for women. It stated that the objective of population control could not be achieved without bringing about major changes in the status of women. This Plan suggested the need for "administrative innovation" and the "collection of sex-wise distribution data on development assistance, thereby urging for better information, together with mechanisms to ensure women receiving their "due share" of government's attention and support and "equal opportunity for growth and distributive justice".

These principles of women's involvement in the planning process also sought to extend support for organisation of rural women similar to organisations of the rural poor in the effort to improve their "bargaining power and access to development assistance". However, the new Planning Commission set up in 1980, reverted women back to the social services and put on hold the outward looking strategies, approaches and perspectives developed for women. However the intervention at this stage, by the national women's organisation, made a definite impact upon the planning process. A period of partnership began between the few cells on women that had been set up within the Ministries of Labour and Employment, Social Welfare and Rural Development, and the growing women's movement and women studies scholars. Seven women's organisations got together to submit a joint memorandum in 1980, gathered support from women members of the Parliament and thereby persuaded the Planning Commission to incorporate a Unit on Women and Development in the Sixth Plan. This was a landmark achievement in India's Planning history.

11.8 The Sixth Plan Unit on Women and Development

The Unit on Women and Development acknowledged women's lesser status in society and traced it to the inadequate opportunities of "independent employment and income", and demographic trends (higher mortality, lower economic participation, literacy, sex-ratio, etc.). It defined a multipronged but inter-dependent strategy for women's development which would be dependent on the total development process. Regarding "cases of transferred assets, such as agricultural and homestead land", the redistribution policies of the government promised that "government shall endeavour to provide joint title to husband and wife". It also advocated strengthening of the grassroots women's voluntary organisations, which were envisioned "as channels for women to participate effectively in decisions that affect their lives and for promoting adequate development efforts for women at different levels". For education, special support services were to expand women's access to all types of education. The institution of a women's quota and magic figure of one-third made its first ever appearance within the TRYSEM programme. The Sixth Plan also proposed "corrective measures" in sectors where women's employment is low or on the decline.

11.9 The Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-90)

The Seventh Five-Year Plan emphasized provision of gainful employment to women and youth. It reiterated strategies of organising women around socio-economic activities in order to succeed in the twin objectives of making their projects economically viable and also of adding social strength to enhance their overall status. For the first time there was use of “feminist language”, as against the predominantly patriarchal preference to confine women to an oppressive environment, in Unit 14 of the actual plan document. This period that coincided with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s gruesome assassination, was a period of change within the government. It was however, a period of optimism for women’s cause both inside and outside the government. The Government of India hosted the 2nd NAM Conference on Women and Development to offer inputs to the end of Decade UN Conference which was to be held at Nairobi. India’s approaches, both official and unofficial, at the ILO sponsored Afro-Asian Conference on Rural Women’s Organisations and Development, earned encouraging appreciation. The Department of Rural Development announced a 30% quota for women in anti-poverty programmes for rural areas. Steps were taken to initiate gender sensitisation as a mandatory part of training of rural development officials.

The new government at the centre formed a full Department of Women and Child Development, under the Ministry of Human Resources. It included the development of education, culture, sports and youth affairs among women. Pressures from the women’s movement and internal struggle within government led to the incorporation of two paragraphs on Education for Women’s Equality with the National Policy on Education. For the first time, a message appeared that together with expanding women’s access to all kinds of education, the system with all its institutions, had to shoulder a major responsibility for genuine empowerment of women, through change in the social construction of gender.

Yet another breakthrough in this Plan period was the issue of effective representation of women in Panchayati Raj institutions. Initially the CSWI’s recommendations in this regard had been shelved. Efforts were made to begin a debate on them by the Secretary, Social Welfare from January, 1985. The results took shape in two years time. Preparations for a National Perspective Plan (NPP) for Women were started under the aegis of the Department of Women and Child Development. The National Commission for Self Employed Women (NCSEW) was set up to articulate the problems, needs and aspirations of working women in this poverty sector. The NPP (1988) wanted an increase in women’s participation and presence at decision-making levels – in local self-government bodies, State Assemblies and Parliament and suggested 30% reservations at all these levels.

The NPP was heavily critiqued by the women’s movements. Finally the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments came about in 1992. They conferred constitutional status on these bodies, mandated regular elections, wider powers/resources and reserved one-third of seats for women at various levels of the local bodies. On the issue of reservation for women, the women’s movement organisations rejected suggestions of nomination to build up a critical mass as undemocratic and subversive of the constitution. They also rejected reservation in State Assemblies and Parliament. However in the case of the Panchayats and Municipalities, demand was made for achievement of a critical mass, which could throw up new leadership and new concerns from the more marginalised sections.

11.10 Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97)

Part I of the Plan document mentions women only in the context of the need for population control. In Part I of the Sectoral units, mention is made of

women only in contest of women-specific programmes. The principles of a women's quota or a ear-marked share of allocations are not mentioned.

The new features in the section of women's development include a paragraph on violence against women and a two-page "Situational Analysis", which highlights the problems of higher mortality, lower education and increasing unemployment of women", the conceptual, methodological and perception biases regarding value of women's work, compounded by women's concentration in the informal sector resulting in casualisation, non-protection of labour laws and inaccessibility to credit, technology and other types of development assistance. The girl child got a paragraph for the first time, with the promise of "special programmes".

The National Commission for Women Act was passed in 1990 whereby the autonomous national commission for women was set up through an enactment act to act as a statutory ombudsperson for women, reviewing laws and policies and intervening selectively in individual cases of violation and denial of women's rights. In 1991, the National Plan of action for the Girl child set up time-bound recommendations for the survival, protection, development and participation of girl-children, with emphasis on non-discrimination and the universality and indivisibility of rights. The draft National Policy for Empowerment of Women (1996) put together policy directives for securing gender justice and gender equality and for the mainstreaming of gender considerations.

11.11 The Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2000)

The Ninth Plan had important objectives for women. The approach paper of the Ninth Plan focused on the issues of empowerment of women, decentralisation and people's participation in planning and implementing strategies. For the first time in the history of planned development in India, the empowerment of women was adopted as one of the objectives in the Ninth Plan. The approach paper also declared a strategy of drawing up a women's component plan for every sector which would identify the inflow of benefit to women and carryout a gender appraisal of past performance in the sector. In the field of development, for the first time, the need for reservation of seats for women in Parliament and the state legislative assemblies were discussed. The Plan proposed to ensure 30 per cent representation of women in the public sector and provides for a larger entry for women, in the premier civil services. In the field of health, the emphasis would as usual be on reproductive health. In education, besides gender equality, plans would be initiated for free education of girls upto the college level and greater vocational training for them. To increase women's participation in the industrial development of the country, the Plan proposes to set up a "Development Bank for Women Entrepreneurs" for assisting them in the small and tiny sector. In agriculture, a greater assistance and share was called upon through rural development employment schemes. The most important resolve of the Plan was to have a special women's component in the Plan to ensure 30 per cent flow of funds to women development sectors.

Reflection and Action 11.3

- 1) How are governmental policies and plans different from civil society initiatives, like NGOs, with regards to women's issue of development?
- 2) List five government initiated efforts that have helped women's cause in India.

11.12 Policy and Planning for Women

A review of policy formulation and planning for women's development in India reflects the lack of effort in planning and policy formation for women in the

states. There is very little conceptualisation regarding women's needs and the necessary formulations required to give them a larger share of development. Only a few states of India have policies for women's development. The efforts are inadequate and do not meet the requirements. Initiatives have come mostly from the central government.

For a federal state that India is, the success of any development process is a far cry unless the state governments fully realise their responsibility to raise the status of women. Greater involvement of grassroots organisations through the political process would be one of the mechanisms for the achievement of women's empowerment. Further, for gender equality to be fully achieved, it has to be integrated in all development programmes of the country.

11.13 Conclusion

Through the various sections in this unit we learned the concept of gender and the place of women in development perspective both in a general as well as Indian context. We have seen how the gender empowerment approach identifies women's participation in decision-making as the key to success. Its goal is to increase self-reliance and self-confidence so that women become active players in society. Incorporation of gender into the development process acknowledges that women and men experience development differently according to their social position, race, class, colonial history, etc. Structures and situations are required to be addressed at multiple levels so as to ensure that women gain increased access and control over critical material and non-material resources. Further, the focus of gender based development is on gender relationship that determine the existing inequities. Measures include credit, training, skills and resources needed for productive decision-making processes and community power structure. Development of women implies their access in overcoming the underlying structural inequalities. Gender in development is the approach that seeks to redress women's status through affirmative action in improving the qualities of women's lives.

11.14 Further reading

Tim Allen and Alan Thomas (eds.) 1990. *Poverty and Development*. Oxford University Press: Oxford

Seth, Mira 2001. *Women and Development: Indian Experience*. Sage Publication: New Delhi