



International Summit on Transforming Women's Lives: Achieving Economic Empowerment and Justice

Kolkata, India
22nd to 24th February 2017



Asian Institute of Poverty Alleviation

The target of eradicating extreme poverty - “getting to zero by 2030” - has worldwide resonance. More so, in stressing the need for policies and actions to address the social, economic and cultural factors that create and/ or exacerbate poverty. Despite massive efforts and resources to tackle glaring inequalities, the projection that close to a billion people will still not be able to come out of extreme poverty by 2030- mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia - signifies the enormous complexity in addressing this daunting challenge. The emerging issues of climate change, natural resource degradation and probable conflicts, along with significant population growth in such developing nations, may keep the problems simmering for quite sometime.

Apart from bringing a whole section of poor marginalised people out of extreme poverty the tasks of stopping impoverishment and sustaining poverty escapes are equally crucial.

Poverty has multiple dimensions; social, political, economic and even cultural. Looked at from the perspectives of poor economic empowerment, systematic social deprivation and denial of political freedom and justice, there seems to be a complex interrelationship between political will, economic structure and social advancement. Tackling poverty necessitates strong policies and programmes for economic empowerment, upholding political rights, and transformative social change that “challenges the

social order (caste, gender, race and class relations) and the social practice (lower wages for woman, denial of women's rights to assets, child labour, bondage about etc.) that perpetuates these factors and traps.”

“Sustainable poverty reduction needs poor people to be both the agents and beneficiaries of economic growth - to directly participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes. Strengthening poor people's organisations, providing them with more control over assets and promoting their influence in economic governance will improve the terms on which they engage in markets. This economic empowerment combined with political and social empowerment will make growth much more effective in reducing poverty.”

As per OECD, “Economic empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. Economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information.” The empowerment of poor people secures their rights and drives pro-poor growth.

Economic empowerment enables people to take their own decisions about their lives, take right decisions through a wide range of options and opportunities taking recourse to a proactive policy measures that essentially address the rights and entitlements of the deprived sections of the society - particularly the children, women, the differently able and tribal populations. In precise economic empowerment gives individuals greater freedom of choice and action. For economic empowerment it is necessary to include poor people in mainstream development. The barriers that stand against their development - be it in education, health, access to jobs, assets, schemes and services - may be systematically and sustainably removed through proactive, pro-poor, pro-women ecologically sound policies. The role of civil society and private sectors are critical in strengthening the rights based approach followed by most governments.

The national government of India in the initial five year plans has a social development approach that transcends the institutional approaches to promote economic development by embedding social policies in the plans to bring economic development. The institutional approach advocates for the allocation of limited resources to unlimited population with an aim to meet their most basic needs. Besides the issues of proper implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, the bigger draw back with this approach has been the issue of distributive justice. In all these years India though developed from an underdeveloped country to developing nation, poverty remained a persistent concern. In all these years India developed from an underdeveloped economy to a developing one, still poverty remained a persistent concern in India. As per the World Bank's Poverty and Equity data 2011, India contributed 21.3 % poor living below poverty to the world poverty head count ratio. Hunger, one of the markers of extreme poverty continues to take its largest toll in Southern Asia with an estimate of 276 million chronically undernourished people in 2014–16.

In India, even today it holds true that poverty has a caste and gender dimension to it. The marginalised castes, scheduled tribes and poor women are severely disadvantaged, deprived and discriminated, more so in rural areas. The SC/ ST and women headed households have a much higher probability to fall in the below poverty line. Women in general are more disadvantaged than men. The relationship between gender and poverty is more intertwined; poor women and children are more vulnerable than poor men. There are myriads social, economic and cultural factors that force women to live in poverty across globe and more so in South Asia and Africa - women representing a confounding 70% of the world's poor. The grievous question then is does gender equality make good economic sense too? And what needs to be done?

At this important juncture, it is critical to review our approach to development and adopt the approach that ensures economic empowerment by embedding economic policies that focus on income generation, raise incomes and ensure sustainable social upliftment of the poor masses. Importantly it would be of significant interest to understand how economic

empowerment can have positive impact on the larger issue of social justice for the poor.

Asian Institute of Poverty Alleviation (AIPA) plans to provide a platform to initiate dialogue, share experiences and discuss practical solutions to the elimination of poverty and how to ensure economic empowerment and vulnerable justice to the poor. The much felt issue of “Transforming Women's Lives: Achieving Economic Empowerment and Justice” seeks to engage the leaders, thinkers and practitioners – from all the walks of professional arena in dialogue with each other to expand the scope, consequence and impact of economic empowerment on poverty reduction - especially covering on the following aspects:-

- ▶ **Economic policy: Making women advancing toward autonomy**
- ▶ **Livelihood and Financial Inclusion: Economic growth opportunity and women's income security**
- ▶ **Social policy: Universal access to services with social protection**
- ▶ **Policies and practices: Women's economic and social rights**
- ▶ **The role of state in promoting gender-responsive budgeting and substantive equality**
- ▶ **International development support: Supporting pro poor growth agenda**

About Asian Institute of Poverty Alleviation (AIPA),
<http://www.aipaasia.in/>

AIPA is an independent development institute that propels policy research, advocacy and resources strengthening in building capacity of the vulnerable to develop entrepreneurship in emerging market situations as guiding factors to create assets, develop skills and deliver prosperity for the poor. The team of AIPA accords highest priority to the critical issues related to social, economic and environment

challenges and its approaches and programmes are results based.

PURPOSE OF FOCUSED DIALOGUE

Furthering the success of 'Leadership Insights' 2015 and response to 'Digital Bharat Summit' 2015 AIPA aspires to hold an International Summit on 'Economic Empowerment and Vulnerable Justice' 2016 to initiate significant dialogue and to get hands on current status, fruitful interventions and lasting solutions in eliminating poverty. This will act as a common platform to share research, practical work and experiences on various dimensions of empowerment, enlist challenges and achievements to arrive into clear pathways of economic empowerment capable of reducing poverty significantly.

With this in view, the Institute is organizing international summit on 'Women's Economic Empowerment and Vulnerable justice' on 22nd, 23rd and 24th February, 2017 in Kolkata.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

The learning and knowledge exchange amongst the participants and speakers will provide a deep understanding in building an inclusive common agenda for going forward in forming effective policy measures for the vulnerable. Besides identifying burning issues and main challenges to combat poverty the dialogue is expected to design a pragmatic road map as convincing instruments towards eradication of poverty. The 'conference proceedings' - as a distinct outcome- will be compiled and published in the form of a summit report having all the presentations, views, research articles and scholarly discussions and conclusions arrived at this important meeting. ■



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