

Human Development and Gender

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According to the UN (2002), “equality is the cornerstone of every democratic society that aspires to social justice and human rights.” Positive change in gender equality is associated with improvement in economic growth (World Bank 2011), Gender equality is intricately linked to human development, which until the late 1980s was narrowly defined as wealth and measured by gross domestic product (GDP). However, in the recent times, a more holistic approach has been adopted to include employment, education, health, participation, sustainability, and human security and rights. After 2010 a much more expanded dimension of human development is adopted that includes factors that create conditions for development and also includes gender equality.

Human Development Report 1997 mentions that there is no country that treats its women as well as its men, according to a complex measure that includes life expectancy, wealth, and education equally. (HDR, 1997). Women and men share many aspects of living together, collaborate with each other in complex and ubiquitous ways, and yet end up — often enough — with very different rewards and deprivations (Anand & Sen, 1996).

Human development and gender equality are linked with each other. Gender equality is a development goal, a means of achieving other development goals, and a fundamental human right (Lawson 2008; UNDP 2020; World Bank 2011). Development that perpetuates inequalities is neither sustainable nor worth sustaining.

Gender equality is intricately linked to economic growth and human development, which until the late 1980s was narrowly defined as wealth and measured by gross domestic product (GDP). However, of late, a more holistic approach of Human Development Index has been adopted by UNDP. In 2010, the United Nations expanded the dimensions of human development to include factors that create conditions for development and included gender equality.

Over the past twenty years, gender equality has become integral to policy analysis, design and implementation (World Bank 2001), and substantial reductions in gender gaps in health and education have occurred. However, despite a steady increase in women in the workplace, the anticipated improvement in labour force participation and political representation has been more moderate than expected (Bandiera and Natraj 2013).

Although this perspective has received some attention in past Reports, there is a strong case at this time for concentrating specifically on that issue for a more comprehensive investigation of gender inequality in economic and social arrangements in the contemporary world. It is this aspect that is the focus of this presentation. An attempt is made to examine an empirical relationship between economic growth, human development, and gender development.