



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Programmes and Schemes for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India

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Abstract

Women are known to be the backward and deprived section of society. Gender inequality is a major issue across the world. The Government of India has consistently launched policies and programmes to empower women and promote gender equality through education, employment, health and participation in governance. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the various programmes and schemes for economic, social and political empowerment in India. The study has followed the documentary analysis method. This study is purely qualitative in nature. Data for the present study has been collected from government reports, various books, research papers, doctoral theses, national and international magazines, state reports, newspapers, websites, etc.

Keywords: Programmes; Schemes; Gender Equality; Women Empowerment

1. Introduction

Women were the backward and deprived section of the society (Fernandez and Koa, 2024). Women's exploitation and discrimination are seen all over the world (Singh, 2017; Hemlata, 2017; Ahmed, Tiwari, and Bano, 2014). Women in India are relatively powerless and despite many efforts taken by the government, they enjoy somewhat lower status than men. Gender equality refers to the principle of fairness and equal treatment of individuals regardless of gender. It includes ensuring equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities for both men and women in all spheres of life, including the social, economic and political spheres (Gaur, 2024). Gender equality is essential for the development and progress of the society as well as the nation.

Both the central and state governments in India have a strong desire for eliminating gender inequality and empowerment of women. For the empowerment of women, Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c), 42, 46, 47, 51(a)(e), 243D(3), 243D(4), 243T(3), 243T(4) of the Indian Constitution carry special significance in the field of women empowerment (Pohekar, 2015; Singh and Singh, 2023; Chhabra, 2015). Also, to protect the human rights of women, the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, DPSP and other constitutional provisions provide several general and special protections (Meena, 2015; Mehla, 2017). The Indian government has launched various Programmes and schemes to empower women (Fernandez and Koya, 2024). The West Bengal Government also has launched many welfare schemes for girls and women's empowerment.

Objectives

- To study the different Programmes and Schemes for Economic Empowerment
- To study the different Programmes and Schemes for Social Empowerment
- To study the different Programmes and Schemes for Political Empowerment

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2. Methodology

This study is purely qualitative in nature. Qualitative data was collected and Qualitative data analysis was done. Documentary analysis approach has been followed in the study. For the present study data was collected from Governmental reports, various Books, research papers, doctoral theses, national and international magazines, state reports, newspapers, websites, etc.

Table 1 Programmes and Schemes for Empowering Women in India

Dimensions	Programme and schemes	Sponsored body	Main Focus
Economic Empowerment	“Working Women’s Hostel (WWH) Scheme (1972-73)”	“Government of India”	The scheme provides safe and affordable housing for working women living away from their families, along with day care for their children. It supports NGOs and agencies to build or rent hostels in areas with women’s employment opportunities.
	“Swawlamban Programme (1952-83)”	“Government of India”	The programme empowers poor and marginalized women, especially from SC and ST groups, by providing skill training for employment or self-employment.
	“STEP (1986-87)”	“Government of India initiative under the Ministry of Women and Child Development”	The programme enhances the employability and entrepreneurship of women aged 16 and above, especially the poor and marginalized, through skill training in various sectors. It also provides soft skills support and is being evaluated for improvement.
	“Mahila Samridhi Yojana (1993)”	“Government of India”	The programme aims to promote economic empowerment and financial inclusion of rural women in India.
	“Indira Mahila Yojana (1995)”	“Government of India”	It aims to empower women—especially in rural areas and urban slums—by enhancing their education, income-generating abilities, economic independence, and participation in decision-making through women’s groups operating in Anganwadi centres.
	“Swayamsidha (2001)”	“Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development”	The scheme promotes holistic women’s empowerment through Self-Help Groups, enabling them to claim rights, access resources, build skills, and act collectively. It also integrates efforts from other programmes like Swa-shakti for greater impact.
	“Swa-shakti (2005)”	“Government of India”	It aimed to empower women and advance socioeconomic development by establishing Self-Help Groups (SHGs), provision of microcredit, and support for income-generating activities.
	“Sukanya Samruddhi Scheme (2015)”	“Government of India”	The scheme aimed at securing the financial future of the girl child. It supports education and long-term goals by encouraging savings and investment until the girl turns 21, thereby promoting financial independence and stability for women.
	“Mahila E-Haat (2016)”	“Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India”	The scheme is an online bilingual platform promoting women’s entrepreneurship, enabling SHGs and women entrepreneurs to showcase and sell products, fostering financial inclusion and economic empowerment through technology.

	"LakshmirBhandar (2021)"	"Government of West Bengal"	It aims to provide women with economic independence, social security and financial empowerment, making them more self-reliant and better equipped to make decisions for their families and communities.
Social Empowerment	"SSA (2001)"	"Government of India"	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is not just an educational programme but a movement for social empowerment. By ensuring universal education and promoting girls' participation, it builds women's confidence, awareness, and leadership, laying the foundation for a more equitable and empowered society.
	"Swadhar (2001-02)"	"Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India"	The scheme provides relief and rehabilitation for women in distress, offering shelter, care, legal aid, and emotional support. It helps women, especially those rescued from trafficking, regain dignity and reintegrate into society through an integrated, home-based approach.
	"Crèche (2006)"	"Government of India"	The scheme supports poor working mothers by offering day-care for children aged 6 months to 6 years, ensuring their nutrition, health, and overall development while educating parents on better childcare.
	"National Literacy Mission (2009)"	"Government of India"	The scheme promotes adult education, especially female literacy, targeting women and marginalized communities like SCs, STs, OBCs, and minorities to empower them through learning.
	"National Mission for Empowerment of Women (2010)"	"Government of India"	The mission promotes holistic women's empowerment—economic, social, and educational—through convergence of schemes, offering a single-window platform (Mission Purna Shakti) for gender equality, justice, and social advancement.
	"Scheme for Adolescent Girls (2010)"	"Government of India"	The programme empowers 11-14-year-old girls by addressing gender and nutrition gaps, fostering personal growth, and promoting self-sufficiency and responsible citizenship.
	"SABLA (2011)"	"Government of India"	The SABLA programme empowers 11-18-year-old girls by enhancing literacy, reducing school dropouts, and promoting participation in work, replacing KSY and NPAG.
	"Nirbhaya (2012)"	"Government of India"	The Scheme focuses on enhancing the safety and security of women, ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of their identity and information, and enabling real-time intervention in cases of distress.
	"Leadership Development Programme for Minority Women (Nai Roshni) (2012)"	"Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India"	The Nai Roshni Programme emphasizes the leadership development and empowerment of minority women, enhancing their confidence and participation in social, economic, and political spheres through training in education, health, hygiene, financial literacy, legal rights, digital skills, and social awareness.

"Kanyashree Prakalpa (2013)"	"Government of West Bengal"	It aimed at empowering adolescent girls aged 13 to 19. It promotes their education, delays early marriage, and enhances their social and financial inclusion. The scheme seeks to ensure the safety, well-being, and overall development of vulnerable girls by encouraging them to stay in school and complete adolescence with dignity and opportunity.
"Sikhshree Scheme (2014)"	"Government of West Bengal"	This program's objective is to lower the dropout rate and encourage Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students—particularly girls—from grades V through VIII to pursue secondary and postsecondary education by offering them financial aid.
"One Stop Centres (2014)"	"Government of India"	It seeks to offer women who have experienced violence in both public and private settings integrated support and redressal services. It offers medical, legal, psychological, and shelter services to women facing various forms of abuse, including sexual harassment, domestic violence, and trafficking.
"Universalisation of Women Helpline Scheme (2015)"	"Government of India"	The scheme offers 24/7 emergency support to women through the national helpline 181, providing referrals to police, hospitals, and OSCs, along with information on government schemes.
"Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) (2015)"	"Government of India"	The scheme prevents gender-biased sex selection, promotes the survival, education, and empowerment of girls, and addresses declining Child Sex Ratio through awareness and community initiatives.
"Ujjawala Scheme (2016)"	"Government of India"	The programme rescues women and children from abuse and trafficking, providing rehabilitation, legal aid, counseling, and vocational training to ensure their protection and long-term empowerment.
"Nari Shakti Puraskar (2016)"	"Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India"	The scheme is an annual national award recognizing individual women and institutions that have significantly contributed to the empowerment, progress, and development of women in society.
"PradhanMantri Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme (2017)"	"Government of India"	The scheme empowers rural women through community participation and student volunteers, promoting girls' education, child welfare, and overall development.
"Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (2017)"	"Government of India"	It provides cash incentives to pregnant and nursing mothers to promote better health and nutrition, thereby creating an enabling environment for maternal care.
"Rupashree Prakalpa (2018)"	"Government of West Bengal"	The scheme supports women by providing financial aid for marriage, preventing child marriage, promoting education and skills, reducing dowry pressures, and enhancing autonomy, social status, and gender equality.

Political Empowerment	“Constitutional Reservations (73rd and 74th Amendments) (1993)”	“Constitution of India”	It aims mandates 33% reservation for women in Panchayats and Municipalities, ensuring grassroots political participation.
	“Leadership Development Programme for Minority Women (Nai Roshni) (2012)”	“Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India”	The Nai Roshni Programme empowers minority women by building leadership, confidence, and participation in social, economic, and political life through training in education, health, finance, legal rights, and digital skills.
	“Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (2023)”	“Government of India”	The schemes emphasize women’s political empowerment by ensuring 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the Delhi Assembly, thereby promoting greater representation and participation of women in governance and decision-making.

3. Discussion

Across the nation, the “Ministry of Women and Child Development” is carrying out a number of programs and campaigns for women's empowerment and advancing the development of children. The needs of women for shelter, safety, security, legal aid, justice, information, food, nutrition, and maternal health are just a few of the many issues that these programs address. They also address the need for financial support through marketing, education, skill development, and credit availability (Kumari, 2009). In an effort to eradicate poverty and lessen gender discrimination, governments have been putting in place a number of programs and initiatives that offer strategies for women's empowerment and development. The following is a briefing on the programs and initiatives aimed at women's development (Ahamad, Tiwari and Bano, 2014).

3.1. Objective 1: To study the different Programmes and Schemes for Economic Empowerment of Women

3.1.1. Working Women's Hostel (WWH) Scheme (1972-1973)

The government of India launched a grant-in-aid program in 1972–1973, which aimed to build new buildings or expand existing ones to provide hostel facilities for working women in cities, small towns, and rural areas where there are job opportunities for women. The goal of the programme is to increase the number of working women who have access to safe and practical housing. Additionally, it pledges to provide daycare for working women's children (Tripathy and Raha, 2019; Women and Child Development Department, Govt. India; Das, 2022).

3.1.2. According to Kumar and Methew (2019) the main objectives of this scheme were

- The goal is to promote the availability of safe and convenient accommodation for working women in urban, semi-urban, or even rural areas where women can find employment, as well as daycare services for their children.
- The program is supporting initiatives to build new hostels for all working women, regardless of their marital status, religion, caste, or other characteristics.
- Until they are five years old for boys and eighteen for girls, children of working women are permitted to live in these hostels with their mothers.

3.1.3. Kumar and Methew (2019) state that This program covers the working women and their children in the following categories:

- Women in the workforce who may be widowed, divorced, separated, or married but whose spouse or close relatives do not live in the same city or region. Women from underprivileged social groups may be given preference. Additionally, there must be a clause allowing beneficiaries with physical disabilities to reserve seats.
- Women undertaking employment training as long as the entire training time doesn't last more than a year. This is only provided that a vacancy remains once working women have been accommodated. The proportion of women undergoing employment training shouldn't surpass 30% of the overall capacity.
- Children up to the age of five and girls up to the age of eighteen who accompany working mothers shall be housed with their mothers. Working mothers are also eligible to use the Day Care Center's services under the program.

Under the program, NGOs, Co-operative Bodies, and other organizations receive funding to build or rent a facility for Working Women Hostels with a daycare center for kids so that they can live in safe and reasonably priced housing (Kumari, 2009). The updated plan covers State Government agencies, Urban Municipal Bodies, Cantonment Boards, Civil Society Organizations, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Self Help Groups, accredited colleges and universities, and corporations or associations like as CII, ASSOCHAM, and FICCI. Approximately 67,284 working women have benefited from the 902 working women's hostels that have been approved under this program nationwide since its commencement in 1972–1973 (Ahamad et al, 2014; Hemlata, 2017; Singh, 2017).

3.1.4. Swawlamban Programme (1982-1983)

The Programme was formerly known as the NORAD. The goal of the program is to provide the skill development and training to rural and urban women and girls section of the society ensuring economic participation of women and employment generation leading to income generation. The program's target groups include women from underprivileged social groups, including SC and ST, as well as needy and impoverished women. The scheme implemented through the Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of HRD, Government of India. In

2006, the scheme is being transferred to the State Government. The Planning Commission approved the transfer of the project to the State governments on April 1, 2006, to improve monitoring and evaluation and to ensure more efficient execution (Swawlamban Programme, 1982-83; Kumari, 2009; Ahamad et al, 2014; Hemlata, 2017; Jyoti, 2019; Prasad, 2018).

3.1.5. STEP (1986-1987)

The "Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) Scheme" has been administered by the "Ministry of Women and Child Development" since 1986–1987 as a "Central Sector Scheme." The objective of the program is to provide women aged 16 and up employable skills and competency so they can work for themselves or start their own business (Fernandes and Koya, 2024; Singh and Singh, 2020; Jyoti, 2019; Singh, 2017; Hemlata, 2017). It ensures that marginalized women will improve their abilities (Tripathy and Raha, 2019). Through skill development training and job possibilities in industries like small-scale manufacturing, handicrafts, and agriculture, STEP seeks to empower women. It seeks to encourage women to enter the workforce and increase their economic independence (Gaur, 2024; Tripathy and Raha, 2019). The Ministry is currently evaluating the initiative. It is suggested that the system be revised in light of the evaluation's findings. The XI Plan proposes 240 crore rupees for the initiative (Kumari, 2009; Ahamad et al. 2014; Jyoti, 2019). STEP that promotes employment by providing women with training (Arora, Khurana and Rani, 2024; Ahamad et al. 2014). They received services like health care, basic education, childcare, and market connections with credit availability. Handicrafts, tailoring, needlework, horticulture, food processing, handlooms, stitching, zari, computer and information technology, and recently, some soft skills like spoken English, gems and jewelers, tourism, travel, and hospitality are among the employability and entrepreneurship-related skills they have taught (Jyoti, 2019; STEP, 2009; Singh and Singh, 2020; Das, 2022; Gaur, 2024; Singh, 2017; Hemlata, 2017; Kumar and Methew, 2019).

The scheme's primary goals are as follows

- To give disadvantaged women and girls in challenging situations the necessities of food, clothes, housing, and care (Das, 2022).
- Providing women with emotional support and counseling to enable them to overcome all obstacles in life (Das, 2022).
- Developing women's skills, awareness, and education in order to provide rehabilitation (Das, 2022).
- To coordinate Government and non-governmental groups' efforts to provide targeted clinical, legal, and other forms of assistance for women and girls who require those interventions (Das, 2022).
- To provide a helpline or additional servicesThe program's beneficiaries include women who have been trafficked, widowed and abandoned by their family, Women who have experienced severe forms of abuse, and women who have been released from prison (Das,2022).
- To equip women with skills that increase their employability (Kumar andMethew, 2019).
- To impart knowledge and abilities that empower women to work for themselves or start their own businesses (Kumar andMethew, 2019).
- To improve the abilities of underprivileged and disenfranchised women (Kumar andMethew, 2019).
- To give them stability in their employment. The scheme's main goal is to support groups that are more committed to and involved with women by utilizing their local abilities to empower them economically (Kumar andMethew, 2019).

3.1.6. Mahila Samridhi Yojana (1993)

The centrally sponsored Mahila Samridhi Yojana was introduced on October 2, 1993 (Mahila Samridhi Yojana, 1993; Kumari, 2009; Das, 2022). This scheme focused on empowering rural women by providing them with a means to save and improve their financial literacy (Prasad, 2018; Das, 2022; Mahila Samridhi Yojana, 1993). All rural women who are at least eighteen years old can use the money they save to open an MSY account through the Mahila Samridhi Yojna. This Mahila Samridhi Yojna is specially designed to provide financial support to the underprivileged women belonging to backward classes. Ever since its initiation, the scheme has gained immense popularity among rural women and women belonging to financially deficient sections of the society to fulfil their dreams (Das, 2022). The objective of the program is to give microfinance to target group women Self Help Groups (SHGs) that are living below twice the poverty level (Kumar and Verma, 2022).

According to Das (2022) The main objective of MSY is

- To inspire an entrepreneurial mindset among women belonging to rural areas or those from backward classes and minority groups.

- To provide financial support to women who are unable to start their own business/ careers due to lack of financial help.
- To motivate women belonging to marginalized groups like SCs and STs to move past social taboos and achieve their dreams.

3.1.7. Indira Mahila Yojana (1995)

Another government initiative for women's empowerment is the Indira Mahila Yojana, which was introduced in August 1995 in more than 200 blocks across the nation (Indira Mahila Yojana, 1995; Kumari, 2009; Pal, 2018). This program's main objective is to advance women's education, awareness, and income-generating capabilities while also empowering them (Kumari, 2009). Under this program, women's organizations from slums and villages operate in Anganwadis-established centers (Pal, 2018). This program aimed to empower women economically, encourage their involvement in decision-making, and raise awareness in both rural and urban slums.

3.1.8. Swa-Shakti (1999)

The "World Bank", "IFAD", and the "Indian government" collaborated to create the project, which began in October 1999 and ended on June 30, 2005. Through microcredit, income-generating activities, and the promotion of women's self-help groups, the program aimed to empower women and promote socioeconomic development (Hemlata, 2017; Ahamad et al. 2014; Kumari, 2009). The project began as a pilot project and was carried out in 9 states throughout 335 blocks of 57 districts. 17,647 SHGs, representing roughly 2,44,000 women, were formed as a result of the project. This project had central sponsorship (Hemlata, 2017; Ahamad et al. 2014).

3.1.9. Swayamsidha (2001)

It is a program for women's holistic empowerment that is centrally financed (Pal, 2018; Singh, 2017; Hemlata, 2017; Patel, 2019; Kumari, 2009; Das, 2022; Ahamad et al. 2014). This comprehensive plan, which was introduced in February 2001, aimed to empower women by establishing Self-Help Groups (SHGs) (Kumari, 2009; Singh, 2017; Hemlata, 2017; Patel, 2019; Das, 2022; Jyoti, 2019; Ahamad et al. 2014). The Swashakti and Swayamsidha initiatives would be combined and put into effect as FICCI and ASSOCHAM under the updated plan (Singh, 2017; Hemlata, 2017; Patel, 2019). The central idea of Swayam Siddha is convergence (Kumari, 2009). Along with having more authority over and access to political, social, and material resources, this program aims to empower women who will demand their rights from their families, communities, and governments. They will also have improved awareness and skills, be able to mobilize and network, and build or expand hostel buildings with day care centers (Sarker and Ghosh, 2021). The scheme was culminated in March, 2007 (Kumari, 2009). The major goal of this scheme's was to empower the ladies by raising their awareness and confidence. Additionally, the goal was to educate the women on their legal rights, health, nutrition, sanitation, education, economic advancement, and, most importantly, sociopolitical issues. By increasing women's participation in microcredit and even financial resources, this program sought to empower women holistically through a continual process of bringing all ongoing programs together and mobilizing them. This plan had been successful in giving women a forum for self-determination, group action, and introspection. March 2007 marked the completion of this plan. It was put into practice in 650 blocks across the nation, and 67971 women's self-help groups were established, ultimately helping 989485 people. This program was in effect in Punjab till March 31, 2015 (Jyoti, 2019; Ahamad et al. 2014).

3.1.10. Sukanya Samruddhi Scheme (2015)

The Sukanya Samruddhi Scheme was launched by the Government in 2015 (Tripathy and Raha, 2019; Fernandes and Koya, 2024). The program's goal is to provide the female child with financial support so she can continue her education and achieve her goals. Women who have a girl child are eligible to participate in this program until the girl kid is 21 (Fernandes and Koya, 2024; Tripathy and Raha, 2019). Through investing and savings plans, the program guarantees women's financial freedom so they can achieve their long-term goals and aspirations, such as pursuing higher education and achieving financial stability (Tripathy and Raha, 2019). The "Women and Child Development (WCD)" Departments of each State Government should be contacted to submit an application for this program (Fernandes and Koya, 2024). Yojna Sukanya Samruddhi This government-backed savings plan, which is part of the "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" program, is aimed at parents of girls. The initiative encourages them to save money for their female child's future schooling and marriage costs. Since there is a low minimum commitment needed and the account is available for 14 years, parents can begin saving early (Kalhapure, 2024).

3.1.11. Mahila E-Haat (2016)

The bilingual web “Mahila E-Haat” was launched by “the Ministry of Women and Child Development” on March 7, 2016. Women entrepreneurs, self-help groups, and non-governmental organizations can utilize this unique direct web marketing platform to market the products and services they design, manufacture, or provide. It is an effort to address women’s needs and goals. This was done in order to make technology accessible to the vast majority of Indian women entrepreneurs, self-help groups, and non-governmental organizations, as it is a vital component of business efficiency (Kumar and Methew, 2019; Fernandes and Koya, 2024). In order to assist women entrepreneurs, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in promoting the products and services they offer, the Ministry of Women and Child Development developed this direct online marketing tool. The Mahila e-haat aims to increase the financial inclusion of female entrepreneurs in the economy. The Mahila e-haat aims to increase the financial inclusion of female entrepreneurs in the economy. (Jain, 2022). In addition to being recognized as one of the “Top 100 Projects in India” for 2016, The “SKOCH GOLD” Award and the “SKOCH Order-of-Merit Award” were also presented to Mahila E-haat on September 9, 2016. Self-help groups, non-governmental organizations, and female entrepreneurs can use this unique direct web marketing platform to advertise their products and services (Kumar and Verma, 2022)

3.1.12. Lakshmir Bhandar Scheme (2021)

Launched in February 2021 by the West Bengal Government, the Lakshmir Bhandar Scheme is a flagship program aimed at empowering female members of economically disadvantaged groups. Every month, it offers financial support to eligible women ensuring their financial independence by helping cover essential food and shelter expenses. The scheme targets women aged 25-60 years enrolled in the “Swasthyasathi” scheme and disburses funds via direct bank transfer (West Bengal Lakshmir Bhandar Scheme, 2021). financial assistance to enable unmarried girls to pursue higher education (Mondal, Mondal and Das, 2023).

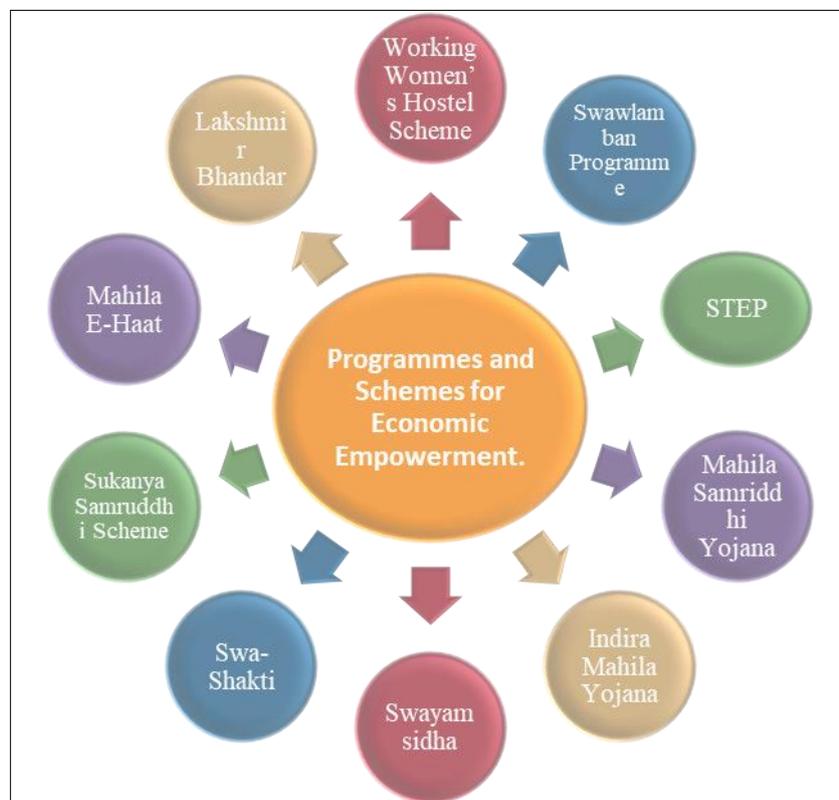


Figure 1 Graphical representation of Programmes and Schemes for Economic Empowerment of women in India

3.2. Objective 2 To study the different Programmes and Schemes for Social Empowerment of women

3.2.1. SSA (2001)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Was Started to Promote Education (Arora, Khurana and Rani, 2024). The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) With Very Ambitious Goals Was Launched In 2001. There Are Certain Specific Programmes Within SSA Like

National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Which Are Specially Designed to Cater to the Educational Needs of Girls in Educationally Backward Districts (Das, 2022).

3.2.2. *Swadhar (2001-2002)*

In 2001–2002, this program was introduced for the relief and rehabilitation of women in difficult situations by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development. This scheme provides food, clothing, shelter and care to needy marginalized women/girls. The beneficiaries of this Swadhar plan include widows who have been abandoned by family members and relatives, women who have been released from prison without the assistance of their families, women who have survived natural calamities and been victims of extremist violence, etc. NGOs make up the majority of the implementing agencies (Das, 2022; Geeta, 2020; Sulaiman et al, 2023; Tripathi and Raha, 2019; Singh and Singh, 2020; Singh, 2017; Hemlata, 2017; Gaur, 2024). The “Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare”, Boards, “State Women Development Corporations”, Urban groups, and other voluntary groups carry out this program if they possess the requisite training and experience in rehabilitating these women. For women in need, the program also funds a helpline, counselling center, training center, and treatment center. There are 34 Swadhar centers operating in the state at the moment. The Swadhargraha program, aims to help women who have experienced hardships and require institutional support for rehabilitation in order to live honourable lives. The plan aims to give these women economic and social security in addition to housing, food, clothes, and health care (Kumar and Mathew, 2019). The goal of the Swadhar Greh Scheme is to give homeless women and girls temporary housing (Jain, 2022).

The goals of the scheme are as follows

- To give the basic necessities of food, clothes, shelter, and care for disadvantaged girls and women who are facing difficult circumstances and lack social and financial assistance (Das, 2022; Singh, 2017; Ahamad et al. 2014; Hemlata, 2017).
- Providing women with emotional support and counselling (Das, 2022; Singh, 2017; Ahamad et al. 2014; Hemlata, 2017).
- Through awareness-raising, skill-building, education, and personality development, impoverished women can be socially and economically rehabilitated (Das, 2022; Singh, 2017; Ahamad et al. 2014; Hemlata, 2017).
- To establish specific clinical, legal, and other support for women and girls who need those interventions, and to network and connect with other government and non-government groups on a case-by-case basis (Das, 2022; Singh, 2017; Ahamad et al. 2014; Hemlata, 2017).
- To help people get back on their feet financially and emotionally (Das, 2022).
- To serve as a network of support for women who are experiencing difficulties (Das, 2022).
- To provide them the opportunity to begin their lives with optimism and a fresh start (Das, 2022).
- To help impoverished and distressed women by offering them rehabilitation and assistance (Kalhapure, 2024).

3.2.3. *“National Literacy Mission/ Sakshar Bharat Mission” (2009)*

The National Literacy Mission or Sakshar Bharat Mission, with its objective of extending educational options to those adults who have no access to formal education, targeted female literacy as a critical instrument for women’s empowerment. Now, NLM as revised Sakshar Bharat focus on Women and Backward Communities like SCs, STs, OBCs and Minorities etc. as its core target groups (Joshi and Moharana, 2015). The National Literacy Mission is also one of the programs for supporting education (Arora, Khurana and Rani, 2024).

3.2.4. *“National Mission for Empowerment of Women” (2010)*

The “Ministry of Women and Child Development” of the Government of India launched the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) program on March 8, 2010 (Prasad, 2018; Patel, 2019; Ahamad et al. 2014; Singh, 2017). It focuses on ensuring economic empowerment for women (Tripathy and Raha, 2019). This mission aims to empower women socially and economically by providing support services, skill development training, and access to government schemes and programs. Its key concerns are gender mainstreaming, economic empowerment, and violence against women (Gaur, 2024). It also concerns with progressive elimination of violence against women and confirming social empowerment of women with emphasis on health and education (Tripathy and Raha, 2019). The National Resource Centre for Women has been set up which functions as a national convergence centre for all schemes and programmes for women. NMEW will achieve gender equality, and gender justice and holistic development of women through inter-sectoral convergence of programmes relating to women, forging synergy between various stakeholders and creating an enabling environment conducive to social change (Patel, 2019). The Mission aims to provide a single window service for all programmes run by the Government for Women under aegis of various Central Ministries. In light with its mandate, the Mission has been named Mission Poorna Shakti, implying a vision for holistic empowerment of Women (Joshi and Moharana, 2015).

3.2.5. "Scheme for Adolescent Girls" (SAG) (2010)

The Program was established in 2010 as a special intervention for 11–14-year-old adolescent girls in order to break the intergenerational cycle of gender and nutritional disadvantage and provide a nurturing environment for the nation's teenage girls' self-development (Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) India.govt.in). The key objective of the scheme is to facilitate, educate, and empower AGs to enable them to become self-reliant and aware citizens. The two major components under the scheme are the Nutrition component and the non-nutrition component (Fernandes and Koya, 2024). Scheme for Adolescent Girls Scheme for Adolescent Girls aims at girls in the age group 11-18, to empower and improve their social status through nutrition, life skills, home skills and vocational training (Kalhapure, 2024).

3.2.6. SABLA (2011)

Rajiv Gandhi's SABLA Scheme for Adolescent Girls' Empowerment a comprehensive scheme for the holistic development of adolescent girls (AGs) of 11-18 years called Sabla was introduced in 2010 (Singh, 2017; Jyoti, 2019). This Scheme mainly aims at reducing the dropout rate of Adolescent Girls by increasing their literacy rate and work participation (Malarvizhi, n.d.). Sabla is being implemented in 205 selected districts across the country (Singh, 2017; Jyoti, 2019;). It intends to improve adolescent girls' health, education, vocational skills, and financial empowerment. Different states have adopted innovative, state-specific initiatives (e.g., vocational training, incentives, peer educators) to strengthen the scheme, though participation rates in Kishori Meetings remain low. In West Bengal, the scheme's progress is satisfactory but still has some drawbacks (Chanda, 2016; Ahamad et al. 2014). This scheme aimed at covering Adolescent Girls in the age group of 11 to 18 years in the selected 205 districts all across the country. The target group may be subdivided into two age categories of 11-14 and 14- 18 years. There are two major components of the scheme; Nutrition Component and Non-Nutrition Component. In the Nutrition Component, the Adolescent Girls were allowed to take home ration or hot cooked meal. It was allowed to 11-14 years out-of-school girls and 14-18 years both schools going girls and out-of-school girls. The Non-Nutrition Component is also provided to both in school and out-of-school Adolescent Girls. For out-of-school girls of age group 11-18, health check-up services are provided with counselling on family welfare and childcare practices and vocational training is also provided under National Skill Development Program for the girls of this category of the age group of 16-18 years. For the school going girls of 11-18 years, the Nutrition and Health Education is provided with counselling on family welfare, life skill education and accessing public services, health services are also provided (Hemlata, 2017; Jyoti, 2019; Singh, 2017; Ahamad et al. 2014).

3.2.7. Nirbhaya (2012)

It launched in 2012. The Nirbhaya program provides women with a range of safety and security measures, to ensure strict privacy and confidentiality of women's identity and information, and to provide real-time intervention as far as possible (Fernandes and Koya, 2024).

3.2.8. Kanyashree Prakalpa (2013)

The programme, was introduced in 2013 to ensure that vulnerable girls between the ages of 13 and 19 finish the developmental tasks of adolescence in safety and wellbeing, The program's goal is to elevate their position by preventing child marriage and promoting education, financial inclusion, and social inclusion ("Department of women and child and social welfare"). This programme uses Conditional Cash Transfer to support the girls' social and educational well-being (Tripathy and Raha, 2019).

The scheme's goals

- To assist girls from low-income households the money they need to finish their secondary and post-secondary education through "Conditional Cash Transfer".
- Reduce child's early marriage, not before the age of 18.
- To raise the rate of higher education.
- To aid in girls' advancement and the development of social power and self-worth in society, and to support a girl's empowerment.

The state received the prestigious "United Nations Public Service Award" in 2017 for its "Kanyashree Scheme" for financial assistance to girls in education and empowerment (Mandal, Mandal and Das, 2023).

3.2.9. Sikhashree Scheme (2014)

The Scheme was launched in 2014 to encourage Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) students. The objective of this scheme is to financially encourage Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students studying in classes V to VIII in

any government, government aided and government recognized school in West Bengal. Due to weak economic conditions, especially students from backward classes, they are unable to complete their secondary and post-secondary education and drop out of school. The scheme has played a significant role in reducing the dropout rate at the upper primary level and providing financial assistance to include girl students in school education. The scheme has been particularly successful in curbing the high dropout rate of girls in school education (Mondal, Mondal and Das, 2023).

3.2.10. One Stop Centres (2014)

It is Popularly known as 'Sakhi'. This programme was implemented on 1st April 2015 with the 'Nirvaya' fund. Schemes of One Stop Centre (OSC) and Women Helpline (WH) are being implemented to facilitate access to an integrated range of services including medical aid, police assistance, legal aid/ case management, psychosocial counselling and temporary support services to women affected by violence. (Kalhapure, 2024). One Stop Centres (OSCs) are intended to support women affected by violence, in private and public spaces, within the family, community (Geeta, 2020; Sulaiman et al, 2023; Tripathy and Raha, 2019; One Stop Centre Scheme 2015) and at the Women facing physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic abuse, irrespective of age, class, caste, education status, marital status, race and culture will be facilitated with support and redressal. The OSC will be provided with specialized services (Geeta, 2020; Sulaiman et al, 2023; Tripathy and Raha, 2019; One Stop Centre Scheme 2015). One Stop Centres (OSCs), funded under the Nirbhaya Fund since 2015, provide integrated support (medical, legal, psychological, counselling) to women and girls facing violence in any setting. The scheme is expanding from the initial 36 centres to 660 across India (Kumar and Mathew, 2019; Gaur, 2024; Jain, 2022; One Stop Centre Scheme 2015).

3.2.11. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) (2015)

The scheme was launched by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 22nd January 2015 at Panipat, Haryana. The name Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao translates to 'Save the girl child, educate the girl child' (Ghosh, bairagya and Mete, 2021; Fernandes and Koya, 2024; Gaur, 2024; Kumar and Mathew, 2019)..The Overall Goal of the Scheme is to celebrate the Girl Child and enable her Education (Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme Guidelines, 2019; Singh and Singh, 2020; Das, 2022; Kumar and Mathew, 2019). The scheme aims to educate citizens against gender bias and improve the efficacy of welfare services for girls. The main objectives of this scheme to save the baby girls from feticide and to make them self-independent through education (Ghosh, bairagya and Mete, 2021; Fernandes and Koya, 2024; Gaur, 2024; Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme Guidelines, 2019; Singh and Singh, 2020; Das, 2022; Geeta, 2020; Sulaiman et al, 2023; Tripathy and Raha, 2019).The Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and the Ministry of Human Resource Development are working together to spread this nationwide initiative, which was started with an initial investment of Rs. 100 crore and aims to address the issue of the declining child sex ratio image (CSR) (Kulhapure, 2024). To ensure that girls are born, raised, and educated without discrimination and grow up to be capable, equal-right citizens of this nation is the campaign's main goal. Under this program, the government launched a number of creative initiatives, including the Digital Guddi-Gudda Board, Udaan-Sapneya Di Duniya De Rubaru, My Aim My Target Campaign, LAKshya se Rubaru, Pahal-Ek Kadam Nari Samman ki Aur, Ghar ki Pehchan Beti ke Naam, Bal Cabinet, the introduction of Pink Cards, and many more. Since June 2014, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has been addressing the topic of installing a physical panic button on mobile phones (Singh and Singh, 2020).

According to Kumar and Mathew (2019) The Scheme's goals are as follows

- Prevent gender-biased sex-selective exclusion.
- Ensure the girl child's protection and survival.
- Assure the girl child's education in order to take on greater duties and assert their rights, the program also assists women in leaving their homes and communities. Additionally, it raises awareness of the significance of safeguarding girls.

3.2.12. Ujjawala Scheme (2016)

The Ministry introduced this program on December 4th; 2007 and is being implemented mainly through NGOs (Sing, 2017; Hemlata, 2017; Singh and Singh, 2020; Ahamad et al. 2014). The Scheme was launched in 2016 to prevent women and children trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, to keep victims secure and to make it easier to rescue them from the location where they are being exploited. Aside from providing basic necessities like food, clothes, shelter, medical care, counselling, legal assistance and advice, and vocational training, this program also offers rehabilitative programs that benefit the victims both immediately and over time (Fernandes and Koya, 2024; Ujjawala, 2016).The program's five pillars include repatriating victims of human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, Preventing, rescuing, rehabilitating, reintegrating (Sing, 2017; Hemlata, 2017; Singh and Singh, 2020; Ahamad et al. 2014).

Target of the Scheme are

- Creating awareness, creating IEC materials, organizing workshops, and forming teenage and community vigilance groups.
- Victims can safely leave the location of exploitation.
- Providing victims with safe housing, basic comforts, medical attention, legal assistance, vocational training, and income-generating activities is part of their rehabilitation.
- Victims' reintegration into society.
- Assist victims who have crossed international borders in returning safely to their home country (Sing, 2017; Hemlata, 2017; Singh and Singh, 2020; Ahamad et al. 2014).

3.2.13. Pradhan Mantri "Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme" (2017)

Lunched in 2017 the scheme aims to promote community participation through involvement of Student Volunteers for empowerment of the rural women. The scheme involves saving of girl child and providing them with primary as well as secondary education and upgrade overall quality of life (Tripathy and Raha, 2019; Kalhapure, 2024). The scheme with an outlay of ₹500 crore provides one-stop convergent support services at village, block, and district levels through Anganwadi centres, focusing on skill development, health, nutrition, digital literacy, legal aid, and financial inclusion to empower rural women (Fernandes and Koya, 2024). It merges with the National Mission for Empowerment of Women to ensure coordinated implementation nationwide (Singh and Singh, 2020). It aims to empower rural women through community participation, training, and capacity building (Gaur, 2024; Kumar and Methew, 2019). It engages college student volunteers in 115 backward districts to spread awareness and link women with government schemes, while District Level Centres for Women (DLCWs) and State Resource Centres (SRCWs) facilitate implementation of women-centric programmes (Kumar and Methew, 2019).

3.2.14. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) (2017)

The Government of India is implementing the scheme with effect from 1st January 2017 (Department of Women and child development, 2017). The scheme {erstwhile Maternity Benefit Programme} has been contributing towards better enabling environment by providing cash incentives for improved health and nutrition to pregnant and nursing mothers (Kalhapure, 2024). It was first launched in 2010 aims to ensure safe delivery and good nutrition for mothers having their first child. (Jain, 2022). This maternity benefit program provides financial assistance to pregnant and lactating women for their first live birth. It aims to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates and promote healthy nutrition and care during pregnancy and lactation (Gaur, 2024).

3.2.15. Rupashree Prakalpa (2018)

On April 1, 2018, the scheme was introduced by the West Bengal government's Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare. The purpose of this Prakalpa is to lessen the financial burden that impoverished families suffer when they have to borrow money at exorbitant interest rates to cover the costs of their daughters' weddings. All of West Bengal's districts are implementing the plan (West Bengal Rupashree Prakalpa Scheme, 2018). Two programs were introduced for the benefit of females in West Bengal: The Kanyashree Prakalpa and the Rupashree Prakalpa. The goal of the Rupashree Scheme is to lessen the financial burden that impoverished families bear when paying for their daughters' weddings (Tripathy and Raha, 2019).

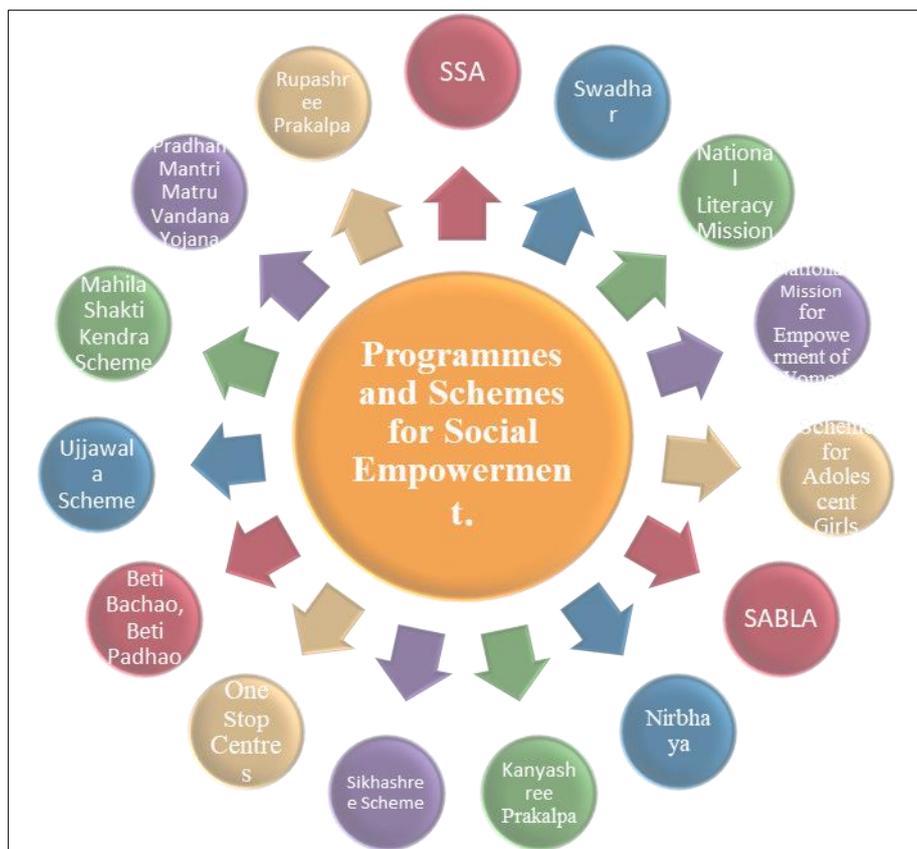


Figure 2 Graphical representation of Programmes and Schemes for Political Empowerment of women in India

3.3. Objective 3: To study the different Programmes and Schemes for Political Empowerment of women

3.3.1. Constitutional Reservations (73rd and 74th Amendments) (1993)

The Constitution was amended in 1992 with the 73rd and 74th amendments and passed in 1993, were marked as a landmark step in India's democratic evolution by institutionalizing decentralized governance through "Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI)" and "Urban Local Bodies (ULB)". One of the most transformative provisions of this amendment was that one-third (33%) of the seats at all levels of local governance must be reserved for women, including seats for STs and SCs (Tokekar, 2017; Brahmanandam, 2018; Rather and Mir, 2020). This constitutional reform was a deliberate effort to correct historical gender imbalances, foster inclusive governance, and empower women politically, socially, and economically.

3.3.2. "Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam" 2023

"The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (NSVA)" 2023, also known as the 128th Constitutional Amendment Act, marks a historic milestone in women's political empowerment in India (Patel, 2024; Das et al., 2024). September 2023 saw the introduction of the bill, which was approved by the Rajya Sabha on September 21 and the Lok Sabha on September 2023. On September 28, 2023, President Droupadi Murmu signed the measure (Khandwe et al., 2024; Das et al., 2024). It ensures women would be given a 33% reservation in the Delhi Assembly, State Legislative Assemblies, and the Lok Sabha, including in seats that are currently set aside for STs and SCs (Patel, 2024; Khandwe et al., 2024; Das et al., 2024).

3.3.3. Leadership Development Programme for Minority Women (Nai Roshni)

The "Ministry of Women and Child Development" started the "Nai Roshni" program in 2012-13 to help minority women hone their leadership abilities. Among the training modules it provides are those on "Women's Leadership, Educational Programs, Health and Hygiene, Swachh Bharat, Financial Literacy, Life Skills, Legal Rights of Women, Digital Literacy, and Advocacy for Social and Behavioural Change" (Kumar and Verma, 2022; Mozumdar and Borooah, (N.D); Singh and Dubey, 2023). Program for Mentoring Minority Women in Leadership: This program for women from rural and minority communities was started by the Ministry of Minority Affairs. Around the nation, NGOs, civil organizations, and government institutions assist in the operation of the Nai Roshni initiative (Sridevi, 2023; Singh and Dubey, 2023).

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that women's empowerment in India has evolved through various constitutional provisions, government programmes and welfare schemes focusing on economic, social and political aspects. The "Central Government" and "State Governments" have taken important steps to support women's advancement by encouraging equality, independence, and leadership roles. As a result, the "Government of India" has consistently introduced policies and programmes to empower women and promote gender equality through education, employment, health and participation in governance. Such as- "Karmarat Mahila Hostel", "STEP", "Mahila E-Haat" and "Laxmi Bhandar" have sought to provide financial independence, skill development and entrepreneurial opportunities. Socially, a wide range of schemes such as "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao", "Kanyashree Scheme", "One Stop Centre" and "Ujjwala Scheme" have addressed important issues such as education, health, safety and protection from violence, aiming to improve the dignity and well-being of women from childhood to adulthood. Politically, groundbreaking measures such as the "Nari Shakti Bandhan Adhiniyam", which mandates 33% reservation for women in the legislature, and the "Nai Roshni Leadership Programme" are signs of significant progress in guaranteeing women's involvement in decision-making and governance. Despite significant progress, challenges such as patriarchal attitudes, gender inequality and socio-economic barriers still persist. Actually, the success of these programmes ultimately depends on the combined efforts of the state, civil society and communities to eliminate entrenched inequalities and create an environment where women can fully realise their potential, and making meaningful contributions to national development.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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