

For Favour of Publication

Patna, 6 Dec. 2019. While addressing the guests at the 2-day International conference titled “Closing the gender gap: health, education and economic opportunities” organized by the International Growth Centre (IGC), Asian Development Research Institute in collaboration with Women Development Corporation, Government of Bihar and Centre for Catalyzing Change(C3), Honourable Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri Sushil Kumar Modi opined that it’s not only economic and political empowerment that will close the gender gap. Rather, we need a multi-pronged strategy like spending more on education and implementing social programs like reservation for women in panchayat local bodies, promotion of self-help groups and Prohibition. He cited examples of Kerala spending as much as 1/4th of its revenue on education in the 1940s and post-independence, Bombay state had a five-fold larger spending on education than Bihar. Education reduces violence as well as TFR. He remarked that people want change. So, programs are required that can be game-changers. He mentioned 3 or 4 such programs like the Bicycle Yojana for school girls. You require a social reform movement and not just laws.

Mr. Gavin McGillivray, Head, DFID, India in his key note address held out that correcting people’s mistaken notions about what other people think can address violence against women and children. He quoted a school boy who wanted schools to teach its pupils how to behave decently with girls. Martin Rama from World Bank delivered the IGC India 10th Anniversary Lecture. He presented the magnitude of the gender gap specifically in India and reviewed what we think about policies to address the gender gap. He also touched on female labor force participation in India and Bihar. He pointed out that female labor force participation in rural areas of India is declining because of lack of suitable jobs for women and also societal norms of patriarchy where women are not supposed to go out to work. A positive aspect of gender equality in India is that 13 percent of pilots in India are women.

While giving the Special Address, Mr. Alkesh Wadhvani, Director, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation wanted to talk about how to see that laws to address the gender gap can be implemented effectively. He said there has been an increase from 38 to 55 percent in economic independence of women due to self-help groups. To effect norm change and behavioural change, mobile phones can be used and the Foundation has partnered with the Health Ministry and Jeevika to achieve gender equality by using mobiles given to ASHA workers. He lauded Bihar for being one of the front-runners in addressing gender issues.

Dr. N. Vijayalakshmi (IAS), Managing-Director, Women Development Corporation, Government of Bihar, pointed out that child marriage has declined from 69 to 42 percent now and malnutrition has dropped from 55 to 48 percent now in Bihar.

While welcoming the guests, Dr. Shaibal Gupta, Member-Secretary, ADRI and Bihar Lead, IGC-India pointed out the even wider gender gap in developing countries like India as compared to developed countries. Government of Bihar has made direct interventions to address gender disparity. Pronab Sen, Country-Director, IGC-India gave the vote of thanks and said that the issues being discussed were applicable not only to Bihar but to India and beyond as well.



Subsequently, Anandi Mani, University of Oxford talked about how poverty affects people's choices and behaviour. Women suffer more from depression because of the poverty and uncertainty of income and the sheer work load.

In the post-lunch session's panel discussion on women economic empowerment: constraints and solutions, it was pointed out that empowerment is the key to close the gender gap and discussion on closing this gap is not just about women but also about other identities that witness wider gaps. Positive correlation for women working outside the household is witnessed with respect to domestic violence. Bringing changes in social norms will require a shift of focus from the adults towards children and youth. This session was chaired by Dr. N. Vijayalakshmi and moderated by Niveditha Menon of the Centre for Budget and Policy Studies. Girija Borker (World Bank), Jonathan Phillips (University of Sao Paulo), Tanushree Goyal (University of Oxford), Sheetal Sekhri (University of Virginia), Shubha Chakravarty (World Bank) and Tarun Jain (IIM-A) were the panellists.

Special Lecture-2 was delivered by Devaki Jain of the Institute of Social Studies Trust and chaired by Dr Pronab Sen, Country Director (IGC, India).

Another panel discussion on gender and labour aimed to deepen our understanding of what matters and what works to empower females and set them on a positive healthy trajectory. This discussion was rooted in questions central to the Saksham Initiative for What Works, Bihar, anchored by the Centre for Catalyzing Change (C3) and their partners. It focuses on the biggest contemporary challenges like women's declining labor force participation, their safety, mobility, and how skilling can reach women. Also, it looks at how resilient agencies can be built and at both micro and macro-economic questions. Supply and demand factors that influence both the sexes, access to incomes and good quality work are critical. This panel was moderated by Yamini Atmavilas (BMGF) and other panellists included Ashmita Gupta (ADRI), Ashwini Deshpande (Ashoka University), Farzana Afridi (ISI-D), Nilanjana Sengupta (ICRW), Sher Singh Verick (ILO) and Sonal De Desai (University of Maryland). It was chaired by Prof. Prabhat P Ghosh, Director ADRI.

Anjani Kumar Verma

(Anjani Kumar Verma)

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

BSIDC Colony, Off Boring-Patliputra Road, Patna - 800 013, Tel. : 0612-2575649, Fax : 0612-2577102

E-mail : adripatna@adriindia.org / adri_patna@hotmail.com, Website : www.adriindia.org