



Jus Corpus Law Journal

Open Access Law Journal – Copyright © 2024 – ISSN 2582-7820

Editor-in-Chief – Prof. (Dr.) Rhishikesh Dave; Publisher – Ayush Pandey

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0) License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium provided the original work is properly cited.

Bharat Nirman to Viksit Bharat by 2047: Women's Empowerment on Paper vs Reality - Triumphs, Trials and Tokenism

Savyasanchi Khare^a Nupur^b

^aNMIMS, Indore, India ^bNMIMS, Indore, India

Received 01 August 2024; Accepted 02 September 2024; Published 06 September 2024

This research paper attenuates on the ambitious vision of developing India towards a Viksit Bharat by 2047 through the passage of an Amrit Kaal of 25 years, or the era of elixir, in special reference to the reality and facade of women's rights, i.e., whether they are one of those historical milestones to achieve or mere a tokenism? Whether the ongoing trials starting from Bharat Nirman to the present-day governmental supports which include an array of governmental schemes, policies, rules, regulations, and laws made with a specific aim to benefit women from the most marginalized segments of society are going to give any acclamation of triumph on the 100th year of our independence? This paper thus, characterizes the real picture of the government's plan and policies formulated in an enclosed room for the 48.5% of the total national population whose socio-economic potential still stands untapped even in the growing and developing realm of the world's biggest and so-called, fastest growing economy. This research paper contains a detailed examination of the present government's Viksit Bharat and Amrit Kaal initiatives, which encompass several policies and programs aimed at improving the lives of women and determines the extent to which these initiatives have been effective in benefiting women from the most marginalized segments of society. With substantial empirical evidence and statistical data, the authors submit that the existing women-centric schemes have certain loopholes in their framework mechanism leading to poor turnout in success stories. These lacunas call for urgent action so that the actual developmental goal of SDGs, GDPs, and other relevant indices can be achieved by the 100th year of our Independence marks our vision of Viksit Bharat.

Keywords: *development, viksit bharat, amrit kaal, women's right, government policies and schemes.*

INTRODUCTION

India's government, from the past to the present, has effectively implemented various programs and schemes to promote the individual and societal development of women belonging to different social classes. This is in line with India's goal of becoming the third-largest economy by 2031 and a developed nation by 2047. The government's plan to achieve developed nation status encompasses a range of strategies and programs aimed at developing sectors such as infrastructure, railways, technology, and human development. However, there is a notable absence of emphasis on schemes specifically targeting women who have been highly disadvantaged in the economic prosperity of our nation and have a continuously declining score of social and industrial inclusion, as per the Social and industrial inclusion of women score India 2022. While the *Viksit Bharat & Amrit Kaal plan* does mention a few initiatives, 48.5% of the nation's population¹ i.e., women do not receive significant attention. The tale is not new. This disparity is evident from the lowering trend of gender inequality alongside an increasing trend of the sex ratio to 952.² The citizens have been witnessing schemes like Bharat Nirman, specifically curated and tailor-made five-year plans of the previous government that aim to soften the harsh edges of social ills including poverty, inequality, unemployment, inflation, etc. Still, the demographic and social picture has not changed much. The nation still has an HDI score of 0.644.³ One of the flagship programs of the previous government i.e., the *Bharat Nirman* was launched as an answer to the problems of rural India with hefty investments

¹ 'Women and Men in India' (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 29 March 2019) <https://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Women%20and%20Men%20in%20India%202018.pdf> accessed 27 May 2024

² Rema Nagarajan, 'Sex ratio less than 900 in most states, worsens in few' *The Times of India* (18 June 2021) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/sex-ratio-less-than-900-in-most-states-worsens-in-few/articleshow/83620577.cms>> accessed 27 May 2024

³ 'India now ranks 134 in Human Development Index among 193 nations: UN' *CNBCTV18* (15 March 2024) <<https://www.cnbctv18.com/india/india-now-ranks-134-in-human-development-index-among-193-nations-un-19289101.htm>> accessed 27 May 2024

and funding of Rs 82,202 crores. Still, it failed to address any aspect relating to women.⁴ Though several other women-centric initiatives were taken by the government at that time, which included gender budgeting, it did not lead to any substantial change in the socio-economic condition of the women.

At present, the current government has introduced two new initiatives. One of these initiatives is called Amrit Kaal, also known as *The era of elixir*. The Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi first used this term in 2021 to emphasize the importance of the country's citizens' assistance in transforming India into a developed nation by 2047.⁵ The Amrit Kaal period refers to the upcoming 25 years of strategic planning for India's development. This plan encompasses various areas such as women, infrastructure, tourism, healthcare, human development, technological advancement, etc., intending to transform India into a developed country by 2047.

Viksit Bharat by 2047 is another prominent initiative of the Government of India that aligns to achieve a developed India soon. These initiatives encompass multiple sectors that require attention to enhance the country's standards. The government's plans and efforts in these initiatives over the years have been ineffective in raising the level of living standards for women. From 1947 to 2024, many programs were established to enhance women's standards and achieve gender equality, and presently, approximately 83.3% of legislative frameworks exist that promote, enforce, and monitor gender equality underneath the SDG indicator, including addressing violence against women.⁶ However, these frameworks have yet to make significant progress.

⁴ 'Bharat Nirman still a work in progress' *Business Standard* (18 February 2014) <https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/bharat-nirman-still-a-work-in-progress-114021701832_1.html> accessed 27 May 2024

⁵ 'Towards 'Amrit Kaal': PM lists 5 pledges for citizens on 76th Independence Day' *Deccan Herald* (15 August 2022) <<https://www.deccanherald.com/india/towards-amrit-kaal-pm-lists-5-pledges-for-citizens-on-76th-independence-day-1136259.html>> accessed 27 May 2024

⁶ 'Percentage of achievement regarding legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality in India as of December 2020, by gender' (*Statista*, 03 August 2023) <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1306919/india-achievement-of-gender-equality-legal-frameworks-by-area/>> accessed 27 May 2024

This paper, thus, aims to provide a detailed analysis of the women-centric schemes implemented by various governments over time, which aims to transform India into a developed nation by 2047.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To delve deeper into the issue of women empowerment, an analysis of published research articles relating it across India and beyond has been undertaken by the authors. An exhaustive review of the prevailing research about the governmental schemes and the existing issues has been analyzed. Furthermore, data from different sources on the web and digital libraries have been utilized to reach the conclusion. Several sources were used to fetch research-relevant data, such as the National Portal of India, Data sets from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, IndiaStat, Statista, etc., and the authors relied on 'Archival Data Analysis', an attractive measure for researchers in analyzing the issues at different practical fronts. A descriptive analysis of data and its interpretations has been contextually made in this study.

THE REAL PICTURE

The vision of Viksit Bharat, these new terminologies including Amrit Kaal, Kartavya Kaal, or the programs like Bharat Nirman have evolved in the second half of the century of our nation's independence. However, in the first half, we witnessed schemes whose focal point was women's development. It included schemes like the *Mahila Samridhi Yojana* which aimed at empowering rural women through microfinance, the establishment of the *Rashtriya Mahila Kosh* to provide microcredit to poor women for various livelihood and income-generating activities, *Indira Mahila Yojana* to make women self-reliant and empower them socially and economically, *Balika Samridhi Yojana* to change adverse familial and communal perspectives on a girl child at birth and their mothers, *Swayamsidha Programme* for the empowerment of women, focusing on establishing self-help groups and many more but the common challenges in the implementation included lack of structured programs for training, absence of provisions for keeping a check on the ground level implementation, proper handling of the sanctioned budget and administrative expenses, lack of diligent manpower required for monitoring, and corruption at the grassroots level of India.

Even today, we have thousands of schemes with women and children being its focal point and the Ministry of Women and Child Development has been allocated the sum of Rs 25,449 crore in the annual budget.⁷ Most recently, the Ministry of Women and Child Development launched *Mission Shakti* which serves as an umbrella scheme for the safety, security, and empowerment of women for implementation during the 15th Finance Commission period 2021 -22 to 2025 -26, epitomizing the notion of transformation from women development to women-led national development has two sub-schemes, namely, *Sambal* and *Samarthya*.

The sub-scheme '*Sambal*' aims to tackle the safety and security issues faced by women, while the sub-scheme '*Samarthya*' aims to enhance the empowerment of women in India. The former includes the present endeavours, such as the One Stop Centre (OSC), which aims to provide services such as legal counselling, psycho-social counselling, and information on the assistance and facilities accessible to women. Additionally, it encompasses the Women Helpline (WHL) and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiatives. Moreover, a new component called Nari Adalat, which aims to provide women with an alternative mechanism for resolving minor grievances, has been introduced. On the other hand, the latter comprises the existing schemes of Ujjwala, Swadhar Greh, and Working Women Hostel. Furthermore, the Samarthya initiative has incorporated the National Creche Scheme and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) as part of its existing schemes. These programs aim to compensate for the loss of wages resulting from pregnancy and childbirth and encourage individuals to seek healthcare services. The Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) extends benefits to families for the birth of their second child, specifically if the child is a girl. Previously, the scheme only provided coverage for a single child. Also, the Samarthya Scheme incorporated a novel element called Gap Funding for Economic Empowerment. These are just those countable schemes that fall within the ambit of Mission Shakti but several other schemes have been launched by our government, namely, NIRBHAYA, Scheme for Adolescent Girls, National Creche Scheme, etc.

Even after having a comprehensive plan and many drafted policies and other legislations, there are a lot of loopholes on the part of administrators and executives. As per the revised statistics

⁷ 'Demand for Grants 2023-24 Analysis' (PRS Legislative Research, 20 February 2023)
<https://prsindia.org/files/budget/budget_parliament/2023/DFG_MHA_2023-24.pdf> accessed 27 May 2024

of budget estimates for the fiscal year 2024-25, continuously, less than 1% of the total union budget has been allocated to the Ministry of Women and Child Development which is the major reason behind the persisting lag overall human and social development of the nation (as per the report of the Standing Committee on Human Resource Development)⁸ but at the same time, there has been an increase of 19.1% for the welfare of women with the amount of Rs. 3,09,690 crores. This is, however, quite less than what has been subsumed by the ministries for the proper implementation and monitoring of the respective schemes and programs. This has led to several hurdles at the implementation stage. For instance, reportedly, there has been a continuous delay in completing the construction of 5,915 Anganwadi Centers and non-use of 1,487 Anganwadi Centers due to dilapidated conditions and scarcity of funds, lack of diversification as well as underutilization of funds.⁹ Several reports underline the lingering issue of underutilization of funds by the respective ministries in every financial year. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resources Development in its report has repeatedly talked about the shrinking budget and underutilization of the funds in the major schemes which depicts the downside of women empowerment strategies. With this poor spending, the fight over having less budget allocation will become tough every passing day.

However, this is just one of those thousand reasons behind the present status of women in Indian society. Many more aspects are attached to it. As per the latest data by NCRB, the rate of crimes against women has almost doubled in the last decade. The story from Kathua to Hathras isn't unknown to us. As per *the Women Peace and Security Index 2023* released by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, India ranks 128 out of 177 countries in terms of women's inclusion, justice, and security.¹⁰ The National Commission for Women (NCW) alone registered about 28,811 complaints of crime against women in 2023 and it included complaints of dowry harassment, molestation complaints, police apathy against women, and rape and

⁸ The Standing Committee on Human Resource Development Ministry of Women and Child Development, *Report No. 338: Demands for Grants 2020-21* (2020)

⁹ Demand for Grants 2023-24 Analysis (n 7)

¹⁰ 'Women Peace and Security Index' (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security)

<<https://giwps.georgetown.edu/the-index/>> accessed 27 May 2024

attempt to rape.¹¹ In continuance, the National Crime Records Bureau reports disclosed that approximately 51 FIRs of crime against women have been registered every hour in 2022.¹² This grim picture of women's safety is further worsened by other factors like the absence of economic independence, pre-established societal norms, entrenched gender bias, and violence. Though the Umbrella scheme on '*Safety of women*' is ongoing with the hefty allocation of funds on paper on paper, which is basically from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Nirbhaya Fund, the reports show that the funds from the Ministry and the Nirbhaya Fund are highly underutilized, in reality.

From the worm's-eye view, there seem to be uncountable reasons behind this worsened status of women in our society but if we analyze the scenario from the bird's-eye view, all these reasons and factors are interconnected and varying at the same point. However, in the further sections of this research paper, the thorough analysis of the miraged schemes of the government of India seems to be beneficial and empathetic but is crippled with the ills of corruption, politics, and patriarchal notions!

BETI BACHAO, BETI PADHAO- WHO KNEW IT WASN'T OBVIOUS?

This flagship scheme of the government of India has not failed in getting the attention of the public since International Day of the Girl Child, 2015; a scheme whose tagline came from the poems of Chetna Bhati, an officer of the Rajasthan Police and today covers more than 640 districts of the country. This scheme was launched to bring certain behavioral and attitudinal changes in society towards the birth and rights of a girl child. Though the main objective was to address the issue of the declining child-sex ratio image of the country, it also aimed to prevent gender-biased sex selective elimination while enabling the survival, protection, and education of girl children.

The imbalanced child sex ratio (CSR) in India is not a recent phenomenon, as it has been reported since the early 20th century, starting from the first Census of 1871. The predominant reason for

¹¹ '28,811 complaints of crimes against women received in 2023, over 50% from U.P.: NCW data' *The Hindu* (02 January 2024) <<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/28811-complaints-of-crimes-against-women-received-in-2023-over-50-from-up-ncw-data/article67695834.ece#>> accessed 27 May 2024

¹² National Crime Records Bureau, *Crime in India 2022 Volume-I* (2022)

the neglect of female children in patrilineal and patrilocal Indian society is a significant preference for male children, resulting in a disproportionately high mortality rate for girls aged 0-4 years. In the 1990s, this issue was worsened by the widespread and uncontrolled use of medical technologies which made it easier to determine the sex of a fetus illegally. The Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Act, 1994¹³ was the very first legislation in India passed with the intent of curbing sex-selective abortions. It was subsequently modified in 2003 and renamed the Pre-Conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (PC & PNDT) Act. This legislation mandated the compulsory maintenance of records for diagnostic testing and limited the utilization of these instruments to authorized centers and competent individuals exclusively.

Nevertheless, despite implementing these legal provisions, numerous reports consistently emphasized a significant and ongoing decrease in the Child Sex Ratio in India, reaching its lowest point according to the Census Data 2011.¹⁴ Several reports suggest that the strong preference for male children in India, which has led to an increase in the selective elimination of female children, can be attributed to factors such as the inadequate implementation of the PC-PNDT act and the delay in judicial convictions. However, a comprehensive study has revealed multiple interconnected factors at play.

Challenging all these strong socio-cultural factors and biases of India which considered daughters as '*Paraya Dhan*', the government came up with this vision to empower the Bharat ki Betiyan and provide them dignity and opportunities to grow and flourish in their lives. The famous logo of this scheme also symbolizes the rights, hopes, and aspirations of the girl child for a life full of dignity and equality. The scheme thus emphasized the serious issue of gender discrimination. Over the years, there has been a significant improvement in all main measures, including CSR, enrolment of girls in school, and percentage of institutional births. However, all this progress has been minimal. The absence of disaggregated data, inadequate monitoring, insufficient expenditure planning, less usage of the allocated funds, and a lack of emphasis on sector-specific interventions have hindered the intended transformation and consistent

¹³ The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act 1994

¹⁴ 'Census of India 2011: Child sex ratio drops to lowest since Independence' *The Economic Times* (31 March 2011) <<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/census-of-india-2011-child-sex-ratio-drops-to-lowest-since-independence/articleshow/7836942.cms?from=mdr>> accessed 27 May 2024

outcomes across different states. Here are a few quantifiable effects of these initiatives, but they aren't enough as the progress has not been uniform throughout nine years since its implementation and throughout many districts. Furthermore, the available data is insufficient to evaluate the initiative's impact on girls from disadvantaged communities, as well as the degree to which the program empowers educated girls and expectant moms to engage in the decision-making process for their own lives and families.

The latest government data has cleared the bubble and has underscored the ever-existing issue of funds-less allocation backed by underutilization and diversification. From Table 1 and Graph 1, it can be easily deduced that since the beginning, the expenditure of the funds has been less than 70% and the same has decreased continuously. Most recently in the fiscal year 2022-2023, out of the total budget of Rs. 222 crores, the total expenditure of the Ministry stands at Rs. 34 crores i.e., less than 20%.¹⁵ A continuing trend can be seen in the proportion of the funds spent on media advocacy and the multi-sectoral intervention which was the actual planned expenditure. The Comptroller & Auditor General of India (CAG) Report of 2017 emphasized the problem of ineffective distribution of money and asserts that the scheme did not meet expectations in the social, economic, and general sectors.¹⁶ A parliamentary committee led by Heena Vijaykumar Gavit, in December 2021, while discussing the report titled 'Empowerment of Women through Education with special reference to 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' had also noted that out of total funds released under the scheme during the period from 2016 to 2019, nearly 78.91%, was spent only on media campaigns and advocacy.¹⁷ The same has been highlighted multiple times in the reports of the Parliamentary Committee.

¹⁵ 'Statistical Information Relating to Quesitons' (*Rajya Sabha*, 2 February 2023)

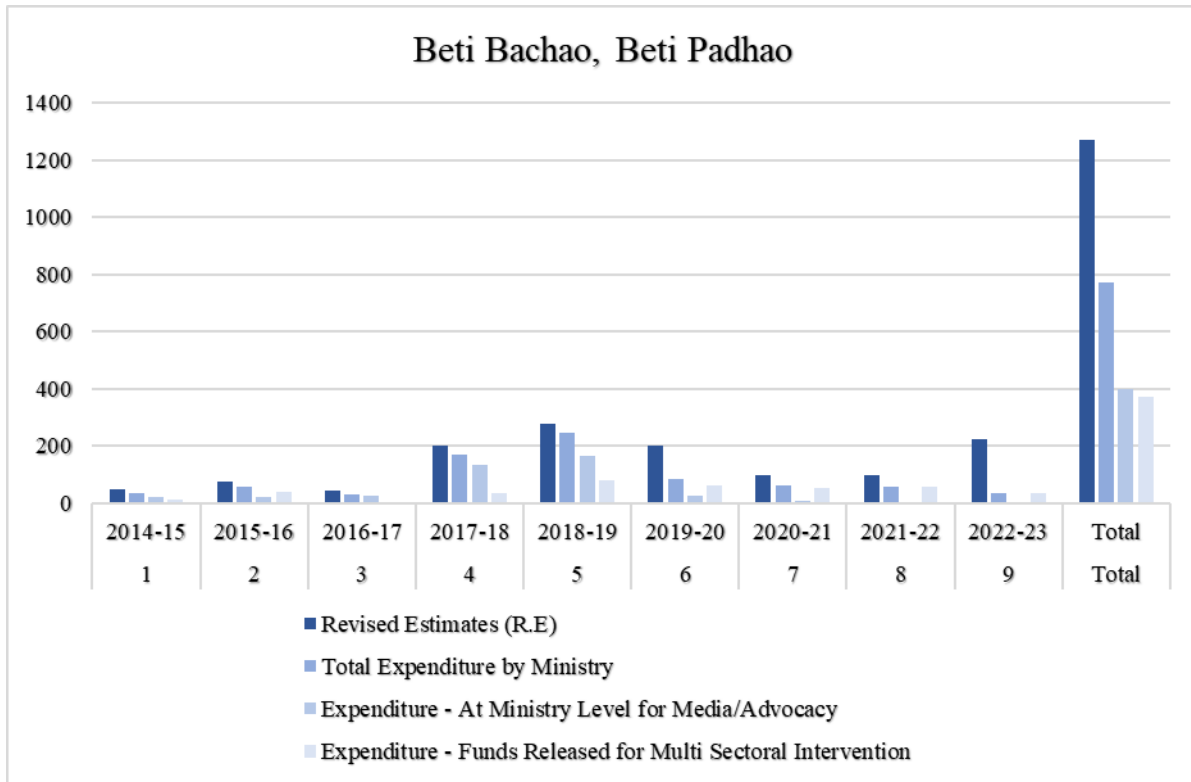
<https://cms.rajyasabha.nic.in/UploadedFiles/Questions/QuestionsStatistical/258/202322_Statistical%20Report%20258%20English.pdf> accessed 27 May 2024

¹⁶ Government of Mizoram, *Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Social, General, Economic and Revenue Sectors* (2017)

¹⁷ Committee on Empowerment of Women, *Sixth Report* (2022)

Sl. No.	Financial Year	Revised Estimates (R.E)	Total Expenditure by Ministry	Expenditure - At Ministry Level for Media/Advocacy	Expenditure - Funds Released for Multi-Sectoral Intervention
1	2014-15	50	34.84	21.46	13.38
2	2015-16	75	59.37	21.01	38.36
3	2016-17	43	28.66	25.84	2.82
4	2017-18	200	169.1	135.92	33.18
5	2018-19	280	244.73	164.04	80.69
6	2019-20	200	85.78	25.75	60.03
7	2020-21	100	60.57	7.02	53.55
8	2021-22	100	57.13	0	57.13
9	2022-23	222	34.07	0	34.07
Total	Total	1270	774.25	401.04	373.21

Table 1 (Source: Rajya Sabha Session; Data Figures are in Rs. Crore. Data of Total Expenditure by Ministry during 2022-23 (as of 05-12-2022)).



Graph 1 (Source: Rajya Sabha Session; Data Figures are in Rs. Crore. Data of Total Expenditure by Ministry during 2022-23 (as of 05-12-2022)).

In addition to this, the scheme has many lacunas in its design itself. It fails to address the concerns of a girl child at different stages of her life i.e. from her mother’s womb to a woman carrying a child in her womb.

The absence of precise exclusive and exhaustive indicators that can accurately measure the real outputs and effects of the schemes has highlighted the need to reassess the quantifiable objectives of the scheme because there is an array of reasons that contribute to the persisting gender bias in the Indian society. Just achieving a balanced ratio of female to male children will not result in daughters being equally valued in families as males!

UJJWALA YOJANA- IS IT FUELING THE VEHICLE OF DEVELOPMENT?

The Ujjwala Yojana is considered one of the central government's most prominent initiatives aimed at enhancing the status of women in India. This scheme comes under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MOPNG). The Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi

initiated this Scheme on 1st May 2016 to provide LPG Connections to 8 crore homes by March 2020. The objective was accomplished on September 7th, 2019.

The implementation of the scheme has resulted in the distribution of 80 million LPG connections, leading to a significant rise in LPG coverage from 62% on May 1, 2016, to 99.8% as of April 1, 2021. Furthermore, the Union Budget for FY 21-22 has allocated resources for the distribution of an extra 1 Crore LPG connections through the PMUY plan. During this phase, migratory families and individuals below the poverty line have been provided with specific accommodations. However, the question remains unchanged: Are the beneficiaries of this initiative genuinely happy, pleased, and accommodated by the scheme, or do they simply adapt to whatever limited benefits they receive? To evaluate the efficacy of the Ujjwala Yojana, a comprehensive audit was done by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), who subsequently presented their audit findings to the parliament. The research highlights significant apprehensions over the scheme.¹⁸

The CAG Report mentions that the PMUY scheme aimed to provide LPG connections under the name of women. However, the audit noted that the software used by Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) lacked input validation checks, resulting in the issuance of 188,000 connections under the AHL TIN of males.

Another loophole that was revealed in the Audit report was the absence of input validation verification in the IOCL software allowed the issuance of 0.80 lakh connections to beneficiaries who were below the age of 18. Furthermore, the study of the data indicated that a total of 8.59 lakh connections were provided to beneficiaries who were underage according to the SECC-2011 data. This action was found to be in contravention of the guidelines set forth by the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) and the LPG Control Order of 2000.

The Negligence does not stop here, an average delay of 10 days (about 1 and a half weeks), with some delays as long as 664 days, was seen in the delivery of 36.62 lakh LPG refills, which should have been delivered within seven days. In addition, the OMCs did not supervise the inadequate

¹⁸ Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, *Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (2019)*

compliance of LPG distributors with the Targeted Delivery Time (TDT) criteria of the Marketing Disciplinary Guidelines (MDG).

The report highlights more flaws, but due to the word constraint of this paper, the authors find it challenging to address them. However, readers can refer to the attached link of the Audit report for further information. The CAG Audit Report also highlighted specific recommendations that should have been implemented but are still pending adoption by the scheme supervisors. Some of the suggestions that the reports mention are that to ensure effective de-duplication, it is necessary to input the Aadhaar numbers of all adult family members, both existing and new beneficiaries, into the system. When LPG connections are given to minor beneficiaries, they can be changed to the name of an adult family member if the family is otherwise qualified under PMUY. As specified in the scheme, a third-party audit could be done to check how well the scheme is being carried out. Although some of the audit committee's ideas have been put into action, others are still being thought about and not yet modified.

This is not the end of the story. The CAG Report on Ujjwala Yojna only hinted at the scheme's flaws and holes, which were not covered by any of the major news outlets. What the news did cover was the scheme's goal of achieving the target before the actual period.

It's been crazy expensive to buy LPG cylinders since March 2021. For example, in Delhi on August 1, 2019, an LPG barrel cost Rs. 574.50.¹⁹ Before the public announcement of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, things got worse. Worldwide demand dropped so much that the price of an LPG cylinder dropped below Rs 600 for three months. Considering February 2021, it has never been less than Rs 700. It went from 809 to 999.50 rupees in March 2021 to May 2022.

According to the RTI data, it was revealed that only one in four people who got help from the Ujjwala Yojana refilled their LPG cylinder last year, even though they got a ₹200 subsidy. This data clearly shows that there are problems with how the plan is being put into action, as the

¹⁹ 'Previous Price of Nonsubsidised 14.2 Kg' (*Indian Oil Corporation Limited*) <<https://iocl.com/indane-14Kg-nonsubsid-price>> accessed on 27 May 2024

people for whom it was created are unable to refill their cylinders because of rising prices and inflation that can't be stopped.²⁰

We as authors support the policy's goal and the first steps toward adoption, but it needs to be restructured and closely watched to be truly effective. The policy's flaws can be fixed by implementing new and improved strategies, such as a third-party audit regularly, a strong monitoring committee to keep an eye on how the scheme is being carried out, and letting the public access and help to carry out the scheme more effectively.

SCHEMES FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF NARI SHAKTI

India is considered one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has projected that the Indian economy is expected to experience a growth rate of approximately 7.8% in the fiscal year 2024-25.²¹ In this era of fast-paced economic growth, the growth of Indian women and men at an equal pace is quintessential. But the reality presents a whole different picture of the same!

A very large segment of the population has been unable to capture the benefits of economic growth by being excluded from the formal capitalistic production-distribution processes. The economic scenario for women who constitute almost half of the Indian population working in the informal sector is highly concerning. As per the International Labor Organization, 81.8% of women's employment in India is predominantly found in the informal economy- work that is not subject to taxation or is conducted off the official records.²² Presently, over 90% of working women find themselves in this sector, where they often face low wages, lack of job security, and no social security benefits.²³ It was previously believed that this informal sector would either wither away as India's economy expanded or blossom into a dynamic part of the country's new

²⁰ Maitri Porecha, 'One in four Ujjwala Yojana beneficiaries took zero or one LPG cylinder refills last year despite ₹200 subsidy, RTI data reveals' *The Hindu* (31 August 2023) <<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/one-in-four-ujjwala-yojana-beneficiaries-took-zero-or-one-lpg-cylinder-refills-last-year-despite-200-subsidy-rti-data-reveals/article67255260.ece>> accessed 27 May 2024

²¹ Dr. Rumki Majumdar, 'India economic outlook, April, 2024' (*Deloitte Insights*, 26 April 2024) <<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/economy/asia-pacific/india-economic-outlook-04-2024.html>> accessed 27 May 2024

²² International Labour Organization, *Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture* (3rd edn, International Labour Office 2018)

²³ *Ibid*

capitalist state. Surprisingly, though, empirical evidence shows that India's informal sector is growing with the country's booming economy. Thus, it is crucial to prioritize the development of women's talents to motivate them to acquire life skills that can result in improved livelihoods, well-paying and high-quality jobs, financial independence, and the ability to support their families.

Since the initial days of independence, our Indian government has been drafting, deliberating, and implementing (to an extent) various schemes, projects, and other initiatives for women's empowerment through skill development.

On the suggestions of the National Commission for Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector (1988), the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) administered the *Support to Training and Employment for Women (STEP)* in 1986–1987 as a Central Sector Scheme. The scheme is funded by the Central government and the implementing agency. Enhancement of women's abilities for self-employment and wages of labour is central to the mission of this program. It is intended to benefit women who are in the age group of 16 years and above across the country, including the marginalized, assetless rural women and urban poor. The effective plan of this scheme includes empowering women to form effective groups, enhancing their skill sets, securing productive assets and wage jobs, establishing a network of support services both formally and informally, increasing their access to credit, raising public awareness, educating them about the importance of good nutrition; sensitizing project officials; and so on.

The grant-in-aid under this scheme is granted to institutions and organizations, including NGOs and the assistance provided under this was accessible in various sectors to enhance employability and entrepreneurship skills which included Agriculture, Horticulture, Food Processing, Handlooms, Tailoring, Stitching, Embroidery, Zari, Handicrafts, Computer & IT enabled services, as well as soft skills and workplace skills like spoken English, Gems & Jewellery, Travel & Tourism, and Hospitality. Furthermore, the authorities outlined detailed guidelines on project formulation, the pattern of assistance, the cost structure of different components, the composition of a project sanctioning committee, the process of release of funds, and the project implementation in December 2014. This scheme, however, succeeded in

empowering thousands of women but had several challenges, such as access to quality training, post-training support, and scalability, that needed to be addressed.

One of the senior officials from the WCD ministry claimed that the WCD ministry allocated an annual budget of Rs. 40 crores to approximately 1,500 registered NGOs at district/panchayat levels to provide skill training for women. Unfortunately, the issue at hand is that none of the NGOs registered with the ministry meets the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) norms, i.e., the NGOs providing training under the STEP scheme should work from modest offices or community centers in rural areas, but unfortunately, there is a lack of funding to support the necessary infrastructure according to the NSQF. The ministry also discontinued this scheme in the year 2019 on account of its similarity with that of the skilling and training program implemented under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to avoid duplication of costs.²⁴ Surprisingly, this Skill India Mission has also faced backlash. It has been said that from the beginning, the scheme was plagued by the wrong selection of courses, outdated technological levels, and deceitful reporting. An investigation by another newspaper daily found the majority of institutes that provided training to the youth lacked proper infrastructure. There have been complaints piling up on the functioning of these initiatives – from no training centers to poor training, no certification, no placement or forced placement, lack of trainers, and no assurance of a decent wage for those trained. According to the official government data, less than 20% of the 10 million (1,37,24,226) individuals trained under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana were reported as placed between 2015 and 2023.²⁵ The 2022 report of the Lok Sabha Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour, Textiles, and Skill Development has expressed dissatisfaction with the low rates of job placements.²⁶ The committee argues that these rates are the most accurate measure of the effectiveness of the initiative. Furthermore, the Committee raised concerns about the inadequate utilization of funds designated for the program, emphasizing the importance of continuous monitoring and

²⁴ 'Address by Smriti Irani' (*Sansad TV*, 16 December 2022) <<https://sansadtv.nic.in/loksabha/minister-smriti-zubin-iranis-reply-private-members-business-resolution>> accessed 27 May 2024

²⁵ 'Annexure Referred To In Reply To Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1747 To Be Answered On 31.07.2023 Regarding "Training Under Skill India Programme' (*MSDE*, 30 July 2023) <<https://msde.gov.in/sites/default/files/2023-07/Annexure%20I%20PMKVY.pdf>> accessed 27 May 2024

²⁶ Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, *48th Report* (2023)

thorough follow-up. In the annual report of 2022-23, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship noted 14 problems raised by trainees, skill centre operators, and prospective employers involved in this project.²⁷

Other skill development programs under the Skill India Mission, such as the *National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)*, *Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)*, *Craftsmanship Training Scheme (CTS)*, and *Craft Instructor Training Scheme (CITS)*, have also encountered backlashes on the similar lines. The schemes like '*Seekho Aur Kamao*', '*USTTAD*', and '*Nai Manzil*', which were notified specifically for the betterment of women of minority communities, were also gripped by the persisting issue of less fund allocation.

This is just one aspect of skill development and economic upliftment. The recent government's introduction of the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2023,²⁸ popularly known as the *Women's Reservation Bill*, during the current extraordinary session of Parliament, which ultimately was passed, has greatly intrigued the nation. This 27-year-long wait is often considered imperfect but important, but is it so? It is alleged to be delayed on the part of the implementation of the delimitation exercise, which is only possible after a census and it has been flawed on the part that it excludes the women of marginalized communities, i.e., from the OBC/EBC category. But people accepted it even after the tincture of absurdity and uncertainty rooted in it.

Considering the patriarchal Indian society, the noticeable gender gap in India's rural and urban areas, as well as between the proportion of women working in organized and unorganized sectors, could not be lowered even after a decade of implementation of these flagship programs. This also demonstrates that, in terms of economic engagement and employment, the gender gap in India is more pronounced than in the rest of the world, hindering our vision of Viksit Bharat!

²⁷ Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, *Annual Report (2023)*

²⁸ The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Amendment) Bill 2023

THE NIRBHAYA FUND - IS IT TRULY THE RAY OF HOPE?

No Indian is unknown to the horrific night of 16th December 2012- the night which shook the whole nation's conscience and brought the masses on the road for rallies calling for structural changes to address the persisting issue of sexual assault.

The incident of grit, pain, and an unyielding quest for justice sparked national disappointment and important discussions about women's safety and justice. In the wake of Nirbhaya, the then-Finance Minister announced in the budget for 2013-14 the consolidation of a non-lapsable corpus fund, Nirbhaya Fund, a dedicated fund that can be utilized for projects specifically curated to improve the safety and security of women while the same shall be administered by the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance and monitored by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. This scheme, with an initial corpus of Rs. 1000 crores, has certain funding patterns between the Centre and states, along with a robust mechanism for the release of funds involving coordination between different ministries for overall appraisal and utilization of funds.²⁹

This led to a few significant developments including distribution of scooties and tablets for cops of Woman Help Desk, installation of CCTV cameras at railway stations and panic buttons, construction of 'She' toilets, comeback of pink BMTC buses, setting up of One Stop Centres for women, setting up fast track special courts and multiple projects worth crores sanctioned in the name of women safety but one headline remains constant over these ten years- UNDERUTILIZED FUNDS!

It was in the year 2016 when the reports of a parliamentary standing committee highlighted the under-utilization of these funds for the past 3-4 years. They said that it's ironic to see the crimes against women increasing exponentially while the dedicated funds allotted to tackle this issue have remained unutilized. It has been a dud as most of the other schemes which were introduced on paper and remained on paper only, i.e., they were never implemented. Presently, there are about 42 projects and schemes running under the Nirbhaya Fund.³⁰

²⁹ Ministry of Women and Child Development, *Nirbhaya Scheme* PIB (2021)

³⁰ Ministry of Women and Child Development, *Projects Under Nirbhaya Fund* PIB (2021)

During the initial days, it was allegedly claimed that there was a lack of clarity in rules on how and at what stage the funds would be released, but soon, detailed guidelines were issued by the concerned ministry, and an integrated system of disbursement and management of money was created. But even after such a detailed and robust plan, not a single project has taken off, with all the consultations and contracts showing only swift progress, making women's safety a far-fetched dream. As of now, more than Rs. 3000 crores have been allotted to the Nirbhaya Fund, but the utilized amount stands not even at half. An average of nearly 90 rapes a day were reported in the year 2022 in our country,³¹ is this something that presents the real picture of how much we are lagging while stepping ahead in making this country a dangerous place to be a woman.

Let us understand this issue precisely by looking at one of the important and buzzed projects rather schemes of the government of India i.e., *the One Stop Centre Scheme*. This scheme was launched in the year 2015 on the recommendations of Justice (Retd.) Usha Mehra Commission in 2013³² to support women affected by violence (or physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and economic abuse) in private and public spaces, within the family, community and at the workplace irrespective of age, class, caste, education status, marital status, race, and culture. Aggrieved women facing any kind of violence due to attempted sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, trafficking, honour-related crimes, acid attacks, or witch-hunting who have reached out or been referred to the One Stop Centre (OSC) were to be provided with specialized services to redress their grievances. One of the unique characteristics of these OSCs is that they were linked with the 181 and other existing helplines and were equipped with a wide range of services, from medical and psychological to legal support in furtherance of the order by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

Ironically, even after having such a good and socially beneficial objective, many investigation reports revealed several challenges in the successful implementation of this scheme, which included issues like lack of awareness, infrastructural issues, lack of coordination between

³¹ The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act 1994

³² Justice Usha Mehra Commission of Inquiry, *Report of Justice Usha Mehra (Retd.)* (2013)

different departments, poor training, inadequate funds, police apathy and most importantly, the persisting hesitancy among women.

In 2015, the Ministry of Women and Child Development designed a federally sponsored program to set OSCs as part of the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (now called 'Mission Shakti'), but even after this step, very little development has been seen.

In 2017, an investigation by Human Rights Watch, a global advocacy, into 21 cases found that a 'lack of coordination between the various relevant departments and ministries' and public awareness had reduced these centers to provide marital counseling.³³ Most recently, in 2023, it was reported that, on average, only one out of 110 registered rape cases were referred to OSC in the financial capital of the country, Mumbai.³⁴ The report further claims that many OSCs are deserted with empty beds and the least maintained infrastructure. When one of the reporters visited the places which were supposedly the addresses of OSCs in Delhi, she found them non-existent and in case they found the room, there was no sign indicating that it was an OSC, an action reflecting the failure of the government to adhere with the blueprint³⁵ given by the Supreme Court in 2019.³⁶ Many reports show that these OSCs aren't working for 24 hours, which they are supposed to and are non-functional. With the most recent instance of UP, there is a huge pile of RTI that got an unclear reply, with big numbers and hidden details that were also proved to be wrong.³⁷ Several centers are yet to be established, existing centers are poorly funded, and those seeking help are victim-blamed today.

One of the major issues is funds. The Rs. 1000 crore budget of the Nirbhaya Fund was reduced to half in the fiscal years 2021-22 and 2022-23 and substantially a very small amount has been

³³ Human Rights Watch, *Everyone Blames Me* (2017)

³⁴ Rupsa Chakraborty, 'Failing them again: Beds remain empty as one-stop centres for rape survivors under Nirbhaya Fund remain crippled with low referral, official apathy' *The Indian Express* (18 June 2023) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/mumbai-hardlook-failing-them-again-8645743/>> accessed 27 May 2024

³⁵ Shruti Janardhan, 'I visited 4 One Stop Centres promised in the Nirbhaya Fund and this is what I found' (*Feminism in India*, 16 December 2017) <<https://feminisminindia.com/2017/12/16/one-stop-centres-nirbhaya-fund/>> accessed 27 May 2024

³⁶ *Nipun Saxena v Union of India & Ors* (2019) 2 SCC 703

³⁷ Puja Awasthi, 'RTI query shows One Stop Centres are dysfunctional in UP' *The Week* (06 March 2020) <<https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2020/03/06/RTI-query-shows-One-Stop-Centres-are-dysfunctional-in-UP.html>> accessed 27 May 2024

spent on the OSCs.³⁸ This fund has been implemented further for 2025-26 but doesn't its abysmally low utilization show little political will to address this issue? This fund is reportedly being used for the construction of roads and railways rather than for women's security. We already have a lack of funding since we need a fund close to 1.3 billion dollars to support 60% of the affected women,³⁹ and these failures of anti-rape laws are making the pursuit of justice futile. What's the point of making schemes global if they are failing on the national fronts?

This stark contrast between what is on the paper and what is, in reality, calls for a different modus operandi to tackle the existing issues and to do what these schemes, projects, and funds were meant to do.

SWADHAR GREH SCHEME- THE BELATED ATTEMPT OF PROVIDING SAFETY TO WOMEN

The Swadhar Greh Scheme was introduced by the government in the year 2001-02 under the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The scheme proposes an institutional structure that provides support to women who are victims of challenging situations, enabling them to live their lives with dignity and determination however, the genesis of this scheme was intricate. In 1969, another scheme with a similar purpose, known as the Scheme of Short Stay Homes for Women and Girls, was implemented by the Department of Social Welfare. In 2001, the Department of Women and Child Development introduced a program called Swadhar - A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances, which shares similar objectives with another scheme.

The scheme attempts to rehabilitate women in tough circumstances by providing them with housing, food, clothing, counseling, training, clinical services, and legal aid. In 2007, the Centre for Market Research and Social Development in New Delhi undertook an evaluation to analyze the performance of both initiatives, given they share the same objective. Consequently, it

³⁸ Mampi Bose, 'What Government Expenditure Tells Us About Official Attitudes Towards Women's Safety' *The Wire* (04 September 2023) <<https://thewire.in/women/what-government-expenditure-tells-us-about-official-attitudes-towards-womens-safety>> accessed 27 May 2024

³⁹ 'Towards Violence Free Lives For Women: Tracking Of Union Budgets (2018-21) For Violence Services' (Oxfam, 08 February 2021) <<https://www.oxfamindia.org/knowledgehub/workingpaper/towards-violence-free-lives-women-tracking-union-budgets-2018-21-violence-services>> accessed 27 May 2024

suggested combining these two systems to enhance their operation and results while minimizing administrative complexities and processes.

The scheme was often updated to adapt to the changing times and societal conditions while maintaining its fundamental objectives. The plan aims to assist women experiencing hardship and lacking social and economic resources. The objective is to assist these women in recovering their emotional resilience, providing legal assistance and guidance for their reintegration into their families or community, and facilitating their economic and emotional rehabilitation. In addition, the program aims to serve as a complete support system, recognizing and addressing the various needs of these women, ultimately empowering them to rebuild their lives with dignity and determination.

The central government plays a crucial role in implementing the scheme by adopting a cost-sharing ratio of 60:40, except for the Northeastern States, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir, where the ratio is 90:10 between the central government and the respective state governments. For UTs, the Government will offer complete help, covering 100% of the expenses. According to the data provided on the ministry website, there is a consistent decrease in the budget allocation for the Swadhar Greh Scheme. According to the data, the allocated budget for this scheme was Rs. 100 crores in 2016-17, but it decreased to Rs. 50 crores in the year 2020-21, indicating a significant fall which has led to the poor execution of the scheme.⁴⁰

According to the ministry's guidelines, it is specified that each district should have a Swadhar Greh. However, given the country's population of nearly 1.4 billion, with approximately 48% being women, having only one Swadhar Greh per district may not be sufficient to meet the program's needs. Furthermore, due to the limited budget allocated, it would be challenging to effectively implement the scheme with the allotted amount.

The scheme has committed to focusing on the needs of women facing difficulties in society. In reality, the initiative has encountered significant setbacks. Various news outlets, including newspapers and television channels, have been reporting on the flaws and deficiencies of the scheme. A news report from Chhatarpur district, which happens to be the hometown of one of

⁴⁰ Ministry of Women and Child Development, *Modifications in the guidelines of Swadhar Greh Scheme- reg.* (2018)

the authors, emerged in 2021, highlighting one such loophole. The news reported the disappearance of two underage girls from a Swadhar Greh, highlighting the organization's absence of effectiveness in ensuring the safety of women.⁴¹

Another story has emerged from Jharkhand, where seven girls, including four children, fled from the Swadhar Greh in Hazaribagh District. This report emphasizes the importance of closely monitoring Swadhar Greh homes. The ministry's website mentions the establishment of monitoring committees at the central, state, and district levels, with the collector acting as the committee's chairperson. Their role was to oversee the scheme's implementation at the grassroots level. However, in practice, these committees have failed to effectively protect these homes and improve the living conditions for the women who are already experiencing challenges.⁴²

In 2019, the National Commission for Women examined the Swadhar Greh scheme in the states of Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal. The commission then presented its findings to the Women and Child Development Ministry. The NCW discovered inadequate security measures and unsanitary living conditions at the women's rehabilitation homes. Adolescent girls under the age of 18, elderly ladies over the age of 60, and women with mental disabilities are all housed together without any effort from the NGOs implementing these programs to segregate them or provide further care.

The reports of the National Commission for Women (NCW) provide an accurate depiction of the scheme that was implemented to aid women who are experiencing distress and hardship. However, the plan itself is currently facing significant challenges.⁴³

⁴¹ Dharmendra Singh, 'Two minor girls mysteriously missing from Swadhar Greh' (*Patrika*, 02 September 2021) <<https://www.patrika.com/chhatarpur-news/two-minor-girls-mysteriously-missing-from-swadhar-greh-7044053>> accessed 27 May 2024

⁴² Animesh Bisoe, 'Minors flee from govt home in Jharkhand' *The Telegraph* (23 December 2022) <<https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/minors-flee-from-govt-home-in-jharkhand/cid/1899673>> accessed 27 May 2024

⁴³ 'NCW finds lack of security and unhygienic living conditions at rehabilitative homes for women' *The Indian Express* (27 September 2019) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/ncw-finds-lack-of-security-and-unhygienic-living-conditions-at-rehabilitative-homes-for-women-6033931/>> accessed 27 May 2024

These incidents represent only a small fraction of the cases that received media attention. However, other distressing and tragic incidents went unreported by the women residing there. This is due to their fear of being evicted from the facility if they speak out against the individuals in charge of the Swadhar Greh. Additionally, it is vital to establish an effective system for addressing complaints and resolving grievances of those residing in the residences. Furthermore, it is necessary to reassess the program to ensure its successful execution.

ANALYSIS

Women's empowerment is an essential facet of India's development. According to the Annual Gender Report, 2023 of the World Economic Forum (WEF), India ranked 127th out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity. There has been a substantial rise in the number of women joining the labour market, and women have attained prominent positions in several industries, such as politics, business, and entertainment. Notwithstanding these accomplishments, women in India continue to encounter substantial obstacles.

The government has duly recognized the potential and significance of women's economic empowerment and is actively working to achieve it. India has served as the host country for the G20 summit in the year 2023 and the economic empowerment of women forms the heart of India's G20 agenda. We envisioned an India where Nari Shakti is celebrated in all spheres of the economy and society, shifting the focus from women's development to women-led development for the first time. We witnessed themes like '*Enhancing Economic and Social Empowerment*', '*Bridging the Gender Digital Divide*', '*Driving Gender Inclusive Climate Action*', and '*Securing Women's Food Security, Nutrition and Well-Being*'. India's goal is succinctly expressed by our Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement at the G20 Summit in Bali, i.e., '*Global development is not possible without women's participation.*'⁴⁴ In addition to this, the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047 also contains a comprehensive blueprint for the future of the country's prosperity, including elements such as inclusive development and economic progress. The

⁴⁴ 'PM addresses G20 Ministerial Conference on Women Empowerment' (*PM India*, 02 August 2023) <https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pm-addresses-g20-ministerial-conference-on-women-empowerment/> accessed 27 May 2024

government has also taken many initiatives to achieve this goal on the 100th anniversary of our independence. But do you think that the present picture stands as a testimony to that?

After analyzing various welfare schemes and initiatives taken up by the government with a vision to make the country inclusively developed by 2047, the author has identified a few common issues and lacunas in them. All these initiatives, while noble in intent often grapple with a wide range of complexities of bureaucratic inertia leading to suboptimal implementation and execution of these schemes. For instance, the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme aimed to balance the CSR of the nation eradicating gender imbalance and fortifying the educational status of the girl children are beleaguered with the issues of less fund allocation, misallocation rather, and underutilization. Moving further, the STEM Scheme followed by the National Skill Mission is now criticized for not aligning the course curriculums with the industry's demands, leading to a stark difference between skill acquisition and employability. Furthermore, the Ujjwala Yojana, which aimed to provide clean cooking fuel to the underprivileged has juggled distribution bottlenecks and a lack of awareness amongst those who are claimed as the beneficiaries of the scheme. The Nirbhaya Fund, instituted to bolster the safety conditions of women is marred by the poor fund disbursement, its underutilization, and a lack of holistic strategy for implementation. Several projects being undertaken under this fund face issues related to infrastructure, lack of funds, monitoring, and implementation strategies. Similarly, the Sudhar Greh Scheme which was designed to rehabilitate women who are the victims of violence against them, is facing challenges related to infrastructural inadequacies and insufficient outreach.

These issues pose a big question to the governance machinery i.e., a huge difference between what has been formulated by the legislative in the House of Parliament and what is the actual on-ground issues encountered by the executives and other administrating agencies. The wide lacuna when it comes to the monitoring of these schemes and initiatives along with the absence of certain stringent standards of accountability has all nurtured a situation where the overall impact of these schemes and initiatives has been diluted making the on-paper aspirations a long-sighted dream!

If we wish to turn our vision of Viksit Bharat into reality, this phase of Amrit Kaal should be taken more seriously than Kartavya Kaal and certain umbrella steps should be taken at the central level to eradicate these nuanced issues. For instance, to tackle the existing issue of fund allocation, wherein we see either over-allocation or minimal allocation, some robust mechanisms like a properly regulated periodic reassessment of the needs of every ministry, rather schemes and initiatives could be done, and this data would make the decisions more analyzed since the legislative can think of possible risks, assess them, the margins between desired and utilized funds and other related aspects. Furthermore, to deal with the monitoring issues, an independent auditing committee shall be established to enforce stringent penalties for any sort of mismanagement or diversion from the actual devised plan. This will ensure compliance with the existing legal provisions and statutory norms while ensuring a comparatively transparent mechanism. But this won't ensure a 100 percent transparent and accountable system while the same can be attempted to be achieved by involving the concerned stakeholders in the process. This might cover the involvement of the public in general to bolster the criteria of public participation and public support.

Most importantly, there are hundreds of running schemes in the country wherein one ministry handles many schemes falling within their area of action alongside the regular ministerial work. There are no specified criteria when it comes to how much time and concentration should be given to one scheme, which one should be prioritized, which one should be more focused on, etc. To tackle this issue, the authors feel that the executives involved in these schemes can hold frequent meetings to track the regular performance of the individual schemes and foster a more fruitful discussion that could benefit those who were earlier intended to be.

Moreover, keeping into consideration the present picture of our country, every citizen is aware of the fact that certain areas are being considered as potent weapons of political parties, and the saddest part is women's welfare and empowerment falling within that area. Additionally, the changing political picture of the country doesn't ensure the long lives of these schemes and initiatives. They are either ignored, renamed, or overshadowed like an old wine in a new bottle. If we are considering this era as an Amrit Kaal, we as citizens of India shouldn't fail to do our

Kartavya, we should not prioritize these materialistic things over the development and overall growth of our India!

CONCLUSION

There is a very famous saying in Sanskrit, '*Rashtrasya Shrava Naari Asti, Naari Rashtrasya Akshi Asti*' which translates to a woman is our tomorrow, and a woman is the eye of the nation! During these 75 years of independence, we have witnessed several situations that have established the fact that women and their contribution to the development of any nation stands irreplaceable. We believe a daughter is born if you have good luck, and when you educate your daughter, you aren't only educating an individual, but a family, then why, is this tainted reality?

The author has specifically chosen these five areas because as per Keshab Chandra Mandal, there are five well-defined aspects of women empowerment and the same can be demarcated into these categories- social, educational, economic, political, and psychological. The selected schemes and their intended areas of operation properly align with these aspects of women's development and our aim of Viksit Bharat. These five aspects are as crucial as those five elements of the human body that are essential to its existence, thus, a more emphasized, monitored, and well-deliberated mechanism can further our aim to achieve the SDG 5 and make our India stand at the top when it comes to the front of gender-based empowerment and development!

Today, we are in the era of Amrit Kaal aiming to have a Viksit Bharat by 2047, but the authors believe that the real Amrit Kaal, the real development will happen when the ills like widened gender disparity, and instances of inequality come to an end and these repeated efforts of formulating, drafting and implementing women and child related schemes would also come to an end, the day when the Indian women will be so empowered in herself that she won't need any external aids in any aspect.