



ESSAY TEST 1

CONTENT BUILDER (FODDER POINTS)

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SECTION – A

Women Empowerment is essential for economic and sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

(Note- Students are advised to begin either with a quote or with an anecdote. They may also share real life stories of women change-makers who had contributed significantly towards economic and sustainable development. For instance, they may mention centenarian S. Thimmakka who was awarded Padma Shri in 2019 for her contribution in environmental protection by planting trees).

- There is no occasion for women to consider themselves subordinate or inferior to men. - M.K .Gandhi
- I measure the progress of a community with the degree of progress women have achieved. – B.R. Ambedkar
- There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. – Kofi Annan
- When women participate in the economy, everyone benefits. – Hillary Clinton
- No country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half of its citizens. – Michelle Obama

Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development” (Principle 20, Rio Declaration) The word empowerment is defined as the authority or power given to someone to do something. It refers to a set of measures to enable people/someone to become more strong, independent and capable. Women empowerment in this sense is enabling women to take control of their lives and to act on their own without solely being dependent on others. There are several aspects to the empowerment of women- social, economic, political/ legal. It not only involves measures to ensure education, secure financial security and political/legal rights for them but also the right to live with dignity.

Women constitute half of humanity. Their empowerment is necessary to ensure overall development of families, societies and countries in all spheres of life. Economic and sustainable development is possible with women’s empowered participation. Women are more vulnerable to environmental degradation, climate change and economic slowdown but also have different perspectives, concerns and ideas for change. Until women are empowered to play a significant part in decision-making at all levels, environmental sustainability and economic development will remain a distant goal.

Note- Students need to highlight various aspects of women’s empowerment before explaining how it can contribute to economic and sustainable development.

Social- Empowerment of women in the social sphere constitutes changes in society’s patriarchal mindset that devalues a woman. Social evils like child marriage, dowry, female foeticide, domestic violence need to be uprooted. Though there are several laws to punish crime against women, rape, honour killings, sexual harassment at workplace etc. continue to take place in the society. Even some in the political class seem to justify such heinous crimes by calling it mistakes of young men. Educating the girl child and teaching her skills can go a long way in the empowerment of women.

Political- In ancient Greek societies that were considered to be the cradle for political systems, including democracy, women were not given the status of citizen. It took many years for women even in the so-called modern nation-states in the west to get voting rights, after a long struggle. The right to participate in the political affairs of the country is a basic right that all adult individuals should have. It is key to women’s empowerment. The constitution of Independent India provided for universal adult franchise, thereby empowering women also. Moreover, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendment to the Indian constitution inaugurated a new era in women empowerment through the political route. The provision for reservation in the elected local bodies in rural and urban India resulted in the election of many women sarpanch who brought significant changes at the grassroots.

Legal- Law can be an effective tool to empower women. Making laws that protect the interests and rights of women against social evils, injustices as well as crime can go a long way in empowering women. The criminalization of 'triple talaq' in India by the Muslim Women Act, 2019 is a step to provide justice to Muslim women. However, creating awareness about the existing laws and rights is equally important.

Economic- This is one of the most important aspect of empowerment. Women are often paid less than men, for the same work hour. The 'gender-pay/wage gap' across the globe is huge. It is a measure of what women are paid relative to men doing the same job. Moreover, employment opportunities for women are limited due to several factors. Even working women do not have a say in financial decisions of her family, often. Therefore, opening more and more employment avenues for women, making workplaces friendly for them and providing them equal pay for equal work ensures economic security and empowers her.

(Note: Students must mention some policy measures by the government in this regard.) In order to ensure that women are empowered in all the aforementioned areas of life, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India outlined the 'National policy for the empowerment of women in India' in the year 2011, with the following goals and objectives

Goal and Objectives

1. The goal of this Policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The Policy will be widely disseminated to encourage active participation of all stakeholders for achieving its goals. Specifically, the objectives of this Policy include

1. Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential
2. The de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres – political, economic, social, cultural and civil
3. Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation
4. Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc.
5. Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women
6. Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.
7. Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.
8. Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; and
9. Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.

BODY

NOTE: In this section, students need to examine the main issue at hand. In the given essay, the focus is on the claim that empowerment of women is essential to ensure economic and sustainable development. Students can begin by briefly explaining what constitutes sustainable development.

“All the Sustainable development goals come down to education.”- Malala Yousafzai

In the aforementioned quote, youngest Noble Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai highlighted the significance of education to achieve sustainable development goals. A champion of female education, she emphasized that education is the linchpin to provide an understanding of the politics and science of climate change to achieve sustainable cities in the future. What is sustainable development? The report titled, ‘Our Common Future’ by the World Commission on Environment and Development, defined Sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development is conceptualized as resting on three pillars: economic development, social development and environmental protection. Sustainable development calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and planet. According to the United Nations, eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. In this regard, empowerment of women and making them financially secure can go a long way in ensuring sustainable development. With their nurturing attitude, women can be great protectors of nature and can secure resources for the future generations.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – The United Nations in its 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development presented 17 goals, of which gender equality is one such goal. It includes empowerment of women and ensuring equal rights for them. Thus, gender equality is a key factor for sustainable development and economic growth. Women empowerment is integral to each of the sustainable development goals. In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) made significant provisions for the recognition of women’s contributions and their full participation in sustainable development. Moreover, the vital role of women and the need for their full and equal participation and leadership in all areas of sustainable development was reaffirmed in the ‘Future We Want’, as well as in the Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals of United Nations.

Judicious use of existing resources and environmental protection are some of the key components of sustainable development. Since a good percentage of women are engaged in forestry, agriculture etc, they play a major role in this regard. Empowerment of women can go a long way in enabling them to take steps for sustainable development. The connection between gender equality and sustainable development has been explored in a recent edited work titled, ‘Why Women Will Save the Planet’. The essays in the book advocate the inclusion of ‘gender agenda’ for increasing the effectiveness of interventions. It is further argued that gender dimension can help develop transformative solutions to the issue of sustainability. Furthermore, poverty reduction is another important component of sustainable development that calls for reducing gendered inequality. Thus, economic development and sustainable development are interrelated with respect to women’s empowerment.

Women’s economic empowerment is crucial in realizing women’s rights and gender equality. Women’s economic empowerment includes their ability to participate equally in existing markets; their access to and control over productive resources, access to decent work, control over their own time, lives and bodies; agency and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to international institutions.

How can women empowerment contribute to economic development?

Since women constitute half of humanity, when more women work, economies grow. Their economic empowerment boosts productivity, increases economic diversification and income equality in addition to other positive development outcomes. For instance, increasing the female employment rates in countries could boost GDP. Empowering women economically and ensuring economic equality for them is also good for business. Companies greatly benefit from increasing employment and leadership opportunities for women and increases organizational effectiveness and growth. It is estimated that companies with three or more women in senior management role score higher in all dimensions of organizational performance. Empowerment of women also ensures better education opportunities for children in the family and in turn opens avenues for their employability. It also reduces the burden and over-dependence on menfolk. Study by Maelan Le Goff on 'feminization of migration' has shown that women migrant workers are often more likely than men to remit on a regular basis owing to women's stronger links to family members and the link between a woman's gendered caregiving role in the household and her increasing propensity to remit. For instance, Women migrant workers were responsible for sending half of the estimated \$601 billion in remittances worldwide in 2016.

LESSONS FROM HISTORY-

"Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacity", were the words of Mahatma Gandhi who made many women actively participate in the freedom movement. His insistence on spinning Charkha and use of Khadi appealed to women. It aimed at not only selfreliance but also self-sustained / sustainable, eco-friendly economy. Many women felt a sense of empowerment through their participation in Gandhi's idea of economic and sustainable development. In a letter written to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur from Wardha on 21, October 1936 Gandhi wrote, "If you women would only realize your dignity and privilege, and make full use of it for mankind, you will make it much better than it is. Self Employed Women's Association of Ahmedabad is a good example of Gandhi's ideas put into practice. SEWA has contributed immensely in ensuring financial autonomy for women who through their skills contribute to the overall economic development.

CONCLUSION

Women are as important to society, polity, economy and environment as men. Giving them the power to take control of their lives and to be able to have considerable degree of autonomy is essential to achieve sustainable and economic development. Without women's active participation in these sphere, countries cannot boost their GDP growth in an inclusive manner, nor can they ensure sustainable development. Empowering women in all spheres of life will enable productive use of a significant proportion of human resource and also ensure sustainable use of resources. The distribution of LPG to BPL families in India under the PM Ujjwala scheme 2016 not only empowers women but also is a step towards shift to non-polluting clean energy for cooking. Empowerment of women not only heightens the economic growth graph but also increases living standards.

Political participation of women is one of the most important ways of empowering her, such as through women's reservation in the Gram Panchayats by the 73rd Amendment act of India. Women as the caregiver of their families in general, can also play a major role in promoting a culture of empathy for the environment and for the preservation of precious resources like water, vegetation etc. Participation of women in political process and their engagement in key decision-making can result in constructive policy decisions for economic and sustainable development. Case in point being the impressive leadership skills displayed by the current Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern. Her contribution in successfully checking the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in her country

through pro-active steps is being praised worldwide. Aware and empowered women can contribute significantly in saving resources for the future. In the words of entrepreneur and philanthropist, Sheryl Sandberg, “We need women at all levels, including the top, to change the dynamic, reshape the conversation, to make sure women's voices are heard and heeded, not overlooked and ignored.” - Anushree