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BALANCE FOR BETTER



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Editorial Desk

"Balance for Better" is a slogan that has been associated with International Women's Day, which is celebrated globally on March 8th each year. The theme emphasizes the importance of achieving gender balance and equality in various aspects of life, including the workplace, education, and society as a whole.

The term "Balance" signifies equilibrium and fairness between genders. It emphasizes the need to address existing imbalances, stereotypes, and biases that have historically favored one gender over the other.

The idea behind "Balance for Better" is to promote a world where both men and women have equal opportunities, rights, and representation. It calls for a more balanced and inclusive approach to address the disparities and challenges faced by individuals of different genders. Remember, the "Balance for Better" movement is a call for action among individuals, communities, and organizations to collectively work towards a more equitable and inclusive future. It highlights the interconnectedness of gender equality with broader social, economic, and cultural factors.

BALANCE FOR BETTER

Achieving national and international development goals has been universally acknowledged to need gender equality. The socioeconomic position of men, women, and girls and boys is now provided via gender statistics. The Indian government understands that without taking gender equality into consideration, growth cannot be equitable or sustainable, and that women would suffer the most from such unjust advancement. It is common knowledge that women's difficulties are complicated, difficult to identify, and frequently represent the effects of serious social ills.

Equal Opportunities: The concept emphasizes providing equal opportunities for men and women in all spheres of life, including education, employment, leadership roles etc.,

Diversity and Inclusion: Achieving balance involves recognizing and celebrating the diversity of individuals, including their gender identity, race, ethnicity, and other factors. Inclusive environments promote equality and contribute to a better understanding of different perspectives.

Breaking Stereotypes: "Balance for Better" encourages breaking traditional gender stereotypes that limit individuals based on their gender. It advocates for a society where people are free to pursue their interests and talents without being confined by societal expectations.

Empowerment: Empowering women and promoting gender equality go hand in hand. This involves providing women with the tools, resources, and support needed to thrive in various aspects of life.

Advocacy and Awareness: The campaign encourages individuals and organizations to advocate for gender equality and raise awareness about the importance of a balanced and fair society. This can include promoting equal pay, challenging gender biases, and supporting policies that foster equality.

Collaboration: Achieving balance requires collaboration between individuals, communities, and organizations. Working together can lead to the development and implementation of strategies that promote gender equality.

Educating and Engaging: Education is a crucial tool for promoting gender equality. "Balance for Better" highlights the importance of educating individuals about the issues surrounding gender inequality and engaging them in conversations that challenge discriminatory practices.

WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT: AN OVERVIEW

Between 1990 and 2018, India's **HDI** value increased from 0.431 to 0.647, an increase of 50.0% attributable to an increase in India's life expectancy at birth by 11.6 years, mean years of schooling by 3.5 years and expected years of schooling by 4.7 years. India's Gross National Income and per capita increased by about 262.9% between 1990 and 2018.

Gender Development Index (GDI), is based on the sex disaggregated HDI and is defined as a ratio of the female to the male HDI. The GDI measures gender inequalities in achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: health, education and command over economic resources. Country groups are based on absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI. The female HDI value for India in 2018, was 0.574 in contrast with 0.692 for males, resulting in a Gender Development Index value of 0.829, placing it into Group 5. In comparison, GDI values for Bangladesh and Pakistan are 0.895 and 0.747, respectively and 0.828 for South Asia.

India has a **Gender Inequality Index (GII)** value of 0.501, ranking it 122 out of 162 countries in the 2018 index. In India, 11.7% of parliamentary seats are held by women, and 39.0% of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 63.5% of their male counterparts. For every 100,000 live births, 174.0 women die from pregnancy related causes; and the adolescent birth rate is 13.2 births per 1,000 women of ages 15-19. Female participation in the labour market is 23.6% compared to 78.6% for men. In comparison, Bangladesh and Pakistan are ranked at 129 and 136 respectively on this index.

India's position with respect to GDI and GII reflect that even though there have been improvements in women's health, education and access to economic resources; reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity of women remain critical areas of concern.

India has slipped four places on the **World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2019 (GGGI)** to 112, due to rising disparity in terms of women's health and participation in the economy. Moreover, India is ranked in the bottom-five in terms of women's health and survival and economic participation. India's latest position is 14 notches lower than its reading in 2006 when the WEF started measuring the gender gap. It also ranked lower than many of its international peers, and some of its neighbors like China (106th), Sri Lanka (102nd), Nepal (101st), Brazil (92nd), Indonesia (85th) and Bangladesh (50th).

Economic opportunities for women are extremely limited in India (35.4%), followed by Pakistan (32.7%), Yemen (27.3%), Syria (24.9 %) and Iraq (22.7%). India also ranked among countries with very low women representation on company boards (13.8%), while it was even worse in China (9.7%). The country also suffers from a **low sex ratio at birth** (91 girls for every 100 boys). On a positive note, India has closed two-thirds of its overall gender gap. Still, the condition of women in a large section of India's society is precarious, and the economic gender gap has significantly widened since 2006. India is the only country among the 153 countries studied where the economic gender gap is larger than the political one. India ranks high on the **political empowerment** sub-index, largely because a woman headed the country for 20 of the past 50 years. But female political representation today is low as women make up only 14.4% of Parliament (122nd rank globally) and 23% of the cabinet (69th).

India has a **Social Progress Index** (SPI) value of 59.1 that positions it at 102 of the 149 participating countries. The performance of India has improved from 53.97 in 2014 to 59.1 in 2018, an increase of 5.13 points.

WOMEN'S SAFETY AND PROTECTION

An assessment of the critical areas in terms of the availability of laws, acts and government interventions (CSSs) that have been implemented in order to ensure women's safety and protection and to identify the gap areas, have been undertaken. The analysis underscores that various laws and Acts have been formulated for the prevention of crimes against women and their implementation by the women's safety division, MHA has been undertaken. Interventions have also been put in place for rescue, rehabilitation, redressal and reintegration of the survivors of crime. In order to create an enabling environment to ensure the birth of a girl child and her survival and development in a safe environment, efforts have been made to sensitise stakeholders, including men/boys under the BBBP scheme. However, even though sex ratio at birth and the percentage of women experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by their current intimate partner show favourable trends, the overall rate of crimes against women highlights an increase. The rise in crime also points to the need for the creation of safe spaces for women in public places, workplaces as well as their own homes. The currently implemented safe cities project of the MHA covers only 8 metropolitan cities. Therefore, there is a growing need for undertaking measures to ensure the safety of women in other urban hubs and cities and upscaling the current intervention. Alongside putting in place interventions for women's safety and protection in rural areas is also essential.

"Balance for Better" serves as a powerful rallying cry for the global pursuit of gender equality. This initiative goes beyond mere symbolism; it encapsulates a transformative vision for societies that are fair, inclusive, and just. The emphasis on balance underscores the need to rectify historical imbalances and challenges individuals and institutions to actively contribute to a more equitable world.

In essence, "Balance for Better" is a call to action, inviting everyone to play a role in the ongoing journey towards gender equality. As societies embrace the principles of balance, they move closer to a future where opportunities, rights, and respect are inherently equal for people of all genders. The journey is ongoing, but the commitment to balance propels us toward a more just and inclusive world.

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