

Gender Sensitisation As A Tool For Reducing Gender Gaps And Feminisation Of Poverty

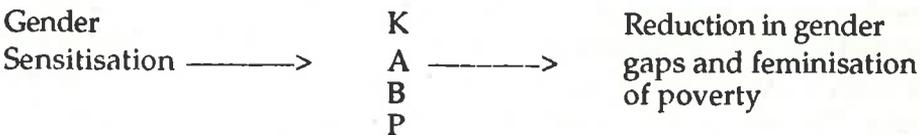
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INTRODUCTION

Although women constitute over half of the population of Nepal, they are far behind men in social, economic and political fields. An overwhelming majority of the women live in rural areas constrained by the slow development of such a large portion of the population. Table 1 reveals the extent of gender gaps in selected sectors in the country.

THE GENDER SENSITISATION MODEL

Gender sensitisation is one of the techniques of reducing gender gaps and feminisation of poverty, in a patriarchal society. The following model depicts as to how gender sensitisation will lead to the reduction in gender gaps and feminisation of poverty.



where,

- K = Knowledge about gender inequalities.
- A = Attitude towards gender roles and responsibilities.
- B = Belief on gender roles and responsibilities.
- P = Practice with regards to decision making and taking responsibilities at home and work places.

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The model operates through four variables, viz., knowledge about gender inequalities (K), attitude towards gender roles and responsibilities (A), belief on gender roles and responsibilities (B) and practice with regards to decision making and taking responsibilities at home and work places (P). Gender sensitisation essentially brings changes in these four variables, which in turn leads to the reduction in gender gaps and feminisation of poverty.

It is assumed that gender sensitisation has a positive association with the knowledge, attitude, belief and practice variables, while the four variables have negative associations with the gender gap and feminisation of poverty (in a patriarchal society). An introduction of the gender sensitisation programme and its evaluation through a field survey may be required to examine the validity of the model.

The Key Persons And The Grass Root Population To Be Gender Sensitised

The key persons are the head of the state, the council of ministers, officials of the constitutional bodies, members of parliament, government officials at the central and local levels, officials of the corporations, universities, banks, and industries, elected people in the DDCs and VDCs, leaders and workers of the political parties, and officials of the NGOs and private organisations, school teachers, and other influential persons in the local area. The key persons play a very powerful role in influencing the behaviour of the society. Ideas, behaviour and actions flow to the grass root population through these persons. If the key persons are convinced that gender inequality must be removed, the society will set a new norm regarding gender equality. This will lead towards behaviour and actions for the achievement of gender equality and reduction of feminisation of poverty.

Instruments Of Gender Sensitisation

Gender sensitisation can be done through seminars/workshops on gender issues, training on gender and development, participant observation and case study analysis, through mass media, like radio, television, newspapers, special type of drama, films shows, songs, poems, stories and puppet shows, using gender sensitised males for changing attitudes towards gender equality, etc. Seminars/workshops for 1-3 days of duration may be organised for the council of ministers, officials of the

constitutional bodies, members of parliament, government officials at the central and local levels, officials of the corporations, universities, banks, and industries, elected people in the DDCs and VDCs, leaders and workers of the political parties, and officials of the NGOs and private organisations, school teachers, and other influential persons in the local area, while gender and development training for a duration of 1 week to 3 months may be organised for the government and non-government officials who are involved in the planning and policy making, administration, and the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development programme. The mass media, like radio, television, newspapers, special type of drama, films shows, songs, poems, stories, puppet shows, etc. will be most effective for sensitising the key persons and the common people of the local area.

CONCLUSION

During the last four decades, we have seen that, sensitisation of family planning programme has greatly helped in bringing a drop in the birth rates in most of the developing countries of the world. Therefore, one can be optimistic about creating a gender equal society through the gender sensitisation programme as well.

Table 1
Selected Educational And Health Indicators By Sex In Nepal

Literacy And Education	1.1	Percent Literate (Persons Over 6 Years Of Age, 1993)	
		Female	25
		Male	55
	1.2	Girls School Enrollment As Percentage Of Total Enrollment (1993)	
		Primary Level (1-5)	39
		Lower Secondary Level (6-8)	34
		Higher Secondary Level (9-10)	31
	1.3	Percentage Of Female Teachers (1993)	
		Primary School	16
		Lower Secondary School	13
	Higher Secondary School	10	
Health	1.4	Expectation of Life At Birth In Years (1991)	
		Female	53.5
		Male	55.0
	1.5	Infant Mortality Rate, Per 1000 Live Births (1991)	
		Female	101
		Male	94
	1.6	Maternal Mortality Rate Per 100,000 Live Births (1198)	
		Nepal	850
		India	550
		Sri Lanka	180
1.7	Economic Activity Rate (1991)		
	Female	45.5	
	Male	68.7	
Economic Participation	1.8	Percentage Of Economically Active Population In Agriculture (1991)	
		Female	91
	Male	75	
Other Social Indicators	1.9	Members Of Parliament In The Lower House (1994)	
		Women	8
		Men	197
	1.10	Members Of Parliament In The Upper House (1994)	
		Women	3
		Men	57
	1.11	Proportion Of Women In The Officer Level Positions (Gazetted Class) In The Government (1993)	
		Special Class	0.0
		First Class	2.5
		Second Class	4.5
		Third Class	4.5
1.12	Proportion Of Women Who Decide In The Household		
	Farm Management	32.7	
	Domestic Expenditure	39.0	
	Children's Education	28.6	
	Gifts, Religious/Social Travel	37.7	
	Disposal Of Household Products And Capital Transactions	23.1	

Sources: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, - National Planning Commission, (1995). 1.4, 1.5 - Acharya, Meena (1997). 1.6, Ministry of Women and Social Welfare HMG/N (1997). 1.9, 1.10 - Shrestha, Shanta Laxmi (1994). 1.12 - Stri Shakti (1994).

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BOOK REVIEW

Keith, Griffin and Terry McKinley (1996) *New Approaches to Development Cooperation*, UNDP, New York. pp. 88, Price not mentioned.

Specialists of international affairs had expected the end of the cold war would end the ideological contests between the East and the West and the structural conflicts between the North and the South and inaugurate a new framework of development cooperation. However, fundamental change appeared only in the former. Development cooperation has mostly encouraged the adoption of unsuitable alien models of development, and postponed the evolution of social dynamic that can enable the recipient countries to achieve greater self-reliance

In many developing countries, continued poverty, inequality, and regional imbalance, therefore, constitute a source of political instability, social decay, and cultural and ecological loss thus posing the crisis of human survival. Is it the interest of industrialised countries to increase their development cooperation? Obviously yes. Flow of technical and financial assistance and improved market access to developed countries for their primary commodities would be expected to help the developing countries to accelerate their production process and reduce pains for everybody irrespective of status in society.

The modes of development cooperation, however, raise several pertinent questions: whether development cooperation ease the leaders of developing countries in pursuing development strategies of their own choice or bend them to their self-image? Does cooperation reflect "mutual interests" as Keith Griffin and Terry McKinley, the authors of this book, claim or produce a power differential between the interest of donors and recipient? How does the modern rationality of development cooperation enter into fair negotiation whereby shared concerns are conceptualised? Who decides the priorities and dominates the choice about the theory and praxis of cooperation? Does it bear liberating or repressing potential? Griffin and McKinley have set forth a number of normative issues and suggested feasible solutions.

They argue that new approach to development cooperation should be based on the mutual interests of people, rather than states, look for positive-sum games in which all will gain, even the losers will be adequately

compensated. The policy approach should be based on accelerating economic growth and efficiency in the use of world's resources. Yet, they equally held that mutual interests do not necessarily foster either human development, or reduce poverty, even the much desired objectives of social justice, global safety net, solidarity and community (p. 25).

Griffin and McKinley put three windows of development cooperation. The first window focuses on the creation of global safety net, the second on the establishment of coherent framework for extra-market financial transactions between countries in which compensation damages will be provided to the countries who are victims of transactions, and the third window embodies a mechanism to increase the technological capabilities of developing countries. They point out several in-built fallacies inherent in foreign aid as it has neither contributed to accelerate economic growth, nor ensured sustainable livelihood of the poorest people, nor promoted development objectives of poverty alleviation, not even succeeded in reaching the hard-core poor. They claim that most of the benefits of aid have been consumed by national elite. "And in some cases, it is the international elite, not the national alone, that captured the lion's share of the benefit" (p.6). this trend is acute in bilateral aid. Yet, the multilateral aid too does not seem free from the "muddle of motives" either.

For example, the World Bank, the largest multilateral institution lending investment funds to developing countries, suffers from a number of biases. First, its aid hardly appear focused on the countries where the largest number of poor live. Second, the Bank has shown only a slight interest in the overall allotment of resources in the countries it supports. Third, its lending has been biased against the poor; and finally, it has hardly exerted its influence on the governments to reduce poverty, inequality and regional balance within countries (p.8). Griffin and Mckinley deduce that in the defense of the Bank authorities that their project aid indirectly helps poor cloaks the agenda of pushing the same discredited "trickle-down" theory that not only failed to deliver development in the past but also fueled the social contradictions to grow.

To them the puzzle of aid is that its purpose and priorities barely seem transparent. For example, in Africa economic growth is not the objective of foreign aid. The objective is: structural adjustment. In Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is "tied to the purchase of specific

products produced in the donor country" (p.10) despite these countries' preferences for trade, not aid. Griffin and McKinley further substantiate that OECD countries are reluctant to give access to their markets to exporters. In term of technical assistance, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which appears to be one of the pillars of international cooperation, does not appear sufficiently capable of handling this issue either.

Griffin and McKinley, therefore, allege that the UNDP also suffers from the lack of proper determination of national priorities and coordination with the other UN agencies. They further assert that as a supply-driven system, its experts are either unsuitable or of low quality and are offering technical assistance neither needed nor wanted by developing countries (p.12). Griffin and Mckinley, therefore, offer a proposal for the developing countries that they should be empowered to participate in the UNDP's fund and should have leverage to spend for any development purpose.

According to them, a new basis for cooperation should intend to alleviate poverty by human development efforts. The current aid regime should be shifted to a paradigm where grant to aid efforts are made mandatory, the responsibility is distributed continuously, and the yearly flow is anticipated by progressive international income tax-progressive on industrialised countries and negative on developing countries- governed by the UN. Dissatisfaction with the outcomes of aid has inspired the governments of recipient countries to enter into a policy dialogue with bilateral donor agencies, the IMF and the World Bank in which priorities, aims, and conditionalities are negotiated. Griffin and Mckinley held the view that a compromise solution would consist of a tripartite body comprising donors, recipients and an intermediary party who will have final say in case of the intractable discord between the contending parties.

Under the condition of economic and technological globalisation how the problems of externalities and free-rider, specifically for environment, be solved and social and political evils managed? The first way is the joint management of the global resources and the global commons. The next way is freedom of the commodity, capital and labor markets. Then, rich countries should compensate the poor in three areas: brain drain, the international migration of low skilled labour and trade restrictions on exports from developing countries (p.32). In contrast, developing countries

should also devise proper macro-economic policies that encourage employment, investment and growth. Still, one might ask: how can the technological capabilities of the countries be equalised which are far more glaring than income or physical capital? At a time when the new information and communication technology are turning some industrial countries to the status of consumer, how can developing countries compete the developed ones in technology production.

Griffin and McKinley hold that at the heart of technological gap is the claim to intellectual property rights for innovation. Defense of monopoly rights in innovation causes both market imperfection and free-rider problem. If innovating industries are given patent rights, the cost of information will not become minimal but rather resonate monopoly power. The products then reflect high prices which "leads to static inefficiency in resource allocation and a deadweight cost to society as a whole" (p.45) because it eliminates the very chance of global competition.

This problem can be solved only when industrial countries finance the research and put its findings in public domain, free of cost and developing countries increase their technological capabilities by encouraging mass scientific education. Promotion of domestic scientific and engineering elite with an interest in research and development (R&D) is significant to prepare both students and labour force for the equipment of coming century. The broader the base of skill and education in developing countries, the better they are capable of altering comparative advantage in their favour owing to the mobility and adaptability of labour force and flexibility of economy.

Griffin and McKinley assert that the Official Development Assistance (ODA) is not properly directed at either reducing global poverty or providing a global safety net. In fact, inverse correlation does exist between per capita income and allocation of foreign aid. According to them greater efforts will be required to direct ODA away from highly industrialised countries to the poorest countries. Similar efforts are needed in foreign direct investment (FDI) which now indicates a trend whereby one industrialised country invests on the other and very little goes to the poorest countries.

Worse still, FDI's engagement in the privatisation of public industries involves the inflow of capital and the outflow of profits, remittances,

repayment of principal and reinvestment of profits. Investment in equity and bond in developing countries, according to Griffin and McKinley, are risky owing to prevailing uncertainty in speculative market and alteration in the country's financial security. The lesson of debt crisis conveys that even long-term borrowing has resulted in the transfer of resources from the poor countries to rich thus producing disturbances in the debtor states.

One of the major causes of underdevelopment is the flight of capital from poor countries to developed ones. It is estimated that "roughly half the foreign borrowing by developing countries are transformed into an outward movement of private capital by citizens of the indebted countries" (p.64). This further widens global inequalities. In this context, Griffin and McKinley argue that the new framework of development cooperation entails effective institutions of global governance -a governance that fosters a sense of global community based on common goals and mutuality of interests so that global opportunities are equitably shared.

The specific reforms formulated in the book are: developed countries must serve as the engine of global economic growth to redress the unequal distribution of global income, discrimination against exports from developing countries should be eliminated, World Trade Organization (WTO) should regulate global capital, labour and technology markets, labour market should be liberalised and international development fund should be created with three windows of cooperation. The first window would provide a global safety net whereby grants from the rich to poor countries are transferred. The second window would facilitate payment for services given; and the third window would focus on payments for the damage done and for "departures from the rules of a liberal economy" (p.76). At the moment these are the just solution to the issue of cooperation, a solution to enliven a sense of humanity. The arguments in the book are not merely valid but unscrupulously honest and bold. The book is immensely useful.

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