

Gendering the Twelfth Plan: A Feminist Perspective

Author(s): MRIDUL EAPEN and AASHA KAPUR MEHTA

Source: *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 47, No. 17 (APRIL 28, 2012), pp. 42-49

Published by: Economic and Political Weekly

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23214836>

Accessed: 23-02-2019 04:57 UTC

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

*Economic and Political Weekly* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Economic and Political Weekly*

# Gendering the Twelfth Plan

## A Feminist Perspective

MRIDUL EAPEN, AASHA KAPUR MEHTA

A gendered analysis of the Approach Paper to the Twelfth Five-Year Plan suggests that women must be recognised as growth agents in India's political economy across all sectors. The gendering of public policy must move into macroeconomic space. While "inclusion" is listed as an objective, there is lack of clarity on the mechanisms for including the excluded, and for measuring and monitoring inclusiveness over the plan period. From a gender point of view, the generation of livelihoods and employment should be the central driving force for growth, and the resources generated should support social policies that universalise education, health and social security.

During the preparation of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan of 2007-12, the Planning Commission set up a Working Group of Feminist Economists to review the sectoral chapters of the Eleventh Plan through a gender lens. Engaging with the draft chapters, the group established the primacy of women and their work in India's growth achievement. It argued that planning processes and methods exhibited an inadequate awareness of these facts. The value of this initiative was that it advocated moving beyond a special focus in the chapter on "Women and Child" to looking at women as growth agents in India's political economy, across all sectors. Thus, the major shift of this initiative was to move the gendering of public policy into macroeconomic space (Planning Commission 2010).

The Planning Commission has reconstituted the Working Group of Feminist Economists for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan. This paper draws on an earlier gendered analysis of the ideas in the Approach Paper to the Twelfth Plan (henceforth Planning Commission 2011). While the wheels of the planning process have been moving steadily forward, we believe that the directions proposed in the approach paper continue to shape planning. The strategies for growth proposed in the Twelfth Plan appear to be formulated with little consideration for the needs and roles of large sections of the population of the country and especially those of poor women (Planning Commission 2011). This paper aims to highlight some of these glaring gaps in the overall design of the proposed plan and to suggest ways of making economic growth during the Twelfth Plan more truly inclusive.

### Inclusive Growth Is Elusive

Despite several decades of struggle by women's groups to make policy gender-sensitive, the approach to the Twelfth Plan exhibits insufficient awareness of the specific problems of women, their unpaid labour and their distinctive economic contribution to the nation's economy. The overall theme for planning is achieving "faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth" (Planning Commission 2011). The thrust is on increasing the rate of growth of gross domestic product (GDP) or the rate of expansion of the total volume of output of goods and services in the economy, especially at a time when there has been a drop, relative to past rates of growth. The approach paper notes that inclusiveness is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Inclusive growth should result in the lower incidence of poverty, broad-based and significant improvements in health outcomes, universal access for children to schooling, increased access to higher education and improved standards of education

This paper is based on inputs provided by Nirmala Banerjee, Ritu Dewan, Devaki Jain, Renana Jhabwala, Jayati Ghosh, Indira Hirway, Mary John, Maithreyi Krishnaraj, Santosh Mehrotra, Yamini Mishra and her team, Ratna Sudarshan and Padmini Swaminathan. Support provided by UN Women is gratefully acknowledged.

Mridul Eapen ([mridul@cds.ac.in](mailto:mridul@cds.ac.in)) is honorary fellow at the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram. Aasha Kapur Mehta ([aashakapurmehta@gmail.com](mailto:aashakapurmehta@gmail.com)) is at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.

overall, including skill development, better opportunities for both wage employment and livelihoods, and improvements in the provision of basic amenities. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of the scheduled caste (sc), scheduled tribe (st) and Other Backward Class (obc) populations, women and children as also minorities and other excluded groups (Planning Commission 2011).

However, there is lack of clarity regarding how inclusion will occur. What are the mechanisms for including the excluded? How will inclusiveness be measured? How will inclusiveness be continuously monitored over the plan period? There is no magic bullet solution to ensure inclusion. We know that the goal leads to greater complexity, both in programme design and appraisal. The critical questions outlined above must be addressed. For without a road map for achieving inclusion, this objective will not be achieved in the Twelfth Plan.

Inclusive growth was envisaged in the Eleventh Plan too, but there is little evidence to show that the fast growth rate of the economy during the plan period led to significant achievement of inclusion. There is a shying away from providing a report card on why the Eleventh Plan that promised so much by way of "more inclusive growth" of excluded/marginalised groups including women failed in these objectives. Inclusive growth through planned development has remained elusive.

Economic growth is a precondition for inclusive growth. However, the nature and composition of growth have to be conducive to inclusion. Growth has to include the poor, especially women, ethnic groups and other disadvantaged groups, as well as deprived regions, not as beneficiaries alone but as partners in the process. In other words, inclusion needs to be embedded in the growth process. It therefore has to explicitly address the constraints faced by the excluded and the marginalised and provide opportunities for them to be partners in growth.

Some of the major components of inclusive growth would be the following:

- **Employment and Livelihoods:** "Livelihood"-led growth should be at the centre of inclusive growth. This requires correcting the existing trend of jobless growth that has excluded women and disadvantaged socio-economic groups from the growth process, providing capabilities that are linked to productive employment opportunities, increasing the productivity and more intensive use of factors of production owned by groups that are poor; and directing investment flows and infrastructure development to spatially disadvantaged locations where the excluded are concentrated.
- **Agriculture and Allied Sectors:** The Twelfth Plan seeks to achieve a 4% or higher agricultural growth. The role of women farmers will be critical in achieving this goal since the feminisation of agriculture is growing. Research and development to increase yields of coarse cereals, pulses, oilseeds and vegetables must be encouraged as this would encourage production of crops that are nutritious and provide food security.
- **Macroeconomic Environment:** Monetary, fiscal and international trade-related policies are closely intertwined with women's multiple roles in the economy. They must take cognisance

of their gendered impact, for example, in terms of women's poor access to credit.

- **Environment and Sustainable Development:** Displacement and environmental degradation in the name of rapid growth should be prevented, so as to prioritise livelihoods of poor women and men over more profits to those who are rich.
- **Rights-based Approaches to the Delivery of Services:** This requires granting basic rights and designing policies as well as mechanisms to see that these rights are actually enforced.
- **Health and Education:** The need is to take responsibility for ensuring access to health and education, not by shifting state responsibility to public-private partnerships (PPPs), but as a universal right; and
- **Designing public spending in a way that the above goals are achieved.**

If inclusion is the goal, then employment generation of high quality must be the central goal of planning and the pivot of the Twelfth Plan. A fundamental concern is that the underlying assumption in the plan continues to be that output growth in itself will generate the required employment, despite all evidence to the contrary (Kohli 2006). In the current plan period, the problem has intensified as revealed by the latest data from the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). Annual compound growth in employment of all kinds (by principal activity) of persons aged 15+, fell to 0.82% between 2004-05 and 2009-10, from 2.7% in the previous period. What is most alarming is the fall in total female employment in absolute terms during this period, mostly because of a substantial reduction in self-employment (Chandrasekhar and Ghosh 2012).

### Explosive Issues

Unemployment and discrimination on grounds of caste, community and gender are becoming increasingly explosive political and social issues (Kannan and Ravindran 2011). Spatially too, the distribution of benefits from economic growth since the early 1990s has followed an identifiable pattern. Per capita income adjusted for inflation fell between 1993 and 2005 in villages located more than five kilometres from the nearest town where half of India's population resides. The steepest decline was experienced by the lowest income groups. This debilitating effect must be countered by better physical and social infrastructure (Krishna and Bajpai 2011).

The problem is particularly critical for women who have been losing jobs during the Eleventh Plan period and have found few new work opportunities except in domestic and personal services, apart from teaching in urban areas. The need to rethink the growth strategy is absolutely urgent because a large population of young people – the much-discussed demographic dividend – is set to enter the labour market during the next few years, an increasing proportion of whom have accessed education, including higher education. Among them, young women are going to face greater difficulties in finding work. The few fresh work opportunities that have opened up for women have been in occupations that the educated young among them are unlikely to find palatable. Exclusion from the process of development can have serious implications for the future of India's democracy.

All policy measures, as well as incentives to boost economic growth therefore need to be tethered to or enabled by increasing employment, based on the recognition that shifting to an employment-oriented macroeconomic strategy can have many direct and indirect positive effects. Three elements of this approach require reinforcement: enabling small producers to become more viable and competitive, encouraging quality employment with adequate remuneration in social sectors, and preventing displacement, loss of livelihoods and environmental degradation in the name of rapid growth. Each of these has strong gender dimensions. Growth and rapid growth are critical but they must be translated into a better quality of life for all of India's citizens – women and men as aggregate groups, as well as subgroups of women and men disaggregated by class, caste, tribe, age, ability, religion, region, and so on.

### Achieving Growth with Inclusion

In the vision of the planners, the primary focus tends to be on increments to GDP, independent of its distribution. However, GDP can hide the composition of output and the means used for achieving that output, i.e., the strategy for growth. Maximising returns is the goal of economic behaviour according to conventional rationality but the reality in developing economies is that households, poor groups and women exert effort to maximise not returns but the well-being of the group to which they regard themselves as accountable.

Women regard the well-being of the family as their mandate. Given the lack of adequate productive resources like capital, technology and support systems like credit and favourable laws that recognise their vulnerabilities, women's labour, both outside and inside the household incurs higher costs and receives poorer returns. There are many attempts to estimate the enormous unpaid labour of women that sustains the household. Such estimates of extended GDP should be presented together with GDP data.

In the view of the planners, inclusion is to be achieved through the distribution of the gains through flagship programmes and handouts to the needy. In other words, if gains from growth do not trickle down to all as expected, equity among citizens is to be ensured through special policies that cater to the needs of vulnerable sections. Perhaps this is why the approach paper is not overly concerned about the failure of the economy to generate additional employment during the Eleventh Plan period.

In our view, however, the primary purpose of the state undertaking planned growth is not just to assist those who are already in the mainstream of the economy but also to correct historical inequities and address factors constraining participation in the growth process. Including all sections of the population in the process of development implies the following three aspects:

- (1) All sections of people in the labour force must be included as productive workers and contribute to the process of development.
- (2) All of them should get an equitable share in the benefits of development.

(3) The contributions and needs of those who have been neglected should get due recognition.

This paper aims to view all three objectives through a gendered lens and identify gaps in the design of the plan for different sectors in that light. It also gives concrete suggestions about the possible actions that will not only be equitable but also efficient in promoting faster growth.

### Inclusion for Workers

For inclusive growth, it is essential that all potential workers find remunerative employment in the mainstream. That is to say, generating productive work has to be an integral part of the plan model. It is now officially acknowledged, in particular by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS 2007: 4) that economic "development" has seen not just the growth of the informal sector and the numbers of those employed informally, but also the "informalisation of the formal sector".

Further, there is remarkable consistency in the manner in which larger numbers of women and their "work" either become invisible in data systems or get captured in categories that fall outside the purview of protective legislation (NCEUS 2007: 59). The organised or formal economy supposedly enjoys the protection of labour laws with some modicum of social security, but even this apparent protection is elusive. NCEUS (2009) estimated the effectiveness of the coverage of important labour laws for 1999-2000. Among other things, this exercise revealed that the effectiveness of coverage for the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, was only 16%. The International Labour Organisation's (ILOs) recently concluded evaluation of maternity benefit schemes in India carried this exercise further and revealed the manner in which eligible women workers were denied maternity benefits statutorily due to them (Lingam and Krishnaraj 2010).

Outcomes of the Eleventh Plan's efforts are especially worrying because, while national product grew at an unprecedentedly fast rate, overall employment was virtually stagnant; it grew at a rate less than a third of that during the previous plan period. In the case of women, the rate of growth of employment was actually negative. Claiming that the rate was low not because of a demand constraint but due to a supply constraint in the labour market can only be temporary solace; those young people who had stayed away from the labour market during the Eleventh Plan period for better education will be joining the labour force during the Twelfth Plan period with even greater expectations regarding the quality and quantity of employment.

In any case, the fact that growth under the accepted plan model was not hindered by the withdrawal from the labour market of large numbers of young men and women only goes to prove the argument that the Eleventh Plan model had not been conceived with the idea of seeking ways to include large numbers of new sections of people in meaningful work.

One often-missed positive effect of an employment-oriented macroeconomic strategy is the possibility of using social policy and social expenditure to generate more employment, which not only improves quality of life but also has very strong multiplier effects. Increased public spending on health, sanitation, education

and other essential public services should be associated with the provision of regular and high quality jobs in these sectors, rather than the current exploitation of underpaid para-professionals who increasingly carry the burden of service delivery.

**Including Women in Developmental Activities:** Equally important is the fact that if women did withdraw from the labour force during the last plan period, it was because the terms on which work was available to them, whether self-employment or piece-rate work, were too poor to be worth their effort. It is not that they did not need the work; after all, during the same period, large numbers of rural women undertook to migrate singly or commute daily to seek work mainly in the unorganised urban domestic service. The three million increase in urban domestic service between 2000 and 2005 indicates not so much women's reluctance to work, as the deteriorating quality of alternative job opportunities available to them.

Currently the single largest public policy measure for promoting women's economic activities is to provide microcredit for promoting self-employment among them. However, numerous studies have shown that:

- (1) The capital provided to women's groups for generating self-employment can at best create part-time, supplementary work.
- (2) Without the help of a dedicated non-governmental organisation (NGO), it is difficult for poor women to design and execute viable new enterprises.
- (3) Women usually end up putting the money in family activities controlled by men or using it to expand existing poor quality enterprises.
- (4) In many instances, expanding existing businesses have driven down piece rates for the work that women had been doing.
- (5) By focusing almost exclusively on microfinance, the state transfers its responsibility of providing employment to women by insisting that they undertake their own economic empowerment through "assisted" self-employment.

Hence, livelihood missions like the large National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) launched in 2011 that do not take account of the macroeconomic context and demand for goods and services are unlikely to be successful. The NRLM's focus on creating producer (self-help) groups will be effective only if it involves improved access to inputs, credit, marketing and technology. It is important that (1) incentives such as those offered to corporates in downswings should be offered to a greater extent for small producers; (2) there should be enhanced access to institutional credit – not microfinance – to small producers of goods and services, especially women who are normally excluded; (3) efforts should be made for technology upgradation in microenterprises, including training programmes and subsidies oriented towards this; and (4) the National Skill Development Mission may be involved in this initiative.

A livelihood is more than the immediate means of earning a living; it comprises people, their capabilities and the means of living, including food, income and tangible assets. Tangible assets are resources and stores and intangible assets are claims and access. A livelihood is environmentally sustainable when it maintains or enhances the local and global access upon

which livelihoods depend and confers net benefits on other livelihoods. A livelihood is socially sustainable if it can cope with or recover from stress and shocks and provide for future generations (Chambers and Conway 1991).

There is an urgent need for policymakers to take cognisance of the roles women have traditionally played in many vital sectors of the economy. Improving their productivity in those occupations will not only be equitable but will also lead to a more efficient use of national resources.

**Agriculture and Allied Activities:** One of women's key roles is in the farm sector where their share of the workforce has been increasing as men move to non-farm activities. Particularly in rain-fed areas and in arid hilly terrain, they are being put in charge of small and marginal farms as virtual cultivators. This is precisely the one sector where planners will have to focus their policies immediately if they are to achieve their plan target of 4% per annum growth in primary production, because currently over three-quarters of all cultivable land falls in this category. Neglecting women's role in oilseed cultivation in such areas, for example, has meant that India's productivity in this crop category is perhaps the world's lowest. The country annually incurs a huge bill for imports of edible oilseeds.

The use of land and water has become commerce-oriented. Mining (legal and illegal) in Andhra Pradesh and in some districts in Karnataka has devastated entire landscapes, polluted water bodies and robbed people of their traditional livelihoods. The gendered impacts of displacement via infrastructural development need special attention.

As cultivators become confined mainly to small or marginal plots, since paid work in agricultural labour is becoming increasingly scarce for women, it has been difficult to increase women's productivity. This difficulty can be overcome by encouraging rural self-help groups to lease in land and pool their plots to apply better inputs, and by providing them with training in innovative women-friendly technologies. Training in improved farming techniques, especially for women, is required if agricultural productivity is to be increased. Unless we boost productivity in this sector, neither reduction in poverty nor industrial progress is feasible. Adequate capital investment, credit, technology and market outlets are required to re-energise this sector. Its role in ensuring food security and relieving women of the stress of household provisioning cannot be overemphasised.

The comment in the approach paper to the effect that "[t]he issue of food security is perhaps the easiest one to resolve" and that the decline in net sown area is only 0.6% of the total sown area (Planning Commission 2011: 50) has inherent contradictions. The gradual fall in the net sown area is a major concern.

New technologies are also required in farm-based activities like dairy, poultry, sericulture and so on, where the conditions in which women work are poor. Moreover, the younger, better educated generation of workers (women included) may not in the future be willing to undertake such arduous work. Micro-level studies have captured the rural population's urge to get away from a farm sector that has been rendered unviable over the years. Not only are relations of production in this sector the

most oppressive, the designation of work in this sector is non-modern and therefore a poor indicator of "development". This likelihood too has not escaped the notice of the Planning Commission. It notes that (2011: 6):

much larger numbers of educated youth will be joining the labour force in increasing numbers during the Twelfth Plan and in the years beyond. The clear implication of this is that the pace of job/livelihood creation must be greatly accelerated.

However, the poor performance of the economy in terms of employment generation in the recent quinquennium casts serious doubts on the possibility of increasing the pace substantially in the coming five years.

**Manufacturing:** The manufacturing sector currently poses the most serious problem for the Indian economy; despite fast growth in production during the last five years, its contribution to the national economy still remains relatively small and it has failed to generate additional decent employment. For women especially, manufacturing employment actually shrank in this period. These trends are contrary to the world-wide pattern of economic development.

While mentioning the need for generating employment in manufacturing, the approach paper does not explore the sector's potential, besides making the rather brave assumption that an additional 100 million decent jobs will be created by 2025. Rather, it then focuses only on ways of enhancing the sector's contribution to the GDP and neglects all other concerns. How such a massive number of jobs are to be created remains an unknown, given that economic growth in the 15 years up to 2010 generated not even a small fraction of this figure. What makes the projection particularly brave is that manufacturing employment actually declined in the period 2004-05 to 2009-10, even though manufacturing output grew at an annual compound rate of more than 8% over that period.

The main reason for the sector's malaise is the decline of the traditional household sector where large numbers of workers had been employed in decentralised units throughout the country. These units have been producing varied goods for both local and global markets, many with very high skill content, and contributed significantly to our foreign exchange earnings. It is difficult to see how the planners can fulfil their target of tripling manufacturing employment over the next 10 years without reviving these units.

With the availability of computerised technologies, manufacturing can once again be decentralised as has happened in many globally important industries. In India, too, growth of production during recent years has chiefly been in small and medium units. Planners are aware that these units' flexibility and capacity to absorb new skills has given them an edge in growth over the factory sector. However, although traditional workers are also known for a capacity for rapid adjustments, they do not find mention in the approach paper. Worse still, the document has completely ignored women workers – perhaps in the misplaced belief that they are incapable of absorbing modern skills. But traditionally, the sector has always been the largest venue of employment for women after farm work;

their skills often have high marketability and the work can be decentralised to suit women with limited mobility.

Planners too appreciate the need to promote decentralised growth of the manufacturing sector; for this, they have proposed setting up several new clusters of small units, but the way they propose to do this is insensitive to the urgency of the problem. Developing new areas and putting in the necessary infrastructure for building such clusters cannot but be a long drawn out process. And experience from the past has shown that opening industries in green areas has seldom provided jobs to needy local workers. We need an alternative strategy that uses existing skills and workers but combines them with fresh entrepreneurial inputs, new tools and techniques and better market information. Such solutions have been successfully tried elsewhere (for example, the Third Italy model or China's town and village industries) and one fails to see why planners have not tried to explore these in India.

**Transport:** Women's inclusion in developmental activities rests critically on their mobility. Transport needs to be viewed not merely as a support for rapid growth, but also as an agent for change and development, for increasing physical and societal mobility, especially for women. It also needs to be noted that women frequently use public transport while travelling with children. Frequent plying of buses, safe stoppage of buses while boarding and alighting, as well as the safety and availability of public transport will create an enabling environment for women's mobility.

Looking at the transport sector through a gender lens reveals several differences that need to be addressed. These relate to the intensity of transport usage, trip purpose, trip patterns, distance, frequency of travel and mode of transport. Women-specific needs include transportation especially of primary products as head-load, access to local markets, inter- and intra-village roads/paths, pedestrian sidewalk use and security. Other issues that need attention are personal security risks at parking lots, buses, bus stops, airports, highways, etc, that affect women's travel patterns, design improvements to meet women's specific mobility needs (lower height of entry steps, straps, etc, in buses and trains; installation of handrails, ramps, etc), demarcated services such as ladies special buses/trains, and most importantly, clean toilets with restrooms at major and mofussil bus stations.

### **Equitable Share in the Benefits of Development**

Inclusive growth implies that the gains of development are shared between all citizens in ways that are just. That is to say, the state takes positive action to compensate the traditional disadvantages of the weak, the deprived and the vulnerable so that each citizen attains a minimal level of capabilities necessary for survival and functioning. India's record in this regard is far from satisfactory; inequalities on grounds of religion, caste and ethnicity are rampant and these get compounded once again for women of all groups on grounds of gender. An unacceptably large section of the population, among whom women form the majority, still continues to suffer from hunger, ill-health and ignorance.

**Education:** Access to education and skill training exemplifies these failures. Despite the constitutional provision of a right to

education and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan campaign, there are still persistent gaps and discrimination in access to education on grounds of religion, caste, ethnicity and gender. Regrettably, this time too, policymakers do not appear to have any vision for redressing that situation. Too much of early childhood education is being left largely to underpaid female teachers who, in spite of being state employees, are denied workers' rights.

The planners make no mention of action on the recommendations made by the various commissions and committees set up during the Eleventh Plan, which is when significantly the big push for education was announced. There is an intention to bring in the private for-profit model into educational institutions. The emphasis on the PPP model for all levels of education must be backed up with evidence and justification to show how it has been successful either in extending facilities to the deprived or in generally improving the quality of education. This is especially true of training in skills. Access to skills has become a prerogative of those who can pay exorbitant fees. Women are deprived on several grounds since families have reservations regarding spending large amounts on a daughter's education. And if the family budget is constrained, then the choice automatically is in favour of the son.

There is also no reason to believe that the PPP model will cater to the urgent need for skill training and upgrading among numerous workers in the unorganised sector who, as mentioned before, can find no markets for their traditional skills unless these are coupled with modern inputs and some entrepreneurial skill. To universalise access to these skills at all levels and to all social groups, the state needs to promote flexible vocational school education as well as enterprise-level training that is sensitive to local opportunities and traditional skills. The Twelfth Plan must pick up the challenge of ensuring that all children, including differently abled children, are able to enjoy equal access to education and educational institutions.

**Health:** The most glaring form of gender discrimination is in the health sector, where it is visibly manifested in the low female-male sex ratio, the high levels of and sex differentials in morbidity and mortality as well as differential access to treatment and care. The zero-to-six child sex ratio has continued to decline from 927 to 914 as per the provisional results of Census 2011. Differentials in morbidity and mortality and differential access to treatment and care for women are causes for concern. Juxtaposed against the high communicable and non-communicable disease burden is the low public sector provisioning for health and the unmet commitments on provision of access to care.

Public expenditure on healthcare in India is among the lowest in the world, both as a proportion of total expenditure on healthcare and as a percentage of GDP. Government expenditure on healthcare in India constitutes only 19.67% of total expenditure while 71.13% is spent by households themselves (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare 2009). In contrast, government expenditure on healthcare is 87% of total health-related expenditure in the United Kingdom (UK), 80% in France, 64% in Thailand and 46% in Sri Lanka (ibid). Clearly, public expenditure on healthcare in India is among the lowest in the world.

The Eleventh Plan fell severely short of raising the share of public expenditure on health from less than 1% of GDP in 2006-07, to 2-3% of GDP. The likely achievement will be only 1.4% of GDP. The approach paper suggests that total health expenditure will be increased to 2.5% of GDP by the end of the Twelfth Plan, but there is no basis for determining whether this is adequate. Nor is there a road map for achieving this number.

There is need for recognition of the critical care work provided by women, that saves the public health system both time and cost. The primary burden of caregiving within the home falls on women. This needs to be recognised and support provided to alleviate the difficulties, drudgery and depression that surround provision of care. Macroeconomic policy takes the "reproductive" economy where women undertake most of the work for granted, and assume that it will adjust to changes induced by macroeconomic variables. While the approach paper notes that the burden of financing healthcare falls excessively on households in the form of out-of-pocket expenses, the solution suggested is publicly-financed healthcare services through high quality, district-level plans for health services, funded primarily by the states. This will be a non-starter as several states will not have the required funds.

While ill-health affects both men and women, the problems get compounded for women due to higher morbidity in both rural and urban areas, lack of access to and control over resources, restrictions on mobility, unrecognised care work burden, high levels of anaemia and greater fear of stigma. Additionally, women are victims of domestic and other forms of violence. This is a public health issue but public provisioning for implementing the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 that has been passed falls far short of needs. In addition to reducing maternal mortality and providing reproductive healthcare, the focus of health provisioning for women has to be on planning for women's survival and health throughout the life cycle. This requires that data on disease burden and health-seeking behaviour be presented separately for males and females. Data show that reported morbidity is higher among women than men. However, disease-wise information is sporadic. Strategies are needed for identification of specific barriers to access to healthcare and removal of these constraints.

Shortfalls in essential infrastructure, nurses, doctors, and other staff and drugs must be corrected and access to primary health centres (PHCs), community health centres (CHCs) and medical care be provided based on population and area norms. Access to healthcare cannot depend on the vagaries of public-private or public donor partnerships. The state must take responsibility for access to quality healthcare – preventive, promotive and curative – for all, with special responsibility for vulnerable groups. However, the "vulnerable" cannot be determined by ownership of a below poverty line (BPL) card, since that will lead to errors of exclusion.

### Contributions and Claims of the Voiceless

As in any democracy, in India too, the claims and needs of the vocal and the powerful tend to get a priority over those of the weak and the voiceless. But in planned development, policymakers are expected to take note of the private costs undergone and contributions made by these others in the process of development.



Plans for state action are supposed to be modelled in ways that provide for the needs of the voiceless and duly compensate them.

**Energy Sector:** Women of poor households contribute in many ways to the welfare of their families and usually at great cost to themselves. For this, they get little acknowledgement or compensation, whether from the family or from society. One major service performed by most rural Indian women for their families, as well as for the country, is to provide for the daily energy needs of the vast majority of households, by collecting non-commercial materials and processing these into fuel for cooking.

The NSSO report on Household Consumption Expenditure (66th round 2009-10) shows that 87% of rural households and 25.1% of urban households use firewood and wood chips, while 41% of rural and 7.8% of urban households use dung cakes. These are collected by women and there is an opportunity cost to the associated drudgery and time required for these tasks. If the objective of the Twelfth Plan is "inclusion", this would require that the lifeline energy needs of poor women everyday be met, through reducing the drudgery associated with collection of firewood, and/or preventing the pollution and health hazards associated with using it for cooking the food that feeds the household. This issue deserves the attention of planners.

Also missing from the discussion is the importance of meeting the energy requirements of small and marginal farms and microenterprises that enable the survival of a large majority of men and women as well as contribute to GDP. The supply of energy to vulnerable households is linked not only to improvement in quality of life and drudgery reduction, but also to livelihood generation and increased contribution to GDP.

The concern in the approach paper is with ensuring that the energy requirements of the major contributors to the GDP – industry, transport, agriculture, etc, are met so that these sectors do not constrain the achievement of the 9% targeted GDP growth rate. In achieving these goals, it seeks firstly to keep a check on the import bill for fossil fuels through increased energy efficiency of these (mainly imported) fuels, thus reducing the energy elasticity of various activities in the growth scenario. Second, it seeks to achieve growth in production while controlling carbon emissions from energy-producing activities.

Despite the Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana (RGGVY), a large number of habitations are still uncovered and a very large population has no connectivity. While there is recognition of the need for universalisation of access to power, it is crucial that there be a commitment to achieving this during the Twelfth Plan and provision of a road map on how this objective will be attained.

For inclusion, when there are shortages and outages, supply must be rationalised so that small farms get priority supply at stipulated times and agriculture is not adversely affected. Similarly, the spatial distribution of available energy supply should be equitable and not skewed in favour of more developed areas and rich households. This must be followed through once again with a concrete road map.

The basic purpose of planning is to correct or compensate for the imbalance between private and public costs; but in this case, planners show no awareness of the fact that women are saving on costs to the nation at great private costs to themselves and their health.

**Urban Sector:** Similarly, more and more women, with or without families, are seeking livelihoods in urban areas. Earnings in those occupations have become vital for the survival of these families. While urban growth may create livelihood opportunities, this will not automatically translate into inclusion. Much of the work that is created is casual and the wages paid are irregular and exploitative. From urban policymakers, however, there is little acknowledgement of women's struggles and the constant uncertainty they face regarding their job opportunities and their claims on urban facilities.

Urban livelihoods are overlooked or undermined by policies, regulations, and practices of municipalities and urban planners and are eroded by urban renewal schemes. The provisioning of basic water and sanitation are basic needs and should be delinked from land tenure and the above poverty line (APL)/BPL distinction. Their needs too find no place in plans for the nation.

There is a strong gender dimension to safe water and sanitation:

- There are effects on women's and girls' health, physical security and exposure to violence, unpaid labour (because of the need to care for sick household members). Sanitation significantly improves health and nutrition outcomes especially for women and girls.

- Lack of urban sewerage is a major problem. The vast majority of cities and towns do not have even partial sewerage networks, and in big cities like Bangalore and Hyderabad, half of all households do not have access to sewerage connections. There has been an increase in the number of census towns with no such infrastructure or municipal arrangements.

**Governance:** The approach document harbours much faith in institutional reforms. How will these reforms be conducted and who will do them? Governance could include institutional arrangements, managerial capabilities, legal and political frameworks for delivery of justice, as well as rational convergence of development delivery. While there is a general understanding that there are impediments to the effective delivery of policies and programmes, such as the "silo" system (i.e., central ministerial control over schemes), and a focus on professional managerial skills, there is no reference to the importance of the panchayati raj institutions as well as the municipalities or their role in providing that convergence.

### Removing Biases

In recent years, several developments have taken place that can help to remove the various biases that are still very much a part of our governance system. One of them is the machinery set in motion to decentralise governance authority through panchayats, district councils and municipal bodies, with reservation of seats for various disadvantaged groups including women. There is hope that the plans and policies executed thus could correct inequities in the system. However, planners are yet to devolve sufficient powers to these bodies to make any impact. Too much authority is still centralised at the top. Central schemes decide on the one design for programmes that are to be applied everywhere. This has foiled any hope of giving women a voice in future development plans.



For women, in particular, with concerns cutting across sectors, an intersectionality framework must necessarily be included whereby the perspectives, interests and voices of women from the most disadvantaged groups are foregrounded. The role of governance, in particular local governance, where women can play an active role in developmental planning, given their high political presence (now over 50%), is critical in this convergence. Women's participation as elected representatives in local bodies, evolved over the last 15 years, has been noteworthy. Hence the strengthening of these agencies' roles and powers, especially for implementing "inclusive" programmes at the grass-roots level would be enabling for women-led governance.

Needless to state, it is the combined effect of these inclusive programmes that can ameliorate so much of rural deprivation for women who perform some of these tasks in the unpaid "care economy". While the approach paper recognises that the Total Sanitation Commission (TSC) without water is meaningless, that the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) without its demand-driven agenda would not improve outcomes, and that (for artisanal families) linking MGNREGA with the National Rural Livelihood Mission is desirable, it makes little effort in working out a mechanism to ensure such convergence.

With the district now being identified as the first building block for planning and devolution of untied funds and flagship schemes, a district plan which includes gendered analysis of the district's economy, postulates a goal of food and livelihood security and allocates funds accordingly is crucial. In short, governance should mean that with political democracy, women are enabled to build economic democracy.

The Indian government has in principle also accepted the tool of gender-just budgeting for monitoring and evaluating public expenditure for reducing gender-based biases. This can also be applied to plan schemes and their execution in order to assess the orientation and progress of the plan from a gendered lens. However, gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) should go beyond a number-crunching game of estimating the flow of budgetary resources to women, "to engage with the overall determination of macroeconomic policy and the degree to which there is adequate support for social investment and provision of public goods" (Elson 2011: 17).

Strengthening the gender perspective in developmental planning through sustained review, monitoring, evaluation

and therefore improvement is not possible without more frequent and better quality gender-disaggregated data on

- Employment conditions (paid and unpaid work)
- Migration
- Health access and outcomes
- Education, skills and training
- Access to food and nutrition outcomes
- Use of public facilities
- Control over private and public assets
- Access to credit
- Access to land
- Access to and impact of flagship schemes
- Fiscal and monetary gender-disaggregated data.

### Conclusions

From a gender point of view, what is required is that the generation of livelihoods and employment be the central driving force for growth and that resources generated through growth of GDP feed the social policies that universalise education, health, social security, social welfare, culture and sports (see, for instance, Sarmiento 2011). This will involve a different approach than currently taken in the Twelfth Plan document. It is hoped that during the Twelfth Plan,

- Livelihood-led growth will be at the centre of inclusive growth. This requires correcting for the existing trend of the poor quality employment generated by growth that in no way benefits women and many other groups; enabling small producers, in agriculture and non-agriculture, to become more viable and competitive; preventing displacement, loss of livelihoods and environmental degradation in the name of rapid growth.

- If inclusion is the goal, then employment generation of high quality, and not primarily underpaid work in the social sector, must be the central goal of planning.

- Shifting to a livelihood-led growth strategy or an employment-oriented macroeconomic strategy can have many direct and indirect positive effects through strong multiplier effects, even for other policy measures.

- Adequate public provisioning for healthcare must also be a priority in view of the high communicable and non-communicable disease burden, the massive burden on households of out-of-pocket expenses for financing healthcare and the unmet commitments regarding equitable access to healthcare.

### REFERENCES

- Chandrasekhar, C P and Jayati Ghosh (2012): "The Latest Employment Trends from the NSSO", MacroScan, 14 July.
- Chambers, R and G Convey (1991): "Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the Twenty First Century", Institute of Development Studies Discussion Paper 296, University of Sussex.
- Elson, Diane (2011): "Economics for a Post-crisis World: Putting Social Justice First" in Devaki Jain and Diane Elson (ed.), *Harvesting Feminist Knowledge for Public Policy: Rebuilding Progress* (New Delhi: IDRC and Sage Publications).
- Kannan, K P and G Ravindran (2011): "India's Common People: The Regional Profile", *Economic & Political Weekly*, 46(38): 60-73.
- Kohli, Atul (2006): "India's Growth by High Inequality and Capital Intensity", *Economic & Political Weekly*, 41(13): 1251-59.
- Krishna, Anirudh and Devendra Bajpai (2011): "Linear Spread and Radial Dissipation: Experiencing Growth in Rural India, 1993-2005", *Economic & Political Weekly*, 46(38): 44-51.
- Lingam, Lakshmi and Maithreyi Krishnaraj (2010): "Maternity Protection in India: A National Assessment", Study Commissioned by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India and ILO, New Delhi.
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (2009): "National Health Accounts India, 2004-05", Government of India, New Delhi.
- NCEUS (2007): "Report on Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganised Sector", NCEUS, New Delhi.
- (2009): "The Challenge of Employment in India: An Informal Economy Perspective", NCEUS, New Delhi.
- Planning Commission (2010): "Engendering Public Policy: A Report on the Work of the Working Group of Feminist Economists during the Preparation of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, 2007-12", Government of India, New Delhi.
- (2011): "Faster, Sustainable and More Inclusive Growth: An Approach to the Twelfth Five-Year Plan", Government of India, New Delhi.
- Sarmiento, Marta Nunez (2011): "Cuban Development Alternatives to Market-Driven Economies: A Gendered Case Study on Women's Employment" in Devaki Jain and Diane Elson (ed.), *Harvesting Feminist Knowledge for Public Policy: Rebuilding Progress* (New Delhi: IDRC and Sage Publications).