

MAJOR DIMENSIONS OF INEQUALITIES IN INDIA: GENDER

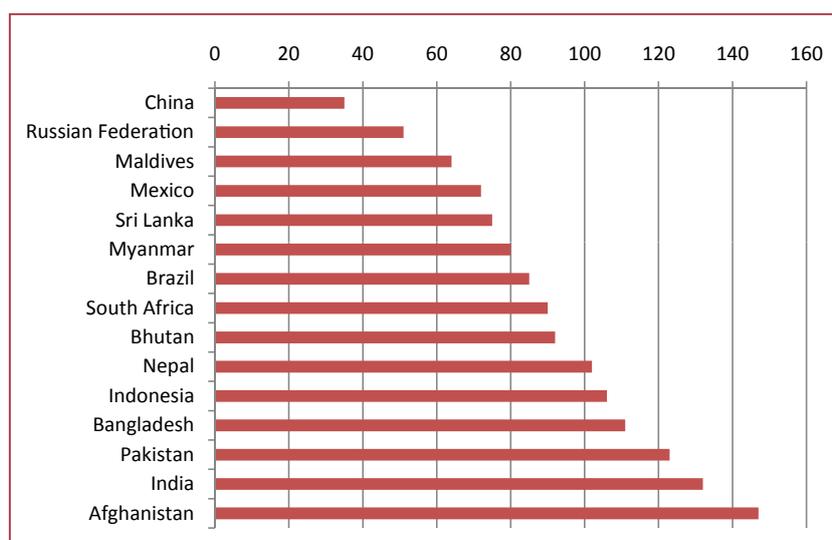
Gender inequalities in India constitute one of the major concerns in the current development paradigm. It manifests itself in various forms and is a core determinant of majority of women's lives in the Indian sub-continent. Several studies and reports by multilateral organisations have shown the existence of the different facets of gender inequality in India. The Global Gender Gap report, 2013, ranks India at 101 among 136 countries, behind Maldives but ahead of Nepal and Pakistan. The report which used the four parameters for measuring gender inequality, namely, economic participation and opportunity, health and survival, educational attainment and political empowerment, put India four notches above its 2012 ranking.

Table 1: India's Rank in Gender Inequality, 2013

	Rank
Economic Participation and Opportunity	124
Educational Attainment	120
Health and Survival	135
Political Empowerment	9
Overall	101

Source: Global Gender Gap Report, 2013

The UNDP Human Development Report, 2013, which calls for better representation of the South in global governance systems, reveals that India's HDI adjusted for gender inequality, fares worst among all its South Asian counterparts barely above Afghanistan. India is ranked at 132 out of 187 countries on the Gender Inequality Index (GII). India also remains the lowest-ranked among its BRICSAM counterparts including Indonesia.

Chart 1: Gender Inequality Index: Rankings for Select Countries, 2012

Source: Human Development Report, 2013

The GII used by the human development report measures the loss in a country's progress and human development because of gender inequality in three sectors: reproductive health, women empowerment and labor market participation. The table below shows the current situation in India in these counts.

Table 2: Gender Inequality Profile of India

	India 2012
HDI Rank	136
Gender Inequality Index Rank	132
Maternal Mortality Ratio	178
Adolescent Fertility Rate	74.7
Seats in National Parliament (% female)	10.9
Population with at least Secondary Education (Female)*	26.6
Population with at least Secondary Education (Male)*	50.4
Female Labourforce Participation Rate	33.1
Male Labourforce Participation Rate	82.7

Source: Open data portal, HDR, UNDP, * 2006-10 estimates

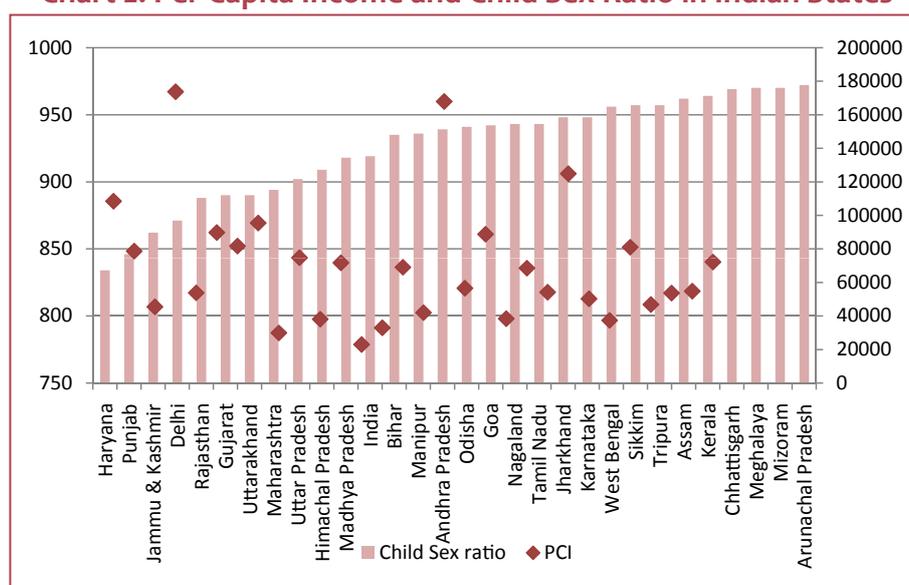
While the GII rightly captures some of the vital indicators of the pervasive gender inequality in India, certain specific dimensions of inequality are highlighted below.

SON PREFERENCE AND DECLINING CHILD SEX RATIO

In India, gender inequalities begin at the stage of conception by a woman. The 'son preference' syndrome in India impacts women's lives significantly even before a girl child is born. The decline in child sex ratio and increases in the incidents of 'sex selective abortion' practised illegally in many parts of the country are evidence to the discrimination faced by women even before they are born. The figure below shows the trends in sex ratio in India. While the overall sex ratio in India has remained almost same

since 1961, there has been an alarming decline in the child sex ratio, specifically after 1981. This steep decline testifies the government’s claims that on an average 100,000 female foetuses are being eliminated illegally in India, each year, over the last two decades. Several studies have noted that such practises of sex selection are rampant in those states which are relatively better off than the others. It is evident from the chart below. Such practises stem from the historical, social and cultural inequalities faced by women where a son is perceived as an ‘asset’ and a daughter as a ‘liability’ thereby reinforcing further gender-based inequalities.

Chart 2: Per Capita Income and Child Sex Ratio in Indian States



Source: Compiled from www.mospi.nic.in

UNEQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND HEALTH

At birth and during her lifetime, the inequalities faced by the girl child in terms of access to education and health are perpetuated by the discriminations arising at the household level. Some of the indicators on education attainments for both boys and girls in India reflect the gender differences prevailing in education (Table 3). Table 3 provides the gross attendance ratio, which measures the total number of attendees to total population of a particular age group corresponding to the respective levels of education. The gap between male and female literacy levels have narrowed over the years, but the gender gap widens above the level of primary education, thus indicating existence of unequal access to higher education.

Table 3: Differential Educational Attainments in India

	Male (%)	Female (%)
Literacy rate	82.1	65.5
Gross Attendance Ratio in Primary Education	101	98
Gross Attendance Ratio in Middle Education	90	88
Gross Attendance Ratio in Secondary Education	96	85
Gross Attendance Ratio in Higher Education	67	54

Source: Status of Education and Vocational Training in India, (July 2009-June 2010), Report number, 551, NSSO, GOI

Similarly, gender inequalities are also directly related to poor health outcomes for women. Studies have found that differential access to healthcare occurs because women are typically entitled to a lower share of household resources and thus utilise healthcare resources to a lesser degree than men. While the GII for India includes the Maternal Mortality Rates and the Adolescent Fertility Rates, some of the other indicators of health and nutrition have been provided in Table 4. In the Indian context, unequal access to healthcare facilities and nutrition are evident from the higher child mortality rates and increased incidence of anemia among women. At the level of households, it is evident from the ‘rationing’ in healthcare which refers to the practise that every time there is shortage of resources, women are the first ones to forego healthcare, depending on their social strata.

Table 4: Differential Health Outcomes in India

	Male	Female
Life Expectancy at Birth (2011)*	66.4	68.7
Total Fertility Rate (Number of births per woman) (2011)*	-	2.59
Child Mortality Rate (the number of deaths to children age 1–4 years per 1,000 children reaching age 1 year)	14	23
Percentage of Fully Immunized Children	42	45
Incidence of Anemia (15-49) (%)	24	56

Source: National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), 2005-6, India, Key Findings, IIPS, * Country Statistics, World Health Report, 2013, WHO

INEQUALITIES IN THE WORLD OF WORK

Apart from access to basic amenities, gender based inequalities in the sphere of livelihoods are manifested in unequal opportunities for women to participate in economic activities and disparities in wages. Not only there exists a wide gap between the male and female labourforce participation rates in India (Table 2), the economic participation rates have also been secularly declining for women workers in India (Chart 3).

Chart 3: Trends in male and female economic participation rates in India

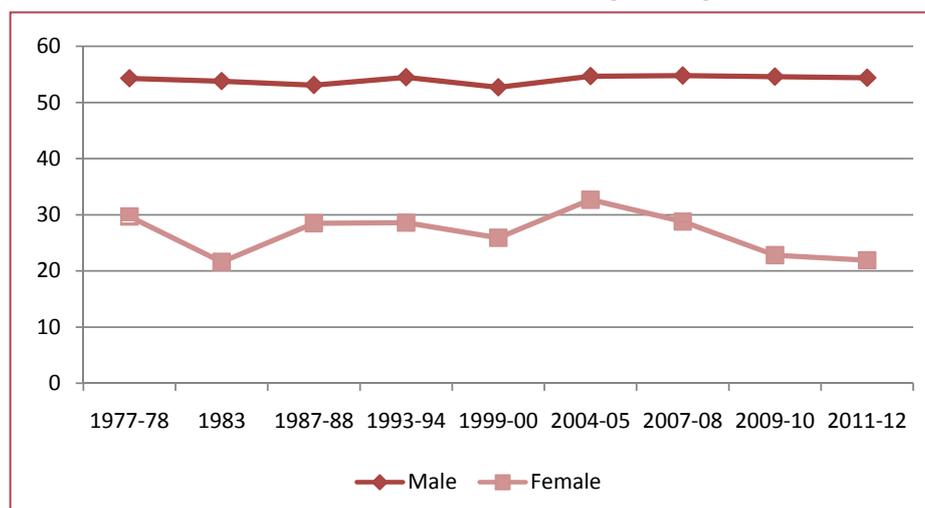
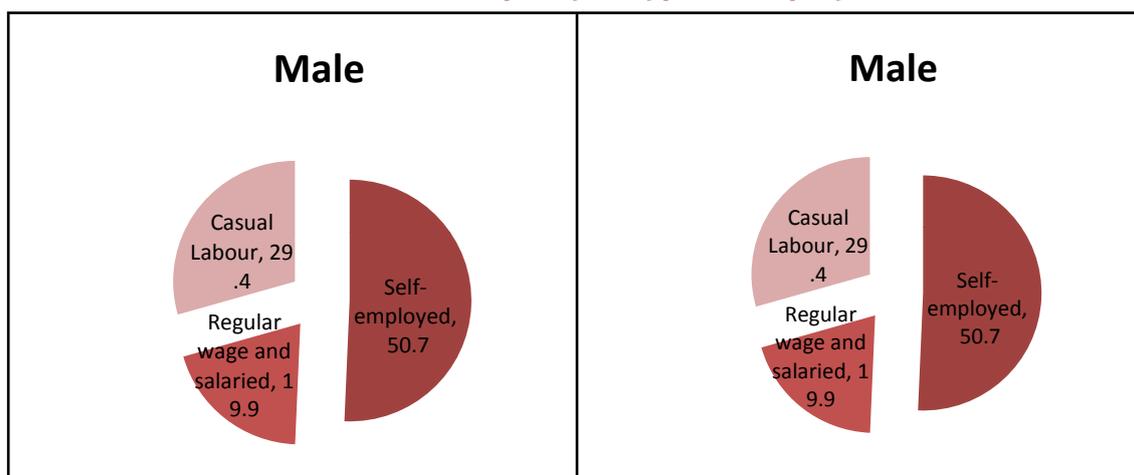


Chart 4: Gender Disparity in Type of Employment

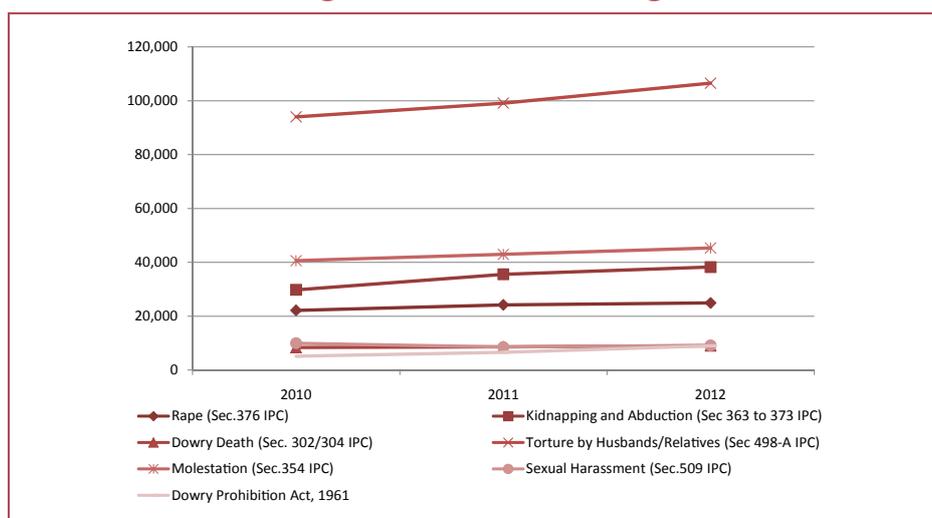


Source: Key Indicators of Employment and Unemployment, June 2011-July 2012, 68th Round NSSO, GOI, 2013

The larger presence of women within the informal sector captures the extent of unequal opportunities for women workers. Currently, almost 94 percent of women workers are engaged in informal activities in the non-agricultural sector (ilostat, 2013). Also, gender inequalities in the labour market are reflected in the fact that women workers are often found within typical employment contracts with low remunerations and lesser job security (Chart 4). While regular employment provides better job quality, and less wage disparity between male and female, casual employment often has greater gender gap in wages. The share of female wages to male wages in regular employment is 74 percent (NSSO, 2013). However female wages constitute only 61 percent and 69 percent of male wages in urban and rural areas respectively for casual employment (NSSO, 2013). Within the self-employed, the largest category, the payment method is often piece-rated, bereft of any non-wage benefits.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In India, violence against women, both sexual and other, forms a root cause that reinforces gender inequalities in social, political and economic spheres. The total crimes against women registered in the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) records show that since 2001, it has increased by 70 percent. Among this, the NCRB reports an increase in rape cases by almost 150 percent since 1990 and a tremendous increase in cases of domestic violence. Low levels of reporting of violence against women and even lower levels of convictions as well as lesser avenues of redressal have added to the woes of women while tackling violence.

Chart 4: Number of Cases Registered under Crime against Women in India, 2012

Source: *Crime in India, 2012*, National Crime Records Bureau, GOI

FINANCING FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The dimensions of gender inequality highlighted above provide the broad glimpses in this domain. There are several other dimensions of gender inequalities manifested in varied and complex forms which have not been documented in details in this technical brief. It is however noteworthy to mention briefly about the initiatives of the government towards financing gender equality in India. In the domain of public policy in India, initiatives to include 'gender equality' in the discourse began from the pioneering report 'Towards Equality', submitted by the Committee on the Status of Women in India in 1974. This report initiated and recognised the importance of women's agency, however women continued to be treated as 'beneficiaries' in the planning and policy realms till the 7th Five Year Plan (FYP) (1987-1992). From the Seventh FYP the development programmes for women had a major objective of raising their economic and social status. The following Eighth FYP had a definite shift towards the development of women. Since then the Planning process has successively included 'empowerment' of women in various forms. The current Plan document, the 12th FYP amply recognises the agency of women within an economic system.

Despite this, when the policies and programmes are designed, women are still looked upon as 'beneficiaries'. This has led to the framing of policies which have either been non-responsive to gender-based challenges or have unwittingly reinforced patriarchal stereotypes in the name of public provisioning for the development of women. This is not to say that no government programme has been effective for meeting women's needs, but to draw attention to the fact that efforts at engendering the fiscal policy in order to address the gendered requirements have remained inadequate so far.

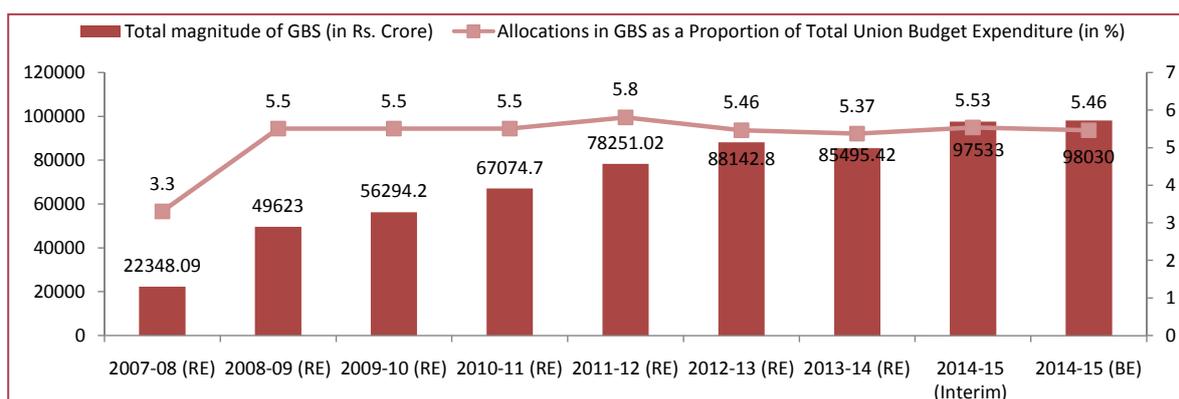
In terms of financing gender equality, it is essential that there exists a discourse on gender responsiveness of government budgets in any country. In India such a discourse dates back only to the late 1990s. Within half a decade of such efforts getting initiated

by the academia and international as well national development organisations, the Union Government of India did adopt Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) as one of its key strategies for economic empowerment of women. However, within less than a decade of adopting GRB in the Union Government and at the level of some State governments, a number of questions have been raised not only on the quality of efforts being carried out under this strategy but also on the potential of the strategy itself in order to adequately finance for gender equality and empowerment of women. The strategy has been criticized for remaining confined to design specific programmes directed towards women's welfare and also tweaking some of the existing programmes to accommodate certain requirements to become women-friendly.

GRB has also emerged as a mere reporting tool for allocations towards such programmes to give a quantitative idea of the extent of public provisioning in a Gender Budget Statement (GBS) placed every year along with the Union Budget. While the statement itself is a first step to using the GRB as a strategy, however, it has not yet been institutionalized within the broader fiscal strategies adopted by the policymakers. This is reflected in the stagnated pattern of budgetary allocations made towards women-specific and women-related programmes in India (Chart 5).

Chart 5 shows a clear stagnation in total allocations for women as share of total Public expenditure as reported in the GBS. Such trends suggest either, a) strategies for intervention in schemes directed at empowerment of women have stagnated or b) strategies for interventions have improved but budgetary allocations have declined. Any or both the reasons for such stagnation in allocations do reflect that in its existing form, GRB needs to be overhauled for achieving its desired objectives.

Chart 5: Allocations for Government schemes directed at empowerment of women in India



Source: Gender Budget Statement, Union Budget documents, Government of India, Various years

From the above discussion, it is evident that despite India's status of an emerging economy, persistence of gender inequalities in several aspects throws light on the need to address these concerns on an urgent basis. In shaping the policy and advocacy efforts within both international platforms such as the BRICS, G20 and the Post 2015 global development agenda as well as the national platforms to work towards ending

these inequalities, the civil society assumes a central role. It is therefore important that while framing the policy advocacy messages, there needs to be a comprehensive understanding on what drives gender inequalities in its varied manifestations. Simultaneously, it is also critical to acknowledge the role of state in order to tackle these and many more forms of gender discriminations through adequate government policies and corresponding public provisioning for the same. The policy advocacy messages both at the global and the local levels need to be reflective of such thoughtfulness.

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