

Economic empowerment of women - Filling gender gaps through Financial inclusion policy - challenges

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Abstract: Financial inclusion strategy of a nation reflects its overall economic policy. Any kind of gender gaps in economic development impedes economic growth as well as national growth. Western countries have been marching towards national growth with provision for equitable involvement of women in all process of economic development. it is a proven fact that women make good banking customers. Studies have shown that women can add positively to bank's growth because they are considered as the consistent banking customers. They tend to have deeper relationships with financial Institutions all through their life. Hence it is imperative for nation with nearly 50% of the women population to incorporate inclusive banking strategies. Increasing women's financial inclusion is especially important in women empowerment process. Indian women disproportionately experience poverty and paucity of resources stemming from unequal divisions of labour and a lack of control over economic resources. Many women remain dependent on their husbands and about one in married women has no control over household on major purchases

Keywords: gender gaps, empowerment of women, Financial inclusion, policy, opportunitie, challenges

I. Introduction

Financial Inclusion has been an important developmental agenda for nations across the globe. India - a nation geared up towards becoming a global leader, financial inclusion becomes further more significant in achieving higher GDP growth. Though financial inclusion is 'necessary', it is definitely not a 'sufficient' condition for economic growth. The success of financial inclusion depends largely on developing products and solutions that directly address low financial literacy affects women empowerment plans.

Concept of financial inclusion- This concept of financial inclusion includes accessing and use of high quality financial services particularly among poor and marginalized sections. This is crucial to achieving inclusive growth of a nation. Women face financial access barriers which prevent them from participating in the economy This disproportionate exclusion of women also hinders their livelihood patterns. To promote gender equity and poverty reduction, inclusive banking is used. Providing low income group women with effective and affordable financial tools to save and borrow money and make and receive payments and manage risk is critical to both women's empowerment and poverty reduction process. Thus there is a need create more gender inclusive financial system that addresses specific demand and supply side barriers faced by women supported by an inclusive regulatory environment, These barriers range from something as basic as the lack of assets for collateral to more structural constraints such as account opening requirements that disadvantage women.

Brookings financial and digital inclusion project report -2015

Brookings financial and digital inclusion project report of 2015 says that India ranks 9th among 21 countries in financial inclusion efforts. This was based on four dimensions of financial inclusion they are nation's commitment mobile capacity regulatory environment and adoption of traditional and digital financial services. India trails countries like Keya south Africa and Brazil. Even though government is committed to inclusive growth where financial inclusion plays a crucial role in helping women through strengthening banking system and providing better access to financial resources. The inclusive financial policy can also be covered through transparent governance. The following table shows the supportive statistics

Financial year ending 2015-2016	
17.5 crore bank accounts	Bank accounts
Rs 22,000 crore	amount deposited
45%	Zero balance accounts

Source : Report of the State bank of India Financial year 2015-2016

During 2015-2016 more than 17.5 crore bank accounts have been opened under the initiative and people have deposited more than Rs 22,000 crore in them. Plus, zero-balance accounts under **Prime Minister Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** have declined from 76 per cent to 45.74 per cent since its inception. PMJDY is enabling citizens at the grassroots to perform financial transactions and keep their hard-earned money safe.

State government strategies towards inclusive banking-

Even as the Centre implements its national agenda of financial inclusion, state governments have been proactive in implementing such initiatives. Some states, have taken the lead to include people especially marginalized sections towards inclusive banking. . Several state governments of the Indian Union have been seeking central government support to implement a model of development that puts socio-economic reform at the epi-centre of the development strategy and These strategies create social justice, effective governance and job creation.

Financial inclusion forms a critical component in national growth. India has been acknowledged as an oasis of opportunity by several multilateral and development organizations. The Indian Government is fully focused on delivering not only high-impact micro reforms coupled with critical structural reforms, to reinvigorate India's macro frameworks. Financial Inclusion has been an important developmental agenda for India. Though financial inclusion is 'necessary', it is definitely not a 'sufficient' condition for economic growth. As this support all round development women are naturally supported.

Supportive factors of financial inclusion- The success of financial inclusion depends largely on developing products and solutions that directly address low financial literacy, Further, leveraging technology to enable financial literacy will help investors take sensible, well informed decisions.

Only 26% of women in India have an account with a formal financial institution as compared with 46% of men. Less than 15% of women entrepreneurs in India have access to finance from a formal banking institution. One of the more impressive aspects of India's growth story relates to the expansion of the banking infrastructure. Between 1969 and 2015 , the banking network has grown ten-fold — from 8,000 branches to 80,000 branches . The number of rural branches has increased phenomenally, from 1,443 to 32,000.

year	urban branches	rural branches
1960- 1970	8000 branches	1400 branches
2005-2015	80,000 braches	32,000 branches

Source: Report of the State bank of India Financial year 2015-2016

This expansion was triggered by nationalization of banks first in 1969 and again in 1980.40 per cent of the households in the country specially rural households do not have a bank account. The term 'financial inclusion', therefore, means delivering banking services such as savings, credit and insurance facilities to the left-out social strata. Financial inclusion need to become a broader subject because it has to broaden the bases of millions of poor and marginalized sections of women and include them in the financial system

Role of Government towards promotion of women banking inclusive policy- - Government can be supportive to endeavors of promotion of women towards inclusive banking.

1. **Strong legeislative intervention-** Government has to strengthen the legislative support to women against any type of discriminative attitude.
2. **Expansion of digital literacy-** Government schemes to enhance digital literacy have to be expanded and welfare schemes with women representation in the bodies have to be increased. Legislations with commitment to customer protection at all stages are needed.
3. **Containing digital divide-** Digital divide has to be contained by increasing the uptake of digital financial services among rural women with greater awareness trainings with user friendly and free applications.
4. **Awareness creation-** Massive organization of the mass awareness camps to digital literacy is needed government has to escalate spending on providing such trainings providing practical training on accessing comprehensive financial services like opening bank accounts accessing mobile banking and digital money availing micro credit insurance and pension facilities is needed.

Role of community- A community plays an important role in conservative mindsets and traditional socio religious barriers have to be addressed. Infrastructural support has to be given to provision bring women under the purview of all such digital literacy. Massive organization of the mass awareness camps to digital literacy is needed government has to escalate spending on providing such trainings providing practical training on accessing comprehensive financial services like opening bank accounts accessing mobile banking and digital money availing micro credit insurance and pension facilities is needed.

II. Conclusion

Women needs stringent actions against any discrimination. In promotion of inclusive banking they require trust privacy security from theft and harassment. A commitment to customer protection in implementation and focus for women needs at all stages is needed. Only these measures ensure sustainable growth and inclusion. Digital divide has to be contained by increasing the uptake of digital financial services among rural women They have to be enabled with training and capacity building to use digital technology S besides conservative mindsets and traditional socio religious barriers have to be addressed. Infrastructural support has to be given to provision bring women under the purview of all such digital literacy. Massive organization of the mass awareness camps towards digital literacy is needed. Government has to escalate spending on providing such trainings providing practical training on accessing comprehensive financial services like opening bank accounts accessing mobile banking and digital money availing micro credit insurance and pension facilities is needed.

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