

Gender Disparities in India and Bangladesh: A comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Present day Bangladesh flourished as an independent nation after separating and achieving independence from Pakistan in the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. The major portion of the country's borders coincide with the boarder of the ancient region of Bengal in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent. The history of the region is closely associated with the history and culture of Bengal and the history of India as well. Since the publication of Human Development report by the UNDP in 1991, the development performance of a country and that of the regions within a country is judged in the first instance on the basis of progress in Human Development. The Human Development Index (HDI) as we know is a composite index of development. This index is now universally accepted and used as a reasonably comprehensive measure of development. Under such historical and demographical background in the present paper an attempt has been made to study comparative status of women in India and Bangladesh.

Key Words : Gender, Human Development Index, Gender Development Index, Gender Inequality Index

INTRODUCTION

The term 'Human Development' was first coined by Pakistani economist MahbubulHaq. According to him existing measures of human progress failed to account for the true purpose of development—to improve people's lives. According to him the commonly used measure of Gross Domestic Product failed to measure overall well-being of the people. Human development is defined as the process of enlarging people's opportunities and freedoms and improving their well-being. According to AmartyaSen, economic development needs to be defined in terms of 'entitlement' and 'capability'. By the term entitlement we mean a set of alternative means that an individual can command over the totality of rights and obligations that one faces. Therefore entitlement generates 'capabilities' that represent a person's freedom to achieve various functioning combinations. And by economic development Sen suggests the expansion of capability or expansion of freedoms. Despite remarkable growth, a vast section of population of the contemporary society is deprived of basic freedoms. One such un-freedom is gender bias.

Women is the integral part of our society. They perform various activities for shaping their family and in turn our society. They are no longer a step child of nature or a Cinderella of fate. In our society women are - farmers and food providers contributing to agricultural output, general environmental maintenance and food security; they are business people and traders -40% of the world's labour force

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are women, not including informal work in the home, on the land, in the market place etc.); they are heads of households most of whom are likely to also have a full time job, as well as caring for children, elderly or sick relatives; they are mothers, carers and support workers ; and they are community leaders, activists and role models stemming from their roles in society as mothers, carers and support workers.

To bringing about sustaining long term social change we need women development. Women in development is an approach of development that emerged in the 1960s. It is the process by which we integrate women into the global economy and assisting in total development. To move towards the modernity it is expected that all deep rooted conservative mind sets norms and social constructed irrational prejudices, where gender discrimination is a major area, would slowly shrink and eventually disappear and help to begin a new era. But in actuality in developing countries of the world are not free from various problems of which the plight of the women is a serious socio-cultural concern.

Since the publication of Human Development report by the UNDP in 1991, the development performance of the countries and that of the regions within a country is judged in the first instance on the basis of progress in Human Development. The Human Development Index (HDI) as we know is a composite index of development. This index is now universally accepted and used as a reasonably comprehensive measure of development. It is continuously undergoing refinement since its introduction to remove its flaws and to make its calculation simple .This index comprises of three indicators *viz.* literacy, life expectancy at birth and per capita income.

Modern Bangladesh flourished as an independent nation after separating and achieving independence from Pakistan in the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. The major portion of the country's borders coincide with the boarder of the ancient region of Bengal in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent. The history of the region is closely associated with the history and culture of Bengal and the history of India as well. Since the publication of Human Development report by the UNDP in 1991, the development performance of a country and that of the regions within a country is judged in the first instance on the basis of progress in Human Development. The Human Development Index (HDI) as we know is a composite index of development. This index is now universally accepted and used as a reasonably comprehensive measure of development.

Literature Survey:

So far various studies have been undertaken on the HDI of different countries, regions and districts. These studies have highlighted different aspects of Human Development at country or state or district levels. We present below a brief review of such recent studies.

Tilok (1978) in his paper entitled 'Poverty ,Inequality and Education' has attempted to show that education reduces poverty, improves income distribution and reduces inequality by transferring the share of the top 20 percent population in the National Income to the population at the bottom and middle levels.

Pattnaik (1994) in his article entitled "Coordinating Health Care and Primary Education" opined that there is a functional relationship between health personal and primary school teacher's working in villages .the primary teachers can provide an important supplementary role to the health personnel for the effective implementation of welfare programmers at the village level.

Zaidi and Salam (1999) in their article attempted to show that improvement in social indicators over the years in India are not satisfactory. Again, the HUMAN Development levels across the states of India vary sharply. They suggested that, a higher per capita tax and non tax revenue, a larger expenditure on social sector and efficient utilization of funds are necessary to achieve higher standard of Human Development.

Bhattacharya (1998) made an attempt, to show that there exists a substantial disparity in Human Development across the districts of West Bengal. The Human Development is more in favour of the

urbanized regions. This is also true for overall India. However the extent of variation differs.

Roy and Bhattacharya (1999) adopted the same methodology applied by UNDP, to calculate HDI for the districts of West Bengal. By computing HDI for 16 districts of West Bengal they made an attempt to evaluate the position or ranking of the districts of West Bengal at the inter state level i.e. within the states of the country.

Rao (2000) suggested that to overcome the persisting poverty and disparities in Human Development within the state while special schemes and programmes are important, attention should also be given to the production base of the economy and institutional structure should spread wide enough to reach all areas. He also stressed on the need of active participation of the beneficiary areas and populations for the success of development programmes.

Roy, Kamaiah and Roa (2000) made a study for 15 large states over the period 1992-93 to 1997-98 to estimate the average level of expenditure on primary, secondary, and higher education. The finding of this study inconsistent with the hypothesis that, rich states spend more and poor states spend less as far as social sector is concerned. So, there is a need for suitable changes in the existing fiscal equalization mechanism to offset the revenue and cost disabilities of poorer states.

Sarkar and Prabhu (2001) made a study of government expenditure on social services in 15 major Indian states over the period 1974-75 to 1995-96. The analysis has revealed that there is a declaration in real per capita state government expenditure on social services in a majority of Indian states and it could have an adverse impact on enrolment and life expectancy. Thus, the cherished goals of ' Education for all' and ' Health for all' may remain as elusive as ever.

Brar (2002) pointed out that Punjab has been experiencing multiple imbalances between the social sector and economic growth. In comparison with low per capita income in the state of Kerala, Punjab is far behind the former in fulfilling the vital needs of the society. So, the policy makers must realize that the state can maintain its place in the next century only by upgrading the quality of human resources through improved education and health.

Bagchi and Sarkar (2003) in their paper showed inter district disparity in health and education in west Bengal. For the study they took six indicators each from education and health sectors. The study finds that there are sharp disparities both among the districts as well as among three designated regions of the state. Policy prescriptions have been made in the paper for the reduction of inter-district disparity in social development.

Swaminath and Balagopal (2004) in their paper entitled 'Human Development in Tamil Nadu' pointed out that though Tamil Nadu has achieved better ranking in Human Development compared to most states in India, but there is a wide spread inter-district variation in Human Development achievement. So, there is acute need to understand the linkages between sectors and themes, across space and time and across gender and caste to begin the process of delineating the outlines of a policy.

Bagchi and Sarkar (2005) in their study showed that the Northern part of West Bengal, popularly known as North Bengal is a comparatively backward region with respect to both social and Human Development.

Under such historical and demographical background in the present paper an attempt has been made to study comparative status of women in India and Bangladesh on the basis of some selected indices like Gender Development Index, Work Force Participation Rate, Gender Inequality Index, Participation of women in political decision making, maternal mortality rate etc.

Objective of the study:

The main objective of the study is to find out the relative position of the Indian women and Bangladeshi women.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on secondary data collected mainly from Human Development Report 2014, published by United Nations Development Programme and also collected from articles published in different journals. For the calculation of index value of each component the standard formula provided by the UNDP has been used :

$$\text{Dimension Index} = \frac{(\text{Actual Value} - \text{Minimum Value})}{(\text{Maximum Value} - \text{Minimum Value})}$$

On the basis of this dimension index, we shall compare the different development index of India with Bangladesh.

DISCUSSION

Gender Inequality Index:

Gender inequality is a social process. In this process men and women are not treated equally. This inequality in treatment arises from biological, psychological and cultural norms constructed by the society. It is one of the major barrier to human development. The disadvantages faced by women and girls are the source of the inequality. They are discriminated against in every sphere like health, education, political presentation, labour market, etc. The prevalence of gender inequality has negative impact on development of their capabilities and freedom of choice as well.

Gender Development Index was introduced in 1995 in the Human Development Report written by the United Nations Development Programme to add gender sensitive dimension to the Human Development Index. It describes the gaps in life expectancy, education, and incomes between male and female.

In Human Development published by UNDP the Gender Development Index (GDI) measures gender inequalities in achievement in three basic dimensions of human development:

a) Health which is measured by female and male life expectancy at birth; All countries, rich and poor, try to improve the health of their populations and attempt to reduce mortality and increase health (Giroso and King, 2007)

b) Education which is measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and female and male mean years of schooling for adults ages 25 years and older; and

Command over economic resources, measured by female and male estimated earned income.

Table 1 shows the Gender Development Index (GDI) and its component in India and in Bangladesh. The closer the value of index to 1 smaller is the gap between man and women. Both India and Bangladesh lies in the group of medium human developed countries of the Human Development Report 2014. It is seen from the table that the GDI of Bangladesh is high as compared to India. It is also noticeable that GDI of India is lower not only than Bangladesh but also lower than the average of the group.

Life expectancy at birth is defined as the average numbers of years, a new born baby can be expected to live, if current death rate prevails. It is one of the important measures of a population's health and widely used to complement economic measure of prosperity. The table 1 shows that the female life expectancy at birth in India is 68.3 years whereas it is 71.5 years in Bangladesh. It is clear from the table that in India female life expectancy at birth is not only lower than Bangladesh, but also lower than the average (70.0 years) in the group.

Education is an important component of wellbeing and it is widely used in the measurement of economic development as well as the quality of life. Attainment in the access to learning and knowledge

Countries	GDI (Value)	HDI (Value)		Life Expectancy at birth (Years)		Expected Year of Schooling (Years)		Mean year of Schooling (Years)		Estimated Gross National Income per capita (2011 PPP \$)	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
India	0.828	0.591	0.627	68.3	64.7	11.3	11.8	3.2	5.6	2277	7833
Bangladesh	0.908	0.528	0.582	71.5	69.9	10.3	9.7	4.6	5.6	1928	3480
Average	0.875	0.565	0.646	65.9	11.4	11.4	11.8	4.7	6.4	3199	8619

Source: Human Development Report 2014, UNDP

is measured by expected years of schooling and mean years of schooling. According to UNDP the expected years of schooling is the number of years of schooling a child of school entrance age can be expected to receive education if prevailing patterns of age specific enrolment rate persist throughout the child's life. It measures the access to learning and knowledge. In this respect Indian female (11.3 years) edged over Bangladesh female (10.3 years). Here it is noticeable that Bangladeshi female's expected years of schooling is lower than that of the average in the group (11.4 years). Mean years of schooling measures the average number of years of education received by the people of age 25 and older. In this respect, both the Indian female (3.2 years) and Bangladeshi female (4.6 years) lies below the group average (4.7 years) and Bangladeshi females are edged over the Indian females.

Another important measure of Gender Development Index is the command over economic resources which is measured by the female and male estimated earned income. Table 1 shows that the estimated gross national income per capita (2011 PPS \$) for Indian female is 2277 \$ whereas it is 1928 \$ for Bangladeshi female. Therefore, in this respect, Bangladeshi female are in a better position than that of India. But both India and Bangladesh lagged behind the group average (3199 \$).

The gender-based disadvantages are measure by Gender Inequality Index (GII). It has three dimensions. These are reproductive health, empowerment and labour market. It shows the loss in opportunity cost in human development due to inequality between the achievements of female and male in these dimensions. If GII is 0 it means that the women and men are treated equally and if it is 1 it implies that one gender treated as poorly as possible in all measured dimensions.

Table 2 shows that in this respect (GII), India (0.563) is marginally ahead of Bangladesh (0.529) and the figures are higher than the group average. The reproductive health is measured by two indicators: the maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rate. In this respect India (200) is slightly in better position than Bangladesh (240). But they perform badly in the group as the group average is lower than their respective maternal mortality ratio. On the other hand the adolescent birth rate in India (32.8 per 1000 women ages 15-19) is much lower than that of Bangladesh (80.6 per 1000 women ages 15-

Country	GII	Maternal mortality ratio (death per 1 lakh live birth)	Adolescent birth rate (birth per 1000 women ages 15 – 19)	Share of seat in Parliament (% held by women)	Population at least some secondary Education		Labour force participation rate	
					Female	Male	Female	Male
India	0.563	200	32.8	10.9	26.6	50.4	28.8	80.9
Bangladesh	0.529	240	80.6	19.7	30.8	39.3	57.3	84.1
Average	0.513	186	43.4	17.5	34.2	51.4	38.7	80

Source: Human Development Report 2014, UNDP

19) and group rate also. In this measure of GII India is much ahead of Bangladesh and in the group as well. Empowerment is measured by the share of parliamentary seats held by women and the shares of population with at least some secondary education by gender. In this measurement of GII Bangladesh is ahead of India. The share of Bangladeshi female in secondary education is also higher than that of the India. Labour market is measured by participation in the labour force by gender. In this measurement also Bangladeshi female are in good position than Indian female.

Conclusion:

1. HDI for female in Bangladesh is in better position than that of India.
 2. In respect of Gender development, the performance of Bangladesh is better than that of India.
 3. Life Expectancy at birth is much higher in Bangladesh both for male and female as compared to India.
 4. The expected year of schooling is higher in India than that of Bangladesh.
 5. Bangladeshi females are in better position than India so far as mean year of schooling is concern.
 6. Estimated NI per capita in terms of PPP 2011 \$ Bangladeshi female is much ahead of Indian female.
 7. In terms of GII Bangladesh is slightly in better position than India.
 8. In India maternal mortality rate is marginally higher than Bangladesh.
 9. The incidence of Adolescent birth rate in Bangladesh is 3.4 times higher than India.
 10. In Bangladesh more women are found as Parliamentarian than that of India.
 11. In Bangladesh more female in the age group 25 or older reached Secondary education than that of India.
 12. The female work force participation rate is much higher in Bangladesh than that of Indian female.
- Finally, we can conclude that both the country India and Bangladesh has to go a long way for the overall development of women.

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