

Women's Participation in Social Development

5.1 Introduction

A woman's living standards are directly linked to her quality of life. It also indicates how well the basic needs of a woman are met. Further, it links to resource availability and fruitful utilization, an individual's easy access to essential utilities, and equity holdings (Ruta *et al.*, 2007). It was also observed that maximum Indian women experience different levels of time deprivation within the same household. This clearly reflects the prevailing inequitable gendered care and reproductive norms (Rai *et al.*, 2019). In this context, it is essential to note that some social institutions, including rules, norms, laws, customs, and traditional beliefs, limit women's liberty (Jütting and Morrisson, 2005). Educational qualification, self-bank accounts, and individual asset ownership are vital parameters for determining their social status (Biswal *et al.*, 2020). This study aimed to depict the rural West Bengal scenario within the framework of gender-based intersectionality to address fundamental needs. In the course of field visits, it has been noticed that women residing in far-flung areas are deprived of fundamental rights, including good health, safe childbirth, quality education, and livelihood. These aspects of women's living standards have become significant hindrances to their development. Moreover, other challenges, such as violence and injustice, compound the acute problem of widespread gender discrimination across the region. The village level financial ground revealed that underpaid work is a significant obstacle to promoting women's relative status in rural societies. It is quite noteworthy that men improve their intra-household financial ability over time. However, women are considered the source of the unpaid labor force at the household level (they are defined as 'housewives' and 'homemakers' rather than 'workers') (Folbre, 2009; Sen, 1990). Researchers have reported that free-wage labourers harness the option of income generation, which is quite prevalent in the current context. It has created discrimination in earning daily wages. While women working hours is cheaper than their male counterparts (Mies, 1986). In the present study has considered people of marginal communities in the *Jangal Mahal*

Women's Participation in Social Development

area of West Bengal as the respondents. These people acquired less than one acre of land and worked as daily wagers in unorganized sectors. We have noticed that male members have shifted to other professions and left farming to secure a permanent source of earnings.

In this context, women contribute equally to supporting their families financially by participating in agriculture, rearing livestock, preparing handicraft products, or making 'beedis'¹. However, most of the work (other than household chores) done by women is an extension of their household work. The different roles played by the women to give it resilience are mentioned as follows—

5.2 The function of women within their families

The function of women within their families is vital. They have made financial parental contributions. They are engaged in various familial responsibilities, including domestic chores, childcare, caring for the elderly, animal husbandry, supporting males on the family farm, and making daily wagers in the informal sector (Biswal *et al.*, 2020). The role of women in our field of study is unacknowledged due to widespread ignorance. It has been discovered that the majority of married women are self-reliant due to their participation in self-help groups (SHGs). They maintain an appropriate work-life balance. Within our designated website, females continue to be regarded as subordinates. Despite their accomplishments, women face time constraints when attempting to commute from their residences to the community. Within this culture, women cannot provide for their fundamental necessities (Tabassum, N., and Nayak, B. S., 2021). They have no authority regarding their daughters' education, marriage, or instruction. As inequitable availability of vital resources results in the deprivation of necessities of life and fundamental rights, sex-selective discrimination is the only means by which poverty can be eradicated in developing nations (Biswal *et al.*, 2020). In rural, impoverished societies, intra-household inequality produces an undisclosed catastrophe.

¹ A *beedi* is a small cigarette filled with tobacco flakes wrapped in leaves of *Piliostigma racemosum* plants.

5.2.1 Lack of awareness

The majority of populations are unaware regarding the breadth of specialized education and the skill-based labour market, which leaves them uncertain about their future (Mukundan, S. R., 2021). It has been demonstrated that during times of crisis, households headed by women ingest fewer nutrient-dense meals due to their reduced income. Insufficient educational opportunities, substandard standards for critical services such as healthcare, and limited economic potential all contribute to the exacerbation of gender disparities in the studied region. Women constitute nearly 55% of the agricultural workforce in the region under investigation. Nevertheless, there is still a need for enhancement in their potential nutritional security. Social sustainability encompasses the development of sustainable, habitable environments that promote well-being and empower individual human being by acknowledging their essence requirements concerning employment and daily life (Rai *et al.*, 2019).

5.2.2 Empowerment fosters well-being

Empowerment fosters well-being by understanding individuals' needs and desires in organizations and their personal lives. It comprises all the necessary components and criteria to assist the social and cultural domain in furnishing appropriate social facilities and mechanisms to encourage the active participation of women (Gammage, S., and Stevanovic, N. (2016). It is necessary to increase productive employment and capacity building, as well as to establish a supply of products and services, in order to eradicate poverty at its source. Although all United Nations organizations have implemented gender mainstreaming policies, empowering those living in poverty remains limited to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals' objective of economic growth. Concerning SDG 5.4 (Tabassum, N., and Nayak, B. S., 2021), the tremendous quantity of unpaid or inadequately compensated labour necessitates that specific initiatives alter societal norms. Each individual has the "right to equality before the law," a fundamental right. The political rights of women, their 30% reservation in India's three-tiered, decentralized form of governance beginning with the gram panchayat, and free mandatory education for all are all delineated in Article 21-A (Mukundan, S. R., 2021).

5.2.3 Context of the study site

In the context of our study site, there is an imperative need for access to vital utilities, ownership of inherited land and other property, utilization of cutting-edge technology, and availability of government-provided financial services (Tabassum, N., and Nayak, B. S., 2021). Global empowerment of the second sex is the focus of SDG 5, which seeks to ensure gender equality. By addressing significant issues such as poverty eradication, gender-based violence, and discrimination, the SDGs seek to reshape the lives of all people in the twenty-first century (Ghosh *et al.*, 2015). For the current social order to function, care is a crucial precondition. Without caring, neither an economy nor a culture could exist. Care must be considered a separate right for society's most vulnerable groups (Rai *et al.*, 2019).

5.2.4 In rural India, women are underrepresented as employers

In 2018, employers comprised only about 3% of the total labour force globally and in high-income nations. Employers' contribution in low-income countries was only 1.6 percent, partially attributed to the preponderance of subsistence activities outside of formally organized economic units. The gender gap among employers is severe globally and across all income levels; only half as many women as men hold this employment status. The caregiving work is called the Purple Economy in developed countries. Moreover, it is well accepted there. This approach is the norm in a rural society where women's lifestyles, daily duties, and great jobs have been accepted as societal norms. So, women learn to sacrifice their desires for their whole lives. However, this system is entirely different in the so-called developed countries. Their perception is very different for women. Therefore, they value caring as a source of GDP (Ghosh *et al.*, 2015). They accepted the ethical criteria of a well-established nation in all its ways. It is time to recognize women as an integral part of society. Both men and women possess the potential to contribute significantly to a nation's development (Rai *et al.*, 2019).

In wealthy nations, the Purple Economy is the task of providing care. Additionally, it is welcomed there. This strategy is the norm in a rural environment where women's lifestyles, daily responsibilities, and excellent employment have been

recognized as social norms (Carmalt, J. C. 2018). Women acquire the ability to live their entire lives making sacrifices. However, in the so-called developed countries, this structure is entirely different. Women's perceptions are very different. As a result, they value care as a source of GDP. They agreed with all of the established nation's moral standards. It is time to acknowledge the value of women in society. Both men and women have the potential to make essential contributions to the growth of a country.

5.2.5 Budgeting for gender equality makes economic policies more equitable

Priorities for the political agenda are revealed through gender budgeting. The most important economic policy tool for reforming societies is this budget. It covers the essential areas of expenditure and the variables affecting income generation (Biswal, S. N., Mishra, S. K., and Sarangi, M. K. 2020). To advance equality, it also examines how resources are distributed according to gender and restructures revenue sources. It is imperative to intensify efforts to address the complex barriers women face at home, at work, and in areas that generate resources (Mukundan, S. R. 2021). This strategy has facilitated the implementation of decision-making processes and the reconfiguration of regional planning. Thanks to its connection, it can be used for budget assessment through budget evaluation. However, the feminist perspective on the care economy is built on a gradual and steady concept of total development (Ghosh *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, this approach could boost women's participation in the workforce. This study attempts to understand the condition of women, recognize their demands in rural areas, and dismantle the current patriarchal social networks. After identifying the underlying gaps in every societal layer, we recommended the best course for mainstreaming.

5.2.6 For holistic development of the area

The holistic improvement of rural society necessitates delegating decision-making authority to women. It provides a means to contribute to societal advancement and improve the well-being of individuals (Ghosh *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, it endeavours to effectuate a profound transformation by broadening the functional boundaries to provide alternatives and transform them into intended results (Sen, 1999). With this

Women's Participation in Social Development

in mind, we focused on SDGs 5.1, 5. A, and 8.5, which all emphasize the promotion of full and productive employment to construct robust, consistent, united, and healthy (Rai *et al.*, 2019; Biswal, S. N., Mishra, S. K., and Sarangi, M. K. 2020). The people of the study possess a maximum of one acre of land and participate in daily waging in unregulated sectors.

In pursuit of a sustainable livelihood, male members transitioned from cultivation to alternative vocations. As a result, women engage in agricultural labour, livestock husbandry, handicraft production, and financial support for their families. The majority of their employment, excluding household duties, is regarded as an extension of their domestic labour. It is essential to mention that few social instruments actively strive to demolish the norms of existing social arms. Thus, empowerment can be achieved by providing suitable education at every level of rural society (Ghosh *et al.*, 2015).

5.3 Gender-based discrimination and intersectionality

In this context, the researcher has focused on SDG 8. Further, SDG 8 talks about building consistent, healthy, united, and resilient societies by promoting fruitful employment (Rai *et al.*, 2019). In past studies, some scholars have emphasized these issues. It is important to note that the overall uplifting of rural society needs to empower rural women for decision-making and agency-building. It gives a tool to do something for their welfare and enhance the cumulative growth in different sectors (Ghosh *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, it attempts to bring about a fundamental change by expanding the individual spaces to offer alternatives and turn those into desired outcomes. Individual and collective human agency is required for personal, socioeconomic, sociocultural, and sociopolitical existence (Sen, 1999). SDG 5 encourages recognizing unpaid caregiving and household work to support government agencies and programmes for social protection (Rai *et al.*, 2014). We have interacted with the residents multiple times on the issue of gender inequality, which has helped us evaluate the area's ground reality. The current research provided valuable insights regarding women's social status, such as education choices, political freedom, parenting rights, economic freedom like land ownership, and participation in decision-making.

Nevertheless, there is an urgent need to address the issues mentioned above in the academic domain. The present research aims to explain the reasons for gender-based discrimination and intersectionality, its multifaceted issues and spatial factors that cause chronic poverty and underdevelopment of women. The article also proposes policymakers after getting an insight into their problems and also highlights their fundamental needs to address the issues mentioned above.

The analysis section revealed the total literacy, women's literacy, educational achievements, monthly family income, monthly earnings of women, and different indicators of their social status to show the importance of positive discrimination. In addition, the results revealed the findings on intra-household intersectionality that the gender differential in the functioning of the service provider for optimum achievement is not more of a problem. Then, the author suggested strategies to tackle the crisis and suitable measures to promote sustainable economic growth through decent workforce participation.

5.4 Methods

For the current study, we emphasized the rural *Bengal* scenario regarding intra-household discrimination, women's roles, gender-based violence, and their societal position from selected four districts, namely Jhargram, Bankura, Purulia and Paschim Medinipur, from West Bengal. Furthermore, twelve Community Development Blocks (CDBs) were selected using a multi-stage sampling technique for in-depth inquiry and primary data collection. Both primary and secondary data sources have been used to achieve the research objectives. For secondary data related to education, we have gone through the Census of India abstract, 2011. A mixed methods approach is used in this research (Creswell and Clark, 2011). This method is suitable for identifying different dimensions of inequality and clarifying the gendered role to contextualize social science research. It will be appropriate to explain our research objectives.

A focus group discussion (FGD) was arranged for an in-depth understanding of the issues based on an open-ended survey schedule (ten specific questions in—one group from the CDBs, each containing ten women (Table 5.1). It took 90 to 110 minutes on average to complete each FGD. The research tool encompasses several

Women's Participation in Social Development

aspects of empowerment, like economic, social, political, and demographic factors, including age, educational attainment, income, job type, and marital status. After that, we discussed the concern with local government executives and explored the hidden roles of particular households, communities and available extension facilities. This work analyzed the existing government policies and suggested suitable measures to eliminate the ongoing gender discrimination in the focused area. There are two sections in the survey schedule: Section A contains economic aspects and Section B includes social aspects. To effectively describe the data, we applied IBM SPSS 23 software. Multiple Regression was chosen to identify the factors that were meaningful and statistically significant. In the dataset, both the continuous and categorical variables were considered. In the first segment of quantitative data analysis, continuous variables like monthly family income have been prioritized, which are regarded as dependent variable.

Moreover, monthly income by women, total arable land in acres, job types, and educational qualification are considered predictors. After that, specific questions and the percentage of responses to particular issues are considered (N=576) for examining the social status of women. The author have chosen some parameters such as equal expenses for children, marital status, types of domestic violence, husband's profession, number of dependents, bank accounts, educational qualification, political freedom, parenting rights, economic freedom, girl's freedom of education, intra-household partiality, frequency of harassment, and job types for FGD. The FGD of the seven groups are coded in this way-

Table 5.1: Specific Question for FGD

Sl. No.	Question
1	Do you spend your earnings on your own choice? What changes do you expect?
2	Do you have a bank account? How do you spend your earnings?
3	Can you apply voting rights of your own choice? Your opinion about the system.
4	Do you have the right to decide on family matters? Kindly share your views.
6	Do girls encounter discrimination when meeting basic needs in your family? Tell me about your experiences with it.
7	Have you been the victim of domestic violence in your home? Please elaborate.
8	What is your educational level? What changes have you noticed in this recent generation?
9	Does your family spend the same amount on the boy as the girl? Please tell me your perceptions about it.
10	Is your family supporting girls in pursuing higher education? How do you encourage your daughter to pursue professional studies?

Source: Prepared by the Author

5.5 Data analysis

It is one essential part of our work that logically justifies the study's hypotheses. In this section, the author analyzed the hidden truth behind the underdevelopment of the focused region. Moreover, they tried to get answers to the specific questions mentioned at the beginning of the article.

5.5.1 Quantitative analysis

Table 5.2: Some Key Social Parameters of the Research Area

Culture		Land Ownership		Economic Status		Caste	
Rural	94%	Marginal	60%	BPL	85%	SCs	30%
		Small Farmer	35%			STs	26%
Urban	6%	Large Landholder	5%	APL	15%	OBCs	33%
						GEN	11%

Source: Census of India Abstract, 2011 and District Statistical Handbook, 2012-2014

Table 5.2 provides a detailed explanation of the socioeconomic status of the study site. It highlights the existing sociocultural phenomenon of the study area. According to the 2011 Census, anyone aged seven years or above who could read and write was considered literate. The overall mean literacy rate in India was 74.04%. The state

Women's Participation in Social Development

average was 77.08%, where male and female literacy was 81.69% and 70.54%, respectively. The literacy rate of the four districts, Purulia and Paschim Medinipur, was 65.38% and 79.08%; the gap between male and female literacy is 27.56% and 15%, respectively. However, this trend is different across the state. The 2011 census reported a considerable gap in literacy rates between males and females in the study area, indicating that the scope of women's education is more diminutive. Therefore, the dropout rate is higher in the study area than in other parts of India. Resultantly, the literacy gap can be seen in the selected CDBs, and it examined recent trends of education in Table 5.3 from the 576 respondents and categorized them into four sections —

- i) Illiterate people: those who never went to school and cannot write their names,
- ii) Primary level education: those with elementary education up to class VIII,
- iii) Secondary level education: those who have appeared or qualified for the class X board examination,
- iv) Higher secondary and graduate: those who qualified XII graduated in any stream or college dropouts.

Table 5.3: Scenario of Women's Education

Respondents in %		Educational qualification in %				
CDBs	Percent	VIII	X	XII	Above XII	Literacy Gap Male and female (%)
Salboni	14.5	12	2.5	0	0	31.61
Baghmundi	13.5	14	0.5	0	0	30.45
Sarenga	14.5	11.5	2	1	0	30.2
Binpur-I	12.5	14	0.5	0	0	29.99
Garhbeta-II	15	10	2.5	0.5	0	16.73
Binpur-II	14.5	12	2	0.5	0	29.93
Jhalda-I	14.5	12.5	2	0	0	36.56
Total	100	86	12	2	0	

N= 576

Source: Compiled by the Author, from field survey and Census of India 2011

Multiple Regression examines the relationship between a single metric dependent variable and two or more metric independent variables. It is the most commonly utilized multivariable technique.

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_nX_n + e$$

Where,

- Y= the dependent variable of the regression
- a= intercept of the regression
- Xi=ith independent variable of the regression
- bi=ith regression coefficient corresponding to the Xi in the regression
- e = error term

Table 5.4: Multiple Regression

Variables	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	p-value
Is there washroom availability for women	1	72209	72209	0.07	0.03124
Women's contributions to economic development	2	1747353	873677	0.849	0.02286
Participation in economic activities	3	4548283	1516094	1.473	0.0221
Equal allocation for children	2	387118	193559	0.188	0.02286
Women's purchasing power	2	837268	418634	0.407	0.036611
Wood collection for household and selling	2	3800243	1900122	1.846	0.015895
Collection of forest resources	2	333076	166538	0.162	0.85069
Support girls in Higher education	2	8554903	4277452	4.155	0.01621 *
Girls get sufficient study time	2	4850306	2425153	2.356	0.09584
The reason behind more female commuters	1	1855311	1855311	1.802	0.018004
Special schemes for girl child	2	909010	454505	0.441	0.04334
Girls enrolled in professional courses	4	5528016	1382004	1.342	0.025302
Women's democratic right	2	10044956	5022478	4.878	0.00796 **
Girls assist with household activities	1	2806086	2806086	2.726	0.09935
Women get proper rest during pregnancy	2	24561886	12280943	11.928	8.57e-06 ***

*df = degrees of freedom, Sum Sq = sum of squared error, Mean sq = mean squared error

Multiple Regression in Table 5.4 examines the relationship between a single metric dependent variable (total female earnings in Rs.) and two or more metric independent

Women's Participation in Social Development

variables explained in this table. This table mentioned only statistically significant variables related to women's participation and economic development in the selected 576 households. This table shows a statistically significant relationship between total female earnings and contribution to economic development. Women's purchasing power, wood collection, girls' study time, and washroom availability are all crucial for improving women's lifestyles and overall economic upgrading. If the 'p-value' is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis at a 5% significance level. Otherwise, we fail to reject it. Therefore, the variables included in Table 5.4 are statistically significant. These support our claim that building a women's agency is essential for the sustainable economic development of the study area. The monthly average income of our respondents from all sources is Rs. 5500. A male earns Rs. 2800/ month. In contrast, a woman makes Rs. 2700. Only 10% of the respondents (N= 576) completed their higher secondary school (class XII). Their husband also finds himself in the same predicament. 30% of the respondents passed class VIII, while 45% qualified for their first board exam (class X).

According to the 2011 Census, anyone seven years old who can read and write is called literate. As a whole, India has a mean literacy rate of 74.04%. Male literacy is 81.69%, female literacy is 70.54%, with the state average being 76.26%. This is how education works in the studied area.

5.5.2 Qualitative analysis

In this chapter considered seven (7) FGDs from the seven separate CDBs to study the socioeconomic position of women in the study region. These are Baghmundi – BM 1, Garhbeta-II – GB 2, Jhalda-I – JD 3, Sarenga– SAR 4, Raipur– RA 5, Binpur-I–BI 6 and Jhargram– JH 7. After that, content analysis (Zakaria and Zakaria, 2016) was done based on the responses from our participants.

Table 5.5: Principal Findings from Focus Group Discussions

FGD. No.	FGD	Summary of Discussions
1	BM1	<p>A high disparity in basic needs among children, men, and women has been observed. There is a partiality of getting nutritious food among the sons and daughters, husbands and wives too—even parents do not consult with an expert except for the severe health issues of girls. Sometimes, women can spend money on their choices during festive seasons (Durga Puja and Kali Puja). Otherwise, they do not have the right to access their earnings.</p> <p><i>“...the daughters will get married after that, and sons will take care of us in our old age. Men travel far away from home for livelihood, so they need better quality food than us”.</i></p>
2	GB 2	<p>Women earn almost equal to men many times. They contribute all their earnings to their husbands or family. Even they never go to a bank for transactions. About nine women studied up to class VIII. They work as agricultural labour. To get a job as a daily wagger, they sometimes need to commute more than 3 hours after doing household work.</p> <p><i>“... we have land but there is no irrigation system. So, it needs to work in other fields, such as laborers and sharecroppers. However, daily wages are insufficient to cover the price of useful commodities. It will be difficult to sustain if we do not work, cannot support families”. Domestic violence is common in our daily lives”.</i></p>
3	JD 3	<p>A maximum of the participants highlighted the issue of authority in decision-making. They argued that 95 % of them work as daily wagers for almost eight months of the year though it is irregular. Also, they actively engage in family farming. Moreover, they hardly studied until class ten due to a lack of accessibility.</p> <p><i>“We try to wake up at 4.30 A.M. every day and then finish daily household work like taking care of kids and rearing cattle, prepare breakfast and lunch before leaving for work around 7 A.M. And usually return late after 3 P.M. It is the daily routine too. Our husband decides on financial matters. They are the supreme authority to make decisions...”.</i></p>
4	SAR 4	<p>Almost all women are harassed by their husbands or other male members. Eight participants opined on the same issue. The girls never get equal opportunities like their brothers in food, education, or other subjects, and it is the social norm. Furthermore, nobody does not think about the necessity of change.</p> <p><i>“...we give a vote that our husbands ask to. Because of a lack of ideas about the present political situation! The daughter will relocate after marriage, and then they will be the visitors here (parents' home). So, we will depend on our sons in old age and then cannot participate in productive work. Therefore, our son should be strong and healthy. After all, they take care of our family. It is our social norm too.”</i></p>
5	RA 5	<p>The women of this group are actively involved in family farming. 85% of them are school dropouts. Many of their husbands cultivate as sharecroppers or lease. In addition, they all work as agricultural laborers and livestock rearers (goats and cows). Most are involved in Self Help Groups (SHGs), which financially strengthen them. By this, our participants support their families and encourage children's education.</p> <p><i>“We do not have higher education to draw a handsome salary. Therefore, the women of this locality try to engage in economic activities that are available nearby. Our common goal is to support our family financially. If the women of this region do not regularly work in underpaid work, their survival will be tough. Moreover, the level of violence will be higher than present...”</i></p>
6	BI 6	<p>This area is a part of the Chhotanagpur plateau. Physiographic hindrances added to the plight of backwardness. All the participants have acquired some land unsuitable</p>

Women's Participation in Social Development

		<p>for farming. Therefore, maximum of the male population moved to industrial cities to secure a better scope of means. In this situation, women carry all kinds of responsibilities towards the family. They are all involved as daily wagers in informal sectors like <i>beedi</i> making, stone mining, agricultural labour, and others. Instead, women need to choose between accessing banking services or parenting kids.</p> <p><i>“One of the important reasons behind the year around job crisis is natural hindrances of the region. The dryness of the soil, low precipitation rates, and poor human resource bases cause less prosperity. Due to this, there is a trend of male migration either in nearby industrial towns or metropolitan cities. Therefore, women play a key role in maintaining their family and work as low paid jobs too...”</i></p>
	JH 7	<p>All our participants said their parents did not ask their opinions before marriage. 95% of them got married before they reached 18 years. They dropped their schools and started to support their father financially from girlhood, from ten years of age. Women constantly face intra-household disparity before and after marriage. Therefore, the social status did not improve at all. The participants claimed that about 85% of their mental and 47% are physically tortured by their in-laws. Though they dedicatedly work for the development of the family.</p> <p><i>“We are always subordinate. Before marriage, our father or brother controlled our activities, and our husbands ruled us after marriage. Since we were ten, I have been associated with work to contribute to our father. Due to this, women in this area did not complete their school education. Though our brothers push to continue to study, many drop school after class IX or X. The married women humiliate their in-laws daily for dowry or any other demands...”</i></p>

Source: Field Survey 2022.

Thematic analysis was done based on the FGD followed by the open-ended survey schedule (Table 5.5). Participants' challenges have been recorded, including their perceptions of social disparities and demands. After that, the most significant themes from seven FGDs have been highlighted.

❖ Focused Group Discussions (FGD)

• Coding

1. "...the daughters will get married after that, and the sons will care for us in our old age. Furthermore, they will travel far from home for their livelihood, so they need quality food more than we do. It is our social norm too." (FGD 4)
2. "We try to wake up at 4.30 A.M. every day and then finish daily household work like taking care of kids and rearing cattle, prepare breakfast and lunch before leaving for work around 7 A.M. And usually return late after 3 P.M. It is our daily routine too." (FGD 15)

3. "... we have land but there is no irrigation potential. The dryness of the soil, low precipitation rates, and inadequate human resource bases lead to a decrease in prosperity." (FGD 9)
4. So, they must work in other fields as labourers. Though the daily wage is insufficient to cope with the price of commodities." (FGD 10)
5. "Our common goal is to support our family financially. If the women in this region do not regularly engage in low-paying work, their survival will be challenging.

Moreover, the level of violence will be higher than present...". (FGD 19)

6. "We do not have the education to earn a handsome salary. Maximum of us studied up to class VIII. Therefore, the women of this locality try to engage in available economic activities nearby." (FGD 12)
7. Our husbands decide on financial matters. They are the supreme authority to make decisions...". (FGD 15)
8. "...we give a vote whom our husbands ask to. Because of lack of idea about the present political situation." (FGD 17)

❖ **Findings**

- i) **Active involvement in economic activities:** The women assist their husbands in family farming. They are involved in other sources like handicrafts and cattle rearing.
- ii) **No such women's agency:** Though the women work hard, they earn and contribute the whole amount to the family. However, they cannot enjoy the basic amenities equally as male members.
- iii) **Need to commute as agricultural laborers:** Family farming is seasonal. Therefore, they are forced to commute 30-70 km to get hired.
- iv) **Poor educational attainment standards:** The respondents' academic standards are low. Since the 2011s, the level of education has changed a bit because of new development projects and programmes.

Case studies

[CS 1] Mrs. Pratima Datta (name changed), 45 years of age. She said:

“I work as an Angawadi assistant in our neighboring village. Therefore, I have a permanent income that I contribute to my family. In addition to this, I support my husband on our family farmland regularly. Except for this, I have two kids; my responsibility is to care for our family as well as a mother, wife, and daughter-in-law. Instead of this innumerable contribution towards the family, my husband and in-laws do not acknowledge my efforts.”

Mrs. Datta's narration clearly shows that she contributes enough in every possible way. However, her efforts are not recognized by her family.

[CS 2] Mrs. Rupali Das (name changed), 37 years of age. She said:

“I assist my husband in his small business. We belong to the potter community. And, it is our hereditary family business. During the sowing and harvesting period, I support my husband in cultivation. As a woman, I also have regular activities and common responsibilities towards my family. However, I have not received any other recognition for these contributions. It is common, in many times my in-laws harassed me on a mental level.”

Mrs. Rupali helps her husband in their family business; they belong to an artisan community (potter). She also supports her husband in farming. Except for this, she plays the familiar role of a woman in rearing and caring activities. However, Mrs. Das is still facing violence on domestic grounds.

[CS 3] Mrs. Durga Murmu (name changed), 28 years of age. She said:

“I got married at 15 years old. At that time, I was in class VIII. Moreover, I am a mother of three. The youngest one is seven years old. My husband and I usually work as agricultural laborers, earning Rs.

350, which we spend on family. In addition to this, I collect forest resources like leaves and wood. And, I sell these for an average monthly income Rs. 2500. Also, we rear some cattle, and from it, we also earn money. Instead, I cannot decide for my family's development.”

From Mrs. Durga's narration, it can be said that she belongs to a marginal household. The primary source of income is a daily wager's job. Other economic activities include collecting forest products and rearing cattle. The total earnings she spends on family and gives to her husband. However, she has no democratic right at an intra-household level.

[CS 4] Mrs. Sima Roy (name changed) is 23. She said:

“I run a small cosmetic shop at our local market where I can earn an average of Rs. 5000/month. Every day after finishing household work, I come to the shop in the evening (4 p.m to 9 p.m). After completing 18 years, I married and was in BA part I. As a student, I was good. However, my parents compelled me to get married. They do not want to spend money on their daughter's education. My husband works as an electrician. After one year of marriage, I became a mother. My in-laws did not support me to continue my studies. So, with little savings, I opened this shop.”

From Mrs. Roy's narration, it can be said that she was forced to get married by her parents. There is intense gender discrimination at the intra-household level and in their society. However, she became self-dependent at her choice.

[CS 5] Mrs. Fulmani Baskey (name changed), 42 years of age. She said:

“We come from the Santal community of West Bengal. I got married when I was in primary school. Our family has eleven members, including my three sons and their family. My husband has some farmland. Moreover, it is not sufficient to carry out our livelihood. Due to this, we work as agricultural laborers on other's land on a daily wage

Women's Participation in Social Development

basis. In addition to this, we are actively involved in cottage industries. My husband is the guardian of our family. We all earn and give it to him. He spends the money as per family demands.”

It is clear from Mrs. Baskey's statement that gender-based discrimination is prevalent in every community in our study area. Though men and women are equal and participate equally in economic activities, they do not have the right to maintain family expense budgets or financial matters.



Image 5.1 shows the women's contribution to financial matters

5.6 Results

From the FGD, it can be said that rural women in the study area participate in every work, such as the 100 Day Work Programme under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM, 2004) and Self-Help Group (SHGs) activities. Feministic agriculture is prevalent in all the CDBs. The women actively participate in family farming. Table 5.2 illustrates socioeconomic aspects based on the primary data. The scenario of obtaining essential provisions at the household level is displayed here. Image 5.1 shows the different roles played by the women in our studied area. In this way, they economically contribute to their families—women's contribution to

financial matters. All the respondents face domestic violence in their homes, 66% of women have intra-household partiality, 77% reported that their daughters are not free of education, and 79% acknowledged that they do not spend an equal amount for their children's upbringing. It was found that a total of 38.5% of the respondents claimed the everydayness of torture, and 33% said it sometimes repeats itself. All these dimensions show the critical situation of rural women. After analyzing the information, it can be argued that social norms and beliefs are a considerable fact in the existing problem of women on the site.

After interacting with the respondents, several significant demands regarding proper education, livelihood, and free law consultation services were revealed. Hence, intersectionality is evident in rural social environments, which indicates the need for full gender-related development. The government should include professional education programs since people use traditional earning strategies. The current study addressed how gender discrimination and disproportionate access to primary education influence the social status of women within their families, communities, and society. An inherent discrepancy within the families is very high in all the selected CDBs in the study area. Lack of education is a significant predictor of rural poverty. Moreover, this poor level of educational achievement leads to an endless vicious circle of poverty in individual households. The key causes behind the slow rate of rural economic growth.

5.6.1 Integration of qualitative and quantitative information

The findings from Tables 5.3 and 5.6 highlight that the gender differential in the functioning of the service provider for optimum achievement is no longer a problem. This gender gap manifests widespread violence and discrimination against women in the four thrust areas. The respondents do not have the right to decide for their or their children's lives. They have followed the customs imposed by the male members of their family, community, and patriarchal society. Women's ability or decision-making capacity to join the workforce results from a complex interaction of many crucial socioeconomic aspects such as education, age of marriage, marital status, gross family income, and caste. The prevalent sociocultural norms adversely impact employment in the informal economy. It is depicted that in the focused area, women continue

Women's Participation in Social Development

struggling to get equal rights in nutrition, property, livelihood, education, and others. The people should provide suitable opportunities to enjoy their desired lives by constituting enough capabilities of resources and agencies. This research demonstrates the four interrelated stages of empowerment. It focuses on reducing the inequalities in people's capacities rather than actual choices. The four stages are —

- i) Sufficient scope of employment for all,
- ii) Scope to get free education to all,
- iii) Free and available health services to all and,
- iv) Freedom for involvement in politics.

The application of predominant masculine authoritarianism is conspicuous in the selected study area. It has widened the gap in changing social and gender relations. It works to sanction and establish specific gender relations and existence in the workplace. Female-headed homes were more impaired regarding education, health, and asset ownership. Low education and economic deprivation are the two most crucial reasons for feminizing multidimensional poverty. Rural females are compelled to prefer household activities due to prevailing norms, beliefs, customs, and social culture (Biswal *et al.*, 2020). Multidimensional poverty has been witnessed due to a lack of interconnectedness of available resources and livelihoods or political disturbances. A statistical report published in the Economic Survey of India 2019 highlighted a challenging issue of Indian economic well-being. Almost 60% of adult citizens are directly involved in unpaid work and are called 'homemakers. Despite contributing immensely to nation-building, this vast population has remained neglected for a long time. Informal labour is essential in bridging the distinction between paid and unpaid services to advance the agenda for decent work. Most people earned less and were compelled to enter into informal work due to a lack of alternative sources in the formal economy and other means of sustenance.

5.6.2 Importance of education

The key advantages of education are information transmission, skill growth, socialization, and the enlightenment of young minds. Under the economic component,

the unique study parameters include the job status, unemployment, and underemployment of family heads and other members (Biswal *et al.*, 2020). The government of West Bengal has implemented several special schemes to increase the enrolment of girls in schools and stop child marriage. Marriage of girls under 18 is strictly prohibited in West Bengal and is a punishable offense. They aim to promote girls' education and gender-related development to support the economically weaker sections of society. This creates financial independence and self-dependency among women. The two most effective schemes for the welfare and empowerment of women are Rupashree Prakalpa (RP) and Kanyashree Prakalpa (KP). These are as follows–

- i) A grant of Rs. 25,000 is provided for girls if they marry after 18 years under the RP scheme enacted on 1st April 2018 in West Bengal.
- ii) The KP scheme was launched by the Department of Women Development and Social Welfare (DWEDSW) of the Government of West Bengal in 2013. It provides an annual scholarship of Rs. 1000 from classes VIII- XI and a one-time grant of Rs. 25,000 after the completion of 18 years.

However, the outcomes of both plans must meet expectations. The two initiatives have yet to accomplish their goals. It is found that many girls receive grants and marry without completing their college education. It illustrates that a maximum of 72% of the participants (N = 576) said their daughters got married just after crossing 18 years of age. Furthermore, 95% of our participants said they were married below 18. After that, they hardly get an opportunity to study further. About 88% of women acknowledged spending their daughters' education grants at marriage. It reflects the undesirable implementation of the schemes and the current scenario of rural West Bengal.

5.7 Discussion

Therefore, expanding access to lifelong learning in a free, open, and regular manner through a system is essential for promoting it to the rurally disadvantaged community to achieve inclusive, equal, and standard quality education for all people from the five case studies (CS 1 to CS 5). Because all Indian citizens have a right to an education. Every child is entitled to a free, compulsory education in school up until

Women's Participation in Social Development

the age of 14 under Article 21-A of the Indian Constitution. There is no longer any free or required education after this age in India. The researcher recommended free skill based professional education in the underdeveloped areas of India, at least up to the graduate level. The most crucial thing is to make her population civilized and construct a developed nation since education is the only tool to make people aware and self-reliant. It can improve residents' well-being while providing additional benefits in several socioeconomic areas. Because more women are enrolling in higher education in various fields and because there is more significant equity across all finance-related industries. Therefore, education must be accessible to everyone throughout their lives, regardless of gender norms.

Because of this, the biased society still has a significant danger of poverty, and some partiality makes women less able to handle hazards. Our study area comprises underprivileged ladies with no savings in their bank accounts. Nevertheless, all have a bank account for the MGNREGA's 100 days of labour. Nonetheless, they bought a family with their entire savings. They work hard, yet they have little regard for society or family. The administration runs unique initiatives to support education and raise literacy rates among rural marginal populations. However, among the members of the selected communities in our study region, there has been no improvement in women's understanding of higher education. Many of them dropped out of school before completing their degrees. However, state government scholarships encourage rural poor and marginalized women to pursue their education. The unpleasant patriarchy in our research area continues to demotivate women. Since no government jobs are available, many respondents wanted to know what would happen to a graduate. So, either complete your schooling through class ten and train the lads in family agricultural mechanics, or leave your state and work in the unorganized sector somewhere. In addition, they marry the females after they turn 18 years old. Because in West Bengal today, getting married before turning eighteen is a crime. In addition, if a girl marries after turning 18, she may be eligible to get Rs 25000 from Rupashree Prakalpa from the West Bengal government. Women's rights have gained prominence as being essential to accomplishing the SDGs. With the aid of numerous policies and programs, they began to move against the grain of marginal society to eradicate the sickness known

as poverty. To assist financially disadvantaged women, setting up loans and programs for practical skill-based employment is helpful. Empowering women's agency encourages them to speak out against injustices.

5.7.1 Financial independence and self-dependency

The government's regulatory laws and policies prohibit discrepancies, and its implementation process should be revised. The administration needs to be devoted to effectively implementing quotas. Only in some matters where reservation is mentioned in official government circulars can one see the allocation of women's involvement. Other than that, it cannot stand out.

The main focus of women's rights and gender equality is their economic emancipation.

- i) It encompassed the capacity to participate in the labor markets—equal control over their families' resources to develop women's agency.
- ii) To achieve the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and meet the goals by empowering women, which implies reducing the gender gap.
- iii) More people will be empowered by attaining an educational level, which promotes inclusive economic growth.

The elimination of sex-selective intersectionality leads to the eradication of marginality. Because of gender inequity, women lose their human dignity and opportunities for well-being. They work daily to earn money and support their family, though it is unsure whether she genuinely owns her land. Globally, just 20% of landowners are women. The Indian Constitution states that it is her legal right to do so if she wants to inherit her family's property in the future. However, there are various obstacles to getting their fair portion, such as in-laws or parental residences. Social norms favor male relatives of every woman (SDGs) since the social law denies them an equal part or is pro-men.

5.8 Recommendations

Gender budgeting is a policy intervention that fills gaps by allocating resources to achieve gender equality through investing in social welfare programs and

Women's Participation in Social Development

continuously monitoring how budgetary policies affect gender differences in geographically remote places. The preliminary reviews show considerable success. Meanwhile, the current research shows different aspects of mainstreaming women; the mobilization of resources improves the flow of essential services to the grassroots level. The government must strictly incorporate gendered and geographical perspectives in policy implementation to combat regional disparities in its national development strategies.

i) Ensure financial support

It is necessary to ensure financial support and provide other essential services for the betterment of disadvantaged groups in the study area through several civil society organizations, trustees, and non-governmental organizations. Another suggestion is to arrange adequate micro-credit for resilience for small families or partnership businesses from less poor communities.

ii) Gender mainstreaming

It is a provision for particular assistance to facilitate research into gender considerations that will improve the capacity development of girls and women. It is required in the local governance framework to ensure women's active involvement in development initiatives. Decision-making by female producers might boost their output in agriculture and small businesses through training, skill development programs, and equitable land and tenure promotion.

iii) Gender-sensitive budgets

Gender-sensitive budgets incorporate women's interests and support their holistic development by decentralizing the authority and power structure. It will help holistically assess the economic viability of equality-related policy promises. NGOs, civil society international organizations, donors, and trustees must come forward to promote technical education and open learning and arrange free seminars to provide equal opportunities, irrespective of gender, to spread awareness. Moreover, the active involvement of more women leaders is necessary for every industry and public and

private organization, especially in The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Environment and Science, Women, and Child Welfare.

The author considered the women members from individual households and recorded their views only. The author did not incorporate men in the interview. The women and their families' approximate monthly income were recorded during the interview because they do not have a fixed monthly payment and do not maintain proper balance sheets or accounts.

5.9 Conclusion

From the overall discussion, it can be inferred that there is significant intersectionality in the study site and that it restricts the scope of the holistic development of women. The preceding explanation shows that the gendered character of labour and its framing in politico-economic beliefs work, favoring specific tasks over existing inequalities. The findings demonstrated that gender discrimination remains deeply entrenched, with a legacy of power that determines women's positions in rural society. Such a viewpoint might prompt important queries concerning the consequences of organizing, constructing, and advancing to uplift the potentiality for developing equitable, viable, and sustainable habitats irrespective of gender. The current research provides valuable insights regarding the multiple dimensions of women's empowerment, such as equal opportunity at the household level, women's agency, economic freedom, political freedom, equal earning opportunities, and equal wages. This work sheds light on the gendered nature of infrastructure, provides insights into the social environment, and explores the potential for creating appropriate infrastructure. In our study area, women face widespread prejudice in the household, community, and society. They continue to be denied a quality education, food, and jobs. The factors for decoding the prevailing structure of patriarchy are education and employment, which eventually lead to women's emancipation in the holistic development processes. Thus, women need the greatest support to utilize their capability in major developmental work at the community and household levels through livelihood zoning at local avenues. Overall, this work suggested gendered rationalities of mainstream infrastructure, societal norms, and values after documenting all symbolic dimensions from the research area. Therefore, it is crucial

Women's Participation in Social Development

to properly implement all special schemes, plans, and programs at every administrative, social, and regional forum to ensure equal treatment for women, promote rural entrepreneurship, and integrate free professional education in these areas.