

# Women Empowerment for Sustaining Development



*Madurai Symposium 2019*

*Fostering Development Knowledge*

September 18-22, 2019

Madurai Welcomes all Development Stakeholders and those interested in Development to a “Unique” Knowledge Mart in Development from September 18 to 22, 2019 at Thamukkam grounds. This is the Ninth Biennial Madurai Symposium, where many stakeholders with diversity in development: Community Organisations, Civil societies / NGOs, Government, Banks, Insurance Companies, CSR Foundations, Donors, Philanthropists and Academia gather to share and learn from each other's experience and practices to serve the underprivileged community. The previous edition of 2017 saw participation of 10,000 stakeholders and deliberated on the approaches and mechanisms for building resilience among the vulnerable and risk prone poor.

Inspired by the universal agenda of SDGs, the Madurai Symposium 2019 would focus on the theme: “WOMEN EMPOWERMENT” as the crucial element of sustaining development processes which make Women have Self-Esteem, Pride, Dignity from the holistic development perspective.

### Women Empowerment

“Women Empowerment is a process whereby women become and are able to organise themselves to enhance their own self-reliance, to assert their independent rights to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination”.

In India, there are many constraints in empowering women at all levels. To cite a few (despite Women constituting 45% in country's population) the male dominance and skewed sex ratio in many states of India,

gender disabilities and discriminations. Empowerment of women educationally, socially, economically, politically and legally is nothing but a continuous and systematic process to get a required transformation of society at all levels. Women's equal participation and making decisions in important area of development in the society make the development genuine and meaningful. Economic transformation, grooming women as leaders in political, business, science and important fields in the society is absolute necessity.

This framework has evolved overtime with Beijing +5 in 2000 setting the global agenda for gender focus in development with Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) prioritizing as important goal and SDGs enlarging the canvass of empowerment with multiple goals and targets.



## Women Empowerment and its relevance for Advancing Development

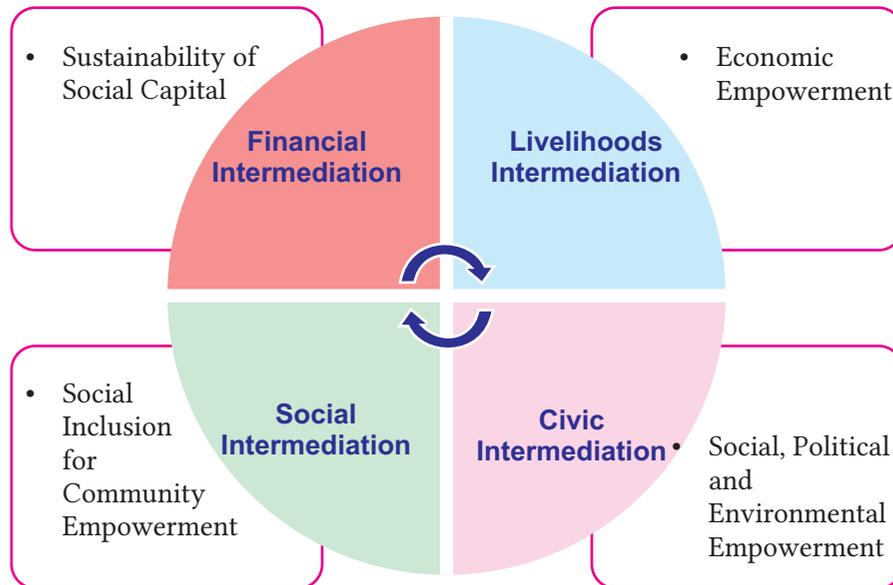
Development institutions keen on holistic empowerment of women, by and large, adopt above sustainable framework towards empowerment of women cutting across all the development themes and programmes which in turn create conducive atmosphere for women to chart their own development and well-being. Madurai Symposium 2019 would provide a platform broadly on the following thematic areas.

- Women and Social Capital, Leadership and Governance
- Women and Economic development and financial well-being

- Women and Education including digital technology, Environment and Health
- Emancipation – Rights, Taking control of destiny, violence, abolishing gender stereotypes
- Women empowerment - A Pathway to SDGs
- Remembering and reinforcing the lofty thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi and Poet Bharathiar on Women empowerment for societal advancement

These themes have been so closely inter-related in terms of equal rights, control and use over the resources, the requisites of building capacity and processes among these interconnected themes presents interesting challenges and opportunities.

### Framework of Sustainable Development with Empowerment Approach



## Women and Social Capital, Leadership and Governance

Historically and culturally, women have been subjugated and treated as “Weaker Sex with Male dominance widely prevalent in the society”. This situation stems from being un-organized and inability to address their marginalization individually. There are growing evidences across the globe, that when women, more particularly from the poor segment have been organized, they have been able to meet the legacy challenges and charter their own way with confidence.

Self-Help Group movement of poor women, for instance, is the best example of how Social Capital has played vital role in women empowerment in multi-dimensional ways in different contexts. Even more noteworthy, from empowerment perspective is the assumption of leadership role and the attendant appreciation and practice of good governance at the grassroots with the potential to transform the quality of governance upstream. The experiences of the stakeholders on the theme when shared in Madurai Symposium would

enhance our understanding of many effective processes in women empowerment.

## Women and Economic development and financial well-being

The strong social capital of women lends itself for enlarging the process for empowerment. The foremost being finance and economic development. Enabling access to financial services, like SHGs, has enhanced the capabilities of women to identify and pursue the opportunities for their economic growth, Livelihood opportunities get broadened in the context of social capital providing them scale and strength, helping to seek new prospects including acquiring new skills. Savings first approach of SHGs transformed and continued to transform the financial landscape of poor households and smoothening access to credit and insurance from the formal financial system. Best practices and success stories in economic and financial empowerment of women will be showcased in the Symposium.



## Women and Education including digital technology, Environment and Health

Education is fundamental to multi-dimensional empowerment process. Access to good, quality education is an equal right for both men and women in the society. There are many positive moves made by the government to encourage women to get educated. Yet, the dropouts among women as compared to men remain high because of the assigned role by the society to women as merely home-makers in doing household chores. Educating women goes beyond household and bring larger societal impact whereby women support and encourages neglected women to pursue education. The process of education brings new life skills for gainful employment, entrepreneurship etc. Information Technology has brought in successful social revolution by producing umpteen women as Programmers, Software Developers and many more. Technology in the hands of women in the bottom of the pyramid would enable them to access information/knowledge and thereby make them to decide about the choices to



charter their own growth and development.

Women and Children in the society are highly susceptible to ill-health due to malnutrition, poor food intake and vulnerable to epidemics. Neglecting the health by the self and family is widespread phenomenon among households which impoverishing further and capacity to lead normal life. Besides, the women are highly insecure in the absence of health cover by way of access to insurance.

Women bore the brunt of environmental degradation resulting from poor sanitation, lack of access to safe drinking water, pollution etc. Women are by and large, neglected and not provided opportunities to have a healthy living environment, as also, protection of larger ecology. Self-Help Group women have demonstrated that women could play an important role in promoting clean environment for better living. The symposium would give great attention to the achievements and challenges in enabling women to have access to education, health and safe and clean environment for better quality of life.

## Emancipation – Entitlements, Rights, Taking control of destiny, violence, abolishing gender stereotypes

Emancipation is the process of moving towards higher order empowerment in equality with men folk. This involves getting what is due to them as a measure of equity vis-a-vis men, recognising, protecting and fulfilling their rights such as equal participation in legislative governance, policy making. More importantly, emancipation help women to deal with violence effectively and ensure their safety. The symposium would encourage debates on the process of

different facets of emancipation which put women on equal pedestal with men.

### **Women empowerment - A Pathway to SDGs**

From development perspective, SDGs are a global recognition of the imperatives of women empowerment, gender equality and justice. There are ample evidences globally on the contributions already made and the potential of women to augment and hasten the process of development towards desired goals and objectives. Sustainable Development Goals like No Poverty, Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Clean Water and Sanitation, Decent Work and Economic Growth will get greater fillip towards reaching the various targets set with women empowerment and participation. Madurai Symposium will marshal the experiences for wider sharing.

### **Remembering and Reinforcing the lofty thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi and Poet Bharathiar on Women empowerment for societal advancement**

Any debate/discussion on women empowerment will not be complete without mention of lofty thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi and Bharathiar on empowering women for larger social advancement. They were ahead of the time in emphasising the equal rights in all spheres for women with those of men. In fact, they became 'gospels' and advocated relentlessly in their speeches and writings. Madurai symposium will refresh and distill fresh dimensions of women empowerment from their lofty thoughts for the present cultural context.

### **Conferences, Seminars and Workshops**

Highlighted in the above sections are few areas of coming out with essential process steps in empowering women in order to sustain the development and



attaining some of the sustainable development goals across different contexts and development arena. There exists an imperative need to understand the challenges and gaps in women empowerment, opportunities for evolving policy amendments for by different social strata in different contexts in order to empower women and include them in equal social transformation processes, capacity building of bottom of the pyramid to make them part of equal and just society in bringing true freedom.

In the Madurai Symposium 2019, development stakeholders would get ample opportunities for deliberating on the issues of gender equality and equity in many conferences, seminars and workshops. Needless to say, these knowledge events would provide a stage to facilitate cross learning through best practices in the process of women empowerment.

### **People Conventions**

As the women empowerment challenges are multi-fold and region as well as context specific, the organizers of Symposium intend to involve the major stakeholders in sharing successful and best practices as well as

processes by different social groups viz. community of women Self-Help groups, small and marginal farmers representing different natural eco-systems, fisher folks, landless etc. The conventions aim to elicit the experiences of these community stakeholders through dialogues, round-table and focus group discussions which ultimately result in greater learning that has to be taken out of those experiences for advancing women empowerment.

### Events for Public

**Cultural evenings:** Reviving and preserving traditional folk and arts is need of the hour which is still relevant. The Symposium would create an opportunity for the folk and traditional artists to perform variety of cultural programmes related to gender issues and women empowerment to exhibit their talents. This would facilitate the development stakeholders to find a way for promoting and preserving the traditional folks and arts which are the symbols of ancient Indian culture.



**Exhibition:** There is need for greater awareness of the public about the rights and equal opportunities so that Women empowerment processes and pathways in development sectors will be finding place by way of women entrepreneurs displaying and exhibiting their business products, paintings and other skills. The Symposium 2019 would attract the public from the city to get exposed to the talents and creativity of the poor people/communities through exhibition of crafts and wares made by them.

**Development Films:** Screening development films for the development stakeholders including the public is important part of the Symposium. Exciting experiences of different development interventions would be displayed through this event to sensitize the stakeholders, communities and common public on various development initiatives and interventions. The best films would be recognized and suitably awarded.

**Date:** September 18-22, 2019

**Venue:** Tamukkam Grounds, Madurai

### Nominations for Events

The Facilitation Committee of the Madurai Symposium 2019 invites NGOs, academic and research institutions, Government Organizations, industries, banks, donor organizations, entrepreneurs, producer companies and cooperatives to host conventions, seminars, workshops and conferences on topics relevant to the theme of the Symposium. The Committee would facilitate logistics and other needed support for the events organized by the host organizations.

## Madurai Symposium so far

- 2003 - Advancing Development
- 2005 - Advancing Development
- 2007 - Advancing Development towards Building Alliances
- 2009 - Advancing Development towards Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
- 2011 - Advancing Development towards Sustainable Livelihoods
- 2013 - Governance for Advancing Development
- 2015 - Localizing Sustainable Development Goals
- 2017 - Building Resilience for Sustaining Development



**Facilitation Committee of  
Madurai Symposium 2019**

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**DHAN Foundation**

1A, Vaidyanathapuram East, Kennet Cross Road

Madurai 625 016, Tamil Nadu, INDIA

Tel: +91 452 2302500, Fax: 2602247

Email: [maduraisymposium@ghan.org](mailto:maduraisymposium@ghan.org)

Website: <http://maduraisymposium.net/>

<http://www.dhan.org>