

Welfare through empowerment: An approach bearing fruits



ANURADHA GURU &
DEEKSHA SUPYAAL BISHT

BEHIND THE GOAL of sustaining economic growth lies the goal of improving the livelihoods of citizens. Development implies “change” – a process of economic and social transformation. The State of the Economy and other sectoral chapters of the Economic Survey 2023-24 talk about the economic transformations underway in the country. This high and sustained economic growth of the country is being accompanied by social and institutional progress, underpinned by transformational and effective implementa-

tion of government programmes. This is the hallmark of the transformed approach to welfare and social change, which is the overarching theme of Chapter 7 – Social Sector: Benefits that Empower, in the Economic Survey of 2023-24.

The delivery of welfare to the public has undergone a profound change in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, and efficacy. The approach is effective as it is reaching the intended beneficiaries; it is efficient as it is being delivered with minimal leakages and it is efficacious as various welfare schemes are leading to an overall better quality of life for citizens. The chapter captures the ways and means through which the economic progress of the country is being translated into development; how remote parts of the country are reaping the fruits of welfare push by the government and how communities are coming together to make a difference in the lives of the underprivileged. Be it health, education, sanitation, digital empowerment, or quality of life in rural areas, each aspect of the social infrastructure ecosystem has made strides through effective planning and delivery of various welfare schemes.

Women-led development is no longer a mere slogan, with real empowerment now visible with

the passage of the Women’s Reservation Bill and many strategic interventions to ensure the health, nutrition, education, safety, and sustainable livelihoods of the womenfolk in the country. The female labour force participation has also seen an uptick. However, there is considerable room for further improvement. An opportunity that can be tapped using local agro-processing enterprises with proper administrative and policy support. Given that women bear the predominant burden of unpaid care work at home, the development of an affordable, reliable, and quality creche and elderly care infrastructure is the Achilles heel for female participation in paid work, which should be determined by comparative advantage and choice rather than dictated by gender.

In the journey towards women-led development, parity in asset ownership is another milestone ahead of us. Although the social acceptance of women breaking into traditionally male domains such as flying a fighter plane, running a unicorn company, or leading a district/department has been rising with such news being celebrated, much scope remains in normalising female property rights. Female ownership of land/assets is crucial for their financial security

and utilisation of economic opportunities and has also been associated with decreased spousal violence. For development to be led by women, it will also have to be ‘owned’ by them.

According to development economists, the vision of true economic development rests on the edifice of expansion of entitlements and capabilities. These should ensure life sustenance, self-esteem, and freedom of choice for one and all. Besides access to basic needs, empowerment requires the opportunity and capability to earn one’s livelihood in a dignified manner. Given the utmost importance of this aspect, this year’s Survey has a separate chapter discussing the employment situation and skilling ecosystem, which is intricately linked to employment. Indian labour market indicators have been improving in the past six years, and net payroll under EPFO has doubled in the past five years. The factory employment data exhibits a continued rise in employment and upscaling of factories. Using a simple model and a few assumptions, it is estimated that the Indian economy would need to generate an average of around 7.85 million jobs per year by 2030. The focus would need to be on both quantity and quality.

We are in the midst of the 4th Industrial Revolution (IR) characterised by seamless ways in which technology is becoming embedded in our lives and the broader economy. As with the earlier three IRs, this is bound to cause technological disruption and significant job displacement. Being ready to take on the challenges that this brings along for the job markets is the need of the hour. Climate change, green energy transition and the rise of the gig economy are another set of trials that the employment scenario will be facing. The Survey dwells deeper into these aspects, presenting the available literature on the impact of these underlying transformations on the job markets.

Like Rome was not built in a day, the building of a Viksit Bharat@2047 is also a brick-by-brick, milestone-by-milestone endeavour, calling for the contribution of the government, citizens, civil society, and private sector alike. The Economic Survey chapters on Social Sector and Employment present a descriptive background and analytical way forward for this teamwork to take roots and flourish.

The authors are officers of the Indian Economic Service

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

MAGZTER

MAGZTER

Clipped from - [Financial Express Mumbai](#) - July 23, 2024

Read it digitally on the Magzter app