

CHAPTER VI

GENDER

Gender

Status of Women

Status of women is a significant indicator of development. The socio cultural impositions and conditioning and social expectations from men and women primarily determine the role and contributions of women to the society. The policies of the State favour the participation of women in public life and contribute to the society. But, often such policies go in contradiction to social norms, where the State often remains silent taking the sensitivity of such issues and social instability. However, since 1980s, gender as a concept got recognized and was well discussed. It is since 1995, that the UNDP HDR report became inclusive, introducing gender as a component and measured the status of women through Gender Related Development Index. Now it has been measured with Gender Inequality Index (GII). It is a negative variable with an inverse relationship with gender equality. Higher the GII, lower the equality in achievement between men and women. However gender as the category of analysis has emerged only recently. Hence, the data available with development indicators are not gender disaggregated. The following section presents the gender analysis of the human development indices in Pudukkottai district.

The status of women in Pudukkottai has been analysed taking the percentage to total population and their achievements in terms of sex ratio, female literacy rate, school enrolment (2013-14), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) (2013-14), percentage of women workers in agricultural sector and percentage of women in non-agricultural sector. Pudukkottai is better in terms of share of female population (50.37 per cent) compared to the State (49.91 per cent) and National (48.53 per cent) levels. It has to be analysed as to whether it is the same with respect to other variables. The female literacy rate is considerably higher than the national level, but it is lower than the State level.

The School enrolment showed that it has covered two third of the eligible student population as per the 2013-14 data. It still needs to go a long way to attain universal coverage.

Pudukkottai being the backward district has more women being absorbed in the agricultural sector. The percentage of women workers in agriculture in Pudukkottai has been higher than both the State and National levels. Due to non- availability of regular employment, men migrate either temporarily or permanently to other districts or states or countries, which render relatively more employment opportunity in agriculture for women.

Table 6.1 Comparative Status of Women

Sl.No		District
1	Female Population	8,15,157
2	Percentage in Total population	50.37
3	Sex-ratio	1,015
4	Female Literacy Rate	69.00
5	School enrollment (Primary)*	103.46
6	MMR*	82.00
7	% of women worker in Agriculture Sector	34.23
8	% of women in Non-Agri. Sector	9.23
Source: Census 2011, *Education Department, Tamil Nadu		

According to the Table 6.1, the female population of the district was 8,15,157, which is 50.37 per cent of the total population. As the percentage of female population is more than the 50, the sex ratio is tilted towards female at 1,015, which is a good trend. The female literacy rate was 69 per cent and was lower than the male literacy rate in the district as well as the female literacy rate at the State level as per the Census 2011. The district female school enrolment at the primary level stood at 103.46 in 2013-14, which was better than the district male and State female rates of 102.22 and 102.42 respectively. The MMR of the district was 82 in the year 2013-14, which is far behind the State rate of 68. The percentage of women in the non-agricultural sector was four times lower than the agricultural sector in Pudukkottai district as per the Census 2011. The percentage of women in non-agricultural sector has been lower than both the State and National levels.

It indicates that only less than 10 per cent of the women were able to assume non-farm employment, which is supported by the fact that relatively more women are in farm employment. So, except the share in population and literacy rate and employment in agriculture, the participation of women needs to be improved to reduce the gender gap. Only when women are employed in paid jobs, it will prepare them to participate in decision making position. Any scheme for their empowerment needs to concentrate on increasing the economic participation of women and recognition of such employment.

Access and Control over Resources

Women's equal access and control over economic and financial resources is critical for the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women. It paves the way for equitable and sustainable economic growth and development. Gender equality in the distribution of economic and financial resources has positive multiplier effects for a range of key development goals, including poverty reduction and the welfare of the children. Micro-level efficiency results through increased household productivity and macro-efficiency results through positive synergies between indicators of gender equality and economic growth which have been recorded. Development rationale for enhancing women's access to economic and financial resources includewomen's role as "safety net of last resort" in economic downturns. But, women's access to major economic and financial resources such as land and capital, and other productive resources such as extension services, inputs including fertilizers and seeds remain very much limited, although policies and schemes aiming at enabling women in the mainstream of economic affairs have been implemented by the Government of India in general and the Government of Tamil Nadu in particular. One such policy has been the development of the Self Help Group (SHG) movement. The SHG movement has been welcomed by all over the world including India. The performance of the SHGs in Pudukkottai district has been discussed in the box.

Box 6.1 Self Help Groups

Self Help Groups (SHGs) among women have been proving a significant strategy to bring the women to the public space on the one hand and also make them self-reliant through micro credit operations and other. The women in the group come together and save their money and practice internal lending. This has considerably driven the traditional money lenders away. SHGs have created a silent revolution at the grass roots and proved that women in groups could influence and change the structure of saving. It has established that poor are bankable. Women, also proved that if they are provided with the opportunity and support, they will successfully transact with banking and avail formal credit. Access to formal credit was a dream, but now millions of women directly transact with banks and serve as models to other women. Banks are willing to support the SHG women on the basis of the performance of the internal lending and other indicators while doing the rating. Also, thanks to the Women Development Corporation for institutionalizing thousands of SHGs.

In Pudukkottai district, Pudukkottai block tops with maximum number of SHGs (1600) followed by Aranthangi, Thiruvarankulam and Viralmalai with above 1500 SHGs. The lowest number of SHGs has been found with Thirumayam block (572) with twice less than the top blocks. Similar trend has been noticed with respect to the number of members in the respective blocks. Maximum number of members has been registered with Pudukkottai block and the minimum has been observed with Thirumayam. It is incredible to notice that Rs.83.04 crores has totally been availed by SHGs in Pudukkottai district till 2011-12.

Block-wise variations demonstrates that Annavalal tops all the block with maximum amount of credit availed (Rs.7.77 crore), followed by Karambakkudi, Kundnarkoil and Pudukkottai. The block which has accessed the lowest SHG credit is Ponnamaravathy with just Rs.0.62 crore, though in terms of number of SHGs and number of SHG members, it was above the least performing block Thirumayam. It indicates that the amount of saving per person might be the least.

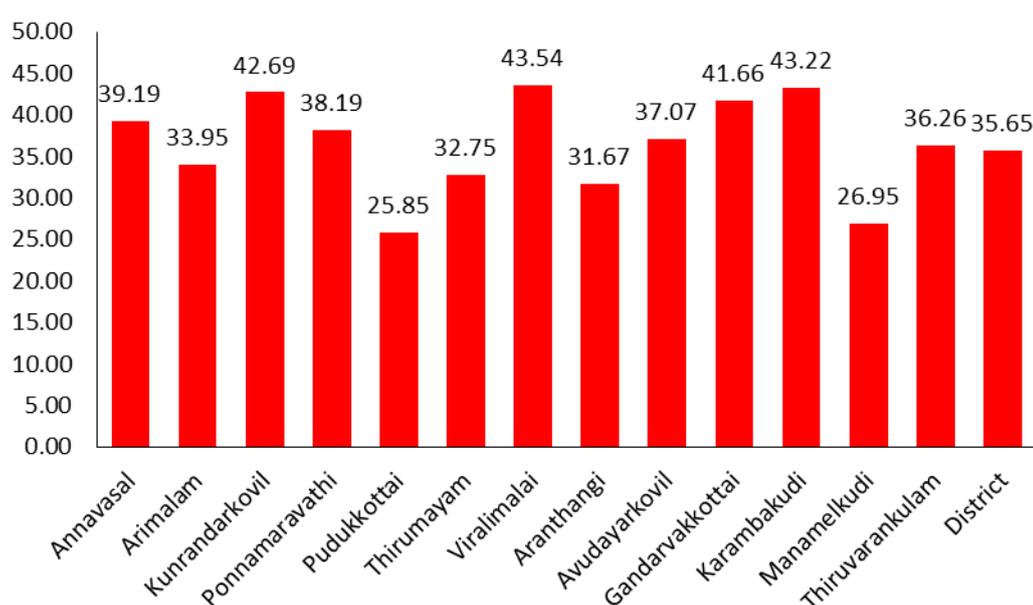
Though in terms of number of groups and number of members, Pudukkottai block tops, in terms of absolute credit availed Annavalal comes first, pushing Pudukkottai to the fourth place. Karambakkudi (921) and Kundnarkoil (947), which have relatively less number of SHGs and members roughly little higher than half of the number of SHGs possessed by the top block, such as Pudukkottai (1600). It indicates that blocks with maximum number of SHGs does not necessarily exhibit maximum record with access to credit. It further informs that, not all the SHGs in blocks with maximum number are fully active and linked with bank. Several groups would have remained with internal lending or failed to have qualified in the credit rating done by the Mahalir Thittam.

The SHG concept has gained momentum and gets spread to other areas by not overlooking some of the processes laid down by the Women Development Corporation. Such deviations by Micro Finance Institutions may not take the SHG women to capacity building. Mere credit operations alone may not ensure empowerment unless the money saved is invested in enterprise development. Access to credit is one step forward and proved that women are bankable.

Employment

Employment is an indicator of development and empowerment. The status of employment can be understood by analysing the WPR. The district female WPR was 35.65 as per the Census 2011, which was far behind the male WPR of 58.65 (see Appendix Table 6.1). Among the 13 blocks of Pudukkottai district, eight blocks had higher female WPR compared to the district level, while the remaining five had female WPR lower than the district level. Pudukkottai and Manmelkudi blocks had the lowest female WPRs of 25.85 and 26.95 respectively. Moving on to formal employment, female participation in State Government employment (36.1 per cent) has been little higher than private and corporate (28.1 per cent) during 2011-12. It shows that State Government has been taking initiatives to reduce the gender gap in employment in the government sector primarily with the objective of extending at least 33 per cent employment for women. Private companies normally offer more employment to women, but in temporary and adhoc positions. Given the capabilities and the kind of delivery, women must be given positions in permanent employment in the private sector. The factor is that the female participation, in unpaid employment is enormous whereas as per UN Statistics, women perform 2/3rd of the work but receive only 1/10th of the world's income. Such disparity must be brought down by the increasing economic participation of women.

Figure 6.1 Female Work Participation Rate



Source: Census 2011

Trends in Political Participation

Political participation of women directly empowers women and contributes to women empowerment unlike employment, where the economic freedom through earnings, may not offer them to spend on their own if the social expectation that women cannot manage financial budget effectively as it is the domain of men. As such economic participation may not guarantee employment unless they get transferred into acquiring political skills to question critically their unequal position in the society. On the other hand participation of women in politics will take them to power and accordingly, sharing of power will be exercised contributing to empowerment. But, it has to be handled independently by the women involved in decision making as per the constitutional norms. It is equally necessary to make the women actively participate in politics which will only involve them in decision making and also empower them.

Table 6.2 Membership in Assembly, Local Bodies

Sl. No	Membership of Women in State Assembly and Local Body	Number of Male	Number of Female	% of Female Participation
1	Annavasal	271	159	36.98
2	Arimalam	188	113	37.54
3	Kunrandarkovil	220	124	36.05
4	Ponnamaravathi	227	140	38.15
5	Pudukkottai	190	126	39.87
6	Thirumayam	191	119	38.39
7	Viralimalai	288	152	34.55
8	Aranthangi	322	203	38.67
9	Avudayarkovil	168	134	44.37
10	Gandarvakkottai	200	118	37.11
11	Karambakkudi	219	130	37.25
12	Manamelkudi	156	102	39.53
13	Thiruvarankulam	309	186	37.58
	District	2,949	1,806	38.06
Source: PAPD, Pudukkottai				

It is observed that in Pudukkottai district, the district level participation in Local Bodies and Assembly for the year 2011 for both urban and rural has been 38.06 per cent (Table 6.2). It is around five per cent higher than the reservation of 33 per cent. Block wise representation of women in local bodies and assembly illustrates that Avudaiyarkoil

tops with 44.37 per cent of local body positions represented by women followed by Manalmelkudi, Pudukkottai, Aranthangi and Thirumayam blocks which are the top five blocks in women's political participation. On the other hand, Viralimalai and Kundaradarkoil receive the least representation among all the blocks with lower percentage of women in Local Bodies and Assesmbly in Pudukkottai district during 2011. The gender gap in the district is around 25 per cent. Viralimalai registers the maximum gender gap with 31 per cent followed by Kundnadarkoil and Annavasal with relatively larger gap between the political participation of men and women in Pudukkottai district. Thanks to 33 per cent reservation in Local Bodies, which has driven the percentage of women's political participation to above 33 per cent in certain blocks. Such trends indicate that the people have accepted women contestants and leaders. Also the women have proved that they can equally perform in every field if opportunity is given to them. Similar reservation in Assembly and Parliament alone will ensure more women to enter into politics.

Conclusion

The female population of the district was 8,15,157, which is 50.37 per cent of the total population. As the percentage of female population is more than the 50, the sex ratio is 1,015, which is a good trend. The female literacy rate is 69 per cent and is lower than the male literacy rate in the district as well as the female literacy rate at the State level as per the Census 2011. Among the 13 blocks of Pudukkottai district, eight blocks had higher female WPR compared to the district level, while the remaining five had female WPR lower than the district level. Pudukkottai and Manmelkudi blocks had the lowest female WPRs of 25.85 and 26.95 respectively.

Block-wise representation of women in local bodies and assembly illustrates that Avudaiyarkoil tops with 44.37 per cent local body represented. Viralimalai and Kundaradarkoil receive the least representation among all the blocks with lower per cent of women in Local Bodies and Assesmbly in Pudukkottai district during 2011. The gender gap in the district is around 25 per cent, Viralimalai registers the maximum gender gap with 31 per cent.

Sex ratio, female literacy, and female work participation rate are encouraging in most of the blocks of the district. But yet, women empowerment in terms of freedom in decision making is still lacking. Proxy participation in politics, business entrepreneurship are no solution to women empowerment. Free higher education for women, awareness and training camps, fund assistance through MAHILA banks can help women achieve women empowerment.