



EDITORIAL

“There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of woman is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing. There is no hope for that family or country where there is no estimation of women, where they live in sadness. For this reason, they have to be raised first.” – Swami Vivekananda

While the world has achieved progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals (including equal access to primary education between girls and boys), women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in every part of the world. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large.

The theme for International Women’s Day (8 March) 2020 is, *I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women’s Rights*; rightly aligned with UN Women’s new multigenerational campaign, Generation Equality, which marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most visionary agenda for the empowerment of women and girls, developed at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China—known as the largest-ever gathering of gender equality advocates—the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted by 189 governments committed to taking strategic, bold action in 12 critical areas of concern: poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media, environment, and the girl child.

In recent times, women safety issues and need for **women empowerment** has been a raging topic and the need to address these topics have been the need of the hour. To ensure women are empowered, the government and the public sector need to play important roles to enable their welfare in various sectors. Whether it’s providing free cooking gas and education schemes or enabling women to leverage technology, a slew of schemes have been launched by the Government of

India in recent years to empower women to be independent in their lives.

Here are a few that are breaking new ground and improving the lives of women, and encouraging them to think big, both in urban and rural areas - *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana* aims to generate awareness and also improve the efficiency of welfare services for the girl child; *Mahila-E-Haat*, a bilingual online marketing platform that leverages technology to help aspiring women entrepreneurs, self-help groups, and NGOs to showcase their products and services (open to all Indian women above the age of 18, this platform offers an easy sign-in process and convenient payment modes and everything can be handled on a mobile with no other intervention required); *Mahila Shakti Kendra* to empower rural women with opportunities for skill development, employment, digital literacy, health and nutrition. The government launched the *Working Women Hostels* to ensure availability of safe, convenient accommodation for working family, along with daycare facilities for their children, wherever possible in urban, semi-urban and rural areas. *Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)* scheme was set up to provide skills to women so that they can take up gainful employment. It also provides the right competencies and training for women to become entrepreneurs and *Sukanya Samridhi Yojana*, a government-backed savings scheme for girl children.

As India progresses further, a lot of opportunities have opened up for women to embrace them. The Union Budget 2020 recommended a provision of Rs 35,500 crore for the nutritional programme in 2021, while a total of Rs 28,600 crore have been allocated for women-specific schemes in the Budget for 20-21. There has been an increase of 21.4 percent in the budget allotted for women with respect to FY 19. Women through these schemes will be benefitted in a lot of ways and will be able to stand out.

This issue presents a good number of articles on the cover story theme ‘*The Next Gen Women: Equal Rights, Opportunities and Participation*’ by distinguished experts and authors. We look forward to constructive feedback from our readers on the articles and overall development of the journal. Please send your mails at editor@icmai.in. We thank all the contributors to this important issue and hope our readers enjoy the articles.