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Policy suggestions in light of the Report on Women, Business and the Law

SANKHYA (संख्या)

"There cannot be a good plan for economic progress without adequate data and there cannot be adequate data without a good plan for collecting them…"

P.C Mahalanobis, Member, First Planning Commission of India & Scientist

WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW

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The Women, Business and the Law is a report released by the World Bank which collects and analyses data on the laws in different countries that impede women's economic opportunities to enhance gender equality.

The World Bank has been collecting data since 1970 to present day, tracking regulatory changes in key areas for women's economic empowerment.

It provides insight into laws affecting women's economic rights and highlights the crucial role of gender equality in poverty reduction and shared prosperity. The report's research and policy discussions offer strategies for enhancing economic opportunities for women.

The report collects data on 35 questions across 8 indicators for 190 economies, using a scoring system out of 100 points. The report calculates the index scores by averaging the score of 8 topics for each economy. A higher score indicates a more gender-equal legal environment in the country, while a lower score suggests the opposite.

Parameters for Evaluating Legal Environment for Gender Equality

- Mobility: Examines constraints on freedom of movement.
- Workplace: Analyzes laws affecting women's decisions to work.
- Pay: Measures laws and regulations affecting women's pay.
- Marriage : Assesses legal constraints related to marriage and divorce
- Parenthood : Examines laws affecting women's work after having children
- Assets : Considers gender differences in property and inheritance
- Pension : Assesses laws affecting the size of a woman's pension
- Entrepreneurship : Evaluates legal constraints that may hinder women from starting and running their own businesses.

WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW REPORT: A LOOK AT GLOBAL TRENDS

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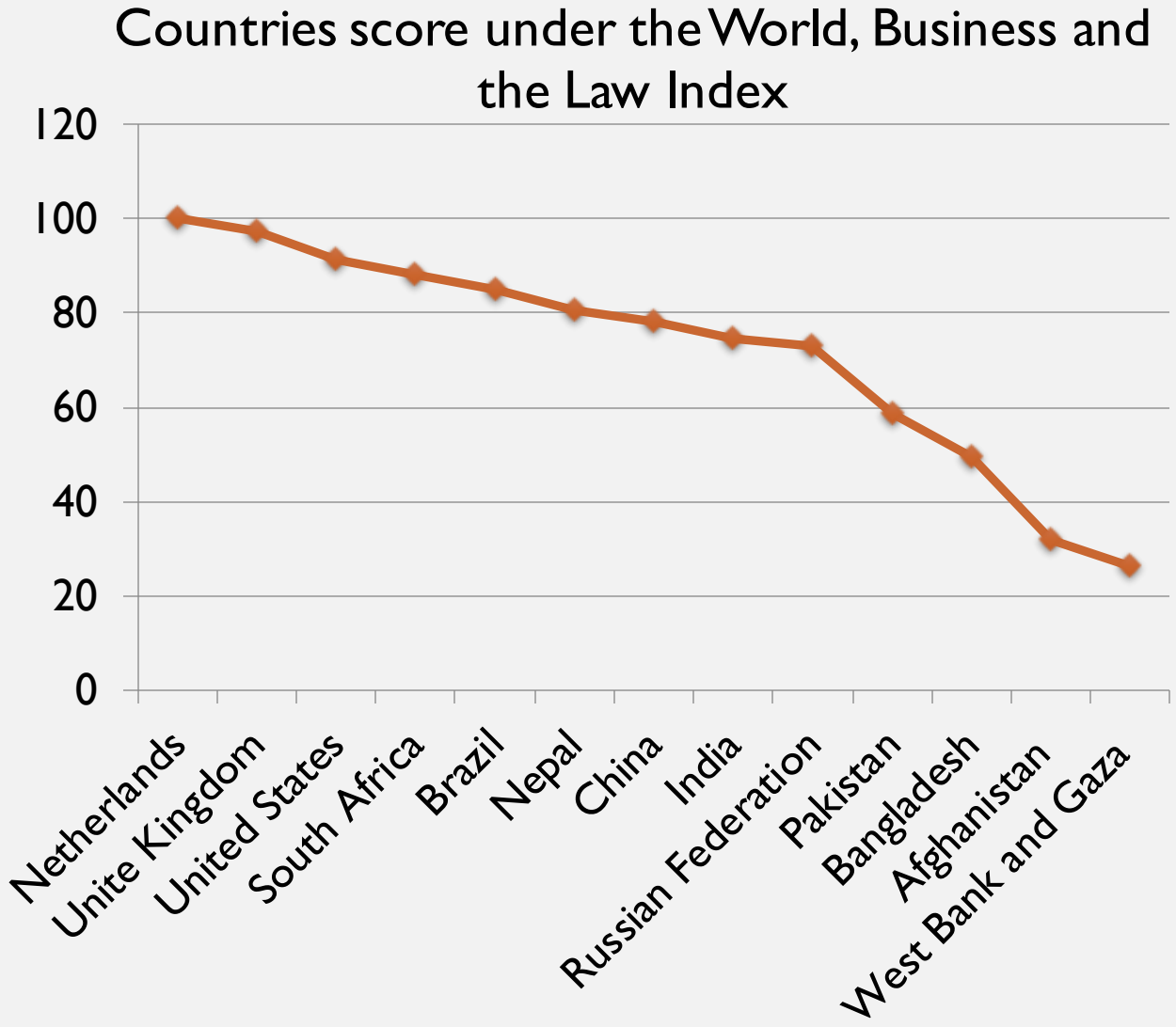


I Only 14 out of 190 countries have achieved a perfect average score of 100 points. In addition, 18 countries have shown an improvement in their score in 2023 compared to the previous years.

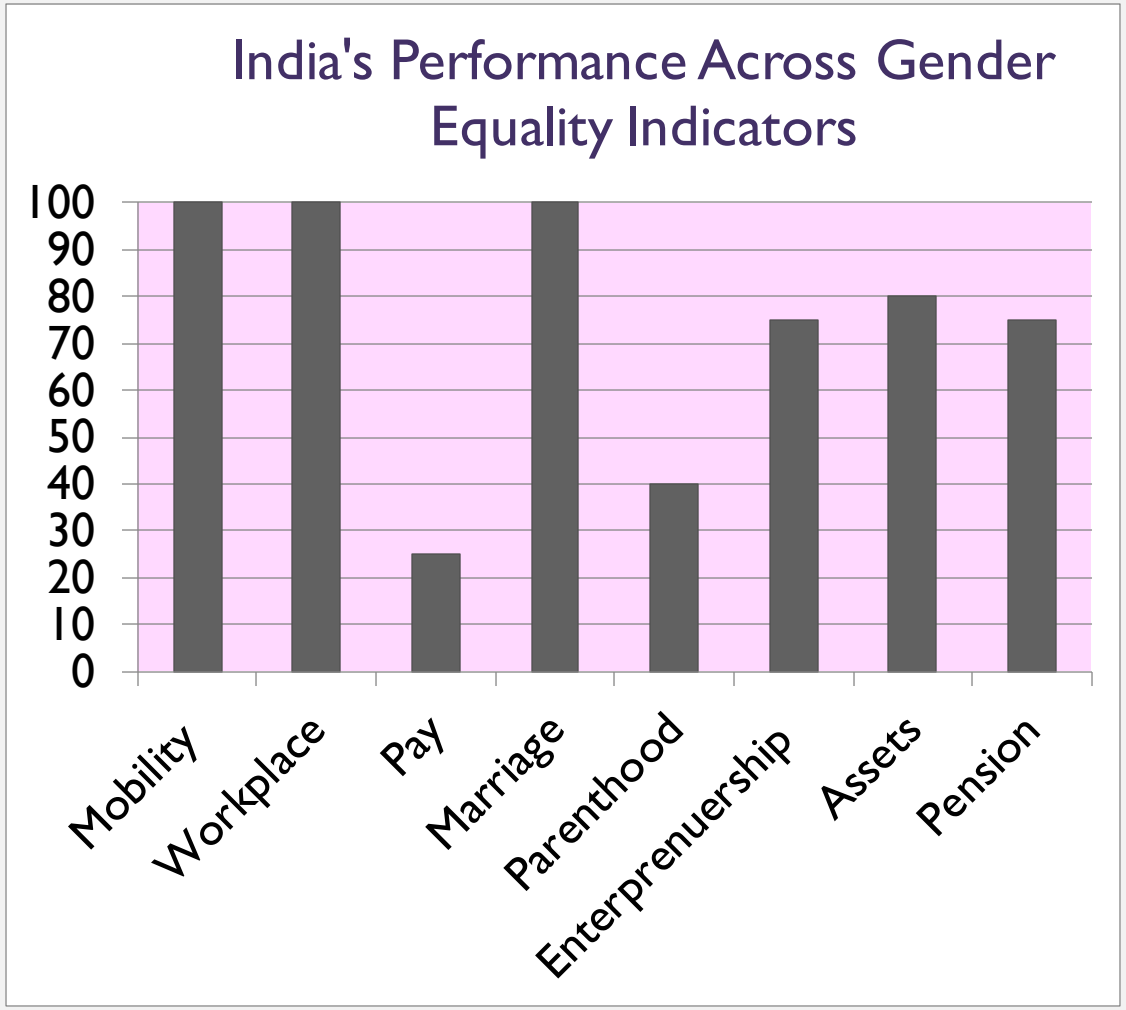
II The West Bank and Gaza have scored the lowest with a score of 26.3 points, followed by Afghanistan with 31.9 points.

III Only in 14 economies do women and men have the same legal rights across all the indicators measured.

IV In 2022, many countries showed positive reforms in the Parenthood and Pay indicators, which are also considered as the indicators with the most potential for improvement

V South Asian economies have shown improvement, with scores increasing by more than 4 points since 2017. Nepal has emerged as the top scorer with 80.6 points, followed by Bhutan with 75 points.

GENDER EQUALITY IN INDIAN LAW AND POLICY



-In 2023, India achieved an average score of 74.4 points across all eight indicators surpassing the South Asian average of 63.7 points by 10.7 points.

-India has shown significant progress in improving its legal environment for gender equality over the past 53 years, with an improvement of 25 points from a score of 49.4 in 1971

-Of the eight categories evaluated, mobility, workplace, and marriage received a perfect score of 100 points each, while pay had the lowest score of 25 points. The parenthood indicator was the second weakest with a score of 40.

-While there are laws aimed at promoting equality in terms of parenthood and pay, these areas are comparatively weak and have not been well-implemented in practice.

-India has maintained a score of 74.4 points for the past three years, showing no progress. The only change was seen in the legal situation of the parenthood indicator, which increased from 20 in 2019 to 40 in 2020.

KEY POLICY SUGGESTIONS

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Access to Financial literacy programs

RBI data shows only 24% of Indian women have basic financial literacy, hindering their economic empowerment. Govt. can improve access to financial education by leveraging technology and designing inclusive programs tailored to women's needs. Use of digital tools and resources, such as financial calculators, budgeting apps, and online courses, can be used to help women improve their financial knowledge and skills.

Promote workplace diversity and inclusion policies

Promoting workplace diversity and inclusion policies can help improve women's economic opportunities by creating an equitable work environment. This can lead to better representation of women in leadership positions and increase the likelihood of women receiving equal pay and benefits. Additionally, diversity programs can help address unconscious bias and stereotypes that may otherwise limit women's advancement in the workplace.

Improving Women's Inheritance Rights

The Indian government should prioritize the upliftment of women's inheritance rights to improve their economic opportunities. This can be done by strengthening and clarifying inheritance laws, addressing discriminatory practices in personal laws, and ensuring effective implementation of these laws. Women should have equal rights to inherit ancestral lands irrespective of religion, marriage etc.

Implement initiatives to ensure the safety of women on roads

Strict policies should be implemented in metro cities in India to ensure women's safety while travelling for economic opportunities. surveillance cameras, increased police presence, panic buttons, and CCTV cameras should be installed in public transportation systems and vehicles, as well as at major transit points, to ensure greater confidence and security, enabling women to access economic opportunities.

Conduct women's leadership training and mentorship programs

To promote women's leadership, training and mentorship programs should be established to build a pipeline of women leaders. These programs can provide women with the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to take on leadership roles in various sectors. Mentorship can also provide women with valuable guidance and support from experienced leaders. By building a strong pipeline of women leaders, there can be a more equitable representation of women in decision-making positions.

WANT TO SUBMIT IDEAS FOR SANKHYA OR GIVE YOUR VIEWS ON OUR PAST EDITIONS?

Share your views, analysis, ideas and questions
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Sankhya* is an initiative of Bridge Policy Think Tank to create interface snapshots in statistics and policy analysis while promoting critical thinking and analysis.

** Sankhya means numbers and is also a school of rationalist Indian philosophy.According to Sankhya philosophy reliable knowledge comes from only three pramanas (proofs)- pratyakṣa ('perception'), anumāṇa ('inference') and śabda (āptavacana, meaning, 'word/testimony of reliable sources').*