

A Geographical Study of Women Status in an Emerging Urban Industrial Economy: Experiences from the Asansol Sub-Division and Durgapur Sub-Division of West Bengal, India

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Abstract : Urbanization has an immense impact on the holistic development of a region. In that same context, the level of women empowerment plays a significant role in the development of any region, particularly a region belonging to a developing country. The present study investigates the status of women empowerment in the Asansol Durgapur Planning Area of the state of West Bengal, India by investigating the status of women and their access to various facilities and awareness about the various governmental and non-governmental schemes meant for their elevation. Through this study, an attempt has been made to understand the perception of the respondents on the context of women's empowerment. The study integrates multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data collected from various reports, field-based measurements, questionnaire survey and community based participatory appraisals. Results reveal that women of the rural parts of the region are relatively disempowered due to the various restrictions imposed on them and enjoy lower socioeconomic clout than their male counterparts in spite of the several remedial efforts taken by the government and NGOs to elevate their position in the society. A considerable gender gap still exists regarding access to education, employment and decision-making power in the family and significant differences in attitude towards women are observable in the rural and urban areas. Freedom of women primarily vary according to their age group, educational level, employment and income status and also on the degree of urbanization. Asansol Durgapur Planning Area is primarily an industrial region where huge employment generation scope exists. But these disparities are quite alarming and indicate that economic development does not always usher in socially justifiable rights and access to resources for both men and women alike in its wake. In this backdrop, this study will attempt to forward relevant suggestions which can be followed for betterment of the status of women.

Keywords : development, disempowered, economic development, urbanization, women empowerment

Conference Title : ICGE 2019 : International Conference on Geography and Environment

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : September 19-20, 2019