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Empowerment of Self-Help Groups in Odisha through Capacity Development

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Introduction

The difference between men and women or gender disparity is deep rooted in Indian society. The Brahminical societies reserved the study of the Vedas to men and considered female education as a threat to society (Dreze and Sen, 1995). While there has been substantial improvement over time, women in the labour market on an average still earn 24 per cent less than men globally. As per United Nations' data, till August 2015, only 22 per cent of all national parliamentarians were female, which exhibited only a slow rise from 11.3 per cent in 1995 (United Nations, 2015).

Since independence, gender parity and women's empowerment were two big tasks for all the states of India. Although the shift from Welfare to Development approach took place in the sixth plan (1980-85), it did not alter the position of women. The Ninth Plan in India, introduced in 1997 brought two substantial changes in the strategy of planning for women. With a focus on '*Empowerment of Women*', attempts were made to create an enabling environment where women could at liberty exercise their rights both within and outside the home. Not only this, the Plan also attempted a '*convergence of existing services*' presented in both women-specific and women related sectors. With such