

## Role of Empowered Women in Viksit Bharat

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### ARTICLE CYCLE

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### ABSTRACT

India's vision of *Viksit Bharat 2047* aspires to transform the nation into a developed, equitable, and prosperous society by the centenary of independence. Women's empowerment is central to this transformation, particularly through its influence on maternal and child health outcomes. This narrative review and conceptual policy analysis examines women's empowerment across the life course—childhood, adolescence, reproductive years, and later life—and explores its cumulative impact on population health and national development. Drawing upon national surveys, global health reports, and policy frameworks, the article integrates the life-course perspective with the GYAN (Gender, Youth, Adolescent, Nutrition) framework to position women's empowerment as an intergenerational investment strategy. Evidence suggests that improvements in female education, economic participation, decision-making autonomy, and nutritional security significantly reduce maternal and child mortality, enhance human capital formation, and contribute to long-term economic growth. By aligning empowerment indicators with *Viksit Bharat 2047* goals, this paper provides a structured framework for policy integration within community medicine and public health. Strengthening women's empowerment across all stages of life is therefore not only a social imperative but a strategic necessity for achieving sustainable national development.

### KEYWORDS

Women's empowerment; *Viksit Bharat 2047*; maternal health; child health; life-course approach; GYAN framework; community medicine

### INTRODUCTION

*Viksit Bharat 2047* outlines India's vision to become a developed nation by 2047, which marks a hundred years of independence. This agenda focuses on economic growth, technological progress, infrastructure improvement, social empowerment, and environmental sustainability. At its core is the belief that empowering women and ensuring

gender equality are not just social goals but essential for reaching sustainable development targets.(1)

The idea of women-led development has become more important in India's development discussions. It has shifted from "development for women" to "development by women." This change recognizes that empowered women are not only beneficiaries

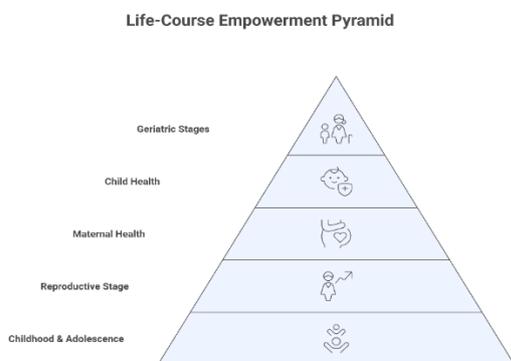
of development but also key drivers of economic growth, social change, and health improvements in communities.(2)

From the perspective of community health, women's health and empowerment are vital for the overall health of the population. The well-being of women directly influences maternal mortality, infant mortality, child nutrition, and family health. Understanding this relationship is crucial for creating effective strategies that support Viksit Bharat's goals.( 3) The GYAN framework, which promotes gender equality, youth involvement, adolescent responsiveness, and nutrition-focused methods, can be integrated to boost mother and child health interventions and increase empowering results throughout the life course (38).

This article conceptually integrates the life-course approach with India's Viksit Bharat 2047 development vision. By applying the GYAN (Gender, Youth, Adolescent, Nutrition) framework within a community medicine perspective, the paper presents women's empowerment as a cumulative and intergenerational development strategy. This integrative framing provides a policy-relevant model linking empowerment indicators directly to national health, economic, and human capital outcomes, thereby offering a structured pathway for aligning gender equity with long-term nation-building goals.

### The Life-Course Approach to Women's Empowerment:

#### 1.Childhood and Adolescence:



Women's empowerment begins in childhood, when they must have access to healthcare, education, and protection from risky behaviors. In this critical phase, a number of

factors contribute to establishing a foundation for future empowerment:

**Quality and Having access to Education:** Women's empowerment is mostly dependent on education. Secondary school graduates are more likely to put delayed getting married, have fewer children, seek medical attention while pregnant, and make sure their children are nourished and educated. Viksit Bharat's objectives for the development of human capital have been directly supported by the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign, which has improved the child-to-sex ratio and increased the number of girls enrolled in school.( 4)

**Nutritional Security:** In order to maintain their growth and future reproductive health, teenage females must maintain a healthy diet. About 53% of individuals have iron deficiency anemia. Improved maternal and child health outcome and preventing the passing on of malnutrition to future generations are two benefits of addressing nutritional deficiencies at this period. (5) **Health Services and Education:** Accessibility to reproductive health care and comprehensive sexuality education enable young women to make knowledgeable decisions about their bodies and futures. Later in life, this information is essential for mother health, family planning, and child welfare. (3)

#### 2.Reproductive Stage:

Viksit Bharat's health objectives are directly impacted by women's empowerment during their crucial reproductive years. This stage includes various aspects of empowerment that collectively impact the health outcomes of mothers and children.

Empowerment of the Economy and Maternal Health Women's access to healthcare services is significantly impacted by their economic involvement and level of financial independence.

- Women having jobs are more likely to:
- Seek prenatal care while pregnant
- give birth in a medical facility
- get professional help during childbirth
- use postnatal care services

Make your own family planning decisions. In connection with Viksit Bharat's goals for human development, economic empowerment also enables women to make investments in the nutrition, health, and

education of the children, helping future generations. (2)

#### Decision-Making Authority and Healthcare Utilization

Women's ability to make healthcare decisions is crucial for improving maternal and child health outcomes. Empowered women can make independent healthcare choices are more likely to:

- Recognize warning signs during pregnancy and childbirth
- Seek timely medical help
- Follow treatment guidelines
- Use family planning methods
- Ensure their children receive complete immunizations

#### Educational Attainment and Health Literacy

Maternal education is one of important predictors of child survival and development.

Educated mothers are more likely to:

- Practice good hygiene and sanitation
- Recognize signs of childhood illnesses
- Seek appropriate healthcare for their children
- Follow recommended feeding practices
- Support their children's educational growth

Research illustrates that each additional year of maternal education reduces child mortality by 5-10%. This underscores the importance of women's education for meeting Viksit Bharat's health targets.(7)

India has made remarkable progress in improving maternal health over the last two decades. The maternal mortality ratio has declined from 384 per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 103 in 2020.(8) This achievement reflects improvements in health systems, service delivery, and public health programs. However, to reach the Sustainable Development Goal target of 70 per 100,000 live births, sustained efforts and continued strengthening of maternal health services remain essential.

Improving maternal health depends not only on access to care but also on the quality and continuity of services throughout pregnancy, childbirth, and the postnatal period.

**Antenatal Care:** Early registration of pregnancy, regular check-ups, and essential laboratory investigations allow timely identification of high-risk conditions such as anemia, hypertension, and gestational diabetes. Adequate antenatal care reduces complications and contributes significantly to safer pregnancy outcomes.(9)

**Skilled Birth Attendance:** The presence of trained health professionals during delivery is critical for managing obstetric emergencies such as hemorrhage, obstructed labor, and eclampsia. Institutional deliveries supported by skilled providers have played a major role in reducing maternal and neonatal deaths in India.(10)

**Postnatal Care:** The period immediately after childbirth is often neglected but remains crucial for both mother and newborn. Early postnatal visits help detect complications such as postpartum hemorrhage, infection, and breastfeeding difficulties. Strengthening postnatal care ensures better recovery for mothers and a healthier start for newborns.(11)

**Family Planning and Birth Spacing:** Access to family planning services enables women to plan pregnancies, avoid unintended births, and maintain appropriate spacing between children. Proper birth spacing reduces maternal exhaustion, lowers obstetric risks, and improves overall maternal health outcomes.(12)

Continued focus on these essential services will be central to further reducing maternal mortality and aligning maternal health indicators with the goals of Viksit Bharat 2047.

### 3. Child Health and Development: Investing in the Next Generation

The health and development of children are closely linked to maternal well-being. Improvements in maternal health translate directly into better survival, growth, and developmental outcomes for children. In this way, investments in women's health create long-term benefits for future generations and strengthen the country's human capital base.

### Nutrition and Early Development

The first 1000 days of life—from conception to two years of age—are critical for physical growth and brain development.

**Breastfeeding:** Early initiation of breastfeeding and exclusive breastfeeding for six months provide optimal nutrition, strengthen immunity, and reduce the risk of infections.(12)

**Complementary Feeding:** After six months, timely introduction of appropriate complementary foods ensures adequate nutrient intake during a period of rapid growth and cognitive development.(12)

**Timely Healthcare Seeking:** Early recognition of illness and prompt care-seeking reduce the risk of severe malnutrition, infections, and long-term developmental delays.(13)

### Immunization and Preventive Care

Complete immunization protects children against preventable diseases and remains one of the most cost-effective public health interventions. Following recommended vaccination schedules and ensuring catch-up doses where needed significantly improves child survival.(14) Preventive healthcare practices in early life reduce disease burden and promote healthier adulthood.

### Educational Investment and Long-Term Development

Healthy children are more likely to attend school regularly, perform better academically, and develop skills that contribute to economic productivity. Investment in children’s education strengthens the foundation of a knowledge-driven economy and supports the broader vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.(15)

By strengthening maternal health services and ensuring optimal child development, India not only improves immediate health outcomes but also builds a healthier, more capable generation prepared to contribute to national progress.

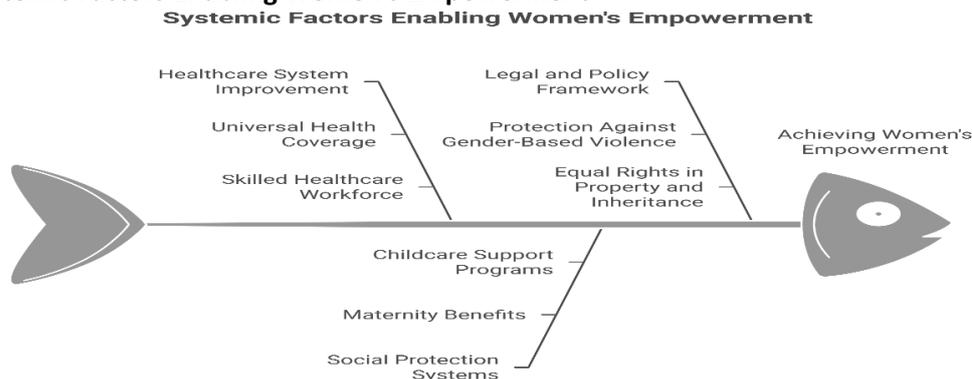
#### 4.Geriatric Stages:

Women's empowerment continues to benefit society as they age. Older women often take on roles such as:

- Health advisors and caregivers in their families
- Community leaders and entrepreneurs
- Mentors for younger women
- Advocates for health and social issues (16)

Their continuous social and economic participation promotes community resilience and promotes intergenerational knowledge transfer.

### Systemic Factors Enabling Women's Empowerment :



#### Healthcare System Improvement

A strong healthcare system that offers quality, accessible, and affordable services is vital for supporting women's empowerment. Essential elements consist of:

- Universal health coverage that decreases financial obstacles

- A skilled healthcare workforce, especially female providers
- Emergency obstetric care facilities
- Community health worker programs
- Digital health solutions for remote areas (17)

### Social Protection Systems

Robust social protection systems offer the safety net needed to achieve women's empowerment.:

- Maternity benefits
- Childcare support programs
- Insurance for health emergencies
- Nutrition supplementation programs
- Conditional cash transfer initiatives (18)

### Legal and Policy Framework

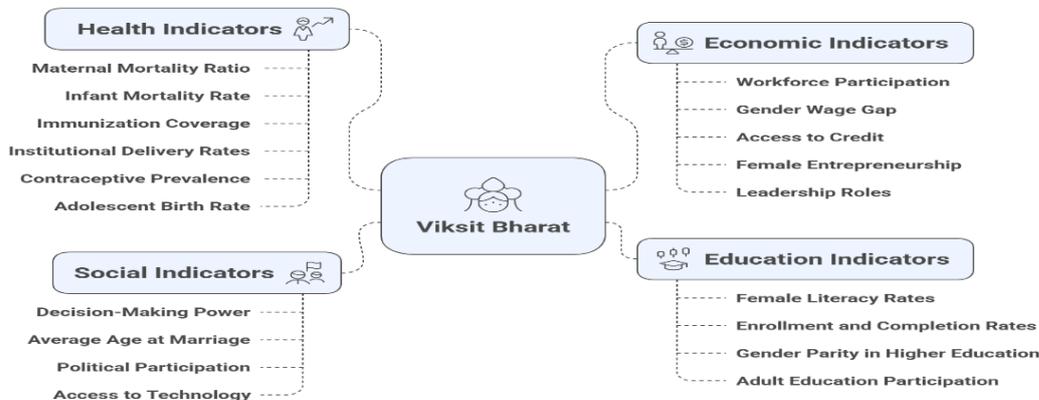
Empowerment requires strong legislation that protects women's rights and promotes gender equality.:

- Protection against gender-based violence
- Equal rights concerning property and inheritance
- Anti-discrimination laws in employment
- Reproductive rights protection
- Quotas for political participation (19)

### Measuring Progress: Indicators for Viksit Bharat

It is essential to monitor a number of important indicators in order to track the progress of women's empowerment through Viksit Bharat: (20,21)

### Indicators for Women's Empowerment in Viksit Bharat



### Health Indicators

- Maternal mortality ratio
- Infant mortality rate
- Immunization coverage percentages
- Institutional delivery rates
- Contraceptive prevalence
- Adolescent birth rate (22)

### Education Indicators

- Female literacy rates
- Enrollment and completion rates for girls in school
- Gender parity in higher education
- Participation in adult education programs (21)

### Economic Indicators

- Women's participation in the workforce
- Gender wage gap
- Access to credit and financial services for women
- Rates of female entrepreneurship

- Proportion of women in leadership roles (23,24)

### Social Indicators

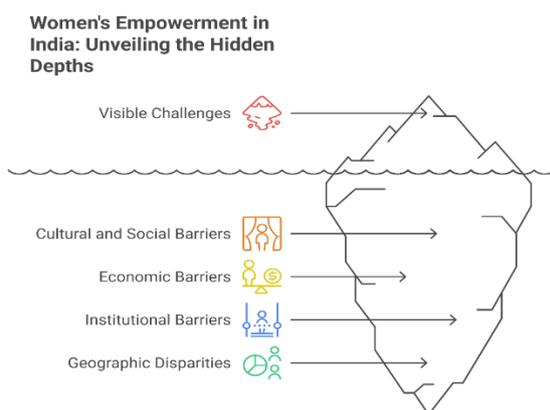
- Women's decision-making power
- Average age at marriage
- Rates of political participation
- Access to technology and digital services (25)

India's accelerated reduction in maternal mortality demonstrates measurable alignment with the Sustainable Development Goal target of reducing the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) to below 70 per 100,000 live births. According to the Sample Registration System, the MMR declined from 130 in 2014–16 to 93 in 2019–21, reflecting strengthened primary healthcare systems, expanded institutional deliveries, improved antenatal coverage, and better referral services.(5) This progress is consistent with global estimates reported by WHO and allied agencies and underscores the

role of sustained health system investments in improving maternal survival.(4,6) Continued focus on quality of care and equity-based interventions will be necessary to achieve the SDG threshold.

Women’s education and labour force participation are equally critical for leveraging India’s demographic dividend. Evidence indicates that female education is strongly associated with lower fertility rates, improved maternal and child health outcomes, and better healthcare utilization.(6,9,14) Economic analyses further suggest that increasing women’s participation in the workforce expands the productive labour base and contributes significantly to long-term economic growth.(10,37) Thus, closing gender gaps in education and employment is both a public health priority and a macroeconomic strategy.

Importantly, maternal and child health indicators serve as core components of human capital development. Improvements in maternal survival, child nutrition, and preventive care enhance cognitive development, educational attainment, and lifetime productivity.(6,13) Investments in women’s health and empowerment therefore generate intergenerational returns, reinforcing national productivity and aligning directly with the developmental aspirations of Viksit Bharat 2047.



**Challenges and Barriers:**

Despite notable progress, several challenges still hinder women's empowerment in India: (26,27)

**Cultural and Social Barriers**

- Deep-rooted patriarchal norms

- Gender stereotypes and discrimination
- Practices supporting early marriage
- Restrictions on mobility and autonomy

**Economic Barriers**

- Limited access to financial services and credit
- Occupational segregation
- Wage discrimination
- Burden of unpaid care work

**Institutional Barriers**

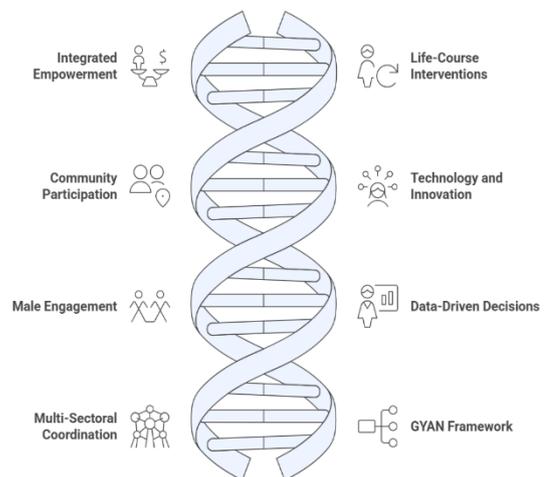
- Inadequate healthcare infrastructure in rural regions
- Gender bias in service provision
- Shortage of female healthcare providers
- Weak enforcement of policies and programs

**Geographic Disparities**

- Differences in access to services between urban and rural areas
- Variations in progress among states
- Difficult terrain and connectivity issues
- Cultural differences across regions (

**Strategic Recommendations for Viksit Bharat**

**Strategic Framework for Women's Empowerment**



**1. Integrated Approach to Women's Empowerment**

Develop comprehensive strategies that simultaneously emphasize different aspects of empowerment while realizing the associations between financial opportunities, education, and health.. (28)

2. Life-Course Interventions

Promote programs that help women throughout their lives, from early childhood to old age, assuring continued support and increasing impacts of empowerment. (29)

3. Community-Based Participatory Approaches

Involve communities in the planning and execution of empowerment initiatives, making sure that they are locally owned and culturally appropriate. (30)

4. Technology and Innovation

Utilize digital technologies to gain access around geographic constraints and promote innovative approaches to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. (31)

5. Male Engagement

Promote gender equality as a shared responsibility and an achievable goal by involving men and boys in empowerment initiatives. (32)

6. Data-Driven Decision Making

Enhance monitoring and evaluation methods to keep tracks on changes, detect gaps, and modify plans of action in response to data. (33)

7. Multi-Sectoral Coordination

To assure integrated approaches to women's empowerment, promote collaboration between the social welfare, health, education, and financial sectors. (34)

8. Putting the GYAN Framework into Practice

Adopt the approach known as GYAN (Gender equality, Youth engagement, Adolescent responsiveness, and Nutrition-focused techniques) for better interventions throughout the life course, with an emphasis

on young women and adolescents. This strategy promotes mother and child health outcomes and sustained human capital development by promoting early empowerment, better reproductive health, and nutritional justice. (38)

**Economic Returns of Women's Empowerment**

Investing in women's empowerment produces significant economic benefits that support Viksit Bharat's development goals:

Health Sector Returns

- Reduced healthcare costs through preventive care
- Improved productivity from better health outcomes
- Decreased maternal and child mortality (35)
- Better human capital development

Education Sector Returns

- Increased enrollment and completion rates
- Improved learning outcomes
- Better skills development
- More innovation and creativity (36)

Economic Sector Returns

- Increased GDP growth from women's economic participation
- Lower poverty rates
- Improved household income and consumption
- More entrepreneurship and job creation (37)

**Role of Healthcare Providers and Community Medicine Professionals**

Healthcare providers and community medicine professionals play key roles in promoting women's empowerment:

**Healthcare roles range from direct care to systemic change.**



**Clinical Practice**

Healthcare providers are crucial for the promotion of women's empowerment

because they provide maternal and pediatric healthcare that is respectful and of high quality. This includes actively advancing

women's health rights, acknowledging and addressing gender-based health inequities, and offering family planning and reproductive health counseling.

#### Community Engagement

Strong community involvement is another component of empowering women. This can be performed through addressing social determinants associated with health outcomes, working with women's groups and organizations, educating community health professionals, and implementing programs to promote health.

#### Research and Advocacy

In order to guide practice and policy, evidence on women's empowerment and health must be established. Promoting legislative changes and equitable resource distribution, documenting best practices and lessons learned, and strengthening the ability to provide gender-sensitive healthcare are important steps.

#### Leadership Development

It is important that women's leadership in the health industry be strengthened. This involves actively aiming to abolish gender bias in healthcare delivery, promoting supportive and equitable work environments, supporting women healthcare workers in their leadership roles in health systems, and mentoring women.

#### Future Directions and Emerging Opportunities

As India moves toward Viksit Bharat 2047, several new opportunities can quicken women's empowerment:

##### Digital Health Solutions

By promoting telemedicine for remote access, adopting mobile health applications for maternal and child health monitoring, utilizing electronic health records for continuity of care, and utilizing artificial intelligence for personalized healthcare solutions, technological innovation may address current healthcare gaps.

##### Climate-Resilient Development

Prioritizing women's leadership in resilience and climate adaptation is important. This involves establishing healthcare systems that are reliable to emergencies ensuring sustainable livelihoods, and providing environmental health protection.

#### Demographic Dividend

Implementing targeted funding in young women is necessary to capitalize on the demographic dividend. Crucial actions include encouraging skill development that corresponds with rising economies, training women for positions of leadership in the future, and promoting innovation and entrepreneurship.

#### Global Partnerships

In order to accelerate progress, international partnership will be essential. Fostering South-South collaboration, obtaining foreign finance and technical assistance, sharing best practices, and participating in collaborative research and development initiatives that prioritize gender equity first are all examples of this.

#### CONCLUSION

Empowering women at every stage of life is essential for achieving Viksit Bharat 2047. The evidence clearly shows that investing in women's health, education, and economic opportunities creates benefits for entire communities and speeds up national development.

From the perspective of community medicine, empowering women is essential to improving population health outcomes, particularly in the areas of maternity and pediatric health. The life-course approach shows how interventions in women's lives can lead to enhanced human capital development, better health outcomes, and more powerful social and economic structures.

The objectives of Viksit Bharat need a strong commitment to women's empowerment through coordinated, evidencebased activities. This includes improving healthcare systems, increasing access to education, promoting economic participation, and addressing systemic obstacles that hamper women from progressing. Healthcare providers and community medicine professionals have unique chances to drive women's empowerment through their clinical work, community involvement, research, and advocacy. By addressing the links between health, education, and empowerment, they

can make a significant impact on India's development into a fair and prosperous nation. By including gender equity, youth engagement, and nutrition into policy as well as practice, the GYAN (Gender Youth Adolescent Nutrition) framework provides an effective path in this respect. By linking together maternal care, adolescent health, and long-term developmental outcomes, it emphasizes a life-course approach to empowerment.

Women-centric interventions can have a greater impact and assure comprehensive success when the GYAN framework is incorporated into national and state-level programs.

The ultimate goal of the Viksit Bharat 2047 journey is to build a society in which all women can achieve their full potential, support the advancement of the country, and secure the well-being and prosperity of coming generations. This vision requires teamwork, continuous funding, and an unwavering dedication to women's rights and gender equality.

Women's empowerment must continue to be a key component of all development plans as India embarks on this transformational journey. The health, dignity, and opportunities available to all of a country's residents, regardless of gender, are just as important indicators of a developed country as its economic prosperity.

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There are no conflicts of interest.

#### DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

The authors haven't used any generative AI/AI assisted technologies in the writing process.

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