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FULL STORY > Women

High growth, but no rights for women

Sunday, May 04, 2008

NEW DELHI: High growth rate of Indian economy has failed to ensure basic rights for all and India has failed to put in place basic entitlements to ensure rights to survival, life and dignity for women, especially dalit women and tribal women, said an NGO report.

The report "Divided Destinies, Unequal Lives, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the India State", was brought out by the People's Collective for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (PCEC) and handed to Planning Commission member Syeda Hameed on Friday. The process was initiated by the Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights under the broad umbrella of PCEC. The report was earlier submitted to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the upcoming India review.

The report highlights the gaps that exist between the promises and assurances made by the state and their actual delivery. It says that livelihood security has figured low in priorities and concerns of policymakers.

About rights of women, the report says that despite its upward economic growth, India has failed to put into place even the most basic entitlements that will ensure the rights to survival, life and dignity for women. Also, in addition to the declining sex ratio, the report says, India has the highest maternal death toll in the world and 57 per cent of girls are married in India are estimated to be under the age of 18 years. Other findings include: women earn only 38 per cent of the average male wage in spite of the Equal Remuneration Act and 93 per cent of the female workforce is in the unorganised sector.

Another alarming finding is that although gender gap in literacy and education have gradually reduced to 21.69 per cent in 2001, women's representation in government jobs has decreased from a meagre 11 per cent in 1990 to 5.8 per cent in 2005. The Planning Commission has pointed out that "women remain largely untouched by gender-sensitive budgets".

Even worse off are the dalit women in India who comprise 48 per cent of the total dalit population but face double the discrimination of caste and gender in all spheres of their lives.

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