

# Spatial Variation of Women's Development in Varanasi city

Sabina Bano and Aanad Prasad Mishra; Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

## Abstract

*Development is a human centered process. People are both the ends and the means in the process. Human resource development applies equally to both women and men. Women play an equal role even in sustainability of development throughout the world. But the fruits of development are distributed unequally among males and females. The process of their (women) marginalization is evolved through excluding them from certain functions, by confining their roles and responsibilities in certain spheres and by not recognizing their works. This gender discrimination severely limits the expansion and utilization of women's capabilities. This has critical implications for the development process, the society, half of which are women. Even the fruit of development is unevenly distributed among women according to region. This paper is an attempt to measure the spatial variation of women's development in Varanasi city.*

**Key words :** *Women Development Index (WDI), Female literacy, Standard of living, Health and Nutritional status*

## Introduction

Women constitute about half of the world's total population, but still equality of women is not fully recognized. Their position and status have been inferior to male members of the society. India is a region of striking socio-economic and cultural diversity with wide variations. Due to the development of patriarchal society women have become a weaker section, her functions have been neglected to more procreation and attending to household chores. She has become a target of social and economic exploitation. This gender discrimination severely limits the expansion and utilization of human capabilities in women and it has been critical implication for 'development'.

Although the principle of equality of men and women was recognized as early as 1945 in the UN charter, and in the UN declaration of Human Rights of 1948, several researchers have pointed out that development planners worked on the assumption that what would benefit one section of society (especially man) would trickle down to other (women) and that they did not need to fully address women's position in the process of development. This orientation in policy framework ignores about the specific benefit of women population.

Early writings in the 1970, were informed by liberal feminism, their goal was to make women visible in the development process.

One of the early books which broke the silence about women was Easter Boserup's (1970) *Women's Role in Economic Development* pointed out that early development models not only overlooked women's contributions but also devised projects that were frequently harmful to women. Boserup's work has been criticized for ignoring women's reproductive role as well as hierarchal gender relations that uphold women's subordination more generally in parts of the world (Beneria and Sen, 1986). Her initiation succeeded in making women visible and stimulated calls for women to be integrated into the development process.

In 1984, a cooperative of feminist scholars- practitioners in the Women and Geography Study Group of the Institute of British Geographers published "Geography and Gender" (Women and Geography Study Group 1984). This followed surveys on research on women in geography (Monk and Hanson 1982; Zelinsky, Monk, and Hanson 1982). According to Women and Study Group (1997). The group advocated change not simply by adding women to geography, but by developing "an entirely different approach to geography as a whole". Looking back at the modernization approach, Parpart (1993) finds that, "if Third World women were considered at all, they were typically regarded as an impediment to modernity and development". Neocolonial discourse represented Third World women as 'exotic specimens', as oppressed victims, as sex objects, or as the most ignorant and backward members of backward societies.

Discussion about the impact of

development policies on women sees them as objects, rather than agents of change. Until quite recently, it was generally believed that economic growth and development was a sufficient condition for an improvement in women's social position. Such an approach, which is derived from Myrdal's 'trickle down' theory of development, denies the unequal power relationships which exist between people of different caste, races, and classes and between men and women. Even Human Resource Development (UNDP-HDR-2001) talks about energies, skills, talent and knowledge of peoples, which are or should be applied to the production of goods or in rendering of useful services come under the assessment of human resources then what about those women who are engaged in household chores throughout their life. Where will they stand in respect of such definition?

The 20th century, probably, is one which has experienced the most trouble in defining the role of a person as male/female. Judith Butler (1990) has completely changed the direction of women's studies, through her most influential work, which published as book entitled, 'Gender Trouble' (1990). Early only scholars confined to think of differences between men and women as being innate and immutable.

Raju and Bagchi (1994) contributed significantly in the emerging field of gender study. They integrate different scales of analysis and combines economic explanations with local dimensions such as religion, culture, and societal constraints on gender roles in South Asian countries. In another study done by Mei-Po Kwan (1999)

conceptualizes individual (male/female) accessibility as space-time feasibility and provides formulations of accessibility measures based on the space-time prism construct. Hapke (2000) demonstrates that how particular ideologies of gender and work associated with different caste/ religion influence the strategies individual household adopts. Productive and reproductive age group of women in urban area not only support her family even contribute in various aspects to make them stand.

Treas and Drobnaić (2010) leading international scholars tried to investigate how culture and country specific social features influence our household and personal lives. Keeping such feedbacks this

paper is an attempt to discuss the regional variation of development among women living in Varanasi city.

## Study Area

Varanasi 'The Sacred City' has acquired great importance at national and global level. The extent of the city touches Banaras Hindu University in south and its western and north western part mostly surrounded by villages and agricultural land. Varanasi as it is now officially known is a major trade centre of Purvanchal (Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Western Bihar). In the process of growth, the city metropolitan due to its residing people mostly from different corner of international boundary. Recently, many cultural events

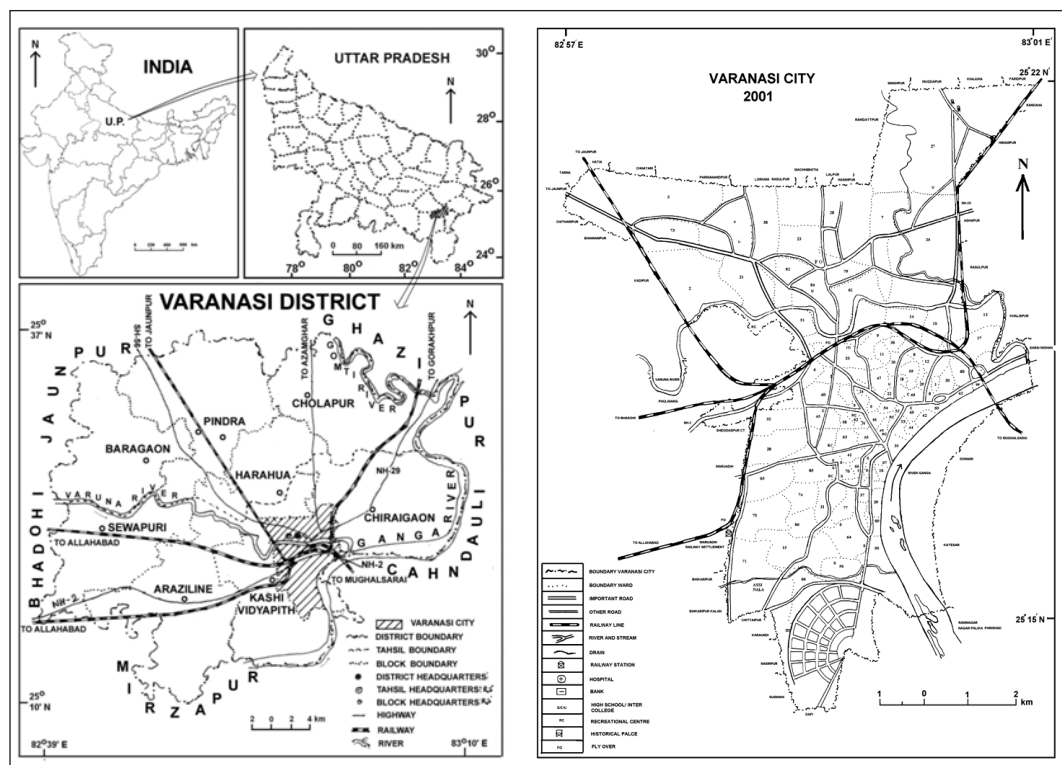


Fig. 1

have been revived, which attracts tourists in various ways and justified the multi-culturalism in Indian society. Actually, Varanasi reported as a cultural capital of India, and its significance is quite visible among the tourists, scholars and philosophers. City is located along the left crescent shaped bank of the Ganga River. It extends between 25° 15' to 25° 22' N latitudes and 82° 57' to 83° 01' E longitudes, covering an area of 74.3 sq.km (according to MCA).

The city lies between the Varuna river in the north and Assi river (now converted into Nala) in the south. (fig.1) The city is situated in the middle Ganga plain having sub humid climate with scorching hot summers and dry winters. Varanasi enjoys moderate climate with normal temperature ranging between 32° C and 46° C. Average rainfall is 1114 mm which occurs mostly in the months of July, August and September. Because of cultural aesthetic it happens to be the first choice of residence in and around city. According to 2001 census, the population of the city is 10, 91, 918 persons including 48 per cent of female population. It consists of 90 municipal wards. The average female population density is more than 6000 females per sq. km. Sex ratio is 876 which is far behind the national average i.e. 933 in 2001.

## Objectives

The present study has been undertaken with the following major objectives

- to measure the spatial development of women across sample wards
- to assess the factors responsible for the substantial variation in development of women.

## Data and Methodology

Present work is an outcome of intensive field work. This study has tried to cover three variables which indicate the index of development of women. The first one is literacy of women, second one is dealing with standard of living of women assessed by their working status, decision making capacity, material possession and monthly per capita income. The last and third one talks about their health and nutritional status under various headings such as age at marriage, age at the birth of first child, number of children, delivery place of the last child, Body Mass Index, intake of Kcal, protein, calcium, and iron. These variables generated through questionnaire based survey of 600 respondents. These respondents were taken from 18 wards of Varanasi city considering the level of gender disparity on the basis of male- female differential in literacy, workforce, main workers, as well as overall and child sex-ratio based on purposive sampling. Index value has been calculated across the wards for individual variable and finally composite index is developed to measure the spatial variation in development.

## Women Development Index (WDI)

WDI (Women Development Index) is computed with the help of three basic dimensions of women development. However, the data for the prescribed indicators in UNDP's methodology was not available at ward level. Hence, substitutes of those indices are used to develop the variables of WDI and substitutes are-

1. A long healthy life as measured by health and nutritional status of women across sample wards
2. Knowledge as female literacy across sample wards and
3. A decent standard of living, as measured by availability of assets to enhance the women comfort in household and allied functions

However, the data for the prescribed indicators in UNDP's methodology was not available at ward wise level. Hence authors have used substitutes of those indicators. For example, data on income or expenditure was not available therefore status of women including their comfort level at household level is able to meet the minimum needs as monthly per capita income of household, occupation status of women, educational status of women, participation in decision making and material possession which reduce women workload and support her task comfortably. Similarly, data on life expectancy was not available at the ward level, is substituted by their health and nutritional status which reflects the utilization of basic health services and health awareness among women and lastly enrollment and dropout rate is also not available at the ward level so female literacy is considered as an indicator.

To drive the composite index of women development, the first step is to compute

indices. The indicators are made scale free unit (between 0 and 1) by applying following formula.

$$I_{ij} = \frac{X_{ij} - \min X_{ij}}{\max X_{ij} - \min X_{ij}}$$

where,  $I_{ij}$  is the factor score for the  $j$ th ward with respect to  $i$ th variable.  $X_{ij}$  is the actual value for selected indicator for the  $j$ th ward and  $\min X_{ij}$  and  $\max X_{ij}$  are the minimum and maximum goal posts/values selected for the indicator. There is however, danger in the choice of maximum and minimum goal posts as they can be subjective and change over time. Hence, these goal posts are selected on the basis of the levels that can be achievable or has been achieved elsewhere and have universal validity. However, the goal posts for some variables are minimum and/or maximum values in the data series.

In the second and final stage, the overall women development index ( $I_j$  for  $j$ th ward) has been worked out by aggregating the component indices and dividing it by total number of indices.

$$I_j = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n I_{ij}}{\sum_{i=1}^n 1}$$

Where  $\sum I_{ij}$  is summation of component indices and

$\sum^n$  is the total number of indices. Further the processed statistics has been displayed in the tabular form.

Table: 1. Women Development in Varanasi city

SI No.	Wards Name & No.		Female literacy	Index of FL	Standard of living	Index of SLI	Health and nutritional status	Index of HN	Total	Index	WDI
1	Lahartara	01	64.8	0.75	41.6	0.44	30.9	0.00	1.19	0.40	L
2	Tarna	05	40.0	0.24	56.9	0.61	43.4	0.26	1.10	0.37	L
3	Pahariya	07	52.6	0.50	45.1	0.48	45.8	0.31	1.28	0.43	M
4	Alaipur	14	28.7	0.00	11.6	0.10	37.0	0.13	0.23	0.08	VL
5	Madan-pura	16	57.8	0.61	42.2	0.44	58.0	0.57	1.62	0.54	M
6	Sikraul	21	58.4	0.62	2.3	0.00	34.2	0.07	0.69	0.23	VL
7	Mewaiya	25	36.2	0.16	35.7	0.37	50.8	0.42	0.94	0.31	L
8	Jaitpura	26	44.8	0.60	23.7	0.24	51.8	0.44	1.27	0.42	M
9	Sarnath	27	38.7	0.21	82.0	0.88	67.2	0.76	1.85	0.62	M
10	Baloapir	29	38.9	0.21	29.5	0.30	39.9	0.19	0.70	0.23	VL
11	Khojwa	31	61.4	0.68	49.8	0.53	49.8	0.40	1.60	0.53	M
12	Durgakund	64	63.1	0.72	90.1	0.97	57.8	0.56	2.25	0.75	H
13	Bangali-tola	67	72.6	0.91	88.3	0.95	78.7	1.00	2.87	0.96	VH
14	Sunderpur	68	56.4	0.58	94.3	1.02	59.3	0.59	2.19	0.73	H
15	Karaundi	71	61.5	0.68	31.6	0.33	57.9	0.65	1.65	0.55	M
16	Sigra	72	76.7	1.00	78.9	0.85	62.5	0.66	2.51	0.84	VH
17	Bhelupur	77	66.4	0.79	79.8	0.86	59.8	0.60	2.25	0.75	H
18	Kamachha	85	73.4	0.93	76.0	0.82	55.3	0.51	2.26	0.75	H

**Source:** Census and Personal Survey 2008-09

**FL-** Female Literacy, **SLI-**Standard of living, **H&N-**Health and Nutritional status and **WDI-** Women Development Index

### a. Limitations of the study

Since the concept of women development is much broader, complex and dynamic than what can be captured in the Women Development Index or any other composite indices such as Gender Development Index (GDI), GEM (Gender Empowerment Measurement), etc. Among all these indices, the primary one and socially most relevant is the WDI. However

the WDI and other composite indices can only present a broad proxy on some of the key issues of the women development. For the fuller and comprehensive picture of women development in any region will require analysis of other various women development indicators. The unavailability of data for the prescribed indicators is also one major constraint especially at ward level study.

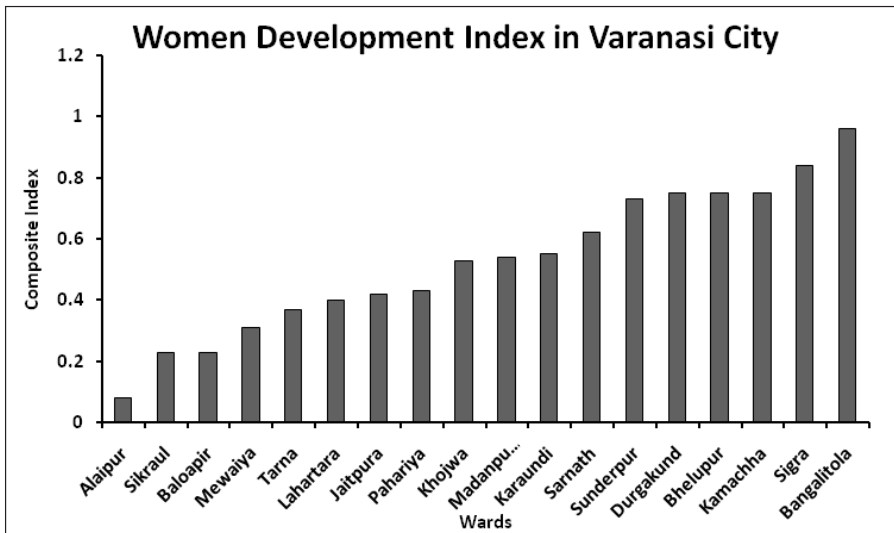


Fig. 2

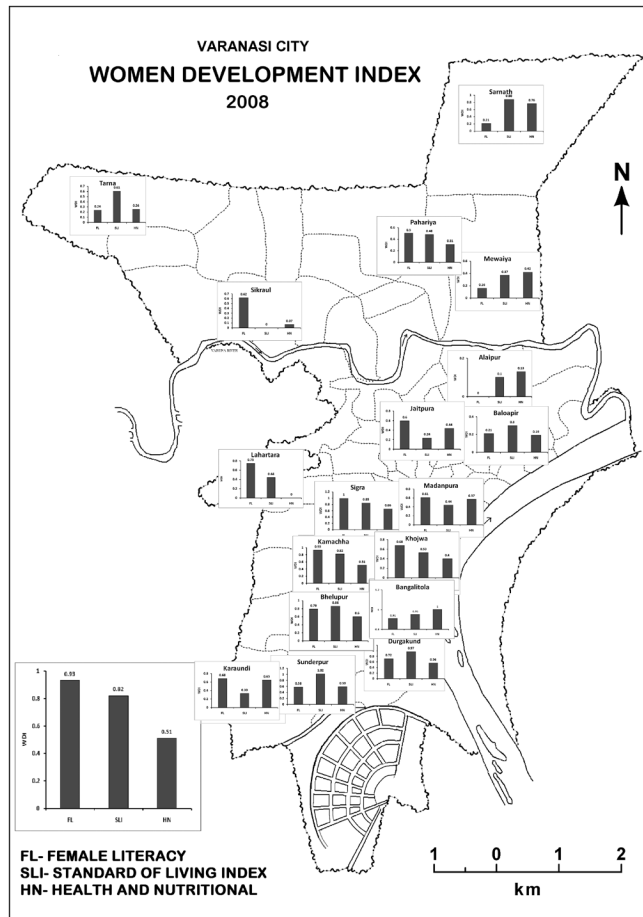


Fig. 3



## **b. Spatial variation of women's development**

The women development index has been worked out for selected wards as shown in fig no. 3 and it has been classified into the following five categories on the basis of Mean $\pm$ S.D namely very high ( $>0.78$ ), high (0.66-0.78), moderate (0.42-0.66) low (0.30-0.42), and very low ( $<0.30$ ) human development (table 1).

### **i) Very high level of women development ( $>0.78$ )**

There are two wards belonging to this category, namely Bangalitola (0.97) and Sigra (0.85). It is due to the high development in educational, economic and health awareness among women. Importantly women of such wards are quite progressive regarding awareness of their health and nutritional status as well as these women impart a major role in decision making not only on day to day social life even in reproductive and economic decisions.

### **ii) High level of women development (0.66 - 0.78)**

There are four wards belonging to this category whose women development index is ranging between values 0.66 to 0.78. These wards have a high position regarding all dimensions of women well beings. It covers the wards of Sunderpur, Bhelupur, and Kamachha. Women of these wards are having comparatively better material possession for their

comfort level as well as educational status is also showing better image with respect to others.

### **iii) Moderate level of women development (0.42 - 0.66)**

Under this category wards are Pahariya (0.44), Jaitpura (0.44), Madanpura (0.55), Khojwa (0.55), Karaundi (0.56), and Sarnath (0.63). These six wards have attended low to moderate positions in literacy that's why over all women development has influenced. That's why education has been considered as an important instrument to bring about the social and economic change. It is very essential to bring up the status and position of women. To make a society cultured and progressive, it is very essential to provide proper education to women at par with men.

### **iv) Low level of women development (0.30 – 0.42)**

Lahartara (0.41), Tarna (0.38), and Mewaiya (0.33) are belonging to this category. Due to lack of literacy and decision making of women in various aspects are comparatively low are the responsible factors to influence the level.

### **v) Very low level of women development ( $<0.30$ )**

Alaipura, Sikraul, and Baloapir are such wards which come under the very low level of women development. Due to very low level of literacy (in general, poor parents



actively seek education for their male children as the best means of improving their income-earning options, but overburdened mothers may be forced to take daughters out of school to assist with childcare and household chores), economic condition, negligible participation in decision making and low level of comfort level development of women is very low.

## Conclusion

The forgoing analysis reveals that, there are spatial variations in levels of WDI within the selected wards of Varanasi city. The six wards Durgakund, Sunderpur, Bhelupur, Kamachha, Sigra and Bangalitola identified with high to very high WDI due to better economic condition, high literacy rate, well facilities with medical utilization and awareness towards nutritional status. However, wards like Lahartara, Tarna, Mewaiya, Sikraul, Baloapir, and Alaipura the underlying factors are responsible for the low or very low WDI such as low literacy rate, high gender disparity, poor economic condition, low participation in decision making, inadequate utilization of health facilities, and lack of awareness of health and nutrition care.

To raise the status of women, government and people should establish and develop sufficient educational facilities and a number of schemes for the purpose must be introduced mainly for women. Sufficient girls schools should be opened with assured and secured transport facilities. It is essential to reserve the seat for girls

in vocational and technical institutions. The traditional mentality of the parents and cultural, economic bias of the society must be redressed. Self dependency can help to raise their status in development course. For the proper development of the status of women there is need breaking of the traditional barriers, widening the frame work of employment opportunities of women, modifying the social attitude towards female workers and non-workers, developing the vocational guidance and counseling adoption and completing the structure of social protection with housing facilities of women workers. In the last but most significant is the role of women themselves to realize their importance and equality in the society. Self help group and self consciousness of women folk may bring the lost prestige and status if government and voluntary organizations become effective and operative in a planned way. Let the women realize their significant role at par with men the required result will be achieved.

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**Sabina Bano**

Research Scholar (SRF),  
sabina.dhn@rediffmail.com,

**Dr. A.P. Mishra**

Associate Professor,  
adeepayan@gmail.com,  
Department of Geography,  
Banaras Hindu University,  
Varanasi-221005