

Development Studies: Towards Empowering Women in the Emerging Economies of India and the UAE

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Abstract

Development studies have generally been concerned with improving standards of living, especially in emerging market economies. Governments have traditionally achieved this goal through an expansion of industries aimed at reducing poverty and furthering economic growth. This study is unique in that it recognizes empowerment as a requisite in ensuring the success of development initiatives. Stromquist (1995) defines four aspects of empowerment: cognitive, psychological, economic, and political. These aspects have each been employed to various degrees in nations' attempts to develop their societies. Sadly, whether we look to high-income nations such as the United Arab Emirates or to lower-middle income countries like India, the psychological empowerment of women remains a distant goal. As such, the project recommends that the traditional approach to development be complemented by furthering the intangible, psychological capacities of women. Only by instilling within women a sense of worth and consequent ability to make decisions in the public sphere can a woman's contribution to her society be truly maximized and societies be developed. The purpose of this essay is ultimately not only to analyze the advances made by women in key social, economic, and political sectors of Indian and Emirati societies, but also to assess the extent to which progress on these fronts has influenced the pace of socio-economic development. The sectors of health, education, and employment are targeted through a focus on historical analysis of feminist movements, observational field studies, ethnographic interviews, and case studies of the UAE and India. The hour-glass model is used in an effort to raise awareness about the crucial role women play in increasing the welfare of society, and so provide needed incentives for the enforcement of policies geared towards the comprehensive empowerment of women.