

IN FOCUS

Accelerating Women-led development

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In pursuance of India's civilizational deep-rooted values, guided by *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, the philosophy of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" that strives for humanity and universal brotherhood, *Nari Shakti* (women's power) has been central to India's progress. As the country advances toward *Viksit Bharat (Developed India)* by 2047, women's empowerment remains vital not just for the nation but for the entire Global South. India's G20 Presidency in 2023 reinforced the shift from *women's development* to *women-led development*, recognizing women as active drivers of change. On **International Women's Day 2025**, the call to **#AccelerateAction** is urgent, demanding global efforts to uplift women and girls.

In this perspective, countries in the Global South have been making concerted efforts toward gender equality through various developmental policies and programs. In view of this, South Africa's Gender Policy Framework, which guides the development of equal laws and policies, Rwanda's female-majority parliament, and India's *Mudra Yojana* and *WISE* (Women in Science and Engineering), which have strengthened women's entrepreneurship and participation, **truly reflect** ongoing efforts toward gender equity. However, despite various initiatives, systemic barriers still **persist**. As of 2021, only 68% of women in developing economies had bank accounts, women make up just 33.3% of global researchers, and Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 70% of maternal deaths. Women in agriculture, producing up to 80% of food in developing nations, still struggle to access land, credit, and resources. Closing these gaps requires expanding financial access, strengthening STEM education, improving maternal healthcare, and ensuring equal resources for women in agriculture and entrepreneurship. Providing credit, digital banking, and land rights can enhance economic participation. Gender-sensitive urban planning is equally vital, as one in three women in developing countries lacks access to safe sanitation.

DAKSHIN—a platform that curates and disseminates learning from the Global South to the Global South can amplify women's voices and support women-led research. This International Women's Day, let's accelerate action for a future where women **empower** societies.