

History and Regional Variation of Gender Disparity in Employment of Malda District: A Geo-spatial Analysis

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“Investing in opportunities for women and girls has strong multiplier effect across all Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).” -UNDP (2007)

Abstract

Gender disparity in employment is the basic problems of the Indian society. The gender disparity in employment is found from historical time in India. The overall female work participation rate is quite low as compared to male in the country even in the 21st century. This disparity in employment hampers the all round development of the society. Malda is a district of West Bengal with low work participation rate but high gender disparity in employment. According to 2011 census, the average female work participation rate is lower than the state average. The lower employment rate and high gender disparity in employment is obstructing the societal development of the district. Moreover, spatial variation in gender disparity is a burning issue in the process of development of the district. The present research work aims at highlighting the trends and regional variations of gender disparity in employment of the Malda district. The data has been collected mainly from the secondary sources of data like District Statistical Handbook, District Census Handbook, Primary Census Abstract, Census of India etc. Collected and tabulated data have been analyzed by different software like MS Excel-2007, ArcGIS (version 10.3) to draw the suitable maps and diagrams to draw the proper inferences.

Keywords: Gender disparity, Employment, Work participation rate, Secondary sources, Census

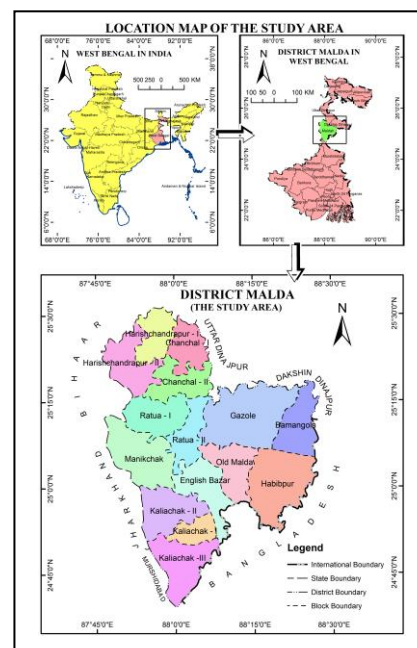
Introduction

In India, women are not considered at par with men due to prejudice against women and because of this prejudicial nature women are lagging far behind men in almost every spheres of life (Kumar, Kumar & Rani, 2016). Women may be empowered against social inequality and injustice by gaining the equal employment opportunities. The central and state government have taken many initiatives for the women empowerment in general and to eradicate gender disparity in employment in particular. In spite of the implementation of several schemes, there is a huge gender disparity in terms of employment throughout the country. The study area i.e. Malda district suffers from high gender disparity in employment.

Brief Information about the Study Region:

Malda district has been selected as the study area which is the southernmost district of North Bengal. It is located between the latitudes of 24° 40' 20" N to 25° 32' 08" N and the longitudes of 87° 45' 50" E to 88°28'10" E. The northern part of the district is surrounded by North Dinajpur District and southern by Murshidabad district across Ganga River, the east and the north-eastern part by South Dinajpur and Bangladesh and the western part by the state of Bihar and Jharkhand (GoWB, 2007).

Malda district covers an area of 3733 sq. km which shares 4.2 per cent to total area of the state of West Bengal. The district has of two sub-divisions namely Malda Sadar and Chanchal. Under these two sub-divisions there are fifteen C.D. blocks viz. Harishchandrapur-I, Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-I, Chanchal-II, Ratua-I, Ratua-II, Manikchak, English Bazar, Kaliachak-I, Kaliachak-II, Kaliachak-III, Gazole, Old Malda, Bamongola and Habibpur. About forty lakh people are living in this district which shares 4.37% of the total population in the state. This district is overwhelmingly rural in nature. Only 13.58 per cent urban population while 86.42 per cent reside in countryside. The sex ratio is 944 and the literacy rate is 61.73 per cent wherein male and female literacy is 66.24 and 56.96 per cent respectively (COI, 2011).

**Objectives of the Study**

The following are the specific objectives of the present study:

- 1) To analyze the history and measure the extent of gender disparity in employment of the district since 1951.
- 2) To examine the spatial variations of gender disparity in employment.
- 3) To suggest some strategies for the eradication of gender disparity in employment.

Rationale of the Present Study

The present study sifts the gender disparity in employment of Malda district of West Bengal. It is essential to measure the gender disparity in employment at the micro level to understand the ground reality of women empowerment and to codify the proper plan to uproot gender disparity by the block level administration. The study is unique in the sense that it examines the trend of the gender disparity of the district since 1951 as well as the C.D. block has been taken as the smallest unit of the study. Therefore, the findings of the study may be useful to frame and implement the proper strategies to abolish the gender disparity at block level.

Materials and Methods

This research work is mainly based on the secondary sources of data which have been collected mainly from the District Statistical Handbook, District Census Handbook and Primary Census Abstract, Census of India etc. Some books and journals have been reviewed to complete the work. To analyze the history of gender disparity in employment, the employment data of the district have taken into consideration while to examine the spatial variations of gender disparity C.D. block has been considered as the unit of analysis. The collected data has been tabulated and analyzed by suitable maps and diagrams to draw the proper inferences. Different software like MS Excel-2007, ArcGIS (version 10.3) has been used to draw the suitable maps and diagrams. The gender disparity in employment is measured by adopting the Sopher's Disparity Index (1974) which is modified by Kundu and Rao(1983).

Sopher's Disparity index=

$$D_i = \log (X_2/X_1) + \log \{(100-X_1) / (100-X_2)\}$$

Modified by Kundu and Rao

$$D_i = \log (X_2/X_1) + \log \{(200-X_1) / (200-X_2)\}$$

Where, D_i =Disparity Index, X_2 = Male, X_1 = Female and $X_2 \geq X_1$

Results and Discussion**Trends of Gender Disparity in Employment Rate**

Employment rate denotes the proportion of population who engaged in economically gainful activities. It is also known as the work participation rate (WPR) which is one of the indicators of socio-economic development.

Table 1
Malda District: History of Gender Disparity in Employment Rate (1951- 2011)

Census year	Total Employment	Male	Female	Gender Gap
1951	26.92	45.80	7.39	38.41
1961	32.79	53.37	11.46	41.91
1971	27.09	49.54	3.42	46.12
1981	30.31	50.08	9.47	40.61
1991	34.69	51.51	16.77	34.74
2001	40.75	52.55	28.29	24.29
2011	38.55	52.96	23.30	29.66

Source: Computed by Authors based district Census Handbook, Malda, 2011

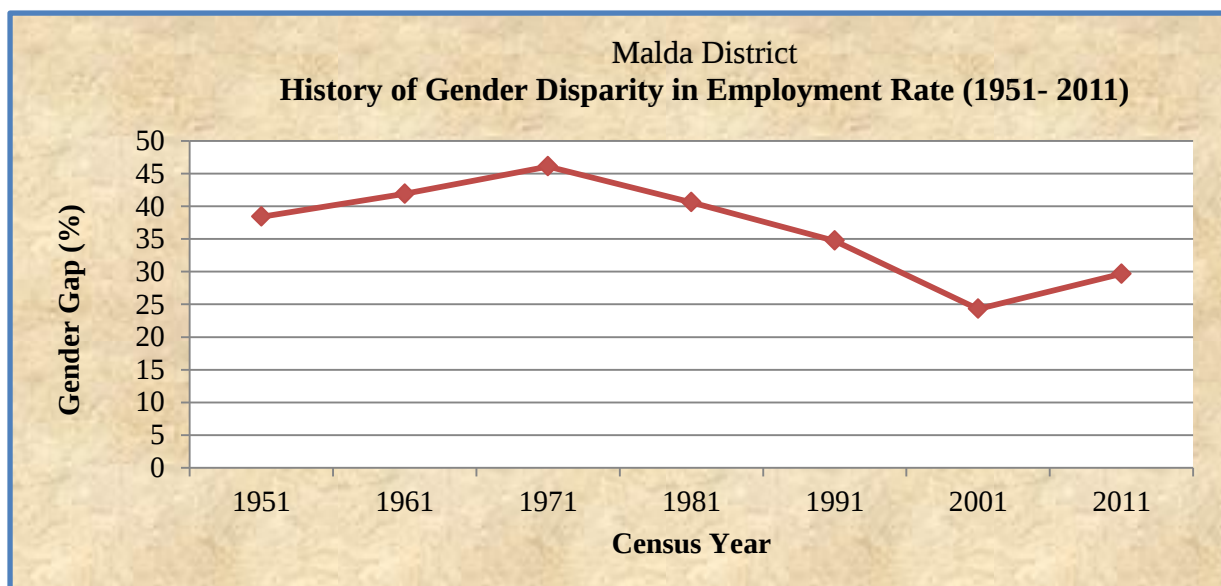


Figure 2 Trends of gender disparity during 1951-2011

The table 1 provides the trends of employment rate and the gender gap in employment of the district. It is observed that the female work participation rate is quite low than the male since 1951. Hence the gender gap is very high and fluctuating in nature. Though the situation of female work participation rate is gradually improving after 1981, the gender gap is still high. The female WPR was lowest with 3.42 per cent in 1971 hence the gender gap is highest in that year.

Spatial Variations of Gender Disparity in Employment Rate, 2011

There is a wide regional variation of gender disparity in employment rate throughout the district. These spatial variations have shown by disparity index value which is ranged from 0.120 to 0.867 which is recorded in Kaliachak-III and Ratua-II respectively. Based on these regional variations, the district has been divided into three distinctive zones such as low, moderate and high disparity zones.

Zone of Low Gender Disparity (Index Value ≤ 0.370)

This zone consists of only four blocks namely Kaliachak-I, Kaliachak-II Kaliachak-III and Habibpur with the disparity index value ranging from 0.120 to 0.300. These four blocks are in leading position in terms of WPR in the district and the WPR of these four blocks are higher than the district average of 38.55 per cent. The main reasons of low gender disparity and high work participation rate are (i) these blocks are famous for bidi industry which is basically household industry and due to it the females are getting opportunities to engage in this industry within the four wall of their own house, (ii) Kaliachak-III and Habibpur block entirely depend on agriculture along with bidi industry. These two blocks have an extremely high concentration of SC and ST population (see annexure-I). The both SC and ST communities allow their female member to work in the agricultural field as the agricultural labour. The females of these communities are engaged in bidi industry along with firming activities.

Table 2

Malda District: Block-wise Variations of Gender Disparity in Employment Rate, 2011

SL.No.	Name of CD Block	Work Participation Rate (%)			Gender Disparity Index
		Persons	Male	Female	
1	Harischandrapur - I	35.17	54.52	14.43	0.683
2	Harischandrapur - II	31.33	50.30	10.89	0.766
3	Chanchal - I	38.01	57.73	17.25	0.633
4	Chanchal - II	34.41	53.35	14.43	0.670
5	Ratua - I	32.81	50.28	14.17	0.644
6	Ratua - II	30.27	50.05	8.68	0.867
7	Manikchak	36.19	50.37	20.99	0.458
8	English Bazar	35.96	53.02	17.97	0.563
9	Maldah (Old)	40.37	57.22	22.67	0.496
10	Habibpur	45.83	57.60	33.74	0.300
11	Bamangola	42.55	58.16	26.00	0.438
12	Gazole	42.49	56.40	28.15	0.380
13	Kaliachak - I	44.46	50.49	38.17	0.156
14	Kaliachak - II	42.67	50.98	33.96	0.223
15	Kaliachak - III	44.67	49.33	39.76	0.120
Malda District		38.55	52.96	23.30	0.436

Source: Computed by authors based on Primary Census Abstract, 2011

Zone of Moderate Gender Disparity (Index Value 0.371 to 0.620)

With the disparity index value ranging 0.371 to 0.620 five blocks such as Manikchak, English Bazar, Bamangola, Old Malda, and Gazole belong to this zone. As the female work participation rate is low in English Bazar (17.97 per cent) and Manikchak (20.99 per cent) block, the total work participation is low for both blocks of 35.96 and 36.19 per cent respectively and gender disparity is high. Though, Bamangola, Gazole and Old Malda come under moderate zone of gender disparity, their female WPR is high as compared to English Bazar and Manikchak block due to the high concentration of SC and ST population as they allow their female member to work in agricultural fields.

Zone of High Gender Disparity (Index Value ≥ 0.621)

The six blocks are accounting 60.00 per cent of the total blocks of the district under the highest gender disparity zone. The six blocks namely Harishchandrapur-I, Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-I, Chanchal-II, Ratua-I and Ratua-II of *Tal* region have shown high gender disparity in employment rate. These six blocks have low work participation rate due to extremely low female work participation rate and hence high gender disparity. The entire *Tal* region is highly concentrated by Muslim population and they primarily depend on cultivation. In spite of that this community normally do not allow their female members to work even in their own agricultural field. Besides the

conservative nature of Muslim society towards female work participation, the absence of household industry likes *Bidi* industry is the main cause of extremely lower female work participation and thus resulting higher gender disparity in employment in this region.

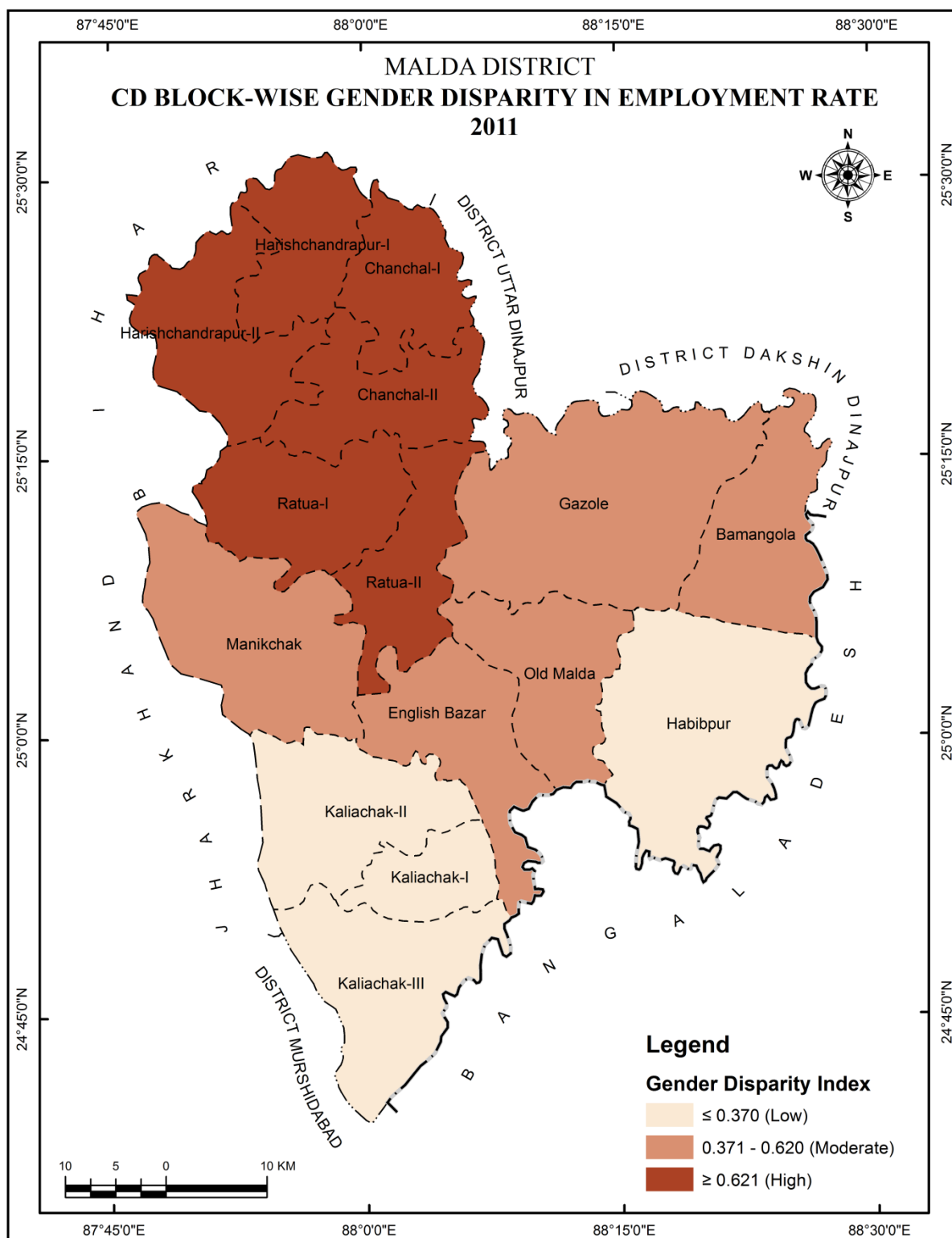


Figure 3 Regional variations of gender disparity in employment rate, 2011

History of Government Initiatives to Eliminate Gender Disparity in Employment

For the elimination of gender disparity in employment and for women empowerment, both the Central and state government have initiated a large number of programmes since the independence of the country. Majors of them are follows:

- ❖ **Scheme for Working Women Hostel:** Keeping in view the problems of the working women, the Government of India introduced a scheme in 1972-73 for construction of working hostel to promote safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women, with day care facility for their children, wherever possible, in urban, semi urban, or even rural areas where employment opportunity for women exists (MWCD, 1972-73).
- ❖ **Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP):** The STEP scheme was launched by Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) and effective since 1986-87 as a 'Central Sector Scheme' at aims to provide skills to women aged 16 years and above across the country. STEP imparts such skill that give employability to women and provide competencies and the skill that enable women to become self-employed/entrepreneurs. "The assistance under STEP Scheme will be available in any sector for imparting skills related to employability and entrepreneurship, including but not limited to the Agriculture, Horticulture, Food Processing, Handlooms, Tailoring, Stitching, Embroidery, Zari etc, Handicrafts, Computer & IT enable services along with soft skills and skills for the work place such as spoken English, Gems & Jewellery, Travel & Tourism, Hospitality."(MWCD, 2014)
- ❖ **Kishori Shakti Yojna (KSY):** The MWCD, Government of India, initiated a scheme called Kishori Shakti Yojna in 2000 using the infrastructure of ICDS to promote overall development of the girls in the age group of 11-18 years (MWCD, 2010).
- ❖ **Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls – SABLA:** It is 100 per cent Centrally Sponsored scheme launched by MWCD, Government of India, in 2009 to empower the Adolescent Girls (AGs) in the age group of 11-18 years. The main objectives of the Scheme are to "enable the AGs for self-development and empowerment, upgrade their home-based skills, life skills and tie up with National Skill, development Program (NSDP) for vocational skills, mainstream out of school AGs into formal/non formal education" (MWCD, 2010).
- ❖ **One Stop Centre Scheme:** Ministry of Finance, Government of India has established 'Nirbhaya Fund' with an initial corpus of Rs.1000.00 cr. (as per the announcement in Budget 2013-14) for women safety pertaining to the strategic areas of prevention, protection and

rehabilitation. It was implemented on 1st April 2015 with the 'Nirbhaya' fund. The One Stop Centres are established at various locations in India for providing shelter, police desk, legal, medical and counselling services to victims of violence under one roof integrated with a 24 hour Helpline (MWCD, 2017).

- ❖ **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP):** It is a joint initiative run by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Human Resource Development, launched by Honourable Prime Minister on 22 January 2015 in Panipath, Haryana. The overall goal of BBBP is to celebrate girl child and enable her proper education. The objectives of this scheme are to ensure survival and protection of the girl child, to prevent gender biased sex selective elimination and to ensure education and participation in all spheres of life of the girl child (MWCD, 2018).
- ❖ **Mahila E-haat:** As the part of 'Digital India' initiatives the Ministry of Women and Child Development launched this programme in 7th March, 2016. This is an online marketing platform to support Self Help Groups (SHGs) women entrepreneurs, and NGOs(MWCD, 2016).
- ❖ **Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme:** The budget speech (2017-18) of the Finance Minister announced setting up of "Mahila Shakti Kendra" is meant to provide "one stop convergent support services for empowering rural women with opportunities for skill development, employment, digital literacy, health and nutrition". MSK IS a new sub-scheme under the "Umbrella Scheme of Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shashaktikaran Yojana (PMMSY) has been approved for implementation during 2017-18 up to 2019-20 with a view provide an interface for rural women to approach the government for availing their entitlements and for empowering them through awareness generation, training and capacity building (GOI, 2017)."

Initiatives by the Government of West Bengal

The West Bengal Government has taken many steps for the women empowerment and to remove all type of social and gender disparity especially in employment. Some of them are as follows:

- ❖ **Kanyashree Prakalpa** is a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Scheme that provides incentives to the school going teenage girls in the age group of thirteen and eighteen, at the same time dis-incentivizing child marriage. The Scheme goes much beyond financial enablement - it not only builds awareness of the scheme, but also includes adolescent-friendly approaches events, competitions and Kanyashree clubs. The endorsement of

strong women figures as role models to promote helps empowerment (DWCDWSW, 2013). All the girls student of the state are getting Rs. 500.00 per month while attain the age of 13 years and at the age of 18 years use to get Rs. 25000.00 at a time through this scheme which has created havoc interest towards education among the girls student of the district. The scheme has been praised worldwide.

- ❖ **Muktir Alo:** Honourable Chief Minister, West Bengal inaugurated this social scheme on 4th September, 2015. On behalf of Women Development and Social Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal, West Bengal Women Development Undertaking has been declared as the Nodal Agency. Muktir Alo intends to provide the opportunities of life with dignity to the sex workers and trafficked victims (female) by providing alternative career opportunities (DWCDWSW, 2015).

Besides the above mention schemes, the government of West Bengal are providing financial assistance in the name of 'Shikshashree', 'Rupashree' not only for financially enabled to women but also for the endorsement of strong women figures as role models to promote psychological and social empowerment. The government has built many 'Kormo Tirtho' to promote female employment through Self Help Groups (SHGs).

Conclusions:

Despite the implementation of several schemes and programmes by the Central and state Government since independence for the eradication gender disparity, the country and the study area i.e. Malda district as well are characterized by high gender disparity in employment.

Following measures have been recommended for the eradication of all type of social gaps and gender disparities:

- (i) Universalizing the elementary education by setting up new girl's schools, providing proper school facilities.
- (ii) Providing free nutritious food to the children up to completion of elementary education.
- (iii) Proper implementation of RTE Act, 2009 which provide free and compulsory education to the children aged 6-14 years.
- (iv) Providing monthly scholarship for the higher education to the girl children who are belonging to the BPL families.
- (v) Creating job opportunities for the women especially for the rural women.
- (vi) Providing working women hostel in the place where job opportunities exist for women.

- (vii) Opening the training centres in each Panchayat to train the rural adult females that give employability to women.
- (viii) Assuring the women safety in their place of work and providing special mode of transport for the women so that they can reach their place of work or place of residence safely even at night.
- (ix) Creating public opinion in favour of women work participation rate in economically gainful activities.
- (x) Providing financial assistance to the Self Help Group (SHG).
- (xi) Appointing female officer at the village level to look after the works provided by the governments.
- (xii) Encouraging the NGOs to organize social works and creating awareness regarding dowry system and other social gaps.

Besides these, every educated people should take some accountability for the expansion of women education and engagement of economically gainful activities to remove gender disparity at the grass root level.

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Annexure-I

Malda District: Block-wise gender Disparity Index, 2011

SL No.	Name of the Block	Percentage Share of Population to Total Population of the District			Disparity Index
		Muslim	SC	ST	
1	Harishchandrapur-I	59.41	24.60	2.08	0.115
2	Harishchandrapur-II	73.65	12.85	2.88	0.066
3	Chanchal-I	71.22	13.37	0.42	0.075
4	Chanchal-II	71.25	8.33	6.71	0.056
5	Ratua-I	66.88	11.09	8.52	0.087
6	Ratua-II	78.71	6.37	0.97	0.047
7	Manikchak	43.88	27.73	14.87	0.141
8	English Bazar	51.49	17.31	1.89	0.081
9	Old Malda	28.60	32.16	15.05	0.121
10	Habibpur	1.28	50.02	29.11	0.168
11	Bamangola	8.87	49.46	20.15	0.149
12	Gazole	23.60	37.36	19.94	0.138
13	Kaliachak-I	89.29	3.83	0.39	0.058
14	Kaliachak-II	65.98	15.56	2.29	0.096
15	Kaliachak-III	50.72	29.44	7.05	0.131
	Malda District	51.27	20.94	7.87	0.095

Source: Computed by authors based on Primary Census Abstract, 2011