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Geographical-niche of women empowerment in north Bihar

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Abstract

The North Bihar Plain Region since long has the very high level of poverty; the state also performs poorly in terms of most of the other social and human development indicators. The socio economic contrast thus has become sharp.

During last three decades the North Bihar Plain Region has observed significant social, economic and political transformation during the last three decades or so. While progress has been uneven, there has been some social and political empowerment of the poor, women, more so among those belonging to privileged castes and considerable decline in poverty as well, although still more than half of the population continues to be poor. To empower women financially, ensuring their equal access and control over economic resources, and guaranteeing that they can use them to increase increased control over other areas of their lives, is imperative. Realizing the economic empowerment of women requires concerted efforts to prioritize and recognize the needs and priorities of women. It is also important to target structural determinants, and recognize that no intervention can address all the main building blocks of women's economic empowerment, such as education, skill development and training, access to quality, decent paid work, Redress of unpaid work and care burden, access to property, property and financial services, collective action and leadership, adequate social security, agency and equitable norms. Furthermore, contextually relevant strategies - are necessary to ensure equal outcomes for poor and marginalized women. The Government of Bihar plays an important role in achieving the economic empowerment of women, thereby achieving their major development goals.

Keywords: edging, interventions, de-womanising, dehumanizing, NCRB, bangle making, bidi-rolling, agarbatti-rolling

Introductions

North Bihar Plain geographically embodies *varieties of crops & the bliss of rivers*. The region is most malleable ground in terms of development of economic landscape. For human resource development it is imbued fertility and on social grounds it is genial. However, history of women in the coverage areas also, portrays the conventional inherited traits; the perspectives of women development have been more pitifully depriving. It is probably the most significant aspects which have probably responsible for deprivation of the state from getting the dividends of overall targeted growth and regional socio-economic imbalance.

The area in focus is stretched over north of Gangetic River covering 21 district of the state and part of Bhagalpur district. Total area covers up 49,263 km² with a population of 64,891,281 persons. The region of north Bihar has a total of 31,107,271 female populations as male recorded to 33,784,010 in 2011 census.

Methodology

For the thematic areas where district level data is available, the district rankings and the composite indices have been calculated using the Range Equalization method, the advantages of which include: • Depiction of the gender status of different parameters for all districts using a standard methodology and colour-coding which presents a snapshot of the prevalent situation for each identified indicator. • Highlights inequities within the state, and helps to identify the districts and areas lagging behind, requiring focused attention and intervention. The composite index for a category, such as the Education, is obtained by first making all the Education-linked indicators scale-free. This is done by subtracting an indicator's minimum value from each observation and then dividing it by its range. Without scaling, a composite index can be biased toward an indicator with the highest range. Steps followed to calculate the composite index and aggregate indices were:

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• The proportion of the value for each indicator, under each component was calculated. • Next, the index was calculated by using the Range Equalization method as described above. The aggregate indices were calculated as an average of composite index. • The aggregate index for the major indicator indicates the relative performance for overall thematic areas. Better health is central to human happiness and well-being. It also makes an important contribution to economic progress, as healthy populations live longer, are more productive, and save more. Healthy populations are a foundation for sustainable social, economic and environmental development. In the last decade, Bihar has made great progress in improving health outcomes among its population. Mortality Indicators of mortality, including Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), are regarded as highly sensitive or proxy measures of population health. These numbers reflect the association between the causes of maternal and child mortality, and other factors that are likely to influence the health status of whole populations such as their economic development, general living conditions, social well-being, rates of illness, and the quality of the environment.

The Women Subordination

The concern of female subordination is as old as human record and cuts across various societies, cultures, civilizations and ideologies. The setback has a global perspective and is not particularly associated with a certain regional grouping geopolitical entity or ideological orientation. Manifestly, it also transcends all epochs and even with the scientific and technological advancements, female subordination is still a thorny issue. Women emancipation in realistic and positive sense is still a mirage even in the developed world. It goes without saying that education helps men and Women claim their rights and realize their potentials in economic, political and social spheres of life. It is also a powerful way, through which people lift up their natural and physiological role-playing positions of life. This goes with assertion that Education is a fundamental instrument which differentiates a fully developed human being from other mammals and is a

criterion for measuring the mental, spiritual, political and to some extent, the economic development of man. Education is therefore a necessary ingredient for a meaningful development of all human beings as well as their society.

Table 1: North Bihar: District wise Frequency in Sex ratio

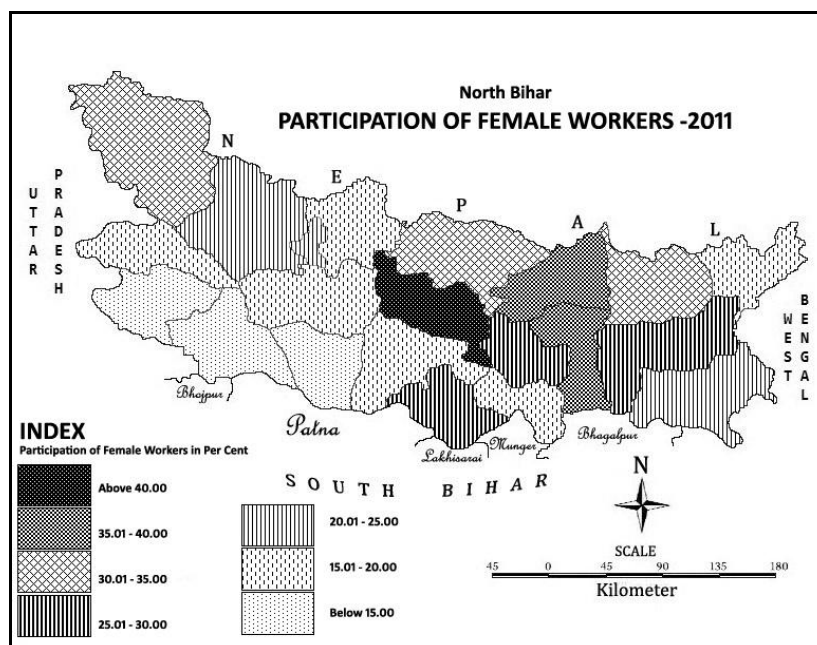
Gender Ratio	Category	Total Frequency	Rural Frequency	Urban Frequency
Less than 875	Very Low	Nil	Nil	2
875 - 900	Low	9	8	14
900 - 925	Notably Moderate	8	7	4
925 - 950	Moderate	2	3	Nil
950 - 975	Considerably High	1	1	1
975 - 1000	High	1	Nil	Nil
Above 1000	Very High	1	2	Nil

In specific terms, views education as a means that helps Women take advantage of opportunities that could benefit them and their families and preparing them for the labor force. It is asserted asserts that Women's education leads *directly to better* economic growth for the society. To demonstrate further concerns for Women highlight that The Beijing Conference (1995) on Women has inter alia recommended the implementation of an affirmative action on;

- Giving Women appointive positions of leadership at ward, state and national levels,
- Ensuring that the concerns of Women, like those of, men to occupy the center stage of all issues,
- Representation of Women in appointive positions and
- Ensuring the annual budget devoted to programmes on women empowerment.

Struggle for women right and equal opportunity

Even after more than fifty years of Indian democracy the struggle of women to get equal rights and opportunities continues all over the not even in the country but in the entire world. Nonetheless, over the years in foremost parts of the country have shown a sign of significant improvement in the socio-economic status of women, Bihar, has lagged far behind the other states.



Map -1

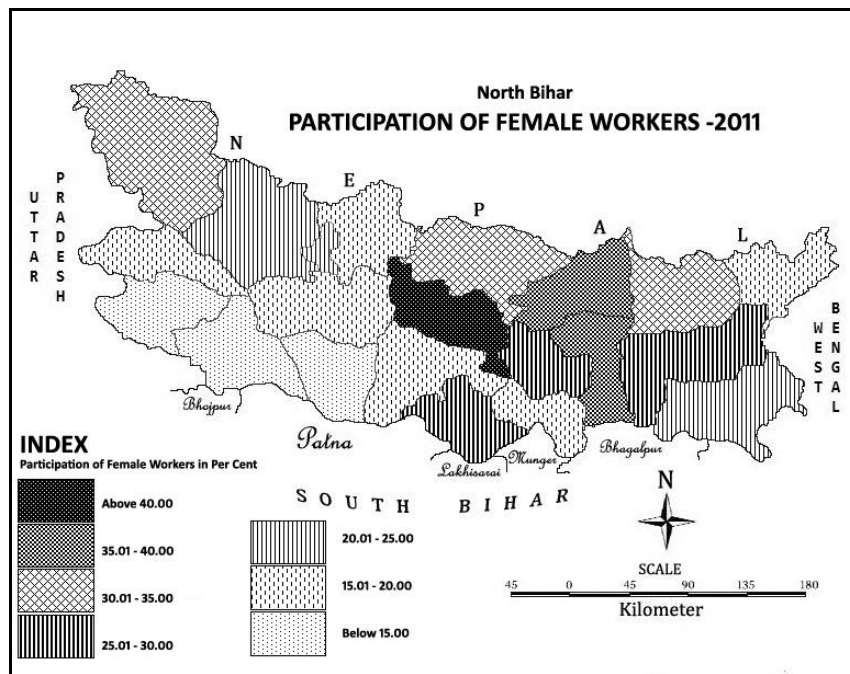
Much has been said about the endemic nature of social and economic backwardness in Bihar. According to a recent study conducted by Rajiv Gandhi Foundation 26 out of the 100 poorest districts in India, are from Bihar. This constitutes more than two third of the state.

The position to emphasize is that the pervasive nature of State's social and economic backwardness has prevented researchers in focusing on vital social sectors concerning women. Hence the overall condition of women in the state has remained a neglected terrain. In a state where more than 40 per cent of the population live below the poverty line and more than 80 per cent of the population live in the pitiable conditions of rural Bihar, to talk of the edging of women has been considered meaningless. However, there is a catch in

this situation, and this pertains to being a victim of double discrimination;

- Being women of a backward region, and
- Overpowering or overruling the backwardness of women.

The research assumes to situate the general condition of both working & non-working women in Bihar in terms of their health, education, empowerment, autonomy, access to resources, participation in work and the institutional efforts in order to reach women. This hopefully will enable us to framing our study of "Social and Economic Position of Women in North Bihar." The study covers broader perspectives of the issues related to emancipation of women empowerment and regional development;



Map -2

In the above backdrop it clearly emerge that although socio-economic status women has been earlier studied it is arguably poorly understood in terms of complexity and diversity and how it affects the different castes, classes and groups of female population. It is evident that in recent times virtually no study on the status of economic participation of women has been conducted separately on present scale. Some of the reports or studies aims to fill some gap by providing an in-depth assessment of socio-economic status of women in the study region covered under the limited objective objectives of research project with a view to offering practical suggestions for interventions to maximize the positives and minimize the negatives associated with the socio- economic status of women in rural areas. While the focus of our study is socio-economic empowerment, researches conducted through other agencies has non-economic dimensions that draw on other aspects such as good governance and women's human rights. Therefore, it is important to understand the various dynamics of women's economic participation to accelerate the process of women empowerment and keeping this in mind the present research study assumes to examine the nature and extent of women's socio-economic participation in North Bihar Plain Region. It is evident that the economic

status of women is not as satisfactory as we had expected and hence there was a compelling necessity to study their condition in the current socio-economic and political set-up. It needs study aims at fulfilling the following objectives:

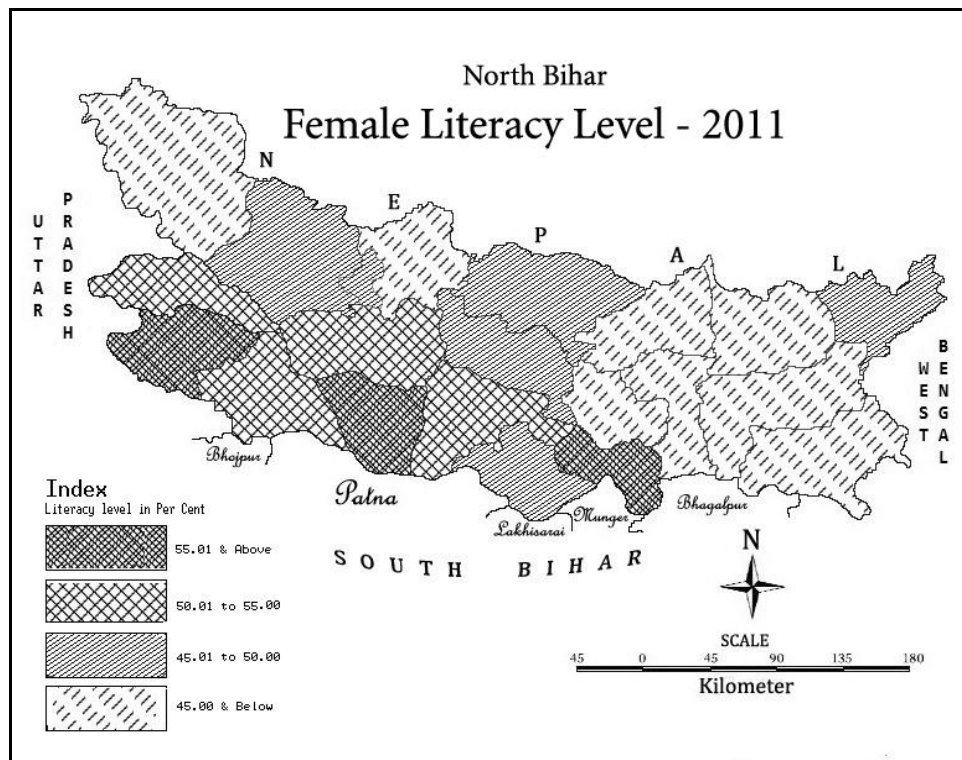
- Tempo-spatial fluctuation in female population and demographic inconsistency.
- The literacy level by various classes and social groups.
- The economic status of women. Social conditions of female workers/non-workers;
- Needs of women, their income, standard of living and to study the major problems of female workers/factors that facilitate their economic participation;
- Impact of various successive government policies and strategic plans on empowerment of women.

Status and Prospect of Female Population

All these go a long way to show the multi-faceted need for education by all and more direly for Women. In other words, for the life of mankind to be meaningful, purposeful, goal-oriented, successful, happy and prosperous, as well as live in peace and tranquility and achieve societal concord, men and Women must acquire a qualitative, functional, role oriented, useful, and positively beneficial and goal oriented education. Dauda (2010:3) concludes that there is no

denying the fact that for both men and Women to enjoy a truly successful life, they must acquire some qualitative, role oriented and positively utilitarian Education. Education in other words, is the basis for the socio-political, economic,

physical, moral, spiritual, scientific and technological development of both the individual and the society within which they live.



Map -3

Despite these lofty assertions and conclusions about the indispensability, measurements and goal-settings about Women education, much need to be considered about what type of education and what job best fit a woman considering her gullibility, physiological and psychological characteristics. It needs not to be misconstrued that the pressure and demand for certain category of jobs are both de-womanising and dehumanizing for the Women folk

though some of the Women are working with the deceitful belief that they can do “whatever” men do. The Women in particular, as the life vein of the society, and the custodians of its distinct socio-cultural values, and as the first teachers of all Sons and daughters born in the society, ought to be given Education which is both biologically and culturally suitable and relevant to their distinct societal roles and their natural disposition.

Table 2: Female Literacy Level -2011

Category	Range	Frequency	Level	District (Figure in Per cent)
1	Above 55.00	3	1	Siwan (58.5), Vaishali (56.7), Khagaria (55.2)
2	50.01 - 55.00	4	2	Gopalganj (54.8), Muzaffarpur (54.7), Saran (54.4), Samastipur (51.5)
3	45.01 - 50.00	6	3	Begusarai (49.6), Kishanganj (46.8), Madhubani (46.2), Sheohar (45.3), Darbhanga (45.2), Pn. Champaran (45.1)
4	Below 45.00	8	4	Supaul (44.8), Ps Champaran (44.7), Katihar (44.4), Araria (43.9), Sitamarhi (42.4), Purnia (42.3), Madhepura (41.7), Saharsa (41.7)

Most of the work that women do, such as collecting fuel, fodder and water, or growing vegetables, or keeping poultry for domestic consumption, goes unrecorded in the Census counts. Many women and girls who work on family land are not recorded as workers. In 1991 women and girls comprised 22.5 per cent of the official workforce. Data from the National Sample Surveys records higher work participation by women than the Census. Women constitute 90 per cent of the total marginal workers of the country. Rural women engaged in agriculture form 78 per cent of all women in regular work. They are a third of all workers on the land. The traditional gender division of labour ensures that these women get on average 30 per cent lower wages than men. The total employment of women in

organised sector is only 4 per cent. Although industrial production increased in the 1980s, jobs in factories and establishments - or non-household jobs - stagnated at eight per cent of the workforce. Increasingly, companies tend to rely on outsourcing, using cheap labour. It is well known that women and children work in huge numbers in bidi-rolling, agarbatti-rolling, bangle making, weaving, brassware, leather, crafts and other industries. Yet, only 3 per cent of these women are recorded as labourers. They are forced to work for pitiable wages and are denied all social security benefits. A study by SEWA of 14 trades found that 85 per cent of women earned only 50 per cent of the official poverty level income.

Social Status of women

Crime against women has been rising with each year. Violence, both outside and within the household, is a grim

reality of women's lives. Between 1990 and 1996 crimes against women grew by 56 per cent. Cruelty to wives comprised 28 per cent of all crimes in 1996.

Table 3: North Bihar: Crime Against Women

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Rate of total Cognisable Crime against Women in Bihar (%)	6.5	6.7	6.8	9.2	6.7	7.4	8.1	9.2	9.2	8.7	9.9	10.8
Crime against Women to total Crime in Bihar (%)	6.1	6.1	6.4	7.5	6.2	6.7	6.9	7.1	7.2	6.6	7.5	7.7
Crime against Women in Bihar to all India Crime against Women (%)	3.7	3.9	4.2	5.2	3.9	4.1	4.1	4.4	4.3	4	4.5	4.7

Source: Report, Government of Bihar, Government Press, Patna - 2014

The extent of trafficking in women is unknown. However, one official study admits to 100,000 prostitutes in six metro

cities. Of these, 15 per cent are girls below the age of 15. Cross-border trafficking is common.

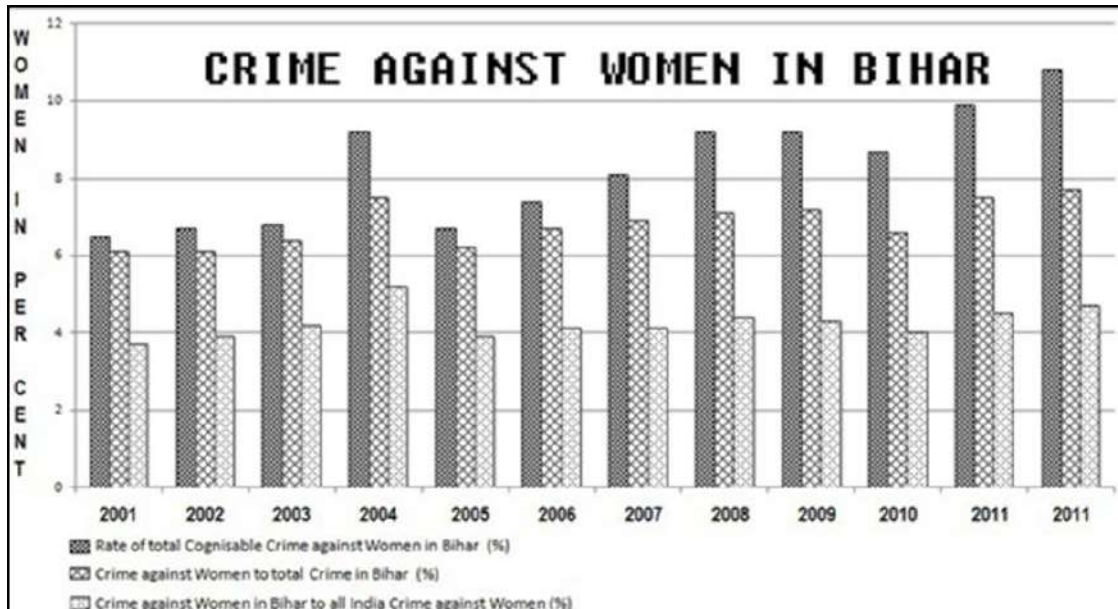


Fig 1: The Task

Recent Trend

The latest data released by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) on Tuesday showed Bihar at eleventh position among the states and Union Territories in terms of crime against women. In 2014, the state was ranked eighth.

Altogether 13,891 cases of crime against women were reported to police in Bihar in 2015 comparing to 15,383 cases in 2014. Like previous years, kidnapping of women with intent to compel them for marriage saw a sharp increase in 2015. Altogether 4,444 women were kidnapped from across the state for marriage in 2015. Bihar came second in this category while Uttar Pradesh topped with 8,290 women kidnapping cases.

Similarly, in dowry deaths and cases registered under the Dowry Prohibition Act also, Bihar came second after Uttar Pradesh. According to the NCRB data, 1,154 cases of dowry deaths were reported to Bihar police in 2015, while the number stood at 2,335 in Uttar Pradesh in 2015. Altogether 1,867 cases under the Dowry Prohibition Act were reported in Bihar and 2,766 cases in Uttar Pradesh.

Education, unawareness and poverty are the main cause of these crimes. Interestingly, the data revealed that not a single case of sexual harassment of woman at workplace and in public transport was registered in Bihar in 2015. According to the data, 1,041 incidents of rape were reported to police in 2015 comparing to 1,127 such incidents in 2014. Of the 1,041 rape cases in 2015, the offenders were known

to the victims in 954 cases. In 315 additional rape cases, the offenders committed the crime with a false promise to marry the victims.

The Task Ahead

The socio-economic development of women is a critical component of any human resource strategy and one of the expected outcomes of human resource practitioner's activities. Despite this, women power planning, as well as succession planning has only recently enjoyed resurgence in popularity. To some extent this has been prompted by the need to develop equity and workspace, skills plans and set numerical equity targets in respect of boost in female population. The failure of many organisations to develop and implement socio-economic-empowerment of women is rather indicative of the lack of strategic planning itself.

Planning socio-economic-empowerment is a systematic process of identifying the qualities, numerical values, competencies required to meet the regional strategic goals and for developing the strategies to meet the emerged socio economic inequalities and gender imbalances. It is a methodical process that provides planners with a framework for making human resource decisions based on the socio-economic scales and a set of desired competencies among either sex category. Women empowerment based planning is a systematic process that is integrated, methodical, and ongoing. It identifies the human capital required to meet

development goals, which consists of determining the number, characteristics, skills and technology which female population possessed and required to be needed in future to reduce the gap created in socio economic fields. Finally women population targeted planning entails developing the

strategies to meet these requirements, which involves identifying actions that must be taken to attract (and retain) the number and characteristics of female population keeping in view of the regional requirements.

Model -1

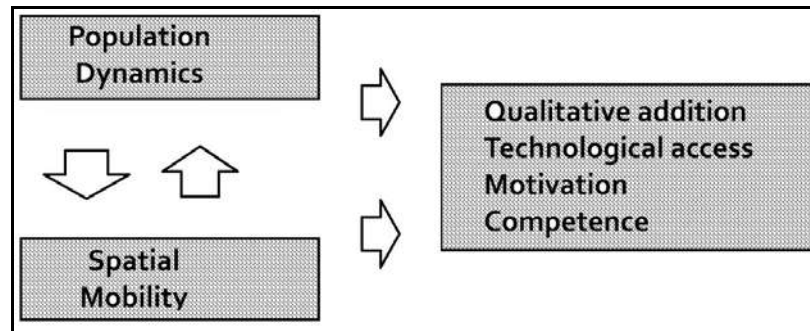


Fig 2: Social & economic position of woman in north bihar needs, deciding gender equality & behavioural change

Findings

A plan related to socio-economic empowerment of women can be as simple or complex and integrated. It can be performed for a sector, partition, space or for the establishment as a whole. Whatever the level or approach being adopted, it must nevertheless be integrated with broad-based planning strategies. In addition to plan socio-economic empowerment of women, one must ensure that regional structure and socio-economic status ensure the efficient delivery of services which may be very effective in development of region as a whole.

A comprehensive workplace skills plan will identify appropriate training priorities based on the organisations workforce needs now and in the future. New recruitment practices may need to be adopted to increase the representation of designated groups, or securing essential skills in the organisation. A comprehensive "learnership strategy" may assist in developing future workforce needs, identified either in terms of the organisations workforce plan or required in terms of industry black economic empowerment charters.

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