

THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN TELANGANA STATE

Durga Kalyan G (Guduri)*

Abstract

Woman in the modern hi- tech society which is moving very fast under the shadow of population explosion, conflicts, chaos and corruption can mold the personality of the adolescent and youth in a proper direction and perspective, provided the woman are themselves in power. There is a positive relationship between education and woman empowerment. Another important aspect in this regard is that, Land represents a fundamental asset to the rural families in India as it is a primary source of income, security, and status. Since its independence, the Government of India has taken up several land reforms as a part of its National Agenda.

* *Dept. of Public Administration, University College of Arts & Social Science, Osmania Univeristy, Hyderabad*

Introduction

Empowerment is a process by which persons lacking access to material and social resources gain greater access and control over those resources and improve their life circumstances. Psychological empowerment occurs when a person is enabled to participate in decisions affecting him or her and to exercise some even limited control over life choices. It is generally recognized supported by psychological and other social science research that empowerment is essential to progress and stability in national development. There is great cultural and environmental diversity among the communities in which rural the 2010 General Assembly Resolution, The Improvement of the Situation of Women in Rural Areas women and girls live. These communities have much in common but also have unique characteristics. Rural women with disabilities are probably the most disempowered of all rural women because they face discrimination, poverty and related societal risks and are often ignored in women empowerment programmes planning. Therefore, empowerment efforts that target rural women and girls have to be culturally and demographically relevant to the communities they serve to be effective.

The psychosocial empowerment of rural women and girls including women and girls with disabilities involves three steps. First, psychological distress must be reduced and participation in economic and social activities encouraged. Second, isolation must also be reduced by developing social relationships and networks. Finally, women's rights to participate in social and economic decision-making at all levels should be supported. The recognition that rural women have rights to ownership and participation in economic decisions is critical to their successful empowerment. A psychosocial approach to empowerment promotes rural women's and girls' recognition and development of their human rights and their strengths, and provides resources and skills. Rural women even while living in extreme poverty and suffering gender disparities and traditional role restrictions play a critical role in family, food security, and survival. They also enhance agricultural and rural development. Their vitality and resilience are protective factors to be nurtured because they provide psychological buffers helpful to avoiding and recovering from threats to their lives. Focusing on these strengths can serve as a basis for effective programs.

India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.

The women's movement and a wide-spread network of non-Government Organisations which have strong grass-roots presence and deep insight into women's concerns have contributed in inspiring initiatives for the empowerment of women.

Gender disparity manifests itself in various forms, the most obvious being the trend of continuously declining female ratio in the population in the last few decades. Social stereotyping and violence at the domestic and societal levels are some of the other manifestations. Discrimination against girl children, adolescent girls and women persists in parts of the country.

Constitutional Provisions, Special Laws and National Policies in Support Of Women Empowerment

The importance of women as an important human resource was recognized by the Constitution of India which not only accorded equality to women but also empowered the State. A number of Articles of the Constitution repeated towards the socio-economic development of women and participation decision making. These are:

- a. Article 14 Men and women to have equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic and social spheres.
- b. Article 15(1) Prohibits discrimination against any citizens on the grounds of religion, race, sex, caste etc.
- c. Article 16 Equality of opportunities in matter of public appointments for all citizens.
- d. Article 39(d) Equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- e. Article 42 the state to make provision for ensuring first and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

Government has also enacted specific laws to safeguard the interests of women and for up gradation of their status. These are:

- a. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 which provides for women the right to parental property.

- b. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 which declares the taking of dowry an unlawful activity and thereby prevents the exploitation of women.
- c. Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 which provides payment of remuneration equal with men for work of equal value.
- d. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 which legalizes abortion conceding the right of a woman to go for abortion on the ground of physical and mental health.
- e. The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983 which seeks to stop various types of crimes against women.
- f. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 which prohibits the vulgar presentation of women in the media such as- newspapers, cinema, T.V. etc.
- g. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 provides for more effective protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the Constitution who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family.

Goal and Objectives

The goal of women empowerment programmes is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The Women empowerment programmes will be widely disseminated so as to encourage active participation of all stakeholders for achieving its goals. Specifically, the objectives of this Women empowerment programmes include

- (i) Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential
- (ii) The de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres – political, economic, social, cultural and civil
- (iii) Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation
- (iv) Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.
- (v) Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; and

- (vi) Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.

Women Education in Women Empowerment

The concept of Women empowerment is a recent one. The first year of New Millennium 2001 was declared as "Women Empowerment Year" Jawaharlal Nehru said "Education of a boy is the education of one person, but the education of girl is the education of entire family." Education of a women leads to a better family and ultimately an ideal society to a progressive nation. A progressive nation is one where all the people of the country in respective of sex, religion, caste, creed and color are economically, socially, culturally, politically and through all thoughts are independent.

Education of Women Enhances the Women Empowerment in the following ways:

1. An education of women can bring change in the attribute of family members and society. It also helps in removing mal-traditions like Sati-Pratha, Early marriage, Dowry etc. Education promotes team work rather than making a woman individualistic. Education makes her an opportunity to choose a career which is best suited for her.
2. Education helps in balanced personality development by giving due weight to various aspects of personality.
3. An educated women is a guiding light for the children, family members, society and nation, she knows how to have a happy family and balanced and healthy relations with others.
4. Education encourages women especially the rural women to take advantage of the various schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Operation Black-Board, and Total Literacy Programmes etc.

Land Access to the Poor

Land represents a fundamental asset to the rural families in India as it is a primary source of income, security, and status. Since its independence, the Government of India has taken up several land reforms as a part of its National Agenda. The Land component of SERP works in two directions: Land Purchase i.e. securing the poor access to productive lands through allowing purchase of good quality irrigated lands, and Land Access i.e. facilitating the poor to have

control over their lands in terms of having secure title, handling their lands locked in courts/disputes, awareness as to the measures taken by the Government to protect the interests of the poor manifested in the form of pro-poor enactments etc.

Vision Statement of IKP

Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) is an autonomous society of the Department of Rural Development, Government of Telangana. SERP is implementing Indira Kranthi Patham (IKP), a statewide community driven rural poverty reduction project to enable the poor to improve their livelihoods and quality of life through their own organizations. It aims to cover all the rural poor households in the state with a special focus on the poorest of the poor households.

The disadvantaged communities shall be empowered to overcome all social, economic, cultural and psychological barriers through self-managed organizations. They will attain higher productivity with improved skills and asset base and utilize resources to full potential and gainful access to services.

Internal Organizational Structure

SERP is registered under the Societies (Telangana) Act, chaired by the Chief Minister as the ex officio Chairman of the General Body (GB). This body has broad representation from key stakeholders, government and NGOs. The General Body consists of twenty-five members, with five ex officio government officials and twenty representing leading agencies and individuals contributing to rural development, community mobilization and poverty alleviation.

The management of SERP is entrusted to an Executive Committee (EC), of which an eminent non-governmental person is President and the State Project Director is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The President of EC is the Vice Chairperson of the GB. The EC consists of seven members with three ex officio government officials and four drawn from the civil society.

SHG Movement

The Self Help Group (SHG) movement in India represents an innovative approach to financial intermediation, and combines access to low-cost financial services with a process of self-management and development for the SHG members. SHG members make small regular savings contributions, and use the savings to lend to group members. IKP also establishes SHGs as financial intermediaries between SHG members and banks, which gives the members access to bank loans.

Through IKP, SERP works with 4,76,930 Self Help Groups federated into 28,080 Village Organizations (VO) and 700 Mandal Samakhyas (MS) with the primary obligation to build strong institutions for the poor and enhance their livelihood opportunities.

A 2009 study found a significant economic impact for long-term SHG participants, including poorest of the poor participants. According to the study, 2.5-3 year exposure to the program leads to increased consumption, improved nutrition, and asset accumulation.

Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture (CMSA)

The CMSA department of SERP works on ecological alternatives in agriculture which make best use of local resources and encourage the farmers to reduce the use chemical pesticides. This is done through advocating Non-pesticide Management (NPM) of insect pests. The poor are encouraged to adopt sustainable agriculture practices to reduce the costs of cultivations thus increasing net incomes. Other major causes of agricultural distress among the rural farmers in India such as displaced local knowledge, unsustainable agricultural practices like monocropping and imperfect markets are also addressed.

Institution Building

This segment works at building Community Based Organisations (CBOs) that aim to bring together the poor women and assist them to work collectively towards sustainable development. These CBOs; Zilla Samakhyas at district level, Mandal Samakhyas at mandal level, Village Organisations at village level and SHGs at the group level, form the basic structure on which the foundations for the growth of rural poor are laid

Conclusion:

To conclude the present scenario, it may be said that woman in the modern hi- tech society which is moving very fast under the shadow of population explosion, conflicts, chaos and corruption can mold the personality of the adolescent and youth in a proper direction and perspective, provided the woman are themselves in power.

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