

STRATEGIES FOR EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Dr. D Sammaiah*

ABSTRACT

The term 'Empowerment' is the restructuring of gender relations both within the family and society at large and it societies recognition of women's equality with men on terms of their worth to society as independent persons. Empowerment process encompasses several mutually reinforcing components but begins with and is supported by economic independence. However, equitable access to resources, power and decision making is of paramount importance in empowerment of women and under Gandhiji's leadership played a very important role in the freedom movement. Women from all walks of life participated in the movement. After independence the constitution guaranteed to all women equal rights of participation in the political process of the country along with equal opportunities in education and employment. This approach is the recent women's development approach, which came into existence through third world women's feminist and grass roots organisations experience. The purpose of the approach is to empower women through self reliance. India after achieving independence decided to develop the economy through economic planning. The development of the economy through economic planning was undertaken to achieve steady economic development in the market economy, remove unemployment, poverty and economic inequalities and achieve self reliance and self sufficiency. A number of programmes were implemented. In this context the government initiates empowering strategies for women's development. Development of women through five year plans. The concept of women's development in the first five year plan (1951-56) was mainly "Welfare Oriented". In the second five year plan (1956-61) women were organised into Mahila Mandals to act as focal points at the grass root level for the development of women etc. In line with the eighth plan strategy promises ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors do not bypass women. Women must be enabled to function as equal partners and participants in the developmental process. This is a further shift from "Development to empowerment" of Women. Empowering strategies implemented by the government through many schemes. In this paper clearly explain all these strategies and government initiatives like SEP, STEP, NORAD, ICDS, MSY, DWCRA etc.

KEYWORDS: Empowerment, Five Year Plans, Government Initiative, Strategies, Schemes.

Introduction

Empowerment approach is the recent women's development approach, which came into existence through third world women's feminist and grass roots organisations experience. The purpose of the approach is to empower women through self reliance. "It also acknowledge the inequalities subordination in the family and stated that women experience oppression differently according to class and race". This approach arose out of failure of equity approach. It emphasizes the fact that women experience oppression differently according to their race, class, colonial history and current position in the international economic order. It maintains that women have to challenge oppressive structures and situations simultaneously at different levels. This approach stressed the importance of women's organisations and acknowledges the functions of traditional organisations. It seeks to assist the traditional organisations to create awareness of feminist issues.

This approach recognised the triple roles of women that is:

- The productive role
- The reproductive role and
- The productive role and community role

* Deputy Director, Dr. BRAOU RCC, SR & BGNR Degree & PG College, Khammam Dist., Telangana, India.

Through bottom up women's organisations empowerment approach seeks to raise women's consciousness to challenge subordination. It seeks address the patriarchal system as the root of women's subordination.

Components of Empowerment

Empowerment process encompasses several mutually reinforcing components but begins with and is supported by economic independence. Components are basically different types they are:

- A critical component to achieving economic independence is access to and control over production resources.
- A second component of empowerment is knowledge and awareness of one's self and society and of personal needs health issues, legal rights technological innovations and the availability of social and economic resources and how to take advantage of them.
- The third component is self image. This includes realization of one's capabilities and the potential and confidence to take action in one's life. Both economic independence and knowledge create a positive self image but confidence in one's self can also facilitate the acquisition of further knowledge and action towards attaining greater economic independence.
- The final component is autonomy which in its ultimate realization, is the empowerment of women at the level of society.

For women, empowerment is the restructuring of gender relations both with in the family and society at large, and it society's recognition of women's equality with men on terms of their worth to society as independent persons. However, equitable access to resources, power and decision making is of paramount importance in empowerment of womens and under Gandhiji's leadership played a very important role in the freedom movement women from all walks of life participated in the movement. After independence the constitution guaranteed all women equal rights of participation in the political process of the country along with equal opportunities in education and employment.

Approaches to Women in India

Development of women through five year plans upto empowerment

After India achieved Independence government adopted the welfare approach to women welfare measures for women were envisaged in the first five year plan (1951-56) at the same time simultaneously occur the political empowerment of women has made considerable strides with 2.8 percent women being represented in the 1st parliament of 1952 – 57 to 7.2 percent in the 10th Lok Sabha. In 1952 elections out of 499 members only 22 were women and in 1991 general elections 28 women were elected to lok sabha and out of 58. Ministers in the cabinet only six were women including one with cabinet rank Women's representation in the Rajya Sabha has shown some improvement, having increased from 7.7 percent in 1952 to 15.5 percent in 1991.

In parliament, despite steadily expanding participation from the 3rd Lok Sabha onwards, and also in general election their numerical strength has never exceeded ten percent of the total membership of either houses of parliament. In this context the women's has participation in the First Five year plan (1951-56) was mainly welfare oriented. The central social welfare board (CSWS) setup in 1953 to initiate and supervise the welfare programs meant for women. Community development programme was introduced and in line with this philosophy emphasized organisation of women into Mahila mandals or women's clubs. In the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) women were organised into mahila mandals to act as focal points at the grass root level for the development of women. The third, fourth and other interim plans (1961-74) accorded high priority to education of women, measures to improve maternal and child health service. This plan recommended the need to train which the need of income and protection. This plan recommend functional literacy for women.

Fifth plan coincided with a) International women's decade and b) submission of the report of women's in India (CSWI). National plan of action (1976) were the major outcome of this report and it identified the special areas like o 1) Health, 2) Family planning, 3) Nutrition, 4) Education, 5) Employment, 6) Legislation, 7) Social Welfare to formulate and implement action programmes to raise the status of women.

There was a shift in the approach for women's development from welfare to development.

The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) as stated earlier it was a landmark in the history of women's development as to received recognition as one of the developmental sectors and was included in the sixth plan document as a separate chapter for the first time in the history of developmental planning. The sixth

plan adopted a multi-disciplinary approach with a three pronged thrust on health, education and employment. DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas) was launched in 1982 as a subcomponent of IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Project) for the social and economic upliftment of women. In the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) the development programmes for women contrived with the major objectives of raising their economic and social status and to bring them into the mainstream of national development. A significant step in this direction was to identify / promote the "beneficiary oriented programmes" for women in developmental sectors which extend direct benefits to women.

The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97), which was benched in 1992, which was launched in 1992, promises to "ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors do not bypass women" and special programmes will be implemented to complement the general development programmes. Therefore, the flow of benefits to women in the three core sectors of education, health and employment will be mentioned with a greater. Women must be enabled to function as equal partners and participants in the developmental process. This approach of the Eighth plan marks a further shift from development to "empowerment of women".

The impact of various developmental plans policies and programmes over a period of four developmental decades (1951 – 91) have brought perceptible improvement in the socio-economic status of women in the country. In these four decades developmental approaches the stepping stone of women's empowerment like social economic and political empowerment or improvement status. In these period important achievements understand the government initiative to women's development.

Empowering Strategies Government Initiatives

Indian government launched many programmes for empowerment of women. They are:

Special trust on employment and training for women:- In line with the Eight plan strategy the nodal department of women and child development has reset its priorities, to accord special emphasis on employment and income generation activities for women. The ultimate objective in all these efforts is to make women economically independent and self reliant. Some of the important programmes initiated by the Department in this direction are (many schemes)

- **Support to Training and Employment Project**

Step: The programme of STEP launched on 1987 aims to upgrade the skills of poor and asset less women mobilise, conscientize and provide employment on a sustainable basis to women in the traditional sectors such as: agriculture, dairying, fisheries, sericulture, hand looms, handicrafts etc. In addition to training and employment support, the three special features which this programmes includes are gender sensitization, women in development (inputs) and provision of "support services.

- **Training cum Employment cum Production Centers (NORAD)**

The second major programme of training cum employment cum production centres which are commonly known as NORAD assisted "Training programmes for women", extends financial assistance to public sector undertakings / corporations / voluntary organisation to train women in non-traditional trades and provide employment on a sustainable basis. Priority is given for training in modern and upcoming trade like electronics electrical, watch assembly and manufacturing, computer programming, printing and binding, handloom, garment making, weaving and spinning, hotel management, beauty culture, fashion technology, tourism, bakeries and office management these programmes are benefitted to women and girls. This programme not only play a preventive role in keeping the young and adolescent away from early marriage, but also keeps them gainfully engaged with economic independence and self reliance.

- **Socio-Economic Programme (SEP)**

The third major programs of employment and training for woman is the socio-economic programme implemented by the central socio welfare board (CSWB) SEP provides "work and wage" to needy women such as destitute, widows, deserted. Economically backward and handicapped. Since the inception of the programme in (1958 till today). It could provide wage and work trades promoted under this programme include both traditional and agro based industries.

- **Condensed Courses of Education and Vocational Training for Adult Women: (CCE& VT):**

The scheme started in 1958 and reset in 1975 by the CSWB. It aims to provide new employment through continuing education and training for women and girls who are school drop-outs. A number of voluntary organisations organised condensed courses of education and vocational training.

Welfare and Support Service

The national machinery has a wide network of support services for women and children belonging to lower economic strata through voluntary organisations. These support services represent an important “plank for the empowerment of women” as they reduce the burden of child care and employment related problems. They are or support services are:-

Hostels for Working Women

In order to promote greater mobility for women in the employment market, the nodal department launched a scheme of hostels for working women in 1973 to provide “safe” and “cheap” accommodation to single working women who come to the cities or towns for the sake of employment.

Creches for Working Mother’s Children

The central scheme of creches for working / ailing mother’s children is under implementation since 1975-76. The scheme is implemented through voluntary organisations. The scheme envisaged day – care services for children of the age group 0-5 years services include health care, supplementary nutrition, sleeping facilities, immunization and play and recreations for the children.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

This scheme, described as India’s gift to her children is today the world’s largest world development programme.

Schemes for Adolescent Girls

For the first time in India a special intervention has been devised for adolescent girls using the ICDS infrastructure. This scheme focuses on school drop-out girls in the age group of 11 – 18years and attempts to meet the special needs of Nutrition, Health, Education, Literacy recreational and skill development of the adolescent girls a better future mother and tap has potential as a social animator.

Early Child Hood [Pre-School] Education (ECE)

This programme is designed to improve the children communication and cognitive (Social emotional, Intellectual and personality development) skills as a preparation for entry into the primary schools.

Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)

DWCRA is a sub scheme of IRDP and came into existence in 1982-83 for the empowerment of women and children at the grass root level.

Gender sensitization and awareness generation:

The treatment method to women and girls indifferent modes of human communication mirror the prevailing attitudes and values towards women in a particular society.

Trysem

(Training of rural youth for self employment) scheme prescribes a norm of having at least one-third of the trainees as women. Monitoring of beneficiary oriented schemes for women the BOS department specially monitors 27 beneficiary oriented schemes which are women specific and reports directly to the prime minister office.

Special initiatives

National Commission for Women

In January 1992, the Government has setup a statutory body called National commission for women with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relations to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary and to look into complaints involving deprivation of the rights of women.

Rashtriya Mahila Kosh

Setting up of Rashtriya Mahila Kosh a National Credit Fund for women in 1993 is yet another innovation. The kosh was visualized, aims to reach the poorest of the poor and assetless women who are in need of credit but cannot reach the formal banking or credit system through the mediation of thrift and credit groups and NGO’s. This would help develop a national network.

Legal Literacy Manuals

A legal literacy manual was brought out in 1992 with the aim of educating women about the laws concerning their basic rights. These manuals have been written in a simple and illustrated format so that even semi-literates and neoliterates are able to comprehend them.

National Resource Centre for Women

Government is also finalizing a proposed to setup the national resource centre for women which will act as an apex body for promotion gender perspectives in policies and programmes of the government.

Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY)

Another initiative to empower women by raising their economic status in the scheme of Mahila Samridhi Yojana launched on 2nd October 1993. The scheme aims to promote among the rural women and to save and improve their financial assets.

Reservation of Women in Grass Root Democracy (1992)

The 72nd and 73rd constitutional amendment bills passed in 1992 by parliament. Women as they ensure 1/3 of total sector for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas and urban areas. As a result of this, women brought to the centre stage in the nation's efforts to strength democate institutions at the grass root levels. Women are going to emerge as leaders / decision makers at grass rod levels and entry into public life.

Training in Leadership Development

A massive country wide training programme was launched in 1983 to extend leadership training for women Sarpanch, Panchayat members / Chair persons.

Voluntary Action

The central social welfare board, which is an apex agency of voluntary organisations of national level promoted voluntary action and community participation through its country wide network of more than 12000 voluntary organisations at the grass roots level. Besides these there are many more voluntary organisations working at block district / State level in the field of women development.

Strategies during the Nineties

In the nineties, the strategy was to ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors do not by pass women. Special programmes with greater gender sensitivity were implemented to complement the development programs. The flow of benefits to women in the three core sectors of education health and employment.

Conclusion

The government took strategies for empowerment of women through development programmes. Whether it is in the field of education and literacy, health and environment, sanitation, training and income generator science and technology media and advertising or judicial reforms, womens concur are fast getting flag marked. Though government strategies, a great led towards brining women into the mainstreams of national development. Employment and income generation activities including self employment with training for upgrading of skills is a major intervention for raining to women. All these government programmes and strategies and are encourage the women development. But today there are so many issues face women. Eventhough women try to change their status with their empowerment. All women to know about all projects and schemes. Then women uplift their status in the society though empowering strategies are keeps them gainfully engaged with economic independence and self reliance.

References

1. Report of the committee on the status of women in India :Towards equality, Dept. of social welfare, ministry of education and social welfare, Government of India, New Delhi, 1974.
2. Government of India Report: Policies and programmes for the advancement of women in India, Dept. of women and child development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi, 1993.
3. Desai, Neera and Maithreyi Krishnaraj : Women and society in India Ajanta Publications, Delhi 1987.
4. Indian Association for women's studies : The New economic policy and women, Bombay 1993
5. Dube, S.C.: Modernisation and Development. The search for alternative paradigms, Vistaar publications 1988.
6. Shram Shekti : A summary of the report of the National commission on self employed women and women in the informal sector".

