

Women Entrepreneurship, Capacity Building and Women Empowerment

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ABSTRACT: *This paper intends to place a particular emphasis on women entrepreneurs whose business have growth potential as a more strategic way to create sustainable jobs and decent work. Enabling more women to pursue enterprise, growth through a more favorable support environment generates employment, empowers women and brings social and economic benefits to women and to society at large. This paper also seeks to redress existing gender imbalances in enterprise development through approaches and activities aimed specifically at women. There is also a need to reduce the vulnerability of women's enterprise relating to working conditions; safety and health at work; social protection; lack of organization; representation and voice; access to appropriate financial services; and all forms of gender based discrimination.*

Keywords: *Women entrepreneurs, Capacity building and Women Empowerment*

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.”- Jawaharlal Nehru

Throughout history and in many societies including India, gender inequality was part and parcel of an accepted male dominated culture. Atrocities and discrimination are the two major problems, which the Indian women face in the present day society. The traditional mentalities of India assume that the place of women mainly concentrated to the household activities like kitchen work and upbringing of the children. Even after sixty five years of independence women are still one of the most powerless and marginalized sections of Indian society.

The 2011 census shows that the sex ratio for India is 914, which is lowest in the world. Percentage of female literacy is 65.46% against male literacy of 82.14%. In India, women's representation in Parliament and in the state assemblies was never beyond 8 to 10% respectively. Most of the working women remain outside the organized sector. A mere 2.3% women are administrators and managers. 20.5% professionals and the technical workers earn 25% of the shared income.

Empowerment is a process aimed at changing the nature and reaction of systemic forces which marginalize women and other disadvantaged sections. While empowerment has become significant for creating enabling conditions for disadvantaged groups at the same time, it has also become a rallying cry for grassroots movements.

For Sen (1993), empowerment is reflected in a person's capability set. The 'capability' of a person depends on a variety of factors, including personal characteristics and social arrangements. Empowerment is the capacity to fulfill this capability and not just the choice to do so. Sen's view on women's empowerment is indicated in his discussion on measurement of empowerment (Sen 1990). According to him, the focus should be on certain universally valued functioning, which relate to the basic fundamentals of survival and well-being.. These include proper nourishment, good health and shelter. If there are systematic gender differences in these very basic functioning achievements, they can be taken as evidence of inequalities in the underlying capabilities, rather than as differences in preferences.

Women's empowerment emerges: (i) as a result of cultural, economic and other changes, such as the availability of new technologies in their lives (e.g. mobile phones and satellite television); (ii) as women's current opportunities and constraints; and (iii) as a process in time, across generations (Cornwall and Edwards 2010).

Empowerment in public spaces is also determined by women's ability to form social networks and social capital and their ability to sanction, influence and change social norms. According to Krishna (2003), empowerment means increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make effective development and life choices and to transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes. The nature of empowerment here is of women not only at an individual level, but collectively as well.

The democratic process in India created the awareness among the women about their plight. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental duties and Directive Principles. The constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India provided for reservation of seats (at least one-third) in the local bodies of Panchayat's and Municipalities for women. Another constitutional Amendment (84th Constitutional Amendment Act 1998) reserving 33% seats in the Parliament and State Legislatives.

Various welfare measures have been taken by the Govt. from time to time to empower women. The Training for- Employment Programme (1987), Mahila Samridhi Yojna (1993), the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (1992-1993), Indira Mahila Yojna (1995), DWACRA Plan (1997) and Balika Samridhi Yojna (1997). On 12th July, 2001, the Mahila Samridhi Yojana and Indira Mahila Yojna have been merged into the integrated self-help group programme i.e Swayam Siddha.

In recent years the entrepreneurship has gained wide popularity on the whole globe. The rate of becoming entrepreneurs in women is more compared to men. (Renzulli et al 2000). Woman entrepreneur is any woman who organizes and manages any enterprise especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk.

In 1975-76 the number of Industrial units run by women entrepreneurs in Kerala was 73. It has increased to 4, 190 industrial Units in 1993-94. The women entrepreneurs in Kerala are now at the top of all industries right from readymade garments to high tech computers. (Kuruksehtra, June 1998).

In our state Jharkhand, Silli (legislative assembly area) is one of the best example where 15,000 women are involved in "Gunj Pariwar" (NGO) and women entrepreneurs are involved in knitting, mushroom agriculture and pickle making Industry etc.

The linkage between this aspect of empowerment and microfinance was explored by Sanyal (2009) in her study of 59 microfinance groups in West Bengal. She found that economic ties produced through access to microcredit led to improvements in women's social capital and their ability to influence social norms. This fostered women's capacity to undertake collective action and facilitated their collective empowerment.

CHALLENGES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

As we see, government is taking some concrete steps in empowering women by helping women to help themselves and their families. But are these programs sufficient? Are they bringing about a change in the attitude of a patriarchal society? Here are some bitter answers:

- The maternal mortality rate in India is the second highest in the world. India accounts for more than 25% of all maternal deaths in the world.
- In a survey conducted by WHO, more than 80% of pregnant Indian women are found to be anemic. This results in exceptionally high rates of child malnutrition. Malnourished women give birth to malnourished children, perpetuating the cycle
- Only 39% of Indian women attend primary schools. Most families pull them out of school, either to help out at home or from fear of violence.
- While women are guaranteed equality under the constitution, legal protection has little effect in the face of prevailing patriarchal traditions. Women lack power to decide who they will marry, and are often married off before they reach the age of 18.
- Lack of individual property rights
- Lack of legal status (in some countries)
- Lack of collateral
- Insufficient access to finance and credit facilities
- Lack of control over income and household investments
- Lack of confidence and ability to enter new areas of activity
- Lack of access to information and networks
- Lack of time and autonomy
- Limited education and vocational training
- Insufficient recognition by governments of the role women play in economic development

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Capacity building is the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes in individuals and groups of people relevant in the design, development and maintenance of institutional and operational infrastructures and processes that are locally meaningful (Groot and Moolen, 2001)

Certain organization work towards the capacity building of women entrepreneurs.

What is a Women Entrepreneurs' Association?

- A WEA is a non-profit organization that encourages entrepreneurship through leadership and mentorship, networking, training and advocacy
- In an WEA owners of micro and small businesses cooperate to pursue common interests
- **WEAs are:**
 - Voluntary
 - Member-based

WEA Membership

- Sources of members for WEAs include:
 - Women entrepreneurs
 - Aspiring businesswomen
 - Women professionals
 - Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
 - Partners in women development organizations

What do WEAs Do?

- Activities that WEAs are involved in include but are not limited to:
 - Providing a forum for women who manage or own commercial enterprises
 - Promoting entrepreneurship among women and thereby empowering them to join the economic mainstream
 - Encouraging and facilitating training of women in modern business administration and technologies
 - Facilitating the access to finance
 - Lobbying & advocacy
 - Working with existing financial institutions and participating in their special programs for women customers
 - Linking women mentors with proteges
 - Learning and sharing from others, network and exposure
 - Developing successful models of entrepreneurship for emulation worldwide

SUGGESTIONS

Right efforts from all areas are required in the development of women entrepreneurs. Role of rural women entrepreneurs in economic development is inevitable.

The following efforts can be taken into account for effective development of women entrepreneurs.

- i. Better educational facilities and schemes should be extended to women folk from Govt.
- ii. Training Programme on management skill should be provided to women community.
- iii. Counseling through the aid of committed NGO'S, Psychologists, managerial experts and technical personnel should be provided.
- iv. Making provisions of marketing and sales assistance from Govt..
- v. Making provisions of micro credit system and enterprise credit system to the women entrepreneurs at local level.
- vi. A women entrepreneur's guidance cell set up to handle the various problems of women entrepreneurs.
- vii. Training in entrepreneurial attitudes should be given at the High School level through well designed courses.

IV. CONCLUSION

Women's equality in power sharing and active participation in decision making in political process at all levels should be ensured for the achievement of the goals of empowerment. All measures should be taken to guarantee women equal access to and full participation in decision making bodies at every level, including the legislative, executive, judicial, corporate, statutory bodies, as also the advisory Commissions, committees, boards, trusts etc.

Rural women are not as aware and literate as to handle all the legal and other formalities involving in loan taking and establishing an Industrial Unit. They also lack confidence in their ability to run the entrepreneurship. They need capacity building and training in functional areas such as finance, literacy skills, marketing, production and managerial skills. The only urgent need is to create a favorable atmosphere to increase self employment for women and over all developments of the country. Thus, there are bright prospects for rural women entrepreneurship in India.

“A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform.” ~Diane Mariechild

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