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Role of NGOs in Women Empowerment: With Special Reference to Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

Empowerment of women has emerged as an important issue in recent times. Empowerment of women facilitates for sustainable rural development by the uplifting the economic, social and political status of women in India. Empowering the women in these aspects is necessary to convert the idle society into self-sustainable society. Women empowerment can be achieved through provision of adequate education facilities, political support, and effective legislation system and employment generation for women. Here, NGO'S and the self-help groups (SHG) play a very pivotal role in women empowerment by providing basic education, vocational training, training for self-employment, legal aid, protection for women and self-awareness programme. Thus they are mainly concerned with the upliftment of the women in the society. This paper looks into the dynamism of the process through which women empowerment is achieved and the status of women are uplifted with the aid of NGO's and self-help groups in Uttar Pradesh.

This paper deals with empowerment of rural women through NGOs and the advantages entrepreneurship among the rural women. This paper seeks to explore some measures that should be adopted in order to (re) position rural women as equal players in entrepreneurship and economic development.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, sustainable rural development, NGOs, Self Help Groups (SHGs), upliftment, vocational training, self-employment.

Introduction

This paper is based on the fact that economy of a nation can be improved only when the quality of life of the citizens of a nation can be effectively improved by raising the standards of living of the people on the street and in backward areas. In India and in many other developing countries women plays a very important role in the upliftment of the nation in all the aspects like social, political, economical and legal. Empowerment means control over material assets, intellectual resources & ideology which involves ability to get what one wants & to influence others on our concerns. Women empowerment includes the lives of women at multiple levels, family, community, market, & the state. The question surrounding women's empowerment, the condition and position of women have now become critical to the human rights based approaches to development. Empowering the women in social, political, economical and legal aspects is necessary to convert the idle society into self-sustainable society.

Women empowerment can be achieved through political power, education, employment, NGO and SHG. Among these, NGO and SHG dominate and fruitful success of the women empowerment needs to occur along multiple dimensions including: economic, socio-cultural, familial/interpersonal, legal, political, and psychological. Since these dimensions cover a broad range of factors, women may be empowered within one of these sub-domains. Human development report since 1999 demonstrated that practically no country in the world treats its women as well as men according to the measures of life expectancy wealth and education. S.Mukhopadhyay in her study reports that female work participation rate in U.P. is reported as 11% with a Gender gap of 52% equal to West Bengal but less than Punjab. 56% women are in community service 17% in Manufacturing & 8.6 rural women in agriculture. Only 4% women as against 10% men are in the formal sector.

2.0 Literature Review

The following literature has been reviewed in this paper to study the role of NGO's in women empowerment:

(Collier, 1998). Since, the 1980's the Government of India has shown increasing concern for women's issues through a variety of legislation promoting the education and political participation of women.

(Narayan, 2002; Sadik, 1988), International organizations like the World Bank and the United Nations have also focused on women's issues, especially the empowerment of poor women in rural areas. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have moved beyond the traditional focus of women's health and education to addressing the underlying causes of deprivation through the promotion of economic and social empowerment.

(Dhillon & Hansra -1995). Voluntary organization is not a new phenomenon in our country. Voluntary effort has always been an important part of our culture and social tradition. The need for organizing people into accredited associations and their involvement and participation in rural development have now been fully recognized. In recent years, they have increased in considerable number, acquired greater importance and significance and put up many new experiments in the field of rural development. Voluntary organization can play a crucial role in rural development by supplementing government efforts as they are close to the minds and hearts of the rural people. They have their roots in the people and can respond to the needs and aspirations of the community very effectively. They can experiment new approaches to rural development.

(Ahsan Ullah, 2003: 21). Literatures suggest that NGO interventions positively contribute to women empowerment. This Paper focus on the role of NGO's located in areas of Uttar Pradesh.

(Rowlands1995; Oxaal and Baden 1997; Hainard and Verschuur 2001) has documented that woman empowerment is essentially a bottom-up process rather than something that can be Formulated as a top-down strategy. According to Zimmerman.

Rappaport (1988), empowerment is the ability of individuals to gain control socially, politically, economically, and psychologically through

- Access to information, knowledge, and skills;
- Decision making; and
- Individual self-efficacy, community participation, and perceived control.

(Rowlands 1997), Empowerment approaches to finding effective ways to support women and enable them to mobilize for change comes from within them, not from outside. Collective empowerment involves individuals working together to achieve a greater impact than they could have achieved alone. In fact, the collective empowerment is very closely related to the personal level since without empowerment at a personal level it is very hard for an individual to be active collectively. Community empowerment includes some elements such as working together, participation in NGO's programmes and community awareness. The concept of working together refers to individuals who are interested to work with the other people in different context, to share their skill and knowledge.

(Agbola 1994) ^[1], the concept of participation in NGO's programme is related to involvement in programmes that are

organized by NGOs to improve the community situation. Meanwhile, community awareness refers to awareness of women about their role and situation in household, community and society. NGOs are private, voluntary, non-profit organizations independent of any government and funded through individual and corporate donations, levies imposed on members, grants from international agencies and governments.

3.0 Objective of the Study

The study is a humble effort to assess the NGO programs and the impact of NGO based on the purpose of women empowerment and various processes applied by the NGOs, promotion of SHGs, the background of NGOs, and their role in the process of Women Empowerment. The following are the specific objectives of the Study.

- To study the function of NGOs which are extensively involved in the process of Women empowerment in the state of Uttar Pradesh.
- To study the various methods used for Women empowerment by NGO's in Uttar Pradesh.
- To Study the various experiences gained and problems faced by the NGOs during the women empowerment process in Uttar Pradesh.
- To study strategic roles of the NGOs perform which help women to access information for their development.

4.0 Overview of Women Empowerment

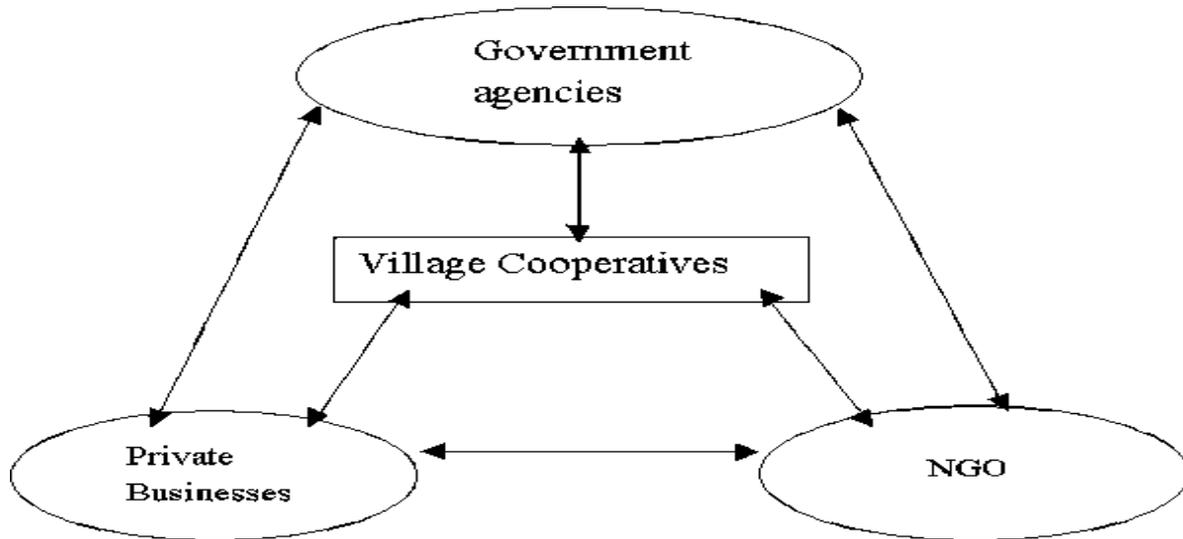
Women, although constitute half of humanity, are socially, economically and politically marginalized. The nature of empowerment can be diverse, depending upon the parameters that define the lack of power within the institutional framework in operation. For the past several decades, national governments, non-governmental organizations and international agencies have been aware and concerned about the status of women. Efforts have been made by these bodies to improve women's literacy, nutritional and health levels and enhance their income-earning capacity. As Mayoux (1998) suggests, Empowerment is a process of internal change, or power within, augmentation of capabilities, or power to, and collective mobilization of women, and when possible men, or power with, to the purpose of questioning and changing the subordination connected with gender, or power over. Thus self-confidence and self-esteem plays an important role in this change. The concept of participation in NGO's programme is related to involvement in programmes that are organized by NGOs to improve the community situation.

5.0 Non-Government Organisation (Ngo)

A non-governmental organization (NGO) is any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of service and humanitarian functions, bring citizen concerns to Governments, advocate and monitor policies and encourage political participation through provision of information. Some are organized around specific issues, such as human rights, environment or health. They provide analysis and expertise, serve as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements. Their relationship with offices and agencies of the United Nations system differs depending on their goals, their venue and the

mandate of a particular institution. Promoting employment is of particular interest to some NGOs working with poor woman. Nonprofit organization, term is usually applied only to organizations that pursue wider social aims that have political aspects, but are not openly political organizations

such as political parties. The following diagram illustrates the framework under which Government agencies, village cooperatives, private business and NGO's work in a village to promote rural development;



6.0 Structure of Self Help Group (Shg)

The SHG offers the canvas to conduct social intermediation, provide women the opportunity to acquire the ability and entitlement to their own lives, set their own agenda, gain skills, solve problems and develop autonomy (Meenai, 2003). Self-help assist the rural area people in their financial needs that ensures that unemployed a low level people get the better opportunity and they start to earn their livelihoods by themselves.

- The ideal size of an SHG is 10 to 20 members.
- From one family, only one member (More families can join SHGs this way)
- The group consists of either only men or of only women. (Mixed groups are generally not preferred)
- Women's groups are generally found to perform better.
- Members have the same social and financial background
- Compulsory attendance.

In India, NABARD plays a key role in assisting banks and NGOs involved in micro finance schemes.

6.1 The member of SHG's may exhibit the following outputs, resulting from their activities:

- Acquisition of literacy and numerically skills;
- Awareness of basic legal rights;
- Awareness of projects and state development activities;
- Critical political consciousness; electoral process, societal analysis and gender issues;
- Enhanced social status as perceived by self and other's;
- Freedom from exploitation, money lenders, landlords etc;
- Active role in organization of group and other political bodies, viz. Panchayat;
- Ensuring literacy and education of girl child;
- Health consciousness;
- Restructuring of women's time utilization; and
- Enhanced decision making powers within the household.

6.2 Functional areas of SHG's

The following are the main functions of SHGs:

- The members should participate actively in every activity conducted by it and the members should be responsible for the savings of its members.
- These savings can be provided as a loan to the members. Everything related to finances should be decided by the group itself.
- To resolve its member's problem, meetings should be conducted so that the members can share their problem openly.

7.0 National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001)

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favors of women. From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women.

7.1 Goals and Objectives of the policy

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

- Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential.
- 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.
- Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the

nation.

- Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office, etc.
- Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.
- Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.
- Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.
- Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child;
- Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.

7.2 Partnership with the voluntary sector organizations

The involvement of voluntary organizations, associations, federations, trade unions, non-governmental organizations, women's organizations, as well as institutions dealing with education, training and research will be ensured in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and review of all policies and programmes affecting women. Towards this end, they will be provided with appropriate support related to resources and capacity building and facilitated to participate actively in the process of the empowerment of women.

8.0 Research Methodology

We have used secondary data for the purpose of this research paper. The main sources of secondary data are NGO's manual, annual general reports of NGO's and SHG's, journals, newspapers and concerned websites.

9.0 Roles and Functions of Ngos

Women Empowerment has been the central agenda for both government and NGO's. Voluntary action promoted by voluntary agencies engaged in development play a significant role at the grass roots level in the regions of Uttar Pradesh for the success of rural development which is dependent upon the active participation of the people through Non-Government Organizations (NGO). The various roles of NGOs are described below for better understanding:-

- Educating the Rural Women
- Supplementation of Government Efforts
- Efforts Organizing the Rural Women
- Building various Model and Experiment
- Ensure Women's Participation in their empowerment
- Mobilizing the optimum Resources
- Promoting Rural Leadership
- Representing the Rural Women
- Promoting Technology in Rural areas
- Activating the Rural Delivery System
- Providing effective & efficient Training to Rural Women.
- Monitoring and Evaluation.
- Impact assessment.
- Planning and Implementation.

10.0 Conclusion

There is significant impact of NGOs on women in Uttar Pradesh. After joining NGO's, drastic changes are seen in the life style and living standard of women. Now women have

started earning money, becoming independent and self-motivated. They can take their own decisions in some matters and give their suggestions in family concerns. The study found significant difference in NGOs' efforts towards implementation of interventional measures in the area of health and to increase literacy level of women. But even after a lot of effort of NGO's in the area of women empowerment, still the situation need to be improved at the paramount level. NGOs and SHGs helps to Women for their empowerment. Study found that a very small percentage from the backward classes actively participate in the meetings of the gram sabha and are involved in the decision making process. As per review of literature NGOs are helpful to improve the capacity building and social mobilization of women in Uttar Pradesh.

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