Women Empowerment - A Strategy for Development

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Abstract:
Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process, which should enable women or group of women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. Empowerment comes from women's groups who seek to empower themselves through greater self reliance. They have right to determine their own choices in life. They also seek to gain control and access to resources. Women play a vital role in society. Women have contributed in all areas and there are so many examples in all fields. There is a need of time to frame the women empowerment programme at all levels. Definitely we can say that India has done the improvement in social, economical and political status of women. Again there is need to strictly implementation and development of scheme and plans started by Government of India. So women Empowerment itself elaborates that Social Rights, Political Rights, Economic stability judicial strength and all other rights should be also equal to women. There should be no discrimination between men and woman. Women should now their fundamental and social rights which they get one they born.

There is need to give special attention on women Empowerment in World. Also traditional attitude has to change regarding women. Awareness programme, education and positive role of every indivisible will help to development the status of women in World. To stop the women exploitation, rape sexually harassment, acid throwing, and domestic violence. Child marriages and female foeticide with effective instruments and control on these problems.

Keyword: Empowerment, women, Political, life.

Women’s Empowerment: A Definition:
Clearly, a common thread uniting each of the major international conferences of the 1990's is women's empowerment. Furthermore, the international community is now accountable to the world's women for fulfilling the significant commitments it has made to help make empowerment a reality of women's lives. What, then, is women's empowerment? Women's empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Characteristics of women empowerment.
The following are the characteristics of women empowerment.

- Women empowerment is giving power to women. It is making women better off. It enables a greater degree of self-confidence and sense of independence among women.
- Women empowerment is a process of acquiring power for women in order to understand their rights and to perform her responsibilities towards oneself and others in a most effective way. It gives the capacity or power to resist discrimination imposed by the male dominated society.
- Women empowerment enables women to organize themselves increase their self-reliance and it provides greater autonomy.
Women empowerment means women’s control over material assets intellectual resources and ideology. It challenges traditional power equations and relations.

Women empowerment abolishes all gender base discrimination in all institutions and structures of society. It ensures participation of women in policy and decision-making the process at domestic and public levels.

Women empowerment means exposing the oppressive powers of existing gender social relations.

Women empowerment makes women more powerful to face the challenges of life, to overcome to the disabilities, handicaps, and inequalities. It enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life.

Empowerment also means equal status to women. It provides greater access to knowledge and resources greater autonomy in decision making greater ability to plan their and freedom from the shackles imposed on them by custom belief and practice.

Women empowerment occurs within sociology, psychological, political cultural, familial and economic spheres and at various levels such as individual, group and community.

Women empowerment is an ongoing dynamic process which enhances women’s abilities to change the structure and ideologies that keep them subordinate. Women empowerment is a process of creating awareness and capacity building.

Culture and tradition:
It is important to make note of one of the concerns most frequently raised regarding efforts to further gender equality and the empowerment of women, i.e., that such efforts constitute undue interference in the culture, religion, or traditional practices of a country. Resident Coordinators have a special responsibility to address these concerns and to draw distinctions among traditional practices that harm women and girls and deprive them of their universally recognized human rights, such as gender-based violence, forced early marriage, and female genital mutilation, and those that are socially valuable and benefit women.

Several points are key in addressing this issue of culture in relation to efforts to foster gender equality and women's empowerment. First, all development efforts, including those that seek "merely" to introduce new technologies or promote economic growth, imply social change, for, as the nature, modes, goals and social relations of production are altered, structures of work and family life are transformed. Second, women's empowerment was first articulated and championed as an approach to development by Southern women seeking to improve their lives and those of their families. Third, culture is not a static, fixed entity, but a confluence of beliefs and values continuously undergoing processes of change and redefinition in response to external and internal economic, political and social forces.

Fourth, cultures and societies are not monolithic; they are made up of groups of people who often hold conflicting and competing ideologies, beliefs and practices. What is called "culture" can sometimes be more accurately understood as the ideas and practices valued by the dominant group, often men. Social movements that pose a particular threat to women (and which are, in turn, particularly threatened by women's empowerment) often appeal to this concept of cultural or religious tradition as a basis for their attempt to extend their social control. Finally, the argument that gender discrimination is a country or cultural matter (which mirrors the claim that domestic violence is a private act rather than a public crime) falls apart when one substitutes
"race" for "gender"; South Africa's past policies of apartheid demanded and received an international response, as should policies and practices of gender discrimination.

**Violence against Women:**
Violence against women is not the issue of any particular region or group; it is an ugly universal, crossing the frontiers of ideology, social class and ethnic identity. At the individual level, violence disrupts the lives of women, limits their options, undermines their confidence and self-esteem, and impairs their health psychologically as well as psychically. It denies them their human rights and hinders their full participation in society. Violence against women deprives society of the full participation of women in all aspects of development, not just in terms of hours of labour missed due to violence, but also in terms of the cost of services to the victims. It also has serious consequences for the mental and bodily health of dependent children.

Despite its prevalence, some of the manifestations of gender-based violence respond to, and are determined and patterned by, the specific characteristics of different national and community contexts. Therefore, the Resident Coordinator should ensure that the design and execution of programmes are specifically attuned to respond appropriately at the local, national and regional levels. The Resident Coordinator has a key role to play in countering violence against women by supporting advocacy, social mobilization, institution-building and network strengthening. He or she can also play a key role in coordinating multi-disciplinary approaches to the problem, as well as multi-agency responses.

**Education:**
The role of equality in education in bringing about equality in all walks of life is well known and discussed in detail in the Basic Education Guidelines. Girls' education is fundamental to gender equality and women's empowerment. Key areas for the Resident Coordinator's attention include life-long education and training, including pre-school provision, the elimination of stereotyped teaching and education materials, diversification of the educational and training opportunities available to women and girls, and the promotion of self-esteem and leadership in girls. Providing employment and job training, as well as literacy training, for women past traditional school age should be an area of special focus, as should enabling pregnant adolescents to continue their schooling. The Resident Coordinator could work to raise awareness about the ancillary advantages of educating girls and women, such as a reduction in fertility rates and a more skilled labour force, as well as advocating for the right of women and girls to equality and quality in education.

**Political Women Empowerment**
It means the existence of a political system favoring the participation in and control by the women of the political decision-making process and in governance.

**The position of Women in India:**
The position enjoyed by women in the Rig-Vedic period deteriorated in the later Vedic civilization. Women were denied the right to education and widow remarriage. They were denied the right to inheritance and ownership of property. Many social evils like child marriage and dowry system surfaced and started to engulf women. During Gupta period, the status of women immensely deteriorated. Dowry became an institution and Sati Pratha became prominent. During the British Raj, many social reformers such as Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Jyotirao Phule started agitations for the empowerment of women. Their efforts...
led to the abolition of Sati and formulation of the Widow Remarriage Act. Later, stalwarts like Mahatma Gandhi and Pt. Nehru advocated women rights. As a result of their concentrated efforts, the status of women in social, economic and political life began to elevate in the Indian society.

**Current Scenario on Women Empowerment:**

Based on the ideas championed by our founding fathers for women empowerment, many social, economic and political provisions were incorporated in the Indian Constitution. Women in India now participate in areas such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sector and science and technology. But due to the deep-rooted patriarchal mentality in the Indian society, women are still victimized, humiliated, tortured and exploited. Even after almost seven decades of Independence, women are still subjected to discrimination in the social, economic and educational field.

**Suggestions for improvement.**

1. Scholarship and suitable economical hostel accommodation facilities be provided by the government to encourage the talented women students to pursue vocational and higher education in specialized areas.
2. The number of women's intake in existing colleges be increased considerably.
3. Higher education is linked with specific avenues of employment and part-time employment be provided to the women on a large scale, to enable them to participate in productive activities.
4. Priorities are given to women's participation in teachers' training programme.

These suggestions, if heeded upon, would certainly increase the enrolment of women in higher institutions and would also increase the representation of women in higher posts.

**Government Policy for Women Empowerment:**

Government policy has been promoting women’s self development and empowering women in the various field of the Society. The schemes or programmes which have been implemented by the Indian Government are as follows:

- Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS)
- Kishori Shakti Yojana (KSY)
- Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY)
- Rastriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)
- Mahila Samridha Yojana (MSY)
- Self help Group (SHG)
- National women’s commission (NWC)
- State women’s commission
- Kanyashri Prokalpa (West Bengal)
- Employment cum Production Centers
- Women’s Development Corporation
- Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)
- Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)
- Training of Rural Youth and Self-Employment (TRYSEM)
Conclusion:
It is observed that complete literacy has not been achieved and this has far reaching socio-economic impacts. Enrolments in schools have improved substantially in recent years but the retention rates are poor, and only a fraction of enrolled students complete even the Primary classes. Completion of Middle and Secondary levels education is still lower. Substantial Gender bias in both access to and completion of education is a major cause of concern. Wide regional variation exists even within this sub-standard performance of the Basic Education System. While few states have performed moderately, others have been abysmally, continue to do so. Factors like poverty, presence of a wide child-labour market, absence of assured employment after schooling, and infrastructural problems are identified as responsible for the ills plaguing Elementary Education System in India. Providing incentives for attending schools, making the schooling process attractive to the children, streamlining the middle and high school curriculum to make it more vocational and job-oriented, and providing better infrastructure for the school are some of the policies likely to improve the scenario.

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