Strategies for women empowerment

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ABSTRACT

Today the women's concern in education, literacy, health and nutrition, training and income generating, legistrative and judicial reforms have been flagged and the challenge lies in converting these concerns into reality for empowering women. To empower women, there is a need to formulate strategies which are very practical in nature , effective and result oriented. The foremost important is to recognize the problems and constraints for empowerment. Women should be involved in a development programmes as active participants. Capabilities of community based organizations and non-government organizations should be strengthened for designing and implementing the effective programme for women. There is a need to formulate women Self Help Groups. This initiative will help the women in improving their living conditions and economic independence. The region wise perspective need of women should be well integrated with macro policy directions for women empowerment. Societal reorientation and holistic approach should be incorporated for women. Educating the women for building positive self image, self confidence, critical thinking, ability to make the decisions and to secure the economic independence. Programmes should be organized for girl students in colleges and universitie for legal education, capacity building and other life skills.

KEW WORDS : Strategies, Women empowerment, Literacy, Health and nutrition, Judicial reforms

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is a process that makes a Woman understand her unique potentials and enables her to break barriers to make her realize that she has the capacity to utilize her full potential. It is a process by which the women will be willing to think independently, to live in her own way and to have the courage to make her own perceptions and judgments. An empowered women would live her own way and to have the courage to make her own perceptions and judgments. An empowered woman would live authentically to speak and act from her inner most convictions and feelings.

Empowerment enables a woman to be willing to know not only what she thinks, but also what she feels, what she wants, needs, desires, suffers over, gets frightened or angered by and to accept her right to experience such feelings. Through empowerment, a woman is committed to her right to exist. By empowerment, a woman starts respecting herself and understands the possibility of growth and experiences joy in the process of exploring her distinct potential.

There is need to develop empowering strategies which make women more vocal assertive, outgoing, independent, equal and active partner, technology lover and bread earner. The empowered women will change her role in a work situation and instead of accepting assigned work she will create opportunities of work. She will meaningfully bargain at work. She will not adjust to uncongenial work environment. She will replace her emotional nature by a more rational and egalitarian existence.

Strategies for women empowerment:
Motivation:

It is effectively thought or emotionally charged needs and desires.

Motives which appear relevant to empowerment of women are

- Achievement – accomplishment and excellence

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- To earn a living
- To become rich
- To educate children
– Social achievement / well being
    - To generate employment for people
    - To build community resource- ponds, well, balwadis etc.
– Influence / power motivation
    - To influence decision making
    - To please parents
    - To please or influence husband
– Recognition motive
    - To gain prestige/ recognition
    - To gain status in society
    - To be a model for others
– Self actualization motive
    - To acquire personal capability to the maximum
    - To be independent and self reliant
    - To achieve the best 1 can

Enabling to recognize self abilities:

The process by which women not only gains certain abilities, but also gains the confidence that she has the capability and the ability to further enhance her capability , is called the process of enabling . It is important to have the realization that she knows something and she can learn the rest.

Enabling means:

– A strong sense of '1 can do'
– A feeling of self reliance and self control
– Awareness of own strengths and weakness
– Awareness of own values and attitudes.
– Clarity of goal
– Confidence in self abilities and resources.

Creating self awareness:

Self awareness means discovery of one's potential. The potential in women is surrounded by the layer of her instincts and drives-interest, needs, worries, ambition etc. These are then covered with positive and negative reinforcement which are the outcomes of happy and unhappy experiences in life. These give rise to social values, beliefs and norms etc. which then mobilize a person to weave a mask for herself and acquires her social identity with the mask.. The process of unmasking deals with positive and negative reinforcements, context building with the basic needs, drives and instincts etc Try to probe and share the relevant life incidents and experiences, one can get in touch with the reinforcements and the basic drives

and instincts. The internal sources of women's identity relate to their self-images. Enabling process develops self-esteem, self-confidence and self-respect. Self-respect is something that a woman develops as she acquires a sense of capable person and become aware of her own power to choose her actions.

Threshold crossing:

Identifying the blocks of women empowerment like lack of motivation, certain beliefs, fear, poor self image, guilt, resistance to change poor skills (managerial, communication.).Outline the effects of their problems / blocks and identify their causes, brain storm solutions and analyze each solution and implement it. This is called threshold crossing. Often women fear of crossing the threshold it signifies moving to an unknown from known. Most women feel they are comfortable where they are, not because they are really content but they fear the unknown. This fear should be removed, only by taking some action. Women must be helped to perform some small task to get rid of the fear, before she takes a decision to step forward so in this way we will cross the threshold.

Considering women as critical agents of change:

Women need to be view not as beneficiaries but as active participants in the process of development and change. Her skills are often the only resource to call upon for survival in poor household. The key to programming for women lies in recognizing their problems and constraints and then adopt a flexible approach that permits programmers to be adopted to suit their specific needs.

Direct involvement of women in programmes:

There should be direct involvement of women who are likely to be affected by the programme. There has been a successful example of programming where women's group has been active in providing basic services. Their experiences have shown that where women are recognized not only as beneficiaries but also supported as managers, the programme outcomes tend to be better.

Collaborate the women development programmes with community bodies:

The attack on the poverty among rural women has a strong social dimension requiring action on a range of points. This brings out the importance of strengthening the capabilities of community based organization and non-governmental organization for designing and implementing effective programme for rural women. This would make programmes more relevant to the local needs of women by better identification and targeting of the poor by

empowering women and communities and creating enabling environment in the community for sustainable development. This would enable better utilization of scarce resources by avoiding duplication of efforts.

Organizing women's groups:

The goals of poverty reduction and empowerment of women can be effectively achieved. If poor women could organize into groups – for community participation as well as for assertion of their rights in various services related to their economic and social well being. The organization of groups could be either based on trade of locality. Training would become critical for building organizations of the poor women and undertaking essential social services promotional programmes, credit and loan servicing, family, primary health care and leadership skills. Their creative potential shall have to be achieved by mobilizing and organizing them through a participatory process. This would enable them to participate in various programmes as effective partners and articulate their hopes and aspirations. Modes of participatory development process have been tried out by various voluntary organizations with success. The process has given women not only a new sense of dignity and confidence to tackle their problems with a sense of solidarity to work together but also a measure of economic independence. It has helped them to improve their living conditions and acquire small capital assets. It has also been demonstrated that the poor women's creativity group dynamics and self-management are major elements in tackling the gender and equity issues.

Targetting on deprived groups :

The current programmes are focusing on women primarily as economic categories. Such programmes does not take into account those social categories of women who without asset ownership and sustained male support find it difficult, to utilize special programmes for sustainable improvement in their economic well-being. Elderly, widowed, female-headed households, women with disability and displaced women are some of the special groups requiring special attention and a comprehensive programming. Physical environment, social security and economic programmes should need to be conceptually integrated and practically implemented.

Considering regional perspectives:

In a large country with regional disparities, micro impacts and regional perspectives need to be well-integrated with macro policSy directions. The policies and programmes have been uniform across the country.

Due to differences in social and cultural milieu and attitudes as well as institutional structures, the impact of these programmes has been varied.

Societal reorientation:

The low status of women is the outcome of a variety of causes in which patriarchal values reinforced by tradition, media and other social-political institutions play a major role. Thus the institutional bases of women's oppression have to be sensitized to accept the gender equality. A societal reorientation for gender equality society would require a radical transformation through an awareness about gender issues and their importance in the well-being of the community and society. Women's own perceptions of themselves would also need to be changed.

In this advocacy, governmental and non-governmental organizations, formal and non-formal leadership, print and electronic media can form a partnership to be effective. National literacy companies have also played a key role in raising awareness of gender equity. A strong monitoring mechanism has to be built to oversee the systematic progress towards this sensitive social change.

Gender sensitization:

The difference between men and women should narrow down as men allows the women to function in a comfortable environment in the available socio economic space. Problem creators, *i.e.* those who are discouraging and obstructing the women in their socio economic participation, become the supporters of women empowerment.

Sensitization programmes should target non only the collective consciousness of men in society to create more space for women but also those women who (*i.e.* elder women in the family) or indirectly tend to act against the larger interest of the women by trying to conform to the traditional socio cultural norms.

Developing drudgery reducing technologies for women:

Women often are hard pressed for time. While developing the technology this point must be kept in mind by the scientist, so that a particular operation takes less time which is performed by the women, giving them ample time for other work and rest. A' women's angle' should be built into all technologies which are relevant to women.

Education regarding women empowerment in colleges:

– Adequate funding should be allocated for providing

and expanding hostel facilities for women students, especially in rural and backward areas.

– Teachers both men and women to be oriented towards the special needs of women students and trained to incorporate the measures for empowering the women students.

– Organise legal education and other life skill and capacity building programmes for women students in colleges.

– Provide the special funding for promoting the gender positive initiatives in colleges.

Creating special facilites for working women:

Make special provisions for women with young children at the work place, especially regarding time. This would require that we openly acknowledge and help women combine having a baby with their career.

Recent advancement of information technology has freed the executive from having to be confined to the office for operational purposes. Women managers with children could operate from the home. Real productivity should be measured and not the time spent in the office. Flexible office hours may become the order of the future.

There is a need for scientific and systematic career planning and career advancement polity that will enable aspiring committed and qualified women to rise to top positions in their career without any discrimination against them on the basis of gender. The prevailing perception is that women's commitment to careers is not taken seriously by many. A reversal of this mindset will be brought about only when the numerical strength of career women in the country goes up in the years to come.

There is a need to encourage young career women to be more mobile rather than remain in the first job that they land in. In order to quickly rise in the hierarchical ladder one needs to move quite a bit, at least initially.

Conclusion:

Empowerment of women is continuous but slow process .Government officials, NGo's and other persons involved in the process need to be patient and encouraging. When group of people are empowered there is another group of people who lose power. Hence, the empowerment process can result in conflict.

Some women themselves may not want power, if the women decide to take charge of their lives, they can achieve good results. Physical environment, social security and economic programmes should need to be conceptually integrated and practically implemented.

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