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RESEARCH ARTICLE

WELFARE PROGRAMMES OF RURAL WOMEN IN KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

The role of women in nation building is as important as that of men. As a better half she takes all the responsibilities of making the man stand highlighted in the socio-economic and religious vistas of life. Hence the role played by woman cannot be denied. The below is an effort to overview the special role of women and welfare programmes for their empowerment

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INTRODUCTION

“Woman is the builder and molder of nation’s destiny. Though delicate and soft as lily, she has a heart far stronger and bolder than men....she is the supreme inspiration for man’s onwards march.” Women constitute half of the world’s population, accomplish about two third of its working hours, receive 1/10th of the world’s income. More than 90 per cent of rural women in India are unskilled, restricting them to low paid occupations. Women generally have no control over land and other productive assets. Despite several attempts by government after independence, Indian women are still in disadvantage in relation to survival, health, nutrition, literacy and productivity. Rural woman’s earnings are only 10 per cent that of their male counterparts for the same work done. It is found that 30-35 per cent of the house holds in India are headed by female and majority of them reported to be below poverty line. Of the 200 million people constituting the hard core of rural poverty for the last 25 years, 100 million of them are females.

The role and status of women is widely discussed and debated in our country, the present position and status of women in general and rural women in particular is not satisfactory, rather their position in the society is in no way better than the second class citizen. Theoretically women are considered important and equal partners in the process of development, but in practice they are generally ignored. In spite of so many statutory protections, women still remain under privileged, under valued and exploited and various kinds of discrimination continue to persist against her. There have been many variations in the condition and position of women from the ancient times. There have been instances in history of treating

woman for many centuries, like once she was treated as slave without having existence and was exploited, at others she was adorned as Goddess. Though the woman’s freedom movement in India began as early as 18th century, her status, equal rights and position according to constitution have been found at the equal footing with that of men only after the independence. Legislations too have come into existence. Many welfare programmes launched under five year plans and even other such government programmes have been the significant steps in social and economic empowerment of the women. Women constitute the backbone of nation. Prosperity of nation depends upon the prosperity of her women. Women have found their due place of importance in all the western countries, but at the same time, is not true in all the major Asian countries, including India.

Since ages, equal opportunities are not provided to women and therefore, they are treated as the second grade citizens in spite of the role they play in the society in all fields viz, social, economic and cultural etc. The status of women in a society is the true index of the level of progress. The status of women and their economic participation have direct bearing on nation’s life. Economic independence of women is generally considered as one of the important parameters of the progress of the country. The unfortunate part of the story, however is that the economic contribution of women is either unrecognized/ unreported or under valued in social accounting. Much of the work done by rural women is invisible; hence do not figure in our social accounting estimates as the work done by them is considered unpaid economic activity. Therefore what is required today is raising the status of women to address the issue of empowering women. Thus the need of the hour is to explore and inculcate the talent of women and to harness the full potential of women by destroying all kinds of visible and

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invisible barriers and by allowing them equal status and opportunity with a sense of dignity and pride. Ironically women have not participated in their own emancipation, mainly due to low economic independence. However, with the shift in approach for development of women from “welfare oriented” to “development oriented” the society has started realizing the importance of women as active, vibrant and inevitable partners in the process of socio-economic development. Women in this new era have been identified as the key agent of sustainable development and women’s equality and empowerment are seen as central to a more holistic approach towards establishing new partner and process of development that are sustainable.

Empowerment Of Women

Women are not only the carriers of human race but civilization and sustainable development rests on them. They are the best upholders of environmental, ecological. Socioeconomic balances, yet a victim of man dominated patriarchal system, neglected in their day to day life, neither considered equal to man in wage or social status. Their role is silently appreciated without economic recognition, regard and accountability. Women comprise 50 per cent of the population, contribute 75 per cent of work hours, and receive 10 per cent of income and 1 per cent share in property (FAO). They remain invisible workers and have not been given an appropriate share in development agendas and programmes. They have been largely treated as beneficiaries rather than partners in development process. Since the 1970s a global concern for emancipation of women in general and farm / rural women in particular has gathered momentum. Empowerment is a process that helps and assists women realize their identity, capacity, capability, strength and power and its application in day to day life in various spheres. It enables them to have access to resources, greater say in decision making, more ability to plan their time and family size, also free them from irrelevant customs, traditions, practices and prejudices. The concept of empowerment of women as a goal of development project and programs has been gaining wider acceptances, especially since the last two decades. A salient feature of the term empowerment is that it contains within it the word “power”.

1. Empowerment through economic interventions to increase womens’ economic status through employment, income generation and access to credit.
2. Empowerment through integrated rural development programme in which strengthening womens’ economic status is only one component along with education, literacy, provision of basic needs and services.

Self Employment Of Women And Credit

Majority of the third world women are involved in the informal sector of economic activities in which they are disproportionately represented among the poorest of the poor. Rural woman’s self employment in the informal sector is based on various types of activities like

- Farm based activities and allied activities.
- Home based production using non traditional and acquired skill.
- (c) Retail trading and services like flower and vegetable selling, garment making, catering, petty shops, retail business in paddy etc.

Yet most of these informal activities do not yield sufficient income to extricate women out of poverty. They lack capital, technical know how, access to credit, market and materials as well as services necessary to expand or even to make marginal improvement in productivities and income. The lack of funds and lack of staying power limit self employment and scale or operation of self employed women. As the majority of rural women don’t own capital or tools and equipments of their trade they remain vulnerable in the clutches of the private money lenders. Indebtedness put them in a weak bargaining position with the middle men and traders of their own business on whom they are dependent for their livelihood, thus perpetuating state of high interest payments, low income, insecurity of work opportunities and completing the vicious cycle of indebtedness.

Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM)

It was launched as a centrally sponsored scheme on 15 August 1979. It aims at providing basic technical and managerial skills to rural youth in the age- group of 18-35 years from families below the poverty-line to enable them to acquire skills and technology to take up vocations of self-employment in agriculture and allied activities, industry, services and business. Liberalization of norms for expenditure under recurring assistance, greater emphasis on systematic marketing and exploring possibility of setting up groups for manufacture/ assembly of non- traditional items for which there is good demand in the market, are some of the steps taken to improve the implementation of the scheme.

Scheme for Rural Artisans

Supply of improved tool-kits to rural artisans is also a supporting component of IRDP. The objective is to enable the rural artisans to enhance the quality of the product, increase the production and their income with use of improved tools. Between 1992-93 and 1997-98 7.46 lakh tool kits have been provided under the scheme incurring an expenditure of Rs. 147.95 lakh.

Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)

This programme aims at raising the income level of women of poor households so as to enable their organized participation in social development towards economic self- reliance.

Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology

The Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) was registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 on September 1, 1986, with headquarters in New Delhi. It aims at encouraging, promoting and assisting voluntary action for enhancement of rural prosperity. It makes available financial assistance to voluntary organizations (VOs) under the following schemes: (i) promotion of voluntary action in rural development, (ii) development of women and children in rural areas (DWCRA), (iii) accelerated rural water supply programme (ARWSP), (iv) central rural sanitation programme (CRSP), (v) organization of beneficiaries of anti-poverty programme, (vi) integrated rural development programme (IRDP), (vii) Jawahar Rozgar Yojna (JRY) consisting of watershed conservation and development

programme, village link road, rural housing and social forestry, (viii) advancement of rural technology scheme (ARTS), (ix) Panchayati Raj (PR), (x) Indira Awaas Yojna, (xi) Million wells scheme, (xii) support to NGOs / VAs, and (xiii) watershed development. It can obtain funds from various Central and State government departments and also accept donations and contributions from other sources. It has set up 9 regional committees at Jaipur, Ahmadabad, Hyderabad, Bhubaneshwar, Patna, Chandigarh, Dharwad Guwahati and Lucknow which are empowered to sanction projects up to an outlay of Rs. 10 lakhs.

Jawahar Rozgar Yojna

Jawahar Rozgar Yojna (JRY) is one of the major wage employment programmes of the Ministry taken up in April 1989 after merging the earlier wage employment programmes, namely, National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). The main objective of the programme is to generate additional gainful employment for the unemployed and under-employed men and women in the rural areas as well as creation of community assets.

Indira Awaas Yojna

This Yojna aims at providing dwelling units free of cost to the members of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and freed bonded labourers living below the poverty line in rural areas.

Ganga Kalyan Yojana

This is a centrally- sponsored scheme which has been launched with effect from 1 February 1982. The objective of the scheme is to provide irrigate through exploitation of ground-water (bore-w and tub-wells) to individuals and groups of small and marginal farmers living below poverty-line, assistance is provided through a mix of subsidy Government and term credit by financial institutions. Special safeguards by way of earmarking 50 per cent of total funds as well as higher percent age of subsidies have been provided for the SCs/S the funding pattern is 80:20 between the Centre and the state government.

National Social Assistance Programme

The National Social Assistance Program (NSAP) came into force on 15 August 1995 provide social assistance to poor households, includes three benefits through (i) National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS)-Central assistance available at the rate of Rs.75 per month to person who are aged 65 years or more and are destitute; (ii) National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS)-Centre assistance is available as a lump sum family benefit for households below the poverty-line on the death of the primary bread winner in the bereaved family.

Rural Sanitation Programme

This is a centrally- sponsored programme whose main objective is to improve rural sanitation through the construction of sanitation toilets. It includes subsidy for the construction of sanitary latrines and for the conversion of dry latrines into sanitary latrines. The amount of subsidy is increased to 80 per cent for persons below the poverty- line and is shared equally by the Central Government and the State Government.

Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)

The SGSY is an integrated programme for self-employment of the rural poor which was started on 1 April 1999. Its objective is to bring the assisted poor families above the poverty line. The focus of the programme is on establishing a large number of micro enterprises in rural areas based on the ability of the poor and potential of each area for a sustainable income generation.

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

It is a 100 per cent centrally sponsored scheme launched on 25 December 2000. Its prime objective is to provide connectivity to all unconnected habitations in the rural areas with a population of more than 500 persons (in hill, desert and tribal areas population 250) through all weather roads by the end of Tenth Plan (2007).

Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)

The SGRY was launched on September 2001 by merging the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) and the Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana with the objective of providing additional wage employment in the rural areas as also food security, alongside the creation of durable community assets. The programme is implemented through district, intermediate and Gram Panchayats. Fifty per cent of the funds are to be utilised for infrastructure development works in SC/ST localities. No contractors are permitted to be engaged. The programme is regularly monitored by reputed institutions and organisations sponsored by the Central/ State Governments.

National Food for Work Programme (NFWP)

It was launched in November 2004 in 150 most backward districts of the country, identified by the Planning Commission in consultation with the Ministry of Rural Development and the State Governments. The objective of the programme is to provide wage employment and food-security through the creation of need based economic, social and community assets. The scheme is 100 per cent centrally sponsored. It provides 5 kg of food grains per man-day along with wages in cash. Under the programme priority is given to the works on water conservation, drought-proofing and land development. The Panchayat concerned has a right to inspect and review the progress of the works. The programme is expected to provide 100 days of supplementary wage employment to one member of each poor family in rural areas of identified 150 districts of the country.

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