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## ROLE OF PROJECTS AND NGOs ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

DR.INDOOR GANGADHAR

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**Abstract:** Women's empowerment is an area specialized and focused by the sociologists, social workers and NGOs which are mainly VOs and MSs. These workers on development dynamics have recognized the roles of institutions of the oppressed people, suppressed because of feudal opinions prevalent till today. These could be based on individuals and collectively as a community in the society. The definition of empowerment implies that it is a process of "Strengthening their capacities through full participation of people". This was voiced in the world summit for social Development (1995) in its declaration (item No. 23). It also states that empowerment is the main objective of development of its resources.

**Keywords:** sociologists, social workers, strength, empowerment.

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**Introduction:** This study brings to focus the issue that empowerment of women means their autonomy and the power to set their own agenda. Their participation in domestic, social, economic and political life depends upon their access to decision-making process. The study of B.V.Suryanarayana and B. Padma Narayana also discusses relative concepts.

Against this background the works of specialists are reserved so that the decisions and actions of VOs and MSs could be evaluated. In a case study of AWARE. Shakuntala Narasimhan ("Empowerment" 1999:76) discussed that women's development or empowerment is affected by their neglect.

She pointed out that Apathy; fear, ignorance, and vulnerability of women in society are the main factors. She found fault with the patriarchal patterns of social behavior as the main reason P.G.Oogdanand opined that "Empowerment is nothing but state of mind; it reflects self-confidence, self reliance and determination to fight for one's rights and interests. This can only be required through action." (Development...2007z; 69)

Venkata Rao and Pulla Rao expressed that empowering women is a process to change the distribution of power. This is in interpersonal relations and in institutions at all levels of society. It is also a process of acquiring, providing, bestowing the resources and the means or enabling then access to resources. Broadly, empowerment is the ability to direct and control one's life by knowing and claiming one's right. ("Political Empowerment...2007) This study is about political empowerment, whereas women lying below and above the poverty line are deprived of their basic rights.

Studies contributing empowerment in its real sense were taken up B.V.Suryanarayana & B. Padma Narayana. They define it as the imitative to do certain things irrespective of political power. A deeper understanding of the word throws light on many of its dimensions and implications. The very concept of empowerment is based on equality between sexes. This gender equality is a long drawn conscious and continuous process comprising;

- ❖ Enhancement of skills,
- ❖ Capacity building and self-confidence
- ❖ Meaningful participation in decision making at all levels.

This study contributes to the all around Empowerment analysis of women

("Empowerment of women,...", 20007:41)

The relative concepts of women's empowerment such as gender equality before law are superficial. This will not endow them to exercise their power in interaction or transaction with men, individually or collectively. The term power means, as most social scientists use, the definition of Max Weber. He defined that "power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests".

From the point of view of psychological dimensions, Ramanshray Roy and Debal K Singh Roy conducted his study. According to them empowerment is a process of psychological mobilization. He discussed that it is not a thing or an object which can either be gifted or picked up by simply stretching one's hand. It has to be cultivated through transforming the self. The self could be submerged in helplessness and passivity into the self that is vibrant with hope and activeness.

This process pertaining to what is usually called the psychological mobilization of people. These people for centuries persuaded themselves to treat inequality, poverty and want as divine sanctions or denials. They never unassigned that they were socially sanctioned and already there. (Debal K. Singha Roy, "Grass roots mobilization....", 2006:91-92).

Women's empowerment is a social process and when an individual, group or community feels helpless and vulnerables NGOs such as VOs and MSs should take awareness increasing programmes. They normally include them in raising slogans and dharnas for general or political purposes. But they should help them in cultivating and acquiring power not only to gain whatever they want but also to retain whatever they have.

As a social process, the central thrust of empowerment is the dynamics of power. This means one's capacity to influence or control others. One can have effective power to influence others only when those who obey them get some benefit; the control over people is regarding their resources and ideology. Thus, those who have power are those who can analyze and evaluate

others to control their self, ideology and resources. This they use it to determine power for their selfish ends or group benefits. This has been traced and studied based on the past events by Bathi--Wala in 1993 and also by Chattopadhyaya. ("Empowering women...Yojana, 2006:30-33).

There have been studies about empowerment and its structure. Sen and Grown defined empowerment as being concerned with the transformation of the structure of subordination. It implies a process of redistribution of power within and between families and societies. It is a process aiming at social equality which can be achieved only by this empowering some structures, systems and institutions. Kalpagam, expresses in the journal that empowerment denotes the ability to negotiate better in social relation of power as well as an enhancement of entitlements, capabilities and choices. (Kalpagam,"Rural women, Development Empowerment"...2006:25)

Another note worthy study is that of M.A Uday Kumar and T.N.Sreedhar In their discussion they reveal that empowerment envisages a whole range of issues through which people acquire the necessary power to participate in the institutions of various kinds. These institutions may be those that influence their choices both at the practical and strategic levels. Further, they feel that empowerment which enables the removal of institutional barriers, enhances the assets and capabilities of diverse individuals and groups to engage, influence and hold accountable to such institutions. M.A Uday Kumar and T.N.Sreedhar (Measuring Empowerment of women...; 2006:147) the idea of measurement, though not accurately, involves their progress in socio-economic development. Such databases are invaluable for eradication of poverty in rural India.

Based on the above studies cited it becomes clear that the concept of women's empowerment enables and gives power to them. This process in turn helps to realize the exploitative forces around them. Such a situation could help them to realize their self-interest and survival in what has been called as a world set and determined by men. Logically, women's empowerment comes to mean that it requires a transformation of power relations.

In such a situation gender equality brings about individuals acquiring the power to think freely. It makes them act freely and exercise choices to fulfill their potential. It is a biological truth that this potential is uniformly present and dormant in all communities although historically they might be oppressed or suppressed.

The tasks ahead of women's empowerment are all the subject matter of planning commission's journal Yojana. The issues raised in various articles and case studies have formed the basis of some studies made as Ex-officio authorities of various states in India. In the planning history of India, the sixth plan (1980-85) document included a chapter on women and development. (Sixth

five year plan, 1980:423).

**The plan emphasized the following aspects:**

- ❖ Economic independence of women
- ❖ Access to health and family planning services
- ❖ Formation of a programme called Development of women and children in rural Areas (DWCRA)
- ❖ DWCRA should help women to conduct income generating activities from 1982.
- ❖ Setting up of a department of women and children in HRD ministry children 1985.
- ❖ Setting up of women development corporations since 1986-87 in several states
- ❖ To identify and assist women entrepreneurs from 1986.

All these activities helped to form National Perspective Plan for women in 1988. It noted that allocation of adequate funds for women within the existing structure of development. It wanted efficient development of women and envisaged a combination of approaches which included the creation of new structures to absorb women into the fold of progress. It suggested the need to enhance women's component in existing development programmes. These measures have changed the situation for all women, although urban women who had schooling could take its benefit. But this study notes that it is the first concrete step and a mile stone in the history of women's empowerment. The main impact and result of the sixth plan was improvement in the status of women. Men at home or office could no longer think in a primitive way and several films reflected the image of awakened woman.

Other articles in the media report that the position of women in the society is alarming. Other legislation were enacted but they have been isolated and resisted politically. Some press reports reveal that in Rajasthan on the minor occasion of AkhaTeej thousands of minor girls are married off violating the marriage laws of the country. The bias against girls, the sex determination in the wombs, the role of illegal abortions through ultrasound testing reveals the gender bias and discrimination in the so called forward castes.

The situation of women in India in general cutting across their income background continue to bear the burden of poverty, illiteracy, economic marginalization, lack of access to resources, exclusion from decision-making, social stereotyping, discrimination and violence at both household and social level.

Sociologists and social workers usually compare women's position with men and conclude that it is inferior; it may be in the fields of literacy, educational status, health, administration, work participation, politics or even sports as is clearly revealed by various socio-economic indicators.

Women have the biological advantage. But their sex-ratio in India continues to be adverse to men. In the sphere of literacy only 39.3percent females were literate as against 64.1Percent of the males.

Despite marked progress in levels of literacy over the decades, the gender gap between male and female literacy has widened between 1951 and 1991 from 18.3 percent to 24.8 percent (India's social sectors, 1996). The figures of 1990-91 and 2000-01 for school enrolment shows that 100 percent has been achieved for boys at the primary and secondary level and only 85 percent of the girls were enrolled (ibid,179). In the field of nutrition, poverty takes a toll on the nutrition of girls than that of boys, about 21 percent of girls in low income families of rural Punjab and Andhra Pradesh suffers from severe malnutrition. The impact of mid-day meal programme on them has not been studied or reported in A.P. The report says that only 3 percent of boys suffered from malnutrition. (Human Development Report,1995-35)

Women's participation in employment in the formal sector was restricted compared to the unorganized sector. Sociologists are reported to have stated that this is due to family responsibilities and lack of higher education. This may not be true in respect of the last decade because of 33 percent of reservation for girls in professional colleges.

There have been team leaders and software engineers in this sector. But in other sectors women have been traditionally employed in lower paying jobs and narrower range of occupations as compared to men. In general 82.8 percent of women were engaged as cultivators, agricultural laborers and in forestry, fishing and hunting as compared to 62.7 percent of men. (ibid)

Average figures reveal that only 8 percent of women representatives in parliament and 2.3 percent as administrators and managers in India. This was the study in gender equality (Krishna Rao, 1996:6). In 1996, India's ranking on the gender developed by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) namely Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and Gender Development Index (GDI) was a poor 93 out of 104 countries for GEM and only 103 out of 137 countries for GDI (ibid). These facts clearly reveal the dismal position of Indian women and lack of service orientation in the part of VOs and MSs. But the figures indicate that women have been the largest disadvantaged class of the country. The disadvantage that can be identified is pervasive and is prevalent in all castes, Creed, state and religion.

In one study, the position of women in Assam which is the focus of the women's empowerment was similar to that of women in the rest of the country. Historically, women's education in Assam was negligible and practices like child marriage and prohibition of widow remarriage were in custom and existence.

Another study reports that women of Assam were better than their counterparts because they are free from social evils suffered by Indian women (Mahanta, 1998:135) social girls like sati and compulsory use of purdah were not widespread. The dowry system was not widespread and the caste system was not rigid. Based on these indicators Assamese women are considered free in regard to movements and outdoor activities. This added

to their participation in public life. (Barooah,1993:42). There are also suggestions that Assamese women participated in the freedom struggle and prominent women are Kanaklata Baruah, Bhogeshwari Phoonam, Chandraprava Saikiani, Amalprava Das, Debiprava Bhuyan and Hemaprasava Das. Demographic and economic indicators right to the status of women in India. The Assamese woman lags behind the average Indian woman to small extent. The sex ratio in Assam in 1991 was 923 females per 1000 males which was lower than the national average. The dropout rates for girls were higher than the corresponding all India rates in (2008-09). The dropout rates for class I to V was 59.6 percent as against 49.7 percent as the all India level (Selected statistics, 2008-09, min. of HRI). In the area of employment in the percentage of female main workers was 12.6 percent which was lower than the all -India percentage was 16 (Census of India, 2001.). The percentage of working women engaged as cultivators, agriculture laborers and forestry, fishing and hunting was 86.4 higher than the national level percentage is 80.8. (ibid)

Studies about other countries which have used the empowerment framework for women would reveal its effects. Unfortunately empowerment has not been fully analyzed though there is some effort at implementation. Bureaucracy is predominantly lazy in analysis and implementation of women's empowerment. Mere subjective evaluation of case studies is not enough. In many cases there are one or two lines about a person and his or her influence over something. For example, the friction of Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri or activists like Medha Patkar on Narmada Bachao Andolan are not indicative of deep empowerment.

There are a few records of conflict pathways which are illustrations of discrete stages in the evolution of conflict, including conflict triggers and factors or mechanisms that sustained conflict, allowing it to either escalate, stagnate or move toward resolution. Some of these studies are not random samples of the population in a village, district or a state. There are no reports about multi-stakeholder workshops during which respondents were asked to verify and explain findings. The meetings or workshops of VOs and MSs could be used to draw out operational implications of women's empowerment.

Preliminary research on this subject is repetitive about the historical condition. There is little effort to develop and test the empowerment framework. The country studies reflect the realities of operational and analytic work. Measurement of empowerment in different interventions and contexts, case studies and reviews are important for the leaders of VOs and MSs. They should be aware of indicators developed to measure empowerment in each context.

In Ethiopia, the women's development initiatives project was carried out. If focused on empowering women by mobilizing them in self-help groups and by increasing their social and economic welfare. The Honduras community based education project (proheco) is an

education decentralization program that devolves authority over school and education-related matters to community based school councils. In Indonesia a project called Kecamatan development project focused on alleviating poverty and empowering citizens and local government through block grants to villages for community level projects. In Nepal, rural water supply and sanitation project focuses on researchers examined the mechanism by which conflict was initiated, intensified and resolved or not resolved in different contexts. The design and structure of these studies do not concentrate on women's empowerment but on all the citizens involved.

The methodology of analysis used quantitative methods to help select the appropriate sites for the qualitative modules. Distress has to be satisfied according to their capacity to manage conflicts arising due to women's domination. The collective capability of marginalized groups engaged to conflict resolution has to be studied. This illustrates the analysis and methods requiring implementation of the framework. Certain studies indicate that empowerment practice cannot be studied based on the data available sometimes the data is not collected no sufficient quantity for findings that could be statistically validated. Hence most of the studies reviewed here are simple descriptive statistics or subjected to techniques such as word counts or narrative analysis. Econometric approaches to quantitatively dynamic systems good analysis. They are about power relations and raise additional concerns related to the metrics identified. Express feed that this is endogeneity has risks connected with it. Many practitioners working with empowerment in general and women's empowerment no particular face a dilemma. The dilemma has been expressed as a potential trade-off between the variables in predictive terms of their impact on empowerment and other development results. The risk of endogeneity through the causes that are attributive to cause and effect is also present. So the emerging one of these estimates of this complete

processes result no regression analysis. So the express feel that the statistical data obtained is not sophisticated enough and that they do not account for different metrics. The types of data obtained have been commented by all the studies cited so far as highly interactive and multidimensional models. This may be because of potential endogeneity in them. These methodological issues cannot be tackled by statistical express.

Hence, another approach is to adopt methodologies having the added values. These are combining methods and data effectively to measure and understand empowerment in general and women's empowerment in particular. In Brazil evaluation of the empowerment impacts of participating Budgeting (PB) was done by Balocchi and his colleagues. They first applied Matched pair analysis to a sample of municipalities.

**Conclusion:** The Modern trend has been that since the early to mid-1990s Indian NGOs have had a stronger focus on empowerment of poor women in their development work, and have adopted the savings and credit self-help group model to achieve this. Generally there has been a strong focus on social transformation and empowerment as a path to reducing poverty and marginalization among rural and urban women. This book has looked at this trend and identified some features of how NGOs work with marginalized women to achieve strong empowerment outcomes. Strong empowerment for poor women was linked to the NGOs spending more time (in terms of years) with the women's self-help groups; and having stronger and more formal accountability relationships with these SHGs, who were the aid recipients. In the early 2000s local NGOs in Southern India were grappling with the conflicting implications of these trends. Experience suggested that if these NGOs were to be true to their values, they had to invest more time and effort in engaging with the marginalized women they were working with to be effective.

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Department of English, SRNK Govt. Degree  
College Banswada,  
Nizamabad, A.P. India.