

Emerging Opportunities and Challenges in Achieving Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment for Sustainable Development

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Abstract: *The empowerment of rural women plays an important role in building up the economic and social pillars of sustainability. To ensure the sustainable development of the country achieving empowerment of women and their gender equality is the need of an hour. In this respect, the role of NGOs is very progressive in achieving women's economic empowerment which is the key to solve issues like gender inequality and poverty and to foster inclusive economic growth. Our society still needs strong steps to ensure economically as well as socially empowered life for the women. NGOs play a pivotal role in the development of women and promoting economic security and well-being. The efforts of NGOs work like a catalyst to empower and uplift the women.. The Empowerment of women has taken place which has helped to strengthened women's position in society. The present study discusses the role played by the NGOs in the economic empowerment of rural women. NGOs have helped the women to get financial assistance at a minimum interest rate so that they can see themselves as an independent entrepreneur and can support the entire family being financially independent. To provide them with the power to take the decision-making process, they need to become self sufficient which will also guarantee gender equality. This paper will highlight the role of NGOs in uplifting the status of women ensuring economic empowerment and equal right of participation. This paper will bring out the positive outcome due to the intervention of the NGOs, the changing role of the women in the society and the family, the economic independence, changing attitude, increasing confidence and the gradual rising of their social and economic status. The paper will also bring out the discussion on challenges faced by NGOs in empowering women. The paper will also be an attempt to discuss the future suggestions for better functioning of NGOs and empowerment of women.*

Key Words: *empowerment, sustainability, NGOs, rural women, participation.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

NGOs have a vital role in introducing social change and bring development in the life of women. NGOs can involve people in productive work and can educate the women, who are living an unprivileged life. In fact, it is quite important to awaken and motivate the women of rural areas. NGOs actively promote and educate women and benefit them to overcome poor women especially the women belonging to the poor and deprived section of society. They should be informed about the different money-generating activities, so that they become independent and earn the money for their family members. The women belonging to the ST and SC especially get less exposure and hence their upliftment is the major priority area of the NGOs. Women are considered to be the torch bearers of the children; hence if they are educated they can bring a good upbringing for the family and make the culture of the family rich. Even if rural girls took admission in schools, the drop rates are very high and then after marriage as they were compelled to become housewives and their participation in the society in terms of decision making is negligible.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

According to CIDA Report "Gender Equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic social and cultural development and benefit equally from the results.....

Attaining gender equality demands recognition that current social, economic, cultural, and political systems are gendered; that women's equal status is systematic and that is necessary to incorporate women's specificity priorities and values into all major social institutions." (CIDA).

Increasingly, women's full participation is recognized as central to policymaking. For example, their decisive involvement in community forest management bodies yields positive outcomes for both forest sustainability and gender equality (Agarwal, 2010). Further, certain aspects of gender equality, such as female education and women's share of employment, can have a positive impact on economic growth, although this impact is dependent on the nature of growth strategies, the structure of the economy, the sectoral composition of women's employment and labour market segregation, among other factors (Kabeer and Natali, 2013).

3. OBJECTIVES

- To study the role played by the NGOs in the economic empowerment of rural women.
- To study the positive outcome due to the intervention of the NGOs

3.1 ROLE OF NGOs AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The NGOs can identify the areas where women can involve themselves and develop, so they can not only grow individually but also grow the community as a whole. The NGOs can play a major role to investigate the situation properly and help them to uplift. NGOs are playing an important role to make the women participate in the productive task and work for the alleviation of poverty. In fact, they play an important role in bringing important changes in the lives of women. Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) have been recognized as an effective strategy for the empowerment of women. The target women can be from rural areas and urban areas as well. The major thrust areas can be to remove the issues faced by them like issues like health, nutrition, agriculture, forestry, income generation activities, seeking microcredit and so on. In fact, over the years the NGOs have helped the women to get financial assistance at a minimum interest rate so that they can see themselves as an independent entrepreneur and can support the entire family being financially independent. In order to help the women the power of decision-making process, they need to become self-sufficient which will also guarantee gender equality.

4. METHODOLOGY:

This research was primarily descriptive research emphasizes on explaining the concept of Women empowerment and different role of NGOs. Information regarding this concept has been collected from the website, online articles, and ideas from abstract, journal. On the basis of conceptual study the paper discusses the various interpretations. Based on the analysis discussion the conclusions were drawn.

5. DISCUSSION:

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE NGOS FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

- For the successful completion of the task resources is a constraint for the NGOs.
- To motivate the women and ask them to participate is also a challenge.
- There is a challenge for the NGOs to play a role to generate employment for the women section.
- NGOs faced a lot of challenges in providing training to the poor women and provide them opportunities for self-employment to improve their social and economic status.

Despite several efforts, still NGOs need to work with a lot of positivity and considering the ground realities of the poor villagers. They have to consider that the major issues are still illiteracy among the women, so generation of employment is quite difficult.

- **Training & Skill Development:** It is important that proper training should be provided for the generation of self-employment so that their social and economic status can be improved.
- **Awareness about legal protection:** The NGOs can play a major role in making them aware of the laws which can protect them. After getting proper awareness and knowledge they may raise voice and protect their own interest.
- **Credit facility:** Women empowerment can be possible only when they become economically independent and hence they are guided about the ways of arranging finance at cheaper rates with lower interest rates. This effort may help them to start their own business with ease, without depending much on family support.

- **Skill development:** Women empowerment will be quite easier, if they are provided with the resources in terms of information, knowledge, technology, training and managerial techniques. So, up scaling them to make them competent and employable are also another major task or priority which can be fixed

6. ANALYSIS:

Furthermore, the process of carrying out an assessment of the work performed by NGOs needs to be closely managed. The approach and methodologies adopted for Impact assessment need to be monitored from time to time and follow a structured manner, so that the same can be used as a framework for various sectors. The used approach for doing the project needs to be scrutinized on a continuous basis, rather than one time implementation. Continuous evaluation is needed to improve the strategies as per the changing requirement to make the plan more successful. The participation of stakeholders is a critical area to address because of its fundamental importance to NGOs and their approach to development.

7. FINDINGS :

Moreover, it has been found that the NGO intervention has been effective only when there is a lot of fine tuning done from the plan to policy implementation. Even if there is a specialized and efficient Training to Rural Women., there must be some kind of Monitoring and Evaluation of the training. It is important to see that the resources are being used in the right direction and results are as per the expectation and is result oriented. However, it is very important to perform the impact assessment of the financial investment and other resources vested in making the project successful. Such a focused assessment will help to streamline the future course of action and to understand the appropriateness of the methodologies adopted in achieving the goals. The empowerment through NGOs implementation if done successfully can be used to develop a framework for different schemes across the demography for bringing more sustainable results.

8. RESULT :

The study of NGOs intervention in empowering the rural women is a very relevant study and it is found that there is a need for proper mobilization of the optimum Resources, so that the same may be channelized towards productive ways, bringing more smoothness to policy implementation and execution of goals. Empowering women by nurturing their leadership skills has proved to be very successful and hence it plays an active role to promote women's leadership in rural areas. This kind of initiatives will surely bring transformation in the lives of rural women. Bringing change through digitalization has been very common in practice nowadays. The rural population and life can enormously be changed with the implementation of digital connectivity and hence the government is also promoting access to high-end technological devices.

9. RECOMMENDATION:

There are various ways in which NGOs which can play a major role in enhancing women Empowerment. There is a need for active participation of the volunteers through Non-Government Organizations (NGO) to come forward for the help of NGOs. The various roles of NGOs towards women empowerment are through Women education. Rural women's were given access to education and training which have a major impact on their potential to access and benefit from income-generating opportunities. They can get a lot of engagement and earn through profitable business. The efforts organizing Rural Women can be brought together. There are many rural women who are less educated but they have a lot of hidden potential and zeal to perform. If those women are identified, they may turn up to be earning members of the society. There is a need to explain the role models properly so they can come forward with confidence and purpose. The NGO capacity building program can support women empowerment.

It is important to ensure Women's Participation 'in their empowerment. They need to be explained that achieving a goal needs a lot of concerted effort and requires policy and programme. When these changed programmes came into action then it will improve women's access to secure livelihoods. They will be able to understand the importance of economic resources and find solutions to alleviate their poverty from their lives.

10. BENEFITS DUE TO THE INTERVENTION OF NGOs

There is no doubt that rural women are bringing in a drastic change in society with the efforts of NGOs and it has changed the life-style of women. They have become independent and started taking crucial decisions for their betterment.

- It is an event that there has been a changing role of women in society in the family due to the support of NGOs.

- The women have achieved economic independence and are becoming aware of the latest laws which protect them. Their knowledge level is also increasing.
- There has been a change in the attitude of the people towards women and their position in the society.
- There is an increase in the confidence and the gradual rising of the social and economic status of women after the intervention of NGOs.
- Leadership qualities among women have developed and ensure their effective participation in their empowerment.
- Women are now able to represent their problem because of the empowerment and economics independency

11. CONCLUSION :

To ensure the sustainable development of the country, achieving the empowerment of women and their gender equality is the need of the hour. In this respect, the role of NGOs is very progressive in achieving women's economic empowerment which is the key to solve issues like gender inequality and poverty and to foster inclusive economic growth. Our society still needs strong steps to ensure economically as well as socially empowered life for women. NGOs play a pivotal role in the development of women and promoting economic security and well-being. The efforts of NGOs work like a catalyst to empower and uplift the women. The Empowerment of women has taken place which has helped to strengthened women's position in society

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