

Non-Governmental Organizations and Women Empowerment
-A Study in Visakhapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh

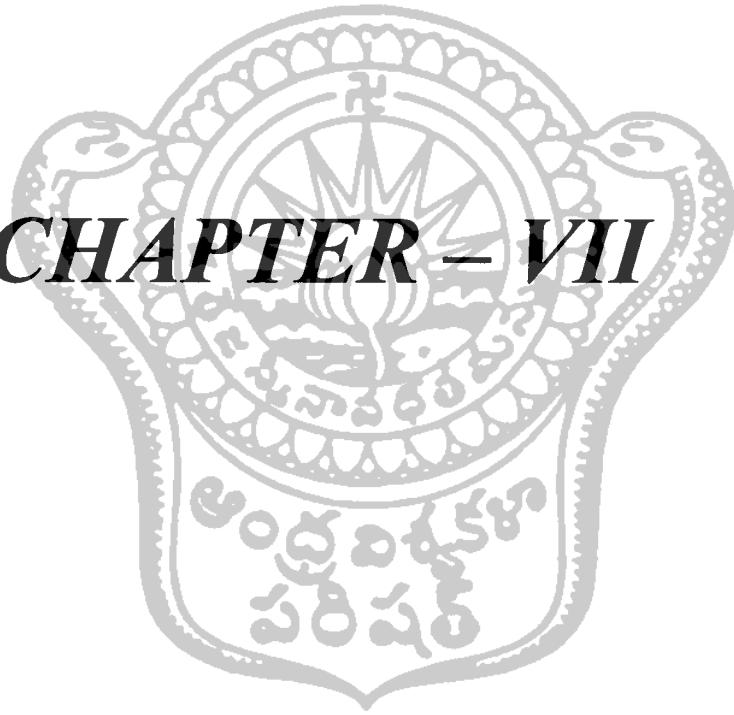


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CHAPTER – VII



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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The principle of gender equality is imbibed in our Constitution which guarantees equality to women and strengthens the National Government to adopt measures of positive determination in favor of women for removing the socio-economic, educational disadvantages faced by them. Within the frame work of democratic polity, our laws, development policies, projects, programs, plans and schemes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. The government has several schemes which cover welfare and support services, awareness generation and gender sensitization. These plans and programs play a supplementary role to other developmental programs in health, education, agriculture and rural development sectors. All these efforts are directed to make women economically and socially empowered so that they can become equal and active partners in national development along with men.

The involvement of voluntary organizations, associations, federations, trade unions, non-governmental organizations, women's organizations, as well as institutions dealing with education, training and research was promised to be ensured in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and review of all policies and programs affecting women. Towards this end, they were to be provided with appropriate support related to resources and capacity building and facilitated to participate actively in the process of empowerment of women.



The Empowerment of Women has acquired significant importance in the light of atrocities meted to them. The Union Government and the State Governments since Independence have initiated several steps to women empowerment. Among them an important strategy for financial inclusion of women, and thereby their empowerment which is crucial for their integration into the economy, has been micro-finance. The model encourages access of SHGs to banks both as a means of savings and as providers of loan services. By March 2010, 69.53 lakh Self Help Group (SHGs) including those formed under the SGSY had been covered under the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development's (NABARD) SHG-bank linkage programme.

The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW), an umbrella mission to strengthen inter-sectoral convergence and facilitate the process of coordination of all the women's welfare and socio-economic development programmes across ministries and departments, was launched on 8 March 2010 to ensure economic and social empowerment of women. The NMEW is piloting the 'convergence model' across the country in 32 select districts with the aim of bridging the gap between demand and supply of women-related services by undertaking realistic estimates of the demand, creating greater awareness about women-based schemes and programmes of the Government, augmenting the demand for various services/schemes for women, and connecting them with the service providers. The model includes introduction of convergence-cum-facilitation centres for women at district, tehsil/block and village levels. These programs are executed by the administrative machinery of both the Centre and the States and the evaluation studies have indicated that still the plight of women has not been considerably changed. These studies also suggested that involvement of NGOs



and Civil Society in these programs will improve the status of women .Thus the role of the NGOs and the civil society in articulating new challenges and initiatives has acquired significance.

The present Study has addressed itself to analyse the role of the NGOs in the Women Empowerment with the following objectives:

Objectives:

The voluntary sector or NGOs have emerged as a new force contributing to social upliftment and economic development. India is estimated to have 3.3 million registered NGOs and play a vital role in the shaping and implementation of participatory democracy, and their credibility lies in the responsible and constructive role they play in society. They work at grass roots level in the remotest areas and their reach is much wider. During the 1990s the distinctive trend was the emergence of welfare-oriented, non-profit and empowerment-oriented organizations. NGOs emerged as important players in the development arena. This emerging NGO or Voluntary Sector is also known as the third sector.

These NGOs are engaged in development work in the remotest areas in a variety of areas like health, education, water, environment, human rights, SCs/STs Women Empowerment, child rights, disability, etc., ensuring that people get their entitlements. Government has accepted the role of NGOs in the development process. Many a time, NGOs act as a bridge between hard-to-reach areas and the government. Recognizing the important contributions made by this Sector, in 2002 the Planning Commission declared the nodal agency for Government Organization – Voluntary Organization interface. This



was the much needed step to have a focal point for an integrated and holistic view of the voluntary sector.

The specific objectives of the Study are:

1. To classify the programs taken up by the NGOs in the realization of Women Empowerment.
2. To examine the initiatives and motivational factors of the Non Governmental Organizations aiming at Women Empowerment.
3. To analyse the role of NGOs in the Empowerment of women.
4. To analyse the perceptions of the respondents on the functioning of their felicitators.

Methodology:

An attempt has been made in this Chapter to analyse the role of NGOs in the empowerment of women. Empowerment is a broad concept and it has several dimensions – economic, social, political, etc. and in this analysis emphasis is made on economic empowerment on the presumption that economic empowerment leads to social and political empowerment. The analysis has been done by using cross section data. As the main objective of this Study is to analyse the role of NGOs in empowerment of women, female respondents of SHGs aided by NGOs and those aided by others (Government or micro finance institutions) are studied here, with a specific purpose of drawing meaningful inferences.

A multi-stage random sampling technique has been used for the Study. At the outset, Visakhapatnam District was selected for time and financial constraints,



purposively. From the selected 10 NGOs two NGOs Bhagavatula Charitable Trust (BCT) and Mahila Action are selected at random for in-depth study. These two NGOs are providing aid to 700 SHGs. Of these 700 SHGs, a sample of 35 SHGs are selected at random which forms five percent of the total SHGs. These 35 SHGs are distributed over 8 villages of two revenue Mandals, Yelamanchili and Munagapaka. All the members of these 35 SHGs are taken for in-depth analysis. Though, the total members of these 35 SHGs are 400, only 350 members have responded to provide the information and the core sample consists of 350 members.

Similarly, 15 SHGs, aided by other than NGOs like government, micro finance institutions, etc., which are known for their efficient functioning were selected purposively for the Study. These 15 SHGs are also chosen from the same villages. The total members of these 15 SHGs are 172 and out of which only 150 are responded. Thus, the sample for the control group consists of 150 members.

Technique of Analysis:

In addition to averages and percentages, the following multiple regression model has been employed to identify the factors influencing the participation of women respondents in decision-making (a proxy to empowerment)

$$Y = a_0 + a_1x_1 + a_2x_2 + a_3x_3 + a_4x_4 + a_5x_5 + a_6x_6 + a_7D_1 + a_8D_2 + a_9D_3$$

Y = Participation of female SHG member in decision making

X₁ = Literacy (As measured by years of schooling)

X₂ = Age of the respondents (Indicating experience)



X_3 = Proportion of earnings of the female respondents to total family earnings

X_4 = Family size

X_5 = Total savings of the SHG member (In Rupees)

X_6 = Investment made by the SHG member in the economic activity in which she is

engaged (In Rupees)

In addition, two sets of intercept dummy variables are used to capture the differences based on region and social status. A dummy variable D_1 as defined below, is used to make a distinction between the two regions

$D_1 = 1$, if the respondent belongs to rural area
0, otherwise

Another set of two intercept dummy variables D_2 and D_3 as defined below are used to capture the effect of social status on the participation of respondents in decision making by taking STs as the base:

$D_2 = 1$, if she belongs to BCs
0, otherwise

$D_3 = 1$, if she belongs to SCs
0, otherwise

Major Findings:

1. In Visakhapatnam district the registered NGOs are 500 and of them 85 are functioning effectively.

2. 10 NGOs are selected to describe the activities of NGOs. All the selected NGOs are engaged in varied activities of development such as social forestry, dairy



development, skill formation, literacy, health improvement etc. It is to be noted that all these programs are implemented by the NGOs with special emphasis on women through promotion of Self Help Groups (SHGs).

3. Of the 10 selected SHGs, 80 percent of the founders are from middle class and the remaining are from upper rich class. This may be an indication of the commitment of middle class in improving the living standards of the weaker sections.

4. All the NGO founders are well educated and they have either post graduation or professional course degrees. Above 60 percent of NGO leaders are young and 30 percent are in the middle age group.

5. All these 10 NGOs are aiding or promoted 3040 SHGs with a membership of 34,800. Average number of members for each of these SHGs is 12.

6. All these 3040 SHGs have mobilized internal resources worth Rs. 155 lakhs and the average resource mobilization per SHG is Rs. 5,132.

7. With the aid of the NGOs and with the mobilized internal resources, these SHGs have obtained financial support to the tune of Rs. 30.2 crores from different financial institutions.

8. 85 percent of the members of these SHGs belong to economically and socially weaker sections of the society viz., SC, ST, BC and minorities.

9. 45 percent of the SHG members became literate after joining the SHGs as members. The children of the above 5 years of age of SHG members are pursuing education at different levels.



10. 64 percent of the SHG members are self-employed and 92 percent of the SHG members are benefitted by different Community Development Programs of State and Central Governments.

11. The results of the sample study indicate the following:

- All the selected sample SHG members of both core and control groups belong to socially and economically weaker sections of the society.
- In the core group (NGO aided SHGs) 36 percent are engaged in social forestry, 29 percent are engaged in dairying, 19 percent are engaged in tailoring and the remaining are engaged in pottery and vegetable vending. In the control group (non NGOs aided SHGs) 27 percent are engaged in social forestry, 33 percent are engaged in dairying, 20 percent are engaged in tailoring and the remaining are engaged in vegetable vending and pottery.
- In the both groups, around 75 percent of the respondent members are in the productive age group of 45 years and below.
- All the members of the SHGs in the core and control groups are literate. However, it is to be noted that about 40 percent of the members in the core group and 45 percent of the members in the control group, became literate only after they joined in SHGs.
- The average family size of the members in the core group is marginally lower than the average family size of the members in the control group.
- The percentage of members working as agricultural labour is found to be lower in the core group as compared to the same in the control group.



- The time spent on cooking by the respondent members is found to be higher in the control group as compared to the core group. An inverse relationship is found between average time spent on cooking and social status.
- The average time spent on other house hold activities such as fetching water, collection of fire wood, cleaning the house, dish washing, care of the children and the aged etc. by the women respondents is also found to be higher in the control group as compared to the same in the core group.

12. With regard to the participation of women respondents in decision-making, the following observations are made:

- The proportion of women respondents in decisions relating to food selection and preparation is higher in the core group as compared to the control group.
- The percentage of female participation in the decisions relating to the expenditure on food is slightly higher in the core group as compared to control group.
- With regard to the decisions relating to selection of cloths, expenditure on cloths, expenditure on health, education of children, marriage of children etc. the participation of female respondents is observed to be higher in the core group as compared to the control group.

13. The results of the multiple-regression analysis are summarized below:

- Literacy of the women respondents, age of the respondents, proportion of earnings of the women respondent to the total family earnings are found to



be the important factors influencing the participation of women in decision-making (a proxy to empowerment of women).

- The participation of females in decision-making is found to be higher in semi-urban areas as compared to the rural areas.
- The levels of participation of female respondents in decision-making and social status are directly related.
- The level of participation of the female respondents in decision-making is higher in the core group as compared to the control group.

Conclusions: From the above analysis, the following conclusions or inferences can be drawn:

- The results clearly indicated that the literacy level of the SHG members both in control and core groups are increased after they became the members of the SHGs. This can be attributed to the commitment of the NGOs and the other facilitators who are responsible for the functioning of these SHGs.
- The average time spent by the female respondents on female related household activities is relatively low in the core group as compared to the control group. This may perhaps be considered as an indication of improving work efficiency of the core group members that can be attributed to the NGOs.
- The participation of female respondents in decision-making of different household activities----social, financial and household----is found to be higher in the core group as compared to the control group. This may be considered as a relatively, higher achievement of women empowerment in the core group as compared to the control group. From this, it may be



inferred that the contribution of NGOs to women empowerment is relatively higher as compared to the other facilitators (Government/Financial Institutions).

14. Suggestions:

1. The sample respondents of the core group (NGO aided) have expressed that the NGOs are helping not only in improving their literacy but also of their children. They also expressed that the NGOs are providing guidance regarding education of their children. 25 percent of these respondents have reported that the NGOs are imparting education to their children through their field staff during their off-school hours. With regard to the control group (non-NGO aided) respondents, though all the members have expressed the help of these facilitators in improving their literacy levels, their help with regard to their children's education is almost non-existent. This phenomenon clearly indicates the commitment of NGOs in promoting women empowerment through improving literacy levels of all the members of the family. Basing on this, it may be suggested that the government and other organizations engaged in literacy missions have to involve NGOs in these missions so that the objectives of these missions can be attained in an efficient and effective manner.

2. All the sample respondents of both the groups, expressed satisfaction regarding the activities undertaken by them in the SHGs-NGO/facilitator interface. In this regard, cent percent of the members of the core group have expressed that they are obtaining technical support, training facilitators and other services relating to their activities from the staff of the NGOs. On the other hand, only about 22 percent of the respondents, of the



control group have expressed that they are obtaining this type of service from their felicitators. This is a clear indication of the commitment of the NGOs in enhancing the incomes of the women SHG members through improving the work efficiency. In this regard it may be suggested that the government may provide certain tax incentives to the NGOs so that it enable them to channelize more funds to the cause of upliftment of the weaker sections in general and women in particular.

