Education and Women Entrepreneurs Empowerment in India

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Abstract: Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. Information and communications are closely linked to power and the ability to affect change. ICT is an umbrella term that includes any communication device. ICTs are emerging as a powerful tool for women empowerment in a developing country like India. Women education in India has also been a major preoccupation of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to responds to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. The growth of women’s education in rural areas is very slow. This obviously means that still large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, the weak, backward and exploited. Education of women in the is the most powerful tool of change of position in society. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. Women’s economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development and pro-poor growth. Achieving women’s economic empowerment requires sound public policies, a holistic approach and long-term commitment and gender-specific perspectives must be integrated at the design stage of policy and programming. The present paper explores the role of education in women empowerment and the status of women education in India. It shows that the education is most important part in the life of every woman.

Keywords: Education, Female Literacy Rate, Women Empowerment, ICT, Education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education of women in India has been a major issue for both the government and civil society, as the educated women play a very important role in the development of the country. India, at present has largest number of illiterates in the world. As we all know that education is must for everyone but unfortunately, in this male dominating society, the education of women has been neglected for a long time. Mostly people think that to spend money on daughters would be vain. Now, we see the change in people’s mentality that they are worried about the future of their daughters and they are ready to give the same place to position their daughters as they want for their sons. But in rural areas, we see that there are negligible changes in rural people’s thinking. Most of the villagers provide education to their daughters but not as much as they want for their sons. If their daughters learn to read or write the letters or count the money, they think that it is sufficient and feel proud that they have done their duty very well. A higher women literacy rate improves the quality of life both at home and outside home, by encouraging and promoting education of children, especially female children, and helps in reducing the infant mortality rate. It is true that empowerment can be gained with the help of education because it gives the knowledge of right and wrong, truth and lie. Women constitute almost half the human race. Education has been recognized as an essential agent of social change and development in any society of any country. Education is considered as a potential instrument through which processes of modernization and social change come to existence. According to the Government of India, "Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute a power." It is the ability to direct and control one's life. It is a process in which women gain control over their own lives of knowing and claiming their right at all levels of society at the international, local and household levels. Women also bear almost all responsibility for meeting basic needs of the family.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Malik and Courtney (2011) studied that how higher education offers empowerment to women. The economic independence and increased standing with the family were the benefits of higher education. It also enabled the women to impact the discriminatory practices.
Noreen and Khalid (2012) explored the possibilities and opportunities for women empowerment and how the participants in the study understand the role of higher education in empowerment of women at home and at work. They found out that the women should continue higher education and career by strategizing and acknowledging the support of their family members.

Banerjee (2012) studied the empowerment of women through higher education. She concluded that the empowered women challenged the man in their workplace and were seen in the powerful corporate positions.

Kandpal et al (2012) studied the participation in community level female empowerment program in India increases participants physical mobility, political participation and access to employment. Murtaza (2012) examined the current status of women in higher education in Gilgit Baltistan. He examined the challenges faced by the women were harassment at work places and work load. The parents didn’t spend similar amount in educating their daughters as compare to their sons.

Sonowal (2013) studied the effect of the SC and ST women in the rural areas of Sonitpur district. He found that the status of women in the present society, attitude of parents and guardians towards girl education.

Taxak (2013) studied the inter-relationships of the empowerment and development are probably too weak to be self sustaining, and that continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women.

Sethuraman, K. (2008) studied the Role of Women’s Empowerment and Domestic Violence in Child Growth and Undernutrition in a Tribal and Rural Community in South India

### III. MEANING OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The absence of a democratic context has contributed to slow progress in empowering women, particularly in South Asia. Women's empowerment movements have not survived in authoritarian regimes based on gender subordination and ideologies of male dominance. Approaches in South Asia have necessarily focused on opportunities and services rather than on political power. Conceptualizations of gender discrimination and male domination have been oversimplified and focused on elimination of obvious oppressive practices such as wife beating or dowry demands. Empowerment of women that will have lasting impacts must involve consciousness raising before the social construction of gender, which subordinates women in the family, class, caste, religion, or society, can be changed. Three experimental approaches to empowerment in South Asia have been tried: integrated development, economic empowerment, and consciousness raising. Consciousness raising has been implemented in awareness groups and education that have led to a new consciousness, self worth, societal and gender analysis, and access to skills and information. The economic empowerment approach has relied on improving women's control over economic resources and strengthening women's economic security. Garmin Bank has provided one example of organizing women around savings and credit, income generation, and skill training activities. Integrated development approaches have encouraged women's collectives that have engaged in development and social problem resolution and formed specialized activity groups as means of mobilization of women. No one design has assured success. Identification of the poorest and most oppressed in a geopolitical area has provided an entry point for action. Women were encouraged to find a separate time and space for themselves. The three aforementioned approaches have different assumptions about the reason for women's powerlessness: greater poverty and lower access to resources, economic vulnerability, and subordination within patriarchal societies and socioeconomic inequalities.

### ICT and Women

In the recent past, ICTs have been added to the women and gender equality debate. ICTs are being presented as a tool having potential to benefit women’s ‘empowerment’ and a number of ICT projects that specifically target women have been established in several developed and underdeveloped countries. Before going to study the role of ICTs in women empowerment, is necessary to understand what is ICT.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are a diverse set of technological tools and resources to create, disseminate, store, bring value addition and manage information. The ICT sector consists of segments as diverse as telecommunications, television and radio broadcasting, computer hardware, software and services and electronic media, for example, the internet and electronic mail.
In India, as elsewhere in the developing world, women play a central role in family, community and social development. However, women often remain invisible and unheard. Women more than men have to balance the complexities of surviving in extreme poverty, yet these women are excluded from discussion because they are often illiterate, they lack confidence and they lack mobility. ICT offer the opportunities for direct, interactive communication even by those who lack skills, who are illiterate, lack mobility and have little self-confidence. ICTs can play a crucial role in empowering women entrepreneurs, especially when coupled with policies addressing constraints that they face at the macro and systemic level.

a. ICTs are especially well adapted for women entrepreneurs who are often juggling family with entrepreneurial responsibilities and can benefit strongly from the time efficiencies and location
b. Flexibilities which ICTs make possible.
c. Empowering women entrepreneurs through ICTs requires a multi-stakeholder effort. There is a need for collaboration between governments, UN agencies, the private sector, business intermediaries and civil society to support the use of different ICTs among women entrepreneurs. It is also important that the perspective of women entrepreneurs at the grass-root level can be effectively brought to the attention of policy makers, which are often men.
d. The diversity of women entrepreneurs was emphasized. The value of different ICTs to a woman entrepreneur varies depending on the nature and size of business, the geographical location, industry
e. and the capabilities needed to make use of the technology.
f. Women’s entrepreneurship associations can play an important role in helping to bring ICTs to women entrepreneurs, especially in developing countries. Strengthening the ICT capacity of such associations in developing countries may be an effective strategy.
g. ICT capacity-building and training is essential for women entrepreneurs in Africa to benefit from the opportunities which ICTs offer. Literacy constraints where many women cannot read or write constrain their use of certain ICTs. Basic training which show women entrepreneurs how to use mobile phones, computers, social media and other ICTs are strongly needed.
h. The lack of ICT and electricity infrastructure in rural areas often makes access impossible in rural areas. There is a need to accelerate the effective implementation of relevant infrastructure for women entrepreneurs in rural areas to benefit.
i. The empowerment of women entrepreneurs through ICTs must involve partnerships with men and integrate measures that address socio-cultural constraints making it unacceptable for women
j. to use or own different ICTs.
k. ICTs are opening up the potential for a number of business ventures for rural women entrepreneurs. It is essential that women entrepreneurs gain greater awareness of these opportunities.

Here are some aspects of life which have a direct influence of ICT especially on women:
a. Women’s increased access to job Market and improve entrepreneurship using ICT
b. Increase of average household income in villages
c. Women empowerment
d. Shrinking Information Asymmetry through ICT.
e. Improved Governance
f. Indigenous Knowledge
g. Easy-Family communication
h. Increase Social awareness

**Strategies for ICT for women Entrepreneurship**
A proper framework of the strategies for all actors involved for ICT entrepreneurship is a must. The reason is that infrastructure for the ICT or ICT based entrepreneurship cannot be created by individuals. The major actors are academia, government and business.
Academia: Academia needs to develop both entrepreneurial skills and ICT skills among entrepreneurs. The curriculum of training program or even general education programs must include early education on financial management and planning skills, early education on entrepreneurial skills, and encourage students to explore entrepreneurial pursuits during school term as part of credit. It must include early start to ICT skills and use of ICT tools for teaching. It should encourage usage of ICT and highlight role models.

The role of ICT education in the overall empowerment of rural women with reference to-

Social empowerment
- Gaining access to new and useful knowledge, information and awareness about a range of issues, topics and activities of interest to women.
- Participating in various activities with other women and people in positions of influence where you can openly discuss issues, share concerns and experiences, and reflect on issues affecting you.

Technological empowerment
- New knowledge, awareness and understanding about new ICTs and their potential benefits and impacts.
- The development of new skills, experience and greater confidence and competence in using new communication technologies.
- Advice and support in using email and the Internet, provided in ways that often met the participants’ needs very well.

Political empowerment
- Having a voice for their rights.
- Feel decision making capacity.
- Networking or meeting with people in government and industry and other women to discuss issues affecting women and women communities, and to organise various actions.

Psychological empowerment
- An increase in self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Feeling more valued, respected.
- Greater motivation, inspiration, enthusiasm and interest to develop new skills and knowledge.
- Feeling much less isolated from others (particularly other supportive women) and, as a result, experiencing greater wellbeing, happiness and enjoyment of life.

Educational empowerment
- ICT deliver information about whole world in a language they understand and a medium that they would be comfortable with.
- Wide knowledge of each area, understanding of new concepts.
- ICT help in non formal and adult women education.

Economical empowerment
- ICT helps them to increase their monthly income.
- ICT provides jobs and opportunities to merge with large industries.
- ICT education makes women economically sound that is source of other all types of women empowerment.

IV. CHALLENGE OF EDUCATION
The vast majority of the world's poor population is women. "Around the world, healthy, educated, employed and empowered women break poverty cycles not only for themselves, but for their families, communities, and countries too." According to United Nations World’s Women 2010 Trends and Statistics, two-third of the world's
illiterate population is female. The majority of school age children, not in school are girls. Women all over the world are challenged by a number of obstacles that restrict their ability to play significant roles in their communities and the broader society. Today, HIV/AIDS is rapidly becoming a woman's disease. A woman is dynamic in many roles she plays. In the village of in Maharashtra 400 women stood up and raised their voices to ban alcohol and drugs. Women have withstood perennial health problems due to the lack of toilet facilities and are forced to use fields and open spaces The current world food price crisis is having a severe impact on women. Around the world, millions of people eat two or three times a day, but a significant percentage of women eat only once. And, now, many women are denying themselves even that one meal to ensure that their children are fed. These women are already suffering the effects of even more severe malnutrition, which inevitably will be their children's fate as well. The impact of this crisis will be with us for many years.

The Ministry for Women & Child Development was established as a department of the Ministry of Human Resource Development in the year 1985 to drive the holistic development of women and children in the country. In 2006 this department was given the status of a Ministry, with the powers to: Formulate plans, policies and programmes, enacts/amends legislation, guiding and coordinating the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organizations working in the field of Women and Child Development. It delivers such initiatives such as the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) which is a package of services such as supplementary nutrition, health check-ups and immunization. As mentioned earlier, the empowerment of women begins with their safety and health and this Ministry is committed to providing them.

V. SUGGESTION

Women Entrepreneur: According to a 2010 report Women Entrepreneurs Worldwide by Global Entrepreneurs Monitor that included interviews with more than 90,000 women across 59 economies in only one of them did more women participate in entrepreneurship than men. Only eight out of 54 economies - Panama, Venezuela, Jamaica, Guatemala, Brazil, Thailand, Switzerland, and Singapore - have equal participation by men and women in entrepreneurship. The remaining economies show lower female participation, some as low as a 1:10 ratio. Women entrepreneurs made up between 1.5 percent and 45.4 percent of the adult female population in their respective economies. Around 83 million women across those regions ran businesses they had launched at least three and a half years before.

The govt of India need to including the implementation of a family planning strategy in countries’ Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) should be considered. Develop a culturally sensitive family planning strategy and implement it National governments of countries with a high unmet need for contraception should take the lead in developing a comprehensive strategy to expand family planning that includes community outreach, the mobilization of support from community leaders, the training of service providers and a communication programme aimed at changing norms and empowering people by providing reliable information on contraception and guidance on how to obtain it.

Engage the medical system in a commitment to provide sexual and reproductive health services to adolescents and young people National authorities and the medical community should ensure that family planning and information about how to prevent sexually transmitted infections are an integral part of the minimum healthcare package offered to adolescents and young people under primary care and remove legal, financial and cultural obstacles that prevent or limit their access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services.

Conduct a communication campaign in favour of girls National authorities assisted as appropriate by the private sector and non-governmental organizations should undertake a communications campaign to transmit positive messages about the value of girls and the real and potential contributions of women to their birth families, and to showcase women’s successes.

VI. CONCLUSION

Education among women is the most powerful tool of attaining power in the society. Higher Education of women plays a very important role in releasing their energy and creativity and enabling them to meet the complex challenges of the present world. It helps in lessening inequalities and functions as a means for improving their status within the family. The higher education increases the women to take independent decisions, to reduce
violence, women’s ability to claim legal rights, participation in civic society, economic independence and many more. The biggest challenge before the Government and NGO’s is to create awareness and sensitization among people of all levels, especially in rural areas, about the special needs of women and girls.

REFERENCES