

Approaches, Framework And Models Of Women Empowerment

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Abstract

Women's participation is not only necessary for economic growth, but it will also have a transformative impact on both economic and social development goals. Women's participation will not only help to establish the social goals that society is ready to pursue, but it will also help to achieve development goals through gender awareness and more efficient, economy-wide policies. Women's participation, then, is not just about increasing the number of women or incorporating them into existing development models; it is also about empowering women and making development policies and programmes more people-centered.

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, Participation, Framework

Introduction:

Women scholars and activists, beginning with Esther Boserup's breakthrough book "Women's Role in Economic Development," released in 1970, sought to make women visible and active participants in production, the home, and other spheres of society. According to studies, women are more often the victims of development programmes than the benefactors. The high failure rate of development policies, programmes, and projects is due, at least in part, to a lack of understanding or awareness of women's productive and reproductive roles.

Prior to the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), development policies and programmes were thought to be gender neutral, which meant they didn't differentiate between men and women and were expected to benefit everyone, men and women alike. Women were singled out as mothers, child caregivers, or as a particularly vulnerable group. As a result, women's programmes were primarily focused on nutrition, child care, health, and population control, with the goal of improving family life and controlling women's fertility, or they were welfare-oriented, with the goal of assisting women who were suffering from the worst effects of poverty and malnutrition. Women's contributions to agriculture and other types of production were mostly overlooked.

Women in Development Approach:

The advancement of women is inextricably linked to the advancement of the nation. For the mobilisation and growth of human resources, effective management and development of women's resources, that is, their abilities, interests, skills, and other potentialities, is critical. Women's development is a holistic and cohesive idea that spans economic, social, and cultural domains. However, because poverty is the single most important cause of socioeconomic development, such as health, education, and employment, women's overall development is widely seen as critical.

By the mid-1990s, a new policy to include women in development had gained traction among development organisations, thanks to the International Year of Women (1975). Women's perceptions of themselves in development thought have gradually shifted from victims and passive objects to independent participants.

The Welfare Approach:

During the 1950s and 1960s, when development cooperation was in its infancy, women were viewed as merely passive recipients of development aid, with a focus on their reproductive duties as mothers and homemakers. This strategy is based on the Western paradigm of the nuclear family, in which women are economically reliant on male breadwinners. It is, however, appropriate to the status of Indian women (Moser, 1989).

The Equality Approach:

This is the first Women in Development (WID) strategy, which arose in response to the failure of modernization initiatives during the UN Decade of Women. The equity approach is based on the belief that women are behind in society and that the gender gap may be closed by implementing remedial measures within existing systems. Women are viewed as active players in the process of development. At the time, there was a dearth of specific study of men and women's relationships, as well as the concept of distinct power bases that might exist between them.

The Anti-Poverty Approach:

The second WID method links economic inequality between men and women to poverty rather than subordination, with the goal of increasing income-generating opportunities for disadvantaged women. This technique is similar to the late 1970s fundamental needs for general development strategy, which focused on meeting basic requirements such as food, clothing, housing, fuel, and education. The anti-poverty strategy emphasises women's productive role and encourages them to work in order to boost their employment and income-generating prospects. This method, however, does not address women's reproductive roles, nor does it identify social and cultural limits.

The Efficiency or Instrumental Approach:

The fundamental premise of this strategy is that women must be completely integrated into the development process in order to fully utilise all human resources and ensure that development becomes more efficient and successful. Women are considered as having untapped development potential that should be used more fully. The efficiency approach, on the other hand, ignores existing role patterns in society and assumes that women could easily accomplish additional work and that women's labour has not benefited national progress thus far.

The Empowerment or Autonomy Approach:

The four approaches outlined previously have one thing in common: they ignore historical inequities in power between men and women in their communities, as well as women's engagement in economic activity. The empowerment or autonomy method, which is based on Third World women's experiences, arose in the mid-1970s among Third World women and their organisations. It acknowledges that feminism is more than just a modern Western, urban, middle-class import; it has a long history.

Feminism in the Third World has its roots in women's engagement in nationalist battles, labour agitations, and peasant revolts, and it has been a powerful force for change. The empowerment strategy strives to increase women's self-reliance by strengthening and widening their power base. It describes gender inequality as a problem not only in comparison to men, but also in terms of race, class, colonial past, and contemporary place in the world economic order.

Empowerment Approaches during 1990s:

In the 1990s, the concept of women's empowerment as a goal of development through involvement in socioeconomic development programmes gained traction. Empowerment is a process of self-awareness and capacity development that leads to increased engagement in transformative action, as well as increased decision-making authority and control over one's life (OECD, 1984). An empowerment approach to development, on the other hand, can imply people's participation in policy-making and planning procedures.

A study titled 'Empowerment of Women in South Asia' identifies two common approaches used by development agencies: (i) empowerment through economic interventions to increase women's economic status through employment, income generation, and access to credit; and (ii) empowerment through integrated rural development programmes, in which strengthening women's economic status is only one component, along with education, literacy, and provision of basic needs and services. These tactics differ with those more commonly utilised by women's organisations and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Women's empowerment through enhanced decision-making authority in the family and community, as well as increased political participation, is achieved through increased awareness, capacity building, and organising (Batliwala, 1993).

Recommendations of the World Conferences on Women Development and Empowerment:

Many international conferences, summits, seminars, conventions, and workshops on women's problems are held around the world to empower women. From Mexico to Copenhagen, then to Nairobi, and lastly to Beijing, the current social history spans just over three decades. However, if one examines the history of the struggle for women's rights and feminism in India and around the world, this period has been one of the most eventful and significant in recent memory. It's been a bumpy but brief ride from ultra-feminism in the 1960s to introspections on women's status in the 1970s, to women in development in the 1980s, gender in the 1990s, and empowerment in the twenty-first century. The paradigms of human development and women empowerment have shifted from women's problems to women's issues, and finally to women's viewpoints.

The Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, proposed a framework for action, as well as a gender equality agenda. For women and the economy, the following specific tactics are suggested: > Develop economic policies that have a beneficial influence on the employment and income of women workers in both the formal and informal sectors, as well as special steps to address women's unemployment.

> Take specific steps to support policies and programmes that promote women's full involvement while respecting their cultural variety.

> Expand institutions dedicated to promoting women's entrepreneurship, including appropriate non-traditional and neutral credit schemes, as well as innovative linkages with financial institutions, to promote and support women's self-employment and the development of small businesses, and to strengthen women's access to credit and capital on appropriate terms equal to those of men, by scaling up institutions dedicated to promoting women's entrepreneurship, including appropriate non-traditional and neutral credit schemes, as well as innovative linkages with financial institutions. and

> Adopt policies that promote business organisations, non-governmental organisations, and cooperatives, revolving loan funds, credit unions, grass-roots organisations, women's SHGs, and other groups in order to provide services to rural and urban women entrepreneurs.

Overall, the Post-Beijing Conference Report (1995) and Maria Riley's suggestions emphasise the importance of continuing to empower women locally and globally through action toward change for a more just and sustainable society and planet. As a United Nations member, India has ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), both of which came into force on September 3,

1981, and has launched numerous socio-economic development programmes aimed at women's empowerment.

Gender and Development (GAD):

Since the mid-1980s, the shift from women's integration to mainstreaming has been accompanied by a shift in focus from women to gender. This new method is known as Gender and Development, in contrast to the WID approach (GAD). Gender is described as men and women's socially defined and constructed roles. Gender roles evolved from one area and culture to the next and with time, unlike sex, which is biologically defined. Gender and Development (GAD) is a progressive approach to development based on the experiences and viewpoints of women.

A number of techniques have been created to integrate women into society and to make gender a primary focus of development efforts. Furthermore, in the past, there has been a lack of focus on the role of women in the development process. The Gender and Development method, on the other hand, has had mixed outcomes in terms of empowering women and men in patriarchal societies. As a result, the shift in planning from 'basic necessities' to 'anti-poverty' and 'target group' has given a new attention to the role of women in India.

The Women's Empowerment Framework:

For the first time, UNICEF (1993) declared the Women's Empowerment Framework, which explains each vital element at each level. The Women's Empowerment Framework's central thesis is that women's progress may be divided into five levels of equality, with empowerment being an important component at each level. Welfare, access, conscientisation, involvement, and control are the five levels.

Welfare:

The First Level focuses solely on the basic needs of women, without acknowledging or seeking to alter the structural factors that demand the provision of welfare services. Women are currently purely passive recipients of welfare assistance.

Access:

For women to make significant advancement, they must complete the Second Level. This entails having equal access to resources such as education, land, and credit. When women recognise that a lack of resources is a barrier to their progress and overall well-being and take steps to remedy it, they embark on the path to empowerment.

Conscientisation:

In the Empowerment structure, the Third Level is critical. Women must recognize that their difficulties stem from structural and institutional discrimination in order to take appropriate action to close gender gaps or inequities.

Participation:

The Fourth Level is the mechanism by which women, like men, make decisions. However, mobilisation is required at this level. They band together and organise themselves so that women are better able to acquire larger representation, which leads to higher empowerment and, ultimately, more control.

Control:

The ultimate level of equality and empowerment is the Fifth Level. As a result, the power balance between men and women is equal, and neither side dominates the other. Women can make decisions about their life and the lives of their children at this stage in the empowerment framework, and take an

active role in the development process. Women's contributions are also adequately acknowledged and appreciated.

Development planners can use the empowerment framework to pinpoint the point at which they should intervene to help women achieve more equality and empowerment. In recent years, all Third World governments have used an empowerment paradigm to bring women into the mainstream of development.

Characteristic Features of Empowerment:

Empowerment, according to Sahai (1998), is a set of interconnected and mutually reinforcing traits that include increased awareness, capacity, and skill development, participation, increased control and decision-making authority, and action. As a step toward gender equality, awareness building refers to raising awareness of women's status, discrimination, and rights and possibilities. Building collective awareness gives people a sense of belonging and the power of working together. The ability to plan, make choices, organise, manage, and carry out tasks, as well as deal with people and institutions, is referred to as capacity building and skills development. Other key aspects of empowerment include exercising greater authority and decision-making power in the household, community, and society, as well as taking action to achieve greater equality between men and women.

Models of Empowerment:

"Women's empowerment and gender equality are conditions for achieving political, social, economic, cultural, and environmental security among all people," according to the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). On the relationship between microfinance and women's empowerment, there are four basic points of view. Some, including the researcher, emphasise the good data and are essentially hopeful about the possibility of long-term microfinance programmes empowering women all over the world (World Bank, 2001). Another school of thinking acknowledges the limitations of empowerment, but blames them on bad programme design (Micro-Credit Summit Campaign, 1999). Others recognise the limitations of microfinance in terms of increasing empowerment, but consider it as an important component of a poverty-reduction strategy. There are however those who believe that microfinance programmes are a waste of money (Mayoux, 2001).

Many NGOs' gender policies and the viewpoints of certain consultants and scholars looking at the gender effect of microfinance programmes are based on the feminist empowerment concept (Johnson, 1997). The establishment of some of the earliest microfinance programmes in the South, particularly the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and the Working Women's Forum (WWF) in India, is based on this idea. Gender equality and women's human rights are the fundamental themes here. Microfinance is advocated as a starting point for a larger strategy of economic and socio-political empowerment for women.

There are three concepts for microfinance and gender that underpin the current debate: financial self-sustainability, poverty alleviation, and feminist empowerment. Most donor agencies, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank (WB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest (CGAP), and the Micro-credit Summit Campaign, have adopted a financial self-sustainability philosophy. The provision of financially self-sustaining microfinance services to large numbers of impoverished people, particularly micro and small enterprises, is the major factor in programme design. Gender lobbyists have been able to use high female payback rates and the significance of women's economic activity to economic growth to argue for targeting women (Mayoux, 2001). According to this paradigm, boosting women's access to microfinance services will result in individual economic empowerment, well-being, and social and political empowerment.

Poverty-targeted programmes are based on the poverty alleviation approach. Poverty reduction among the poorest, greater well-being, and community development are the major goals here. Small savings and loan provision for consumption and manufacturing, as well as group formation, are the focus.

This concept supports some funding for programmes that function with certain client groups or in specific settings (Mayoux, 2001). In this context, gender lobbies have advocated that women should be targeted due to higher levels of female poverty and women's responsibility for household well-being. Women's empowerment and poverty reduction are considered as two sides of the same coin.

In models of micro-credit programmes for women's empowerment, Mayoux (2001) describes three virtuous cycles. Women's access to savings and credit offers them a larger economic involvement in decision-making through their savings and credit decisions in the economic empowerment spiral. Women who have control over credit and financial decisions will improve their own and their families' well-being. Investing in women's economic activities will increase their employment chances, resulting in a 'trickle down' impact. Women's own income-generating activities are emphasised in the financial sustainability and feminist empowerment frameworks. The emphasis in the poverty alleviation model is on boosting household incomes and the utilisation of loans for spending. Individual economic empowerment is considered as contingent on social and political empowerment in the feminist empowerment model.

Increased well-being merely promotes access to savings and credit facilities, implying that women's decisions about how they use savings and credit strengthen their voice in household economic decisions. This allows women to spend more money on their own and their children's well-being. The poverty-alleviation model's core concern is this. Men benefit from women's decision-making power because it prevents household income from being diverted to unproductive and destructive pursuits. Other welfare programmes, including as nutrition, health, and literacy campaigns, are recommended in addition to microfinance to reduce women's vulnerability and increase their abilities.

CONCLUSION:

Women's increased economic activity and control over income, as a result of access to microfinance, leads to social and political empowerment, with the added benefits of enhanced skills, mobility, and access to knowledge and support networks. The status of women in the community is also improved. Group formation reinforces these shifts, leading to broader social and political movements. Without particular interventions to modify gender relations at the home, community, or macro-levels, the financial self-sustainability and poverty reduction models assume that social and political empowerment will occur.

The feminist empowerment model, on the other hand, promotes explicit tactics for assisting women in protecting their individual and collective gender interests at the household, community, and macro-levels. To some extent, all three models are linked. No model can become self-sufficient on its own. As a result, the integration of all three models guides the researcher.

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