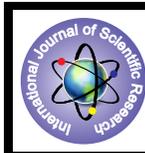


Planning Commission Initiative for Woman Empowerment in India



Engineering

KEYWORDS :

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ABSTRACT

“ A Candle loses nothing by lighting another candle. ” - Swami Vivekanda.”

In most of the developing countries today, more and more emphasis is laid on the need for development of women and their active participation in the main stream of development process. It is also widely recognized that apart from managing household, bearing children, rural women bring income with productive activities ranging from traditional work in the fields to working in factories or running small and petty businesses. They have also proven that they can be better entrepreneurs and development managers in any kind of human development activities. Therefore, it is important and utmost necessary to make rural women empowered in taking decisions to enable them to be in the central part of any human development process. The Empowerment of Women also considered as an active process enabling women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life.

Empowerment of women is a socio-political ideal, encompassing notions of dignity and equality, envisioned in relation to the wider framework of women's rights. It is a process of gaining control over self, over resources and over existing societal perceptions and attitudes and would be achieved only when an improvement in the 'condition' of women is accompanied by an advancement in their 'position' by enlarging the economic, social and political freedoms and choices available to them.

In this regard the planning commission initiative through different five years plan for women empowerment are briefed discusses in this paper.

Introduction :

Though the planned economic development in India began in 1951 with the inception of First Five Year Plan, theoretical efforts had begun much earlier, even prior to the independence. Setting up of National Planning Committee by Indian National Congress in 1938, The Bombay Plan & Gandhian Plan in 1944, Peoples Plan in 1945 (by post war reconstruction Committee of Indian Trade Union), Sarvodaya Plan in 1950 by Jaiprakash Narayan were steps in this direction.

The planning commission's "Plans and Prospects for social benefit in India 1951 - 1961" spells out social welfare services as intending to provide the special needs of persons and groups who, by the reason of same handicap-social, economic, physical or mental are unable to avail or are traditionally denied the amenities and services provided by community.

The committee on status of women, in its report "towards equality", has mentioned, "Women are considered to be handicapped by social customs and social values and, therefore, social welfare services have specially endeavored to rehabilitate them.

The Planning Commission defined three major areas in which they had paid special attention to women's development. (a) Education, (b) Social welfare and (c) Health. A planned approach to provide special force to the welfare of women was adopted with the launching of the first five year plan in 1951.

The First Five Year Plan:

The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) contemplated welfare measures for women. To implement welfare measures for the benefit of poor women, the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was established to deal with the problems of women. The CSWB recognized and realized the need for organising women into Mahila Mandals or women's club as an approach to community development.

The Second Five Year Plan:

The Second Five Year Plan (1956 - 61) intimately concentrated overall intensive agricultural development. However, the

welfare approach to women's issues was determined recognizing women as workers. Further, protection against injuries at work, maternity benefits and crèches for their children. It also suggested immediate implementation of the principal of equal pay for equal work and provision for training to enable women to compete for higher jobs.

The Third Five Year Plan:

The Third Five Year Plan (1961 - 66) sincerely recognized the greater importance of education for women which has been a major welfare strategy for women. This plan allocated the largest share for expending social welfare services and condensed courses of education. As regards to wealth, maternal and child welfare programmes were proclaimed in terms of maternal and child welfare, health education, nutrition and family planning.

The Fourth Five year Plan:

Thus the emphasis on women education was continued during the Fourth Five Year Plan also (1969 - 1974). The basic policy was to promote women's welfare as the base of operation. The outlay on family planning was stepped up to reduce the birth rate through education. Immunization of pre-school children and supplemental feeding, expectant and nursing mothers.

The Fifth Five year Plan:

Need for training women in respect of income generating activities and their protection was stressed in the Fifth Five Year Plan(1974-1979). Further, the fifth plan also recommended a strategic programme of functional literacy to equip women with skills and knowledge to perform the functions as a good housewife. Under the health programmes, the primary objective was to provide minimum public health facilities integrated with family planning and nutrition for vulnerable groups, children, pregnant and lactating mothers.

The Fifth Year Plan was happened to be during the decade of International Women's decade and the submission of the Report of the Committee on the status of women in India (CSWI) "Towards Equality". The CSWI had comprehensively examined the rights and status of women in the context of

changing social and economic conditions and the problems relating to the advancement of women. The CSWI reported that the dynamics of social change and development had adversely affected a large section of women and had created new imbalances and disparities.

It was realized that constitutional guarantees of equality would be meaningless and unrealistic unless women's right to economic independence is acknowledged and their training in skills as contributors to the family and the national economy was improved. Consequently National Plan of Action (1976) providing the guidelines based on 'United Nations' World Plan of Action for women' came into force. The National Plan of Action identified areas of health, family planning, nutrition, education, employment, legislation and social welfare for formulating and implementing of action programmes for women and called for planned interventions to improve the conditions of women in India. The women's welfare as development bureau was setup in 1976 to act as a nodal point within the Government of India to co-ordinate policies and programmes and initiate measures for women's development.

The Sixth Five year Plan:

The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-1985) stressed the need of economic independence educational advance and access to health care and family planning as essential for women's development. So the strategy was threefold: of education, employment and health. They are independent and dependent on the total developmental process.

The Seventh Five year Plan:

The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-1990) sought to generate awareness among women about their rights and privileges. The long term objectives of developmental programmes in the Seventh plan were to raise women's economic and social status in order to bring them into the mainstream of national development and recognized the importance of women in contributing to the various socio-economic, political and cultural activities. The seventh plan emphasized the need to open new avenues of work for women and perceive them as crucial resource for the development of the country. Another salient and crucial recognition was the need for organization of women workers and unionization.

Under the plan, a new scheme, "Women's Development Corporation" has been taken up for promoting employment generating activities by supporting schemes from women's group and women from poorer sections of society. A women's development planning and monitoring cell was also set up for collection of data and monitoring of plan programmes. A very significant step therein was to identify and promote beneficiary oriented programmes which extended direct benefits to women.

During the 7th Plan period, the Indian Parliament adopted a National Policy on Education 1986 included a chapter on Education for women's equality.

The Eighth Five year Plan:

The strategy in the Eighth Plan (1992-1997) was to ensure that the benefits of development from diverse sectors did not bypass women and special programmes were implemented to harmonize the general programmes. The main objective of Eighth Plan was to extend the reach of services to women both qualitatively and quantitatively. Panchayati Raj institutions are involved in the designing and implementation of women's programmes.

The approach of the Eighth Plan made a paradigm shift from

development to empowerment of women. In order to meet the needs of women and children, there had been a progressive increase in the plan outlays over the time of eight five year plans. The outlay of Rs. 4 crores in the First Five Year Plan (1951 - 56) had gone up to Rs. 2000 Crores in the Eighth Five Year Plan.

The Ninth Five year Plan:

The Ninth Five Year Plan(1997-2002) came into effect from April 1, 1997. An approach paper had been developed by the Planning Commission and accepted by the National Development Council, which had become basis for developing Ninth Five Year Plan. In this approach paper focus was laid on empowerment of women and people's contribution in planning and implementation of strategies.

An important objective in the Approach paper was the empowerment of women. In planning process, empowerment at the outset, means choices for women and opportunities to benefit of these choices. The supportive environment should be provided to women at all stages by the home, school, religion, government and work place.

A supportive environment was one that gender sensitive. In all regional meetings, participants asked for gender sensitization or training at all levels in public and private sectors.

Women are facing problems like feminization of poverty, inadequate investment in social sectors, increasing violence against women and stereotyped portrayal of women in private and state media especially television. There is necessity for information and training opportunities, reservations and social services etc., and people's involvement is necessary for the success of any programme. Empowerment is about choices and the ability exercise women's choices will be limited unless they are more involved in policy-making. The 9th Five Year Plan is an attempt to bring in women's issues within the policy-making spheres.

The Government has set up a national resource units for women which acts as an apex body for promoting and incorporating gender perspectives in politics and programmes of the government. To achieve the goals laid down therein, a number of initiatives have been launched. They include enactment of legislation to ban sex determination tests so as to prevent female foeticide. Equally important is the fact that the state governments are also drawing up plans of action to cater to local requirements and ensure the holistic development of the girl child.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1993 ensure reservation of 1/3 of seats for women in all elected offices of local bodies, in rural and urban areas. In the rural areas, women have thus been brought to the centre-stage in the nation's efforts to strengthen democratic institutions.

The Tenth Five year Plan:

The Tenth Plan(2002-2007) aims at empowering women through translating the recently adopted National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001) into action and ensuring 'survival' protection and development of children through rights based approach.

The Eleventh Five year Plan:

The Eleventh Plan(2007-2012) Approach paper aimed to raise the sex ratio for the age group 0 - 6 to 935 by 2011 - 12 and to 950 by 2016 - 17. Further, this plan intends to ensure 33 percent of the direct and indirect beneficiaries of all government schemes were women and girl children. It also proposes to make sure that all children enjoy a safe childhood without any

pressure to work.

The Eleventh plan approach paper says it was about to change all that. The document reads; “An important divide which compels gender special focused efforts was made to purge society of this malaise by creating an enabling environment for women to become economically, politically and socially empowered.” But it is interesting to note that in a unique move, the government has constituted a committee of feminist economist to ensure gender sensitive allocation of public resources in the 11th five years plan, a step it hopes was promoted gender equality and more inclusive growth.

The Twelfth Five year Plan:

Vision for the 12th Five Year Plan:

The vision for the 12th Five Year Plan(2007-2012) is to ensure improving the position and condition of women by addressing structural and institutional barriers as well as strengthening gender mainstreaming.

Goals for the 12th Five Year Plan:

- Creating greater ‘freedom’ and ‘choice’ for women by generating awareness and creating institutional mechanisms to help women question prevalent “patriarchal” beliefs that are detrimental to their empowerment.
- Improving health and education indicators for women like maternal mortality, infant mortality, nutrition levels, enrolment and retention in primary, secondary and higher education.
- Reducing the incidence of violence against women and providing quality care services to the victims.
- Improving employability of women, work participation rates especially in the organized sector and increased ownership of assets and control over resources.
- Increasing women’s access to public services and programmes through establishing and strengthening convergence mechanisms at multiple levels, creation of physical infrastructure for women and improving the capacity of women’s organizations and collectives.
- Ensuring that the specific concerns of single and disadvantaged women are addressed.

Thrust areas for the Twelfth plan:

The 11th Plan had taken numerous steps forward. However, the targets set out could be only partially achieved. In the 12th plan the Government’s priority would be to consolidate the existing initiatives and interventions relating to women, build upon the achievements and also move beyond to respond to new challenges. The thrust areas for economic, social and political empowerment of women for the 12th Plan are derived from the concerns and barriers outlined .

Conclusion:

Women’s discrimination is phenomenon in Indian society. In fact, still now they are ill treated by their family in terms of low intake of food, lack of educational attainments and exploitation both in public and private spheres. Before sixth five year plan, there was no provision for women’s cause. However, seventh and eighth plans emphasize on women’s development and women empowerment. But since the 11th five year plans, women are considered as a category of the notion of inclusive growth as it is

attached with the notion of inclusive democracy. We know that despite the half of the population, their voice was not counted in various decisions – making bodies. Democracy is based on the principle of equality. In this connection, It is clear that “Democracy is never just a system for organizing the election of government. It also brings with it a strong conviction about the citizens being of intrinsically equal worth”. Again, we see 11th and 12th five year plan both have stressed the importance on inclusive growth. In fact, women must be included in the development process for the country’s progress.

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