



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Management

CAPACITY BUILDING OF WOMEN THROUGH WOMEN'S ECONOMIC ENHANCEMENT (WEE) VALUE CHAIN ANALYSIS

KEY WORDS: Entrepreneurial, Self- Help Groups, Value chain, Economic Enhancement

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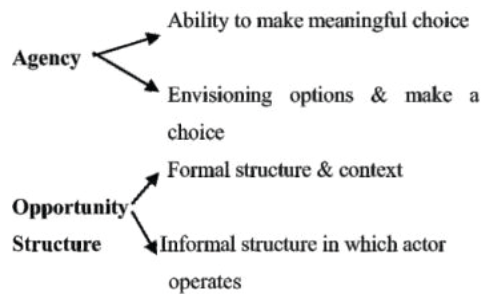
ABSTRACT

Empowerment' as a vehicle for poverty reduction is becoming critical factor for success, leading to development across the nations. As a strategic approach building the capacity of women from bottom up approach with the existing community resources. Although it is acknowledged across that enterprise development is a crucial element in the process of economic development. Building the enterprise activities at the grass roots by the women groups will enhance their economic standards. The purpose of this paper is to explore the economic enhancement standards of women formed as a collective group by a sample WEE 'Chain analysis. As a case, based approach few Self-Help Groups (SHGs) running their businesses in the state of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are considered. The findings of this case study emphasize the importance of seeing the women forming as collective groups for entrepreneurial activity for economic enhancement at a broader perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment means Swashakthi i.e Empowering women – the third of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which are now named as Strategic Development Goals (SDGs), can be achieved only by providing the equal opportunities. Women are almost half of the population having enormous potential but being underutilized for the economic development of the nation. Women's economic participation and empowerment are fundamental to strengthening women's rights & enabling women to have control over their lives and exert influence in society according to the Swedish Ministry for foreign affairs 2010. According to the OECD 2010 report investments in gender equality yield the highest returns of all development investments. Achieving, women's economic empowerment is not a 'quick fix'; it will take sound public policies, a holistic approach and long term commitment from all development actors. Women's economic empowerment is a right and smart economics, the development actors need to reach and enhance opportunities for the poorest of the poor, 'picking winners' is not sufficient. One motivation for women's empowerment is basic fairness and decency among the society. Young girls should have the exact same opportunities that boys do to lead full and productive lives. They should have all the basic amenities by which they can prove their caliber in the macro environment. Mere Provision of micro finance is not just about giving micro credit to the poor rather it is a tool whose objective is to assist poor to work their way out of poverty. Micro credit offers access to financial resources to the poorest of the poor in the rural areas. It allows people undertake self-employment activities or to venture very small businesses without depending on money lenders who demand exorbitant interest rates. SHG's (Self Help groups) are the community platforms from which women are encouraged to become socially active especially regarding issues affecting their daily life. Empowerment is the process of Awareness(A) and the Capacity building(CB) leading to greater participation and front end engagement in better decision making process power and transformative action. The Government of India started a programme (SGSY) Swarna Jayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana aims at establishing many micro-enterprises in rural areas based on the ability of the poor and potential of each area. It is considered as a holistic programme of self-employment. It covers all the aspects of self-employment in the rural areas. Given the fact that women are having the potential to grab the opportunities need some mentoring. This mentoring form the basis for research for understanding the five women empowerment dimensions they are (1) Cognitive Dimension-Understanding conditions for subordination, making choices for bringing difference. (2) Psychological dimension- The belief that women can act at personal and societal levels to improve their individual realities and the society in which they live. (3) Economic dimension-women have access to and control over, productive

resources thus ensuring some degree of financial autonomy. Also realizes that changes in the economic balance of power do not necessarily alter traditional gender roles or norms. (4) Political component- capability to analyze, organize and mobilize for social change. (5) Physical element- gaining control over one's body and sexuality and the ability to protect oneself against sexual violence. Enhancing an individuals or groups capacity to make choices into derived actions and outcomes is empowerment. Despite of growing interest in the subject and increased investments in empowerment, the development of instruments and indicators with which to monitor and evaluate empowerment processes and outcomes is still at an early stage. If a person or group is empowered, they possess the capacity to make effective choices, to translate their choices into desired actions and outcomes. Capacity to make a choice is primarily influenced by two things (1) Agency and (2) Opportunity structure.



The asset endowments are used as indicators of Agency. These assets are psychological, informational, organizational, material, social, financial and human etc. can be used for capacity of individuals. Measuring of assets and institutions provides intermediary indicators of empowerment.

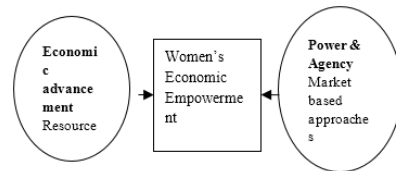


Fig :1 Components contribute for Economic Empowerment

Direct measures of empowerment can be made by assessing (i) Whether an opportunity to make a choice exists (Existence of choice) (ii) Whether a person uses the opportunity to choose (Use of choice) (iii) Whether the choice resulted in the desired result (Achievement of choice). A woman is economically empowered

when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions. To succeed and advance economically they need the skills and resources to compete in markets, as well as fair and equal access to economic institutions. To have the power and agency to benefit from economic activities, women could make and act on decisions and control resources and profits. Economic empowerment is comprised of two inter-related components: 1) economic advancement and 2) power and agency. Both components are connected, and both are necessary to achieve better lives for women and their families. Economic gain and success (economic advancement) promote women's power and agency. At the same time, when a woman can control and share in resource use (power) and to define and make choices (agency), she is better able to advance economically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure derived changes and the right to control one's life.¹ Enabling women to gain equal access to all the resources like material, human and intellectual and control over the resources². Empowered women maintain their strength on the face of pressures from the religion, work and contribute towards the empowerment of all women. They also define their values and formulate their beliefs themselves, and derive their sense of being from neither male authority nor do they live vicariously through men³. Women usually invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities than men. A study in Brazil showed that the likelihood of a child's survival increased by 20 percent when the mother controlled household income⁴. Women entrepreneur's still constitute a minority in the business world mainly due to various barriers that arise from their feminine gender such as anachronistic societal and cultural perceptions, plans to make a family while in business, need to undertake multiple roles in their business and at home, the difficulty to convince investors and raise capital, feelings of insecurity and fear of failure in a tough business world⁵. The strengths based approach can support and increase team performance by focusing on the members' strengths and by delegating tasks based on these strengths. This can prepare the ground for change by supporting employees to work in new and creative ways, and increase their job satisfaction and fulfillment by doing well a job they love.⁶ In his study measures empowerment through the degree of autonomy to which women can live their lives, ability to control decision making within the family and measures the relative access to household resources, such as food, education, healthcare⁷. In his study analyzes women's empowerment through the ability to exercise control over their lives, control over their labor, freedom to move and interact, access to leadership positions and control over reproduction. She measures the changes in the lives of individual women after getting micro credit, increase in income, new skills gained, mobility, status in the family and visibility in the community and work load⁸. Women's Empowerment Framework has five levels of empowerment. The five levels are framed in hierarchal and ascending order, moving from (1) Welfare, meaning improvement in socioeconomic status, such as income, better nutrition. This level produces nothing to empower women. (2) Access, meaning increased access to resources. This is the first step in empowerment, as women increase their access relative to men. (3) Concretization, involving the recognition of structural forces that disadvantage and discriminate Against women coupled with the collective aim to address these discriminations. (4) Mobilization, implementing actions related to the concretization of women. (5) Control, involving the level of access reached and control of resources that have shifted because of collective claim-making and action. The model is political, linking poverty and inequality to structural oppression. Thus, by identifying the levels of empowerment, the roots of inequalities are made more explicit in a programme⁹. Broader strategies to foster women's empowerment in the development context are the ability of people to make strategic choices in areas that affect their lives. Two key factors in the process of empowerment are identified: control over resources (the conditions for empowerment) and agency (the ability to formulate choices)¹⁰. A recent study looking

at economic development and women's empowerment in China and India found that increasing labor opportunities for women is linked with better outcomes in terms of girl survival and education, women's employment rates and birth-rate imbalances¹¹. According to the World bank President Robert Zoellick, addressing in a springs meeting in April, 2008 "*one motivation for women's empowerment is basic fairness and decency. young girls should have the exact same opportunities that boys do to lead full and productive lives ... the empowerment of women is smart economics*". Kerala is only the state in India that has attained a remarkable status, fulfilling all the criterion of various social well-beings compared with some of the developed countries in the world, which is widely known as the 'Kerala model of **development**' Kudumbashree¹². This achievement is reflected in the literacy level of **women**, salary or wage structure of employment, technical and professional services, equality of **women** at par with men. Taking this model' as inspiration developing the consciousness about the poverty concept and promoting them to the next level economic growth by creating awareness on various aspects like women empowerment and women entrepreneurship.

WEPEG - A STRENGTH BASED MODEL

Entrepreneurship has long been suggested as a 'must-go-path' towards the growth of any nation. In this context, the combination of female entrepreneurship is of utmost importance especially as women being into the business practice attributes such as team spirit, synergy, intuition, multitasking, commitment and awareness that are beneficial for entrepreneurial advancement and for society. The twin impact of this model is to empower women economically through small businesses and provide access to the safe, clean & healthy living in the rural communities. This increases the livelihood capacity and employability in the rural communities. And thus, decrease the rural urban divide. WEPEG (Women Empowered Participatory Entrepreneurs Group Model-Social Business Model) is implemented as a social initiative which promotes empowerment through enterprise education and training. Increased learning of entrepreneurship education and participation in the work force will work wonders and help women to break the shackles of exclusion. WEPEG mediates in improving women's economic empowerment through strong networking and affordable loans. It tries to enhance their capacities at an individual's/ groups to make their choices from the pool of resources and help to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Entrepreneurship development programs intend to enhance economic development by way of increasing opportunities, strengthen the Discovery community's livelihood base, and support beneficiaries' integral development. Some of other programmes also include micro finance, village level social enterprise, entrepreneurship trainings, livelihood trainings etc. WEPEG model believes in leveling the playing field by creating pro-women initiatives by enabling women to rise and fulfill their innate abilities and talents. It is true and it is also understandable, given the bias that exists in the society this model act as a catalytic facilitating action Model. This model believes on strength-based mentoring which is a leading-edge approach that yields positive results as it is an evolutionary experience for both mentors and mentees. This approach believes in creating a positive chain reaction by tapping the human potential to the immediate working social environment. Strength is a pre-existing capacity for a way of behaving thinking or feeling. It is an integral part of our human identity, contributing to intrinsic and inherent qualities that define as individuals. WEPEG' model which is strength based human oriented model that enhances personal experience and the professional milieu in which individuals interact. As a social mission building positive attitude among the women that results from a process of discovery, recognition, emergence, freedom, use and evaluation of strengths that invariably leads to better performance and wellbeing which are essential for the overall growth of the society. The strength based mentoring is a change in perception relating to the development of the women entrepreneur. It is a positive attitude which shifts focus from existence to survival and to wellbeing, from the existing to exploring opportunities and from the effort to improve weakness to the capacity building.

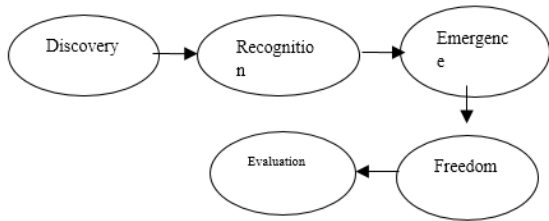


Fig :2 Capacity Building

To bridge the gap and to build confidence among women training is important to match their competence. So, it is hundred percent essential that women be ready to “dare the difference- and make the difference” - to take risks and step out for greater heights. There is an African adage that goes, “If you educate a boy, you train a man. If you educate girl/women you train a village.” This is not only true, it is measurable. This model adopts to educate women in entrepreneurship and create measurable impact at the grass root level. Research proves that women are more likely to spend their resources on health and education, investing up to 90% of their earnings in this way, compared to just 30-40% by men. This spending creates a powerful ripple effect throughout society and across generations. Creating these positive ripples in the lives of women at the grass root level is the mantra.

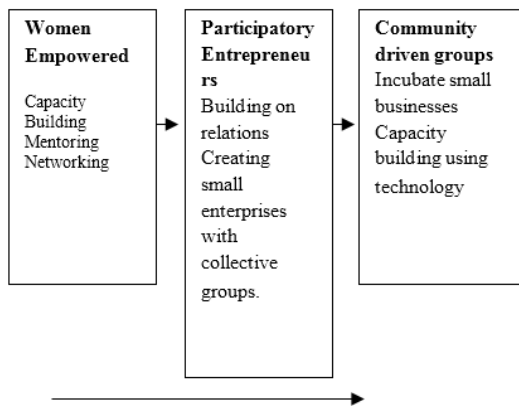


Fig:3 WEPEG- A Strength based model

Source: Model developed from the understanding of the field study by the author

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted is to personally meet the groups where the entrepreneurial activity is started and to understand the economic enhancement of women collectively. The research meeting emphasized on to understand the overall development of the group economically. Individual data of the women is not considered only the group name (as case) is taken for analysis to apply the WEE' value chain model. Five groups are being considered. This sample is not a representative sample because the total data is un-available. This is a pilot study only to see whether the WEE' value chain developed can be used to understand for some larger collective groups to analyze the overall economic enhancement of women across. The outcome of the analysis is explained by only a theoretical explanation, no statistical methods are used.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

The following are the five groups which are involved in economic activity considered for the analysis of WEE' Value chain analysis.

These five cases are of different nature their common element is to have a collective effort towards the journey of empowerment and economic enhancement. The following assumption is considered for analysis.

(i) WEE' Key Assumption: Women have a measure of control over the income they earn collectively in a group by an entrepreneurial activity.

(ii) New WEE' Results statement: Increased women's House Hold (HH) decision making by earning through entrepreneurial activity.

(i) Case 1: Orvakallu Podupu Lakshmi Ikhya Sangham, A federation of women's Self-Help Groups

Orvakallu Mandal Podhupu Lakshmi Iky Sangam (OMPLIS) is a federation of 10,000 rural poor women. It is an organization formed by rural poor women and totally managed by themselves. Since 1995, OMPLIS evolved as a laboratory where lot of experimentation happened in the field of social mobilization and poverty eradication. Drawing the lessons from the success of OMPLIS and trying to understand whether the model can be replicated all around the world. For any model to be replicated the local conditions like social, cultural, economic and political factors are to be analyzed. Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh is known for its backwardness and poverty. Orvakal is one of the mandals in Kurnool(district) of Rayalaseema region. The poverty scenario of this mandal in 1995 was very pathetic. It was a drought prone area with sparse rainfall. 90 percent of the women married at the age below 15 years. Child marriages were very common. Un-touchability was very intense in this area. 90 percent of the women are illiterate. Violence against women was alarming. Factionism made poor people's lives more miserable. Now the story is changed by the movement of SHG's they have saved money from their individual savings and constructed a school for their children. The following Table -1 explains the WEE' components results sheet.

Table :1 WEE' Components Results Sheet Case (I)

Impact	Contribution of HH income increased	HH decision of women enhanced	Economic Standard Increased	Wages Received	Benefit Received
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No collective wages, Individual earnings	Loans received from the groups and support from society.

*HH- House Hold

Source : Data collected through personal interview

(i) Case 2: Sangham' Products, Deccan Development Society, A women's farmers Group

The Deccan Development Society (DDS), is a two and half decade old grassroots organization working in about 75 villages with women's Sanghams (voluntary village level associations of the poor) in Medak District of Telangana State. The 5000 women members of the Society represent the poorest of the poor in their village communities. Most of them are dalits, the lowest group in the Indian social hierarchy. The Society has a vision of consolidating these village groups into vibrant economic groups by empowering them through organic farming. The vision seems to be a reality today by facilitating all the women action groups are collectively progressing towards the economic empowerment through the SEED' journey. Initially it started off with the intention of ensuring the simple sustenance needs but the women have taken it the next level with their collective effort. It is a tool of empowerment for them today to address the larger issues of food security, natural resource enhancement, education, and health needs of the region. The conscious integration of various activities the Society has helped to retrieve women's natural leadership

positions in their communities, and to fight back one of the empowerment dimension i.e the lack of access and control over their own resources.

Sangham Organics – The market for their product: The DDS Sangham^{*} Organics is country's first organic market run by women farmers at Jaheerabad, Medak district Telangana state. This farmer's market is another dimension of the Deccan Development Society's discourse on control. In the age of globalization, where market is open and sales can be done at anywhere in the world. Creating own markets for their produced product is the idea behind the establishment of Sanghams^{*} by making them finished and semi-finished and ready to use products. Initially the market was limited to cater their own needs, in 2001 a mobile van was introduced the system to transport the products to the villages regularly to provide the easier access to their market. An extension of the farmer's market has been the formation of the Zaheerabad Consumers Action group to take the product to the urban market. This action group tries to act as a link between Consumer-Producer network. Slowly the urban consumers are created awareness of the organic foods and traditional foods. By establishing the Café Ethnic a restaurant at Jaheerabad for urban consumers by creating awareness for the forgotten foods like Raagi Sankati, Ambali, kora payasam etc are served. The women's market has been able to earn a unique identity for themselves. The following Table -2 explains the WEE' components results sheet. *Sanghams are small village level groups established by DDS.

Table :2
WEE' Components Results Sheet Case (ii)

Impact	Contribution of HH income increased	HH decision of women enhanced	Economic Standard Increased	Wages Received	Benefit Received
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Wages are received, Individual earnings. They sell the individual procurement to the sanghams , packing ,marketing are done by the sangham'. It is a collective effort of all the women together	Support from society for all the problems and loan benefit is also given.

***HH- House Hold**
Source : Data collected through personal interview

(iii) Case 3: Kosigi Mandal Samakya, A federation of Women's Self Help Groups.

A group of Self-Help Group members formed as a federation of women association of Kosagi, A village in Mehboobnagar district. The motive of this federation is to see all the farmers of the village together procure the paddy and start refining them and make the rice as ready to sell product. The main motive behind this is to safeguard the interests of the farmers by eliminating the middle men. They have started sending it to the nearby cities and towns for sale. The initiative few women changed the outlook of the total village. The intervention gave a positive outlook to the village at large. The following Table -3 explains the WEE' components results sheet.

Table :3
WEE' Components Results Sheet Case (iii)

Impact	Contribution of HH income increased	HH decision of women enhanced	Economic Standard Increased	Wages Received	Benefit Received
Increased Income	Contribution of HH income increased	HH decision of women enhanced	Economic Standard Increased	Wages Received	Benefit Received

Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Collective Income is increased. Individual savings from Rs 90 to Rs 150 per Quintal on an average	Support from all the farmers from the village,
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***HH- House Hold**
Source : Data collected through personal interview

(iv) Case 4: Lakshmi Sweets, A collective women's group

A group of five women from Sangareddy district headquarters in state of Telangana formed together as a group, they are not part of the Self-Help Groups but the common interest of doing a business brought them together as a team. These people started a known business of making 'Madatha Khaja' which is famous delicacy of south India. As a popular sweet 'Kakinaada khaja' from Kakinaada is known all over the world for its mouthwatering taste. Likewise in Telangana state they wanted to make the difference by only making Khaja' as one distinct product. As of now they are making fifty kgs of Madatha khaja's on daily basis. They work for 365 days without any holidays. They are in the initial stage of expansion of the business if the support from the government and other stake holders is given then they will make wonders. After few years of challenging work, they will be in a position to provide employment for few other women leading them to empower themselves. The following Table -4 explains the WEE' components results sheet.

Table :4
WEE' Components Results Sheet Case (iv)

Impact	Contribution of HH income increased	HH decision of women enhanced	Economic Standard Increased	Wages Received	Benefit Received
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Collective wages and Individual earnings as profits on overall business	Loans received from the bank.

***HH- House Hold**
Source : Data collected through personal interview

(v) Case 5: Kalpana Pelli Poola Jada, A group of women employees

Kalpana an individual with the support of her mother and two other maids from her locality started a small business venture named 'Pelli Poola Jada', making of bride plait with flowers to decorate hair in the weddings. It started with making the bride plait and expanded to all the accessories of weddings. It is a big one stop hub for all the accessories of wedding. Marketing of the business was done using the Facebook' and What's app' platform an approach where the modern women have picked up by ICT technology which is a way forward. Without much investment in advertising they are able to expand their business, now Pelli Poola Jada is able to employ 200 women employees by making them economically empowered. The following Table -5 explains the WEE' components results sheet.

Table :5
WEE' Components Results Sheet Case (v)

Impact	Contribution of HH income increased	HH decision of women enhanced	Economic Standard Increased	Wages Received	Benefit Received
Increased Income	Contribution of HH income increased	HH decision of women enhanced	Economic Standard Increased	Wages Received	Benefit Received

Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Wages and Individual wages earnings and franchise opportunity for individuals who have talent	Loans received from the bank.
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*HH- House Hold

Source : Data collected through personal interview

The idea of the research is to improve the capacity of women as a group, and understand the methodologies possible in graduating the self-help groups into micro enterprises, which leads to women economic empowerment.

CONCLUSION

The journey of creating businesses should start with proper enterprise education. Mentoring and sponsoring are two important aspects for incubating the ideas at the grass root level. It's a belief that increased learning of entrepreneurship education and participation in the work force will work wonders and help women to break the shackles of exclusion. Interventions by various stakeholders at various levels are required for improving women's economic empowerment. Strong networking and affordable loans for women enhances their capacities at an individual's/ groups to make their choices from the pool of resources and help to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Entrepreneurship is taken up by the passionate people who have set of behaviors which are exceptional. These behaviors should be encouraged and rewarded for taking up business as the way of life. It is agreeing that leaders are individuals who play a paramount role in the transformation of dreams into reality but catalyst should be there in between, in realizing those dreams.

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