Women Empowerment and NGOs

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Introduction:

Rural development is an important sector of national development any developing economy. Rural development includes poverty alleviation, poverty reduction coupled with agriculture development and rural industrial development. Poverty is often referred as a severe failure of basic capabilities and often related to inadequate incomes. Poverty as a concept encompasses many aspects of wants and disadvantages. Chambers (1995) recognizes that lack of assets: physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability, and powerlessness are the five clusters of disadvantages characterize the poor in the rural areas.

Backwardness among rural women is such more severe to various socio-economic and cultural reasons. International, national and local government organizations and non-government organizations are involved in various experiments of women empowerment in backward regions.

Empowerment results from control over resources and the power to take decisions on all major issues concerned. “The empowerment process encompasses several mutually reinforcing components but begins with and supported by economic independence”. (Ranjana Kumari) Empowerment would consist of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision-making and free them from shackles imposed on them by custom, belief and practice.

NGOs and Women Empowerment:

NGOs can frame many activities for women empowerment. Historians of feminism have long back noted that nineteenth century philanthropy offered a pathway for women in western societies to move from the private to the public sphere. Often denied access political participation and barred from donors, volunteers and organizational entrepreneurs nonetheless left their imprint on national legislation and institutions in a variety of countries. Through, their philanthropic contributions of time, money and possessions carved out a public niche for themselves in diverse religions, political and economic regimes.

In India several NGOs are involved in women empowerment programmes in general and rural women empowerment in specific.

Methodology:

In this context, in this paper an attempt is made to analyse the impact of NGO’s programmes on women empowerment with the help of the data collected from the project area of SKRDP (a voluntary organization involved in rural development) in Karnataka State. Primary data were collected from women beneficiaries in two villages. The oldest beneficiaries were treated as member group and recent beneficiaries were treated as the comparison group.
Impact is seen in terms of differences in income, savings, occupational diversification, control over income, decision-making within the household, mobility of women and awareness of government programmes.

A case study method is adopted to find out the impact of NGO’s programmes on women. The methodology focused mainly on a comparison between the member and the comparison group, rather than before and after comparisons.

The first section of the paper provides background information of the NGO and conditions and the severity of the backwardness of the rural women in the study area. The second section analyses the impact of NGOs programmes on income, savings, occupation, vulnerability and qualitative components of rural women lives.