Women Empowerment through Self Employed Women Association: A Case Study of Nirmaladevi Mahila Mandal (R), Shahapur Taluk

Dr. N. Ramanjaneyalu  
Research Guide, Kousali Institute of Management Studies  
Karnatak University, Dharwad  
Email: n.ramulu@gmail.com

Shankramma Mallanagouda Patil  
Assistant Professor in Management, Government First Grade College, Shahapur  
Email: spatilkims@gmail.com

Abstract

Empowerment in the context of women’s development is a way of defining, challenging and overcoming barriers in a woman’s life through which she increases her ability to shape her life and cope up with the environmental settings. This article is an account of women development through self employed women association in backward areas where women are lagging in education, economic status and social freedom. The study is confined to the scheme of mid-day meal which is being provided by Nirmaladevi Mahila Mandal, Shahapur Taluk. The study is also undertaken to make a critical analysis about the growth and prospects of the mid-day meal scheme. The objective of the present study is to study women empowerment though self-employed women association (SEWA) and also to analyze the growth and future prospectus of mid-day meal scheme of the Nirmaladevi Mahila Mandal. Members of the association have been interviewed to study their economic and social status after forming the association. Critical analysis has been made on the basis of work culture of the association through observation methods and secondary sources. Effective participation and involvement in income generating activities by the women lead to overall development of the women including economic status, social status, political participation, family decision making and personal financial management etc. In this issue, self employed women association certainly plays a significant role in the upliftment of women in the society especially towards backward areas. In light of this, Nirmaladevi Mahila Mandal is a standing example for the same.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, SEWA, Economic status, Mid-day meal scheme
INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment as such is an emerging issue in today’s human development area. Worldwide half of the population plus or minus has the women population in which two third of world adult illiterates are women and women’s contribution directly affect the economic development and human development of any country. Empowerment activities and factors are many but the most effective one is Self Help Groups in rural areas. SHG is an organization of rural poor, particularly of women that which delivers micro credit facilities to undertake the entrepreneurial activity. Entrepreneurship development and income generating activities are a feasible solution for empowering women. It generates income and also provides flexible working hours according to the needs of homemakers. Economic independence is the need of the hour. Participation in income generating activities helps in the overall empowerment of women. Empowerment in the context of women’s development is a way of defining, challenging and overcoming barriers in a woman’s life through which she increases her ability to shape her life and environment. It is an active, multidimensional process, which should enable women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. New district like Yadgir have more scope of having women contribution to its rigorous development because of equal gender ratio in the district. In the recent days, the emphasis has been increased on women development which increases women decision making capabilities, social and economic well being. This article is an account of women development through self employed women association in backward areas where women are lagging in education, economic and social freedom.

About Nirmala Devi Mahila Mandala:

It is a self employed women association which was formed in the year 2006 by a group of 7 members of women by investing a seeding capital of Rs. 3600 with initial objective providing mid-day meals to the children of government schools of nearby villages in Shahpur Taluk. Now, this self help group is providing various services such as working for the betterment of women and children who are in need of nutrition, education, family welfare, food shortage and in turn also help them in immunization of children, provide small saving accounts of women, provision of bathrooms, smokeless chulhas, women crafts centre and balwadis. Nirmala Devi Mahila Mandala is contributing much to the society and schools through certain schemes and group has some future plans of schemes like Mahila Mandal Protsahan Scheme, Mahila Mandal Sammelan Scheme etc which can contribute social development of the region.

Objectives and goals of the association:

The group Nirmala Devi Mahila Mandal is established with the objectives like to setup professional education training schools/colleges which will enable women welfare and empowerment. To conduct programmes for women and child
Women Empowerment through Self Employed Women Association: A Case Study

Empowerment and empowerment of socially spoilt women that is enforced by State and Union Government. The group also aims to enlighten rural women with the knowledge and skills about Handicrafts, to rare sheep/goat, buffalo and poultry etc. To setup pre-primary schools, kinder garden, high school, college, commerce school, professional education training college, nursing school, medical college for upliftment of Scheduled Cast, Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Communities and to setup libraries, hostels for rural poor people and to perform various such people welfare programmes.

The group also intended to supply food grains and many essentials goods to SC/ST/OBC hostels and to setup fair-price outlets (Nyaya bele angadi) grocery shops.

There many other such similar objectives of the group as follows:

- To conduct all the programmes under Govt's NGT Directive (Not too sure) and to supply uniforms to police department, KPTCL and hostels.
- To supply teaching, non-teaching staffs, teaching aids to govt and private institutions.
- To supply stationary and other essentials good to ZP and TP.
- To supply building tools and materials.
- To participate in the national level events for civil health and social welfare.
- To strive for equality, sustenance and coexistence specifically targeted in rural areas.
- To strive for nation building activities and social awareness.
- To strive hard for rural welfare and development in total.
- To make women self reliant and also conscious of their human and constitutional rights and to put pressure on the state for fulfilling its major obligation towards its people.
- To nurture women’s physical and emotional health.
- To provide vocational training and credit facilities to women for self employment.
- To create a progressive space in society for all its deprived people and also to specifically resist sexism, casteism, religious chauvinism and homophobia.
- To work towards elimination of discrimination, intolerance, inequality and violence both within and outside the home.
- To work towards the creation of a society based on freedom, equality, democracy, diversity and peace.
SCOPE OF THE STUDY:
The study is confined to the scheme of mid-day meal which is being provided by Nirmaladevi Mahila Mandal, Shahapur Taluk. The study is undertaken to make critical analysis about the growth and prospects of the mid-day meal scheme. Mid day meal scheme as such was initiated by government of Karnataka keeping major objectives in mind specifically to improve the enrollment and attendance in schools, to improve retention rate in classes, to reduce dropout rate, to improve health and hygiene of the child by increasing nutrition level, to improve learning ability levels of children, to develop social and national integration among children, to improve mid day meal to children of drought affected areas during summer vacation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
- To study the women empowerment though self-employed women association (SEWA).
- To analyze the growth the prospectus of mid-day meal scheme of the Nirmaladevi Mahila Mandal
- To understand the role of Mahila Mandals in upliftment of rural women through various perspectives

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
It is a descriptive and empirical study. The required data and information have been collected through primary and secondary sources. Members of the association have been interviewed to study their economic and social status after forming the association. Critical analysis has been made on the basis of work culture of the association through the observation and secondary sources like statistical information about the various schemes, which are being maintained by the association.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Nirmaladevi Mahila Mandal(R) was formed with the initial intention of supplying mid day meal to children of Government and private schools in the nearby villages of Shahapur Taluk through the tenders. At present, it has taken orders from 13 government schools and 4 private schools for the supply of mid-day meals on daily basis. The association has totally 54 workers include 10 women chief cooks, 42 women helpers and 2 men delivery van drivers.
In the above table, turnover and growth rate of mid-day scheme which is being provided by the Nirmaladevi Mahila Mandal has been presented. After formation of association, very next year there was a tremendous growth in terms of turnover which is increased by 50% as the association could able to renewal the orders from the government and private schools, because of quality supply of food and services. The association has succeeded in getting orders to supply mid day meals every year without fail even though there is tough competition in bidding the tenders. Every year, there is continuous and steady growth in terms of turnover by an exception of 2013-14 and 2016-17 because of high cost of production. It clearly indicates the association has become successful in growth and generating higher profits every year. The high growth rate has been observed in the year 2010-11.

Apart from mid day meal scheme, the association has already taken initiative to supply Stationeries, Uniform, Shoes, belt and groceries to the govt hostel students and to Murarjee Desai Residential school Shahapur. Through which the association is gaining additional profit apart from mid day meal scheme. Nirmaladevi Mihila Mandal is a self employed women association consisting 7 women members. Initially, they have struggled a lot to form and run the association as they were not supported by the family members, lack of finance and improper education. Over a period of time, they have learnt the entrepreneurial skills to manage the activities of the association. Now they have gained confidence, decision making skills, independence and respect from the family and society. Overall, they are developed socially and economically. President of the Association Mrs. Pooja adds that she gained leadership qualities and management skills after becoming member of the
Association. Mrs. Manjula Jaganthraddy, Vice President shared that she is now able to take her family decision without any fear and hesitation and with the support of family as compare to earlier. All members are standing as role models for the whole community, and became an inspiration to other women.

Role of Mahila Mandals in upliftment of rural women through various perspectives:

- **Women’s Position -A historical perspective:** In the earlier Vedic period, women had certainly occupied a highly respectable status; no religious and social ceremony could be performed without her presence. She was considered a goddess and was adored. It is mentioned in Rigveda also that "God lives there where women are worshiped". Inspite of this, her physical weakness and other disadvantages gave excuse for the assignment to her for a definitely inferior status. The status and position of women deteriorated in smritic-era and post smritic-era considered Women unequal to and quite dependent upon him.

- **Modern Age -Post Independence:** In the modern era, the demographic factors, Industrialization, organizations and advancement of knowledge have brought about radical changes in the basic institution like family and are also affecting the economic security and social status of women. The constitution declared India to be Sovereign Democratic Republic based on the four pillars of justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Article 15 of the Constitution confers equal rights on both sexes. At the international level, in 1967 declaration made for the elimination of discrimination against women was adopted which proclaims measures taken to protect women in certain types of works for reasons inherent in their physical nature, not be regarded as discriminatory. The United Nation’s Organization also celebrated 1975 as a women year to highlight that the position and status of women is not satisfactory and thus there is an urgent need for the efforts to uplift them, to make them social equals has gained more prominence in recent years. The question of political empowerment of women in rural India has assumed considerable significance recently because of 73rd constitution amendment. The amendment required reservation seats and posts of chairpersons for women in all grass roots democratic institutions in the countryside known as Panchayats. This is a historic step of far reaching implications and significant repercussions on the political processes in rural India.

- **Women’s Role in development:** Women's contribution to national development is crucial. The process of development would be incomplete and lopsided, unless women are fully involved in it. Emancipation of women is an essential pre-requisite for economic development and social progress of the nation. Women must be recognised as a power in development and involvement actively and productively in the developmental process.

- **Development – A process of empowerment:** Development essentially means the powerless getting empowered. As power comes through unity, development means the poor getting organized to fight for their rights, to tilt the balance of power
in their own favour. Development means local people controlling local resources with equitable distribution of resources. The primary task of development then becomes initiating a process of awareness building, of educating, of people forming their own organisations to define and create and demand what they need to lead a decent life. People's participation in rural development, particularly by rural women, will not automatically flow concerted efforts are needed to empower rural women to get involved in all aspects of development. Development should ultimately become a process of empowerment.

Women as partners in development: The Global conference on women's empowerment, 1988 highlighted empowerment as the surest way of making women as 'partners in development'. The food and agricultural organisation (FAO) has also emphasized on empowerment of women at the grassroots as the most recent approach to women in development. The national policy on education (1986) has suggested certain strategies to empower women. Accordingly, "women become empowered through collective reflections and decision making. The parameters of empowerment are positive self image, critical thinking, group cohesion, decision-making, equals participation and economic development". The plan also pointed out the need for a holistic approach towards development of women. Besides the draft approach to the eighth plan

Concept of Mahila Mandal: The concepts of Mahila Mandal come into existence in 1955 at the time of the first five years plan was about to be over. The women were organised into Mahila Mandal during the second five year plan with stress on women education, health services for the mother and child, supplementary feeding for the children and women's economic development. The sixth five-year plan basically adopted their pronged strategy, which included thrust on thrust, education and employment. The concept of Mahila Mandal meant a formal association of women belonging to village or duster of villages. It is an organisation, which involves collective efforts of women aiming at solving multifarious problems of women in villages with support of local and block level administration. It was expected that it would work effectively and accomplish the basic goals. Some of primary objections of this organisation were in creating the level of family income for raising the standard of living of women and their families. Besides this the function of such organisation necessitated sanitation and other activities conducive to maintenance of good health of women and children, female education and other related welfare activities. The membership of such organisations included any or all women between the ages of 18 to 45 years. Each member pays a membership fee and monthly subscription determined by Mahila Mandal. The amount collected through fees and subscriptions is used for seeking advice from experts and on various welfare programmes organised. The organisation of Mahila Mandal is based on democratic values and process, which means that it, has a formally elected Executive Committee comprising Seven, Nine or Eleven members. The offices in the social organisation of Mahila Mandal a President, a Secretary and Treasurer.
Future Plans of Nirmaladevi Mahila Mandal:

The group has a set of plans for the future like to setup professional education training schools for girls in Shahapur city. The group also initiated to supply food for Indira Canteen in whole district of Yadgir. To conduct programmes for women and child empowerment and empowerment of socially spoilt women that is enforced by State and Union Government in next year.

CONCLUSION

Women Empowerment through self employed Association shows, effective participation and involvement in income generating activities by the women lead to overall development of the women including economic status, social status, political participation, Family decision making and personal financial management etc. In this issue, self employed women association plays an significant role in the up liftment of women in the society especially backward areas. The Nirmaladevi Mahila Mandal is a standing example for the same.

REFERENCES


[7] Annual Reports of Nirmaladevi Mahila Mandal (R)


[9] IbidP.84-85


[13] Ibid P.5


[15] Official record and files of Directorate of Rural Development
Dr. N. Ramanjaneyalu and Shankramma Mallanagouda Patil