IMPACT OF SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (SSA) ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Renu Srivastava

Research Scholar

Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science Institute

(A Constituent Institute of Central University of Allahabad)

Jhusi, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, India

Abstract

Women constitute about half of the total population of country but they suffer from many disadvantages, so the empowerment of women is one of the central issues in the process of development of countries all over the world. Education is the key factor for effective and inclusive empowerment. There is direct relationship between empowerment and education. It is as a mean to promote development in social and economic condition therefore the government has been implementing various schemes related to women education and SSA is one of them. Present study has been focused on the impact of SSA on qualitative aspect of women empowerment.

Key words: SSA, Education, Women Empowerment

Concept of Women Empowerment

Women constitute about half of the total population of country (as per census 2011) but they suffer from many disadvantages, therefor empowerment of women is one of the central issues in the process of development of countries in all over the world. There is much evidence of extensive gender based inequality even in the elementary matters of health, education and nutrition in many regions across the world (Singh, 2010).We live in democratic scenario where the women right is not only a legal but it is also a human right and the women empowerment becomes the most important contemporary issue in India as well as the world. Women empowerment is the outcome of the concept of liberty and justice. Empowerment could be taken as the expansion of assets and capability of poor people to

participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affects their lives (Narayna, 2005).

The concept of empowerment emerged from the civil rights movement in USA during 1950 to 1960s. It had been interpreted in different way at that time. The empowerment of women is located within the discourse and agenda of gender equality. It is increasingly being taken in the agenda of international development organizations perhaps more as a means to achieve gender equality than as an end in itself. Since the founding of the United Nations, equality between men and women has been among the most fundamental guarantees of human rights. Adopted in 1945, the Charter of the United Nations set out as one of its goals "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, [and] in the equal *rights of men and women*". In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, it, too, proclaimed equal entitlements of women and men to the rights contained in it, "without distinction of any kind, such as gender." In 1967, United Nations Member States adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of *Discrimination against Women*. In 1975, which was also International Women's Year, Mexico City hosted the World Conference on the International Women's Year, which resulted in the World Plan of Action and the designation of 1975–1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women. In 1980, another international conference on women was held in Copenhagen and the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women was opened for signature. The third World Conference on Women was held in Nairobi, with the Committee on the *Elimination of Discrimination against Women* having begun its work in 1982. The idea of Women Empowerment came forward when the Third International Women's Conference at Nairobi in 1985 introduced and defined "women empowerment- *as a re-distribution of social power and control of resources in favor of Women*"(UN,2014) At the Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1993 and the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo 1994, Governments committed themselves to the *empowerment of women*. This commitment was operationalized and formulated into a clear action plan at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995. Governments committed themselves to the "empowerment and advancement of women including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religious belief, contributing to the moral, ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs of women and men. Arnoff, (2011), quoted Batliwala (2007), described the Beijing conference vision of women's empowerment which stressed on three main fundamentals aspects as given below-

1- It was a socio-political process
2- Power was critical to empowerment; and

3- The process promoted shifts in political, social, and economic power between and across the individuals and groups.

This International environment also affected the Indian approach about women empowerment. The decades of the 1980s and the1990s have been characterized by a variety of pressures on the Government of India and State Governments, especially from International Bodies and from the groups within for affirmative action in favor of women as well as incorporating gender issues in policy planning. One of the primary objectives of the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) was to create an enabling environment where women could freely exercise their rights both within and outside home as equal partners along with the men. The Ninth Plan document further states that this would be realized through the early finalization and adoption of the 'National Policy for Empowerment of Women' (Rajgopal & Mathur, 2000).

In eleventh five year plan the empowerment of women's approach was adopted by the government. The Government has been implementing various schemes for the socio-economic advancement and development of women in the country The National Policy on Women 2001, which informed the 10th five-year plan, articulated a series of goals towards women's empowerment. The objectives of this Policy include (i) Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for development of women to enable them to realize their full potential (ii) The de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women on equal basis with men in all spheres – political, economic, social, cultural and civil (iii) Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation (iv) *Equal access to women to health care, quality education* at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc. (v) Strengthening the legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (vi) Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women. (vii) Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process. (viii) Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; and (ix) Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations (Report of the Steering Committee on Empowerment of Women and Development of Children for the Eleventh Plan, Planning Commission, Government of India).

The lack of education means the lack of self-reliance, self-confidence for which women are not able to come out of their problems. So educating a woman means educating a family. Education is the

key factor for effective and inclusive empowerment and it is as a mean to promote development in social and economic condition therefore the government has been implementing various central sponsored schemes related to women.

The different levels were seen as interconnected and mutually reinforcing, e.g. when empowerment on individual level occurs, this effects the group and societal as well. Women, who are empowered on an individual level, would most likely go on and affect the other levels. Empowerment on the group level e.g. women organizing around a particular need was likely to have effect on the individual empowerment of the women in the form of increased self-esteem and sense of agency.

Constitutional framework of Women Empowerment

In Indian Constitution we could see gender equality being framed in our preamble, fundamental rights and as well as in our directive principles. The Constitution of India guarantees equality to women (Article 14). There are other articles too which ensure rights of women.

Constitutional Privileges

(I)   Equality before law for women (Article 14)

(II)   The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i))

(III)   The State to make any special provision in favor of women and children (Article 15 (3))

(IV)   Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)

(V)   The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))

(VI)   To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A)

(VII)   The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)

(VIII)   The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)

(IX)   The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people (Article 47)

(X)   To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e))

Constitution also gives positive discrimination right to the state for gender equality. After the implementation of our constitution the government had adopted welfare approach to make any schemes for women and after that in next phase, government had also adopted the equality and health promotion based approach. After 1980 finally government adopted skill development and empowerment based approach for women's development. The establishment of National Women's Commission and State Women's Commissions were important milestones in the direction of Women Empowerment in India. The National Policy for the Empowerment of women (2001) was an important step taken by the Government of the time for accelerating the pace of women empowerment. The policy was aimed at ensuring women empowerment through positive economic and social policies for the full development of women. So the women could realize their full potential. The policy assured equal access to women to health care, quality education, participation and decision making in Social, Political and Economic life of the nation. The National Policy also aimed at strengthening the legal system for eliminating discrimination against Women.

Review of Literature

Lord and Hutchison explains the process of personal empowerment, this process leads two vital changes in participants first Individuals became aware of their own capacities and of alternatives to the experience of powerlessness. Second, individuals began to develop new directions for themselves. These are critical elements of personal empowerment. Element of the personal empowerment process is experiencing powerlessness (social isolation, service dependency, limited choices) gaining awareness (responding to information and new contexts) learning new roles (connecting with others, linking with resources, expanding choices) participating (joining groups, speaking out, expanding participatory competence)and then contributing (being a role model, having influence, increasing self-efficiency) (Lord & Hutchison, 1993).

On the basis of Bangladesh study she pointed out that women empowerment programmes can change the role of Women. They hold that many important and positive changes took place at individual, familial and societal levels. They feel that they have gained greater access and control over resources. Further, she described the relationship of women to others is an ongoing process and it is improving time to time. They have become able to change the external environment. Women are valued more in the family for their contribution in family's income. Verbal and physical abuse and violence against women have been reduced. Since the late 1970s women of rural Bangladesh have experienced different programmes aimed at empowering them. These programmes make change in the role of women at all level like mobilization decision making, economic autonomy etc (Naved, 1994).

She explains structural framework of empowerment. It is a process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such ability. It is a zero sum game where politically weak winner and powerful loser. Empowerment entails a process of change in this process three elements are interlink i.e. resources (pre-condition), agency (process), and achievement (outcome). Resources include not only in the material resources in the more conventional economic sense, but also the various human and social resources which serve to enhance the ability to exercise choice. Power related to agency – the ability to define ones goal and act upon them (Kabeer, 2005).

Rao point out that Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a flagship programme that aims to provide useful and relevant elementary education to all children in the 6 to 14 age group by 2010 and bridge social, regional and gender gaps. It assigns the greatest importance to systematic mobilization of the community and creation of an effective system of decentralized decision making. It promotes community participation in school education and reduces social discrimination among community. Study is based on tribal area of Andhra Pradesh (Rao, 2009).

They focusing on policy goals of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (education for all) programme focus on access and quality education. Article 45 of the Constitution says "The state shall endeavor to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 years within 10 years of adoption of this Constitution". Government statistics indicate that nearly 30 per cent of India's children are out of school and deprived of their fundamental right. Poor delivery of basic services (education, health, water, etc.) is a major problem in India, indeed in much of the developing world. This creates a huge gap between word and action, intent and result, policy and practice. Interaction between policymakers and implementers, implementers and service providers, service providers and "beneficiaries", who will help to translate policy into practice to the maximum benefit of this

programme problem of delivery mechanism in overcrowding, achievement and mainstreaming increase the drop out level of girls. It is based on Delhi and Mumbai study (Iyenger & Surinarain, 2008).

Review gives a vision to understand the concept of empowerment and provide a structural framework (resource, Agency and Achievement) of empowerment and its implementation policy.

Srava Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

It is said that Education is the base of the society. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) forms the cornerstone of government interventions in basic education for all children. SSA, launched in November 2000 as an umbrella programme, was to support and build on primary and elementary education programmes. The programme aims to ensure five years of primary education for all children in the age group of 6-14 years by 2007 and eight years of schooling by 2010 (Kainth, 2006). Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched in January 2001 to provide useful and relevant education for all children in the age group of 6-14 years by 2010. It was an attempt to provide an opportunity for improving human capabilities to all children, with special focus on bridging social, regional and gender gaps, through the active participation of the community in the management of schools. One of the salient features of the SSA is its emphasis on decentralized implementation. The programme calls for community ownership of school based interventions by the involvement of Women's groups, Village Education Committee members (now known as SMC), Mother Teacher Associations\Parent Teacher Associations (Evaluation Report on Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Programme, Planning Commission, Government of India, 2010).

Research Questions

- Whether the Public Private Partnership (PPP) approach has enhanced the awareness and participation levels of women in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan?

- Why has not the empowerment level of the women been achieved despite the best effort of the government?

Objectives

- To study how Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) enhances the awareness and participation level of the women.

- To study the performance of SSA in promoting the qualitative aspects of the women i.e. decision making in household activities.

Methodology

Uttar Pradesh is the largest State of India as male and female population and one of lowest State in sex ratio and female literacy (as per census 2011). In Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad district has been selected because it has highest population in the State (as per census 2011). On the basis of cumulative index which includes health facility, female literacy and sex ratio, Koraon block has been selected with simple random method. Koraon block is also one of the less developed block in the district. After the selection of block, 10 villages with primary schools with higher girl's enrollment have been selected for the study on the basis of simple random method. In each of the village, 20 female parents have been randomly selected from the experimental group (SSA schools) and 5 female parents have been randomly selected from the control group (non-SSA schools) for the study.

Findings & Conclusion

The analysis of the study shows though the result has not been statistically significant, however, the mild changes have been observed in the awareness level and decision making between the experimental group and control group. This has also been reflected in the participation and decision making process of the two groups. Thus, we can say that the slow change that has come about could also be attributed to the following factors:

(a) Social Indicators take a longer time to precipitate. It may be recalled that SSA has been operational since the year 2001.

(b) The context: For any intervention to succeed, the regional context holds a significant place. This region has remained with the feudal dominant classes from very long period that did not permit or encourage the democratic forces to operate. Under the SSA, government has provided devolution of power and has encourages the people to come forward and participate in a big way however, this has not been liked by the people of elite class who have ruled the region with iron hand. They therefore are indulging every trick and creating bottleneck to derail it for the slow down the process.

Now what is required is that we should focus on providing more social intervention at regular interval that encourage and promote the participation and decision making.

Awareness, Participation and Decision Making Status of the Respondents
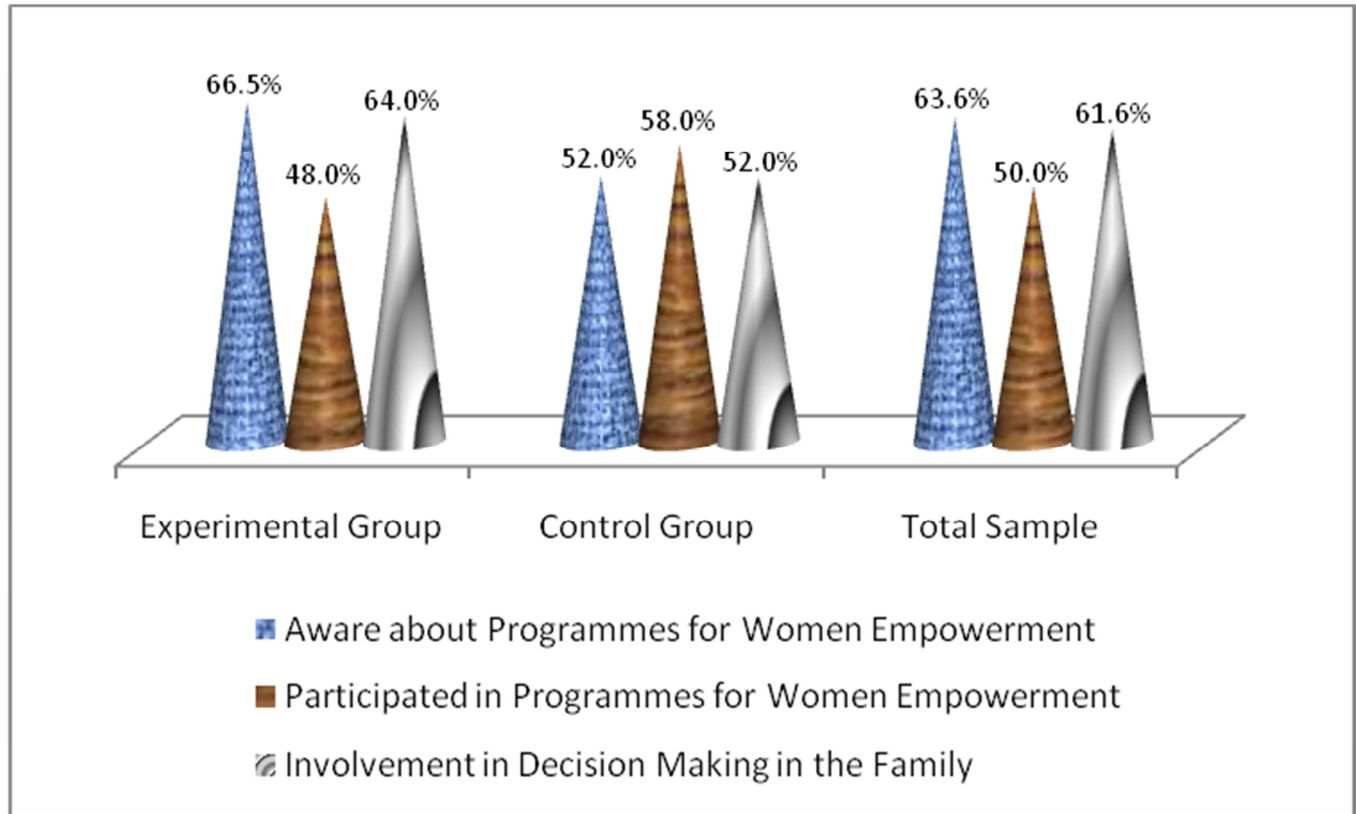
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