

Identification of Crucial Messages Related to Social Empowerment of Women

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ABSTRACT The aim of the present investigation was to identify the messages related to social empowerment of women. Messages related to social needs and problems of women were identified under three components of social empowerment of women, that is, health, drinking water and sanitation and science and technology. Thirty judges were selected from department of women and child development, health department and social work department and NGO's. Three messages, that is, reproductive and child health, safe drinking water and sanitation and household technologies and 14 sub-messages were identified on the basis of judges' consensus and coefficient of variation score.

INTRODUCTION

The empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century, not only at national level but also at the international level. Efforts by the government are on to ensure gender equality but government's initiatives alone are not sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiatives to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self decision-making and participating in the social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality (Anonymous 2012). Women's empowerment is not only in financial terms but also has socialization-attitudinal and motivational connotations. There is no need for much innovation to empower rural women. What is needed- reorientation, mobilization and realization of women friendly environment in rural areas by involving them from grass root level up to policy-making decisions (Devasia 2001; Mehta et al. 2010). Social empowerment is by far the most difficult and long-term goal to attain, because social equality includes equality of treatment, equality of respect, equality of opportunity, equality of recognition and above all equality of status. So far as social empowerment of women is concerned, still, a lot has to be done to make them fully self-dependent and empowered equally at par with men. The empowering strategies needs to be further sharpened in sectors like education, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, women friendly appropriate technologies, legislative reforms to

make them effective and result oriented. For the first time, educators have made available media package for daily use which assists in creating learning opportunities even for learners situated great distances away. Similarly, in India the time has come when these devices which seemed inaccessible just a few years ago, are now at our doorstep. Today, women are increasingly taking advantage of information communication technology in all spheres of life, thus confirming that information communication technology can be a tool to promote gender equality and enhance the economic, political and social empowerment of women. Upgrading women's skills through a continuous learning process would benefit women and society. Therefore, the present study was undertaken with the objective of identifying the crucial messages related to social empowerment of women.

METHODOLOGY

The access of women to education, health and productive resources, among others, is inadequate. Therefore, they remain largely marginalized, poor and socially excluded. Hence, it was thought desirable to identify social needs and problems of women on which information needs to be disseminated among women, which would further help in empowering them. For this, government organizations /non government organizations/ autonomous organizations, actively involved in working towards empowerment of women of Delhi region were selected purposively. A list of components of social empower-

ment of women as stated in the “Women Empowerment Policy, 2001” was prepared and subjected to 30 judges including social scientists and experts from various departments, that is, Women and Child Development Department, Social Welfare Department, Non Governmental Organizations dealing with issues related to components of social empowerment of women were selected randomly for final identification of crucial messages related to social needs and problems of women. These judges were asked to rank them in order to identify the three most crucial and important components on which information could be imparted to women. Based on judges’ responses three components, that is, Health, Drinking Water and Sanitation and Science and Technology were selected. After selecting the three crucial components of social empowerment of women, an inventory was developed for selection of the messages and sub-messages related to the three selected components of social empowerment of women. The judges’ responses were analysed with the help of judge’s consensus and coefficient of variation for selection of messages and sub-messages. Only those messages and sub-messages were retained where judges’ agreement was at least 80 percent and coefficient of variation was below 25 percent and the rest were deleted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Judges

Profile of judges, with respect to age, background, educational qualification, designation, department, experience and nature of job have been presented in Table 1. Majority of the judges were in the age group of 41-50 years (40%), belonged to urban areas (56.7%), were Ph.D degree holders (63.3%) and working as professors (40%), scientists (40%), belonged to women and children department (60%), and had experience of less than 10 years (40%). Major job function of 40 percent judges was research.

Identification of Messages /Sub-messages in Relation to Social Empowerment of Women

A list of components of social empowerment of women as defined in Women Empowerment Policy 2001 was prepared and given to the respondents and their opinion was sought regard-

Table 1: Profile of judges (N=30)

S. No.	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1.	<i>Age (years)</i>		
i)	30-40	09	30.00
ii)	41-50	12	40.00
iii)	51-60	09	30.00
2.	<i>Background</i>		
i)	Rural	13	43.33
ii)	Urban	17	56.67
3.	<i>Educational Qualification</i>		
i)	M.Sc/M.A./M.S.W.	09	30.00
ii)	Ph.D	19	63.33
iii)	M.B.B.S.	02	6.67
4.	<i>Designation</i>		
i)	Professor/Equivalent	12	40.00
ii)	Associate Professor/Equivalent	07	23.33
iii)	Assistant Professor/Equivalent	05	16.67
iv)	Doctors	02	6.67
v)	Others (NGOs etc)	04	13.33
5.	<i>Department</i>		
i)	Women and Child Development	18	60.00
ii)	Health Department	07	23.33
iii)	Science and Technology Deptt.	05	16.67
6.	<i>Experience</i>		
i)	<10 yrs	12	40.00
ii)	11-20 yrs	11	36.67
iii)	>20 yrs	07	23.33
7.	<i>Nature of Job</i>		
i)	Teaching	05	16.67
ii)	Research	12	40.00
iii)	Training	10	33.33
iv)	All of three (Teaching, Research, Extension)	03	10.00

ing the three most crucial and important components of social empowerment of women. Accordingly judges’ were asked to rank them in accordance to their preference.

Data presented in Table 2 reveals that health was assigned first rank by most of the judges. As per the judges’ view, the two other components selected were drinking water and sanitation (ranked II) and science and technology (ranked III). Due to lack of judges’ preference the rest of 8 components, that is, education, nutrition, housing and shelter, violence against women, mass media, women in difficult circumstances, rights of the girl child and environment were deleted at the initial stage of selection.

Selection of Messages/Sub-Messages in Relation to Social Empowerment of Women

An inventory pertaining to the critical messages on selected components of social empowerment of women, that is, health, drinking wa-

Table 2: Preference of components related to social empowerment of women by judges (N=30)

S. No.	Components	Rank
1.	Health	I
2.	Education	V
3.	Nutrition	VII
4.	Housing and shelter	XI
5.	Violence against women	VI
6.	Mass media	X
7.	Women in difficult circumstances	VIII
8.	Science and technology	III
9.	Rights of the girl child	IV
10.	Environment	IX
11.	Drinking water and sanitation	II

Source: Women Empowerment Policy 2001

ter and sanitation and science and technology was prepared and in this manner total 15 messages as given in Table 3 were listed and relevancy of each message was ascertained under three categories, that is, most relevant, relevant and not relevant. Accordingly weighted mean, coefficient of variation and judges' consensus were worked out for each of the 15 messages separately. The messages with coefficient of variation below 25 percent and judges' consensus 80 percent and above were finally retained. Bindu (2004) adopted the same pattern for the selection of messages. Data presented in Table 3 reveal that on the basis of judges' response three messages having coefficient of variation below 25 percent, that is, reproductive and child health, safe drinking water and sanitation and household technologies were selected for inclusion.

Selection of Sub-messages Related to Reproductive and Child Health (M_1)

The first selected message viz. reproductive and child health (M_1) was again divided into ten sub-messages which were sex determination, health check-ups, immunization, family planning/birth spacing, maternal mortality, infant mortality, breast feeding, maternal benefits, age at marriage, abortions. Data presented in Table 4 reveal that five sub-messages were retained as per the judges' consensus, that is, sex determination (CV 20.16), health check-ups (CV 16.25), immunization (CV 21.85), family planning/birth spacing (CV 14.98), and breast feeding (CV 23.85). The messages deleted as per the judges' consensus were maternal mortality, infant mortality, maternal benefits, age at marriage, abortions.

Table 3: Selection of messages related to selected components of social empowerment of women (N=30)

S. No.	Messages	Total weighted mean	CV (%)	Judges consensus (%)
<i>Health</i>				
1.	Reproductive and child health	2.90	10.34	100*
2.	Diseases	1.60	45.00	46
3.	Health of the elderly	1.57	49.04	40
4.	Health indicators	2.13	36.61	76
5.	Foods and nutrition	1.87	36.36	70
<i>Drinking Water and Sanitation</i>				
1.	Safe drinking water	2.80	14.64	100*
2.	Pollution	1.97	47.21	56
3.	Sanitation	2.73	21.24	93*
4.	Water borne diseases	1.80	45.00	57
5.	Proper drainage system	2.17	36.41	77
<i>Science and Technology</i>				
1.	Household technology	2.70	19.62	97*
2.	Agricultural technology	1.80	45.00	57
3.	Technology for gainful employment	2.00	34.50	77
4.	Drudgery reducing technology	1.93	38.34	70
5.	Communication and information related technology	1.77	43.50	56

riage and abortions. These five messages were crucial and important as per opinion of judges and hence retained for further investigation.

Table 4: Selection of sub-messages related to reproductive and child health (M_1) N=30

S. No.	Sub-messages	Total weighted mean	CV (%)	Judges consensus (%)
1.	Sex determination	2.53	20.16	100*
2.	Health checkups	2.83	16.25	97*
3.	Immunization	2.70	21.85	93*
4.	Family planning/Birth spacing	2.87	14.98	97*
5.	Maternal mortality	1.80	36.11	66
6.	Infant mortality	1.77	43.50	56
7.	Breast feeding	2.60	23.85	93*
8.	Maternal benefits	2.00	34.50	76
9.	Age at marriage	1.73	39.88	60
10.	Abortions	1.93	38.34	70

Selection of Sub-messages Related to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation (M_2)

In this message viz. safe drinking water and sanitation eight sub-messages were identified. Out of these four messages fulfilled the criteria of selection in terms of CV (below 25%) and

judges' agreement, hence these four sub-messages were retained. The messages retained were safe drinking water (CV 19.23), causes of contamination in water sources (CV 24.90), ways to purify drinking water (CV 22.52) and proper disposal of waste/garbage (CV 23.04). This shows that these four messages were found to be crucial and important by the judges and hence retained for further investigation (Table 5). Chawla et al. (2006) reported that exposure to health and sanitation education had enabled the beneficiaries to acquire certain desirable health and hygienic practices in daily living. The trend towards adoption of desirable hygienic practices was positive. This favorable atmosphere needs to be capitalized.

Table 5: Selection of sub-messages related to safe drinking water and sanitation (M₂) N=30

S. No.	Sub-messages	Total weighted mean	CV (%)	Judges consensus (%)
1.	Safe drinking water	2.60	19.23	100*
2.	Causes of contamination in water sources	2.53	24.90	93*
3.	Water borne diseases	2.20	40.45	70
4.	Ways to purify drinking Water	2.53	22.52	96*
5.	Water pollution	1.47	42.86	40
6.	Proper disposal of waste/garbage	2.30	23.04	97*
7.	Insanitary living conditions	1.93	38.34	70
8.	Solid waste disposal	2.13	36.62	76

Selection of Sub-Messages Related to Household Technologies (M₃)

The sub-messages covered under household technologies are furnished in Table 6. Total eight messages were included in this category and five were finally retained, that is, solar cooker (CV 19.64), solar lantern (CV 14.98), fuel efficient stove (CV 18.05), *janta* filter (CV 22.85) and soakage pit (CV 23.46). For rest of the messages, viz. solar water heater, bio-gas, pulley with ball bearing for drawing water from wells CV value were found to be above 25 percent which indicated the varied opinion of judges about these messages and hence were deleted for further investigation. These technologies are very simple and useful in their functioning and therefore, the rural population is required to be educated about these technologies. Further, there

is a dire need for change of values and behaviour in the society, positive socio-cultural and economic empowerment and above all the will power and strong determination of women. Education can play a vital role in bringing about the desirable behavioral changes among the women and make them well equipped in terms of knowledge, competence and capacity to deal with different problems (Dasarathi 2006).

Table 6: Selection of sub-messages related to household technologies (M₃) N=30

S. No.	Sub-messages	Total weighted mean	CV (%)	Judges consensus (%)
1.	Solar cooker	2.80	19.64	93*
2.	Solar lantern	2.87	14.98	96*
3.	Solar water heater	1.80	36.67	66
4.	Fuel efficient stove	2.77	18.05	96*
5.	<i>Janta</i> filter	2.67	22.85	93*
6.	Soakage pit	2.60	23.46	93*
7.	Bio-gas	1.80	45.00	57
8.	Pulley with ball bearing for drawing water from wells	1.87	43.85	60

CONCLUSION

Educating women on important issues related to their social needs and problems enhances their knowledge and brings about a change in their attitude. Thus educating this half of human capital in much productive and efficient way as identified messages will not only provide vital support to their families but also give a new direction to rural development. Advancement of women and improvement in their life has a positive influence on socio-economic development of the nation. Educating rural women in all spheres of their lives means making them aware, upgrading their skills and knowledge and strengthening them to be self-reliant and independent. Hence, there is need to develop a workable gender audit system for government programmes which would look at targets like training, recruitments, promotion, infrastructure and decision-making opportunities. The verbal change from women welfare to women rights needs to be converted into reality. Gender budgets need participation of other departments besides the existing ones.

As evidenced in many studies, the level of awareness of government schemes is very low,

so more effective publicity is necessary. A more effective system for monitoring women welfare, women empowerment programmes is to be developed which is simple, transparent and involves both government and non- government functionaries (Chandra 2012).

Practically no schemes exist to encourage women in non-stereotype occupations. Training of women in leadership market research and entrepreneurship with follow- ups must be institutionalized. At the national as well as state levels, we need a full fledged mechanism to ensure gender sensitive policy, implementation through a participatory apex body. Clearer definition of work, Joint *pattas*/deeds for women and men will ensure better control of women over resources as well as their acknowledgement in national income like recent initiative of the state of Haryana regarding the reduction of stamp duty on the purchase of land from 7 per cent to 5 per cent has worked in the direction of more land being bought in the name of women in the family. This will not only shape their lives but also change the destiny of our nation by pro-

ducing better human capital to step into the next millennium.

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