

Women Empowerment in Rural Areas of Andhra Pradesh: State Government Schemes

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ABSTRACT:-

Women Empowerment is a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own, self reliance to assert their independent right to make choice and to control resources which will assists in challenges and eliminating their own subordination. The government of India has implemented many programmes for the empowerment of women. In addition, Andhra Pradesh state government also implementing various women development programmes, like the gender component of SERP under APRIGP program focuses on enabling the women of the poorest of the poor households of Andhra Pradesh to overcome their poverty through the self managed institutions like self – help groups, village organizations, mandal samakhyas and zilla samakhyas.

Gender programme aims to ensure gender equity, equality and a dignified way of living for rural women. Mobility, participation and decision making will be enhanced through their self managed institutions by providing capacity building trainings. These schemes plays an effective dimensional role in creating rural livelihood at sustain, the savings and group activities in eliminating poverty by active participation of women at village level committees. It was observed that there is a drastic development occurred in their life with their active participation, and they are getting awareness in all aspects. Through these schemes, traditional Indian women have started

proving themselves more skilled and competent in many professions. This article explains complete data of SHG'S, village and mandal samakhyas etc which empowered rural women of Andhra Pradesh.

KEYWORDS: - Role of Women, Economic status, Participation, Govt. schemes, Campaigns.

Introduction:

What is Women Empowerment?

Women Empowerment means promoting women in their social and economic development, providing them equal opportunities of employment, education, economical development and allowing them to socialize; the freedoms and rights that were denied before. It is the process which empowers women to know that they too can achieve their aspirations as the men of the society and help them do that.

Why Do We Need Women Empowerment in India

The need of women empowerment arose because of the gender discrimination and male domination in the Indian society since ancient time. Socio-political rights (right to work, right to education, right to decide for themselves, etc) for the women were completely restricted by the male members of family.

In the recent years, various constitutional and legal rights have been implemented by the government of India in order to

eliminate ill practices and gender discrimination against women. However, in order to solve such a big issue, the continuous effort of everyone including women is required. Modern society is being more aware about the women rights which results in the increasing number of several self-help groups, NGOs, etc working in this direction. Women are being more open minded and breaking the societal barriers in order to achieve their rights in all dimensions even after crimes are going side by side.

Some of the acts passed by the Parliament

Equal Remuneration Act-1976, Dowry Prohibition Act-1961, Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act-1956, Medical termination of Pregnancy Act-1971, Maternity Benefit Act-1961, Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act-1987, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act-2006, Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act-1994, Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Protection and) Act-2013, etc in order to empower women with legal rights.

Government's Role in Woman Empowerment in India

The government of India has implemented many programs for the empowerment of women. Many of these programs are for providing employment, education, health accessible to the masses. These programs have been especially incorporated keeping in mind the needs and conditions of Indian women, to ensure their participation. Some of these programs are – MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme), Sarva Siksha Abhiyaan, Janani Suraksha Yojana (reduce maternal mortality) etc.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India has implemented various new schemes specifically aimed at the empowerment of Indian women

Some of those significant schemes are given below:

1) Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme

The scheme focuses on eradicating female infanticide and also on the education of girl child. It aims for changing the mindset of people towards a girl, by providing financial support and also by strict enforcement of laws and acts.

2) Women Helpline Scheme

This scheme aims for providing 24 hours emergency support help line for women who are subjected to any kind of violence or crime. The scheme provides a universal emergency number -181 across the country for women in distress. The number also provides information on women related schemes in the country.

3) Ujjawala Scheme

A scheme aiming at the rescue of women affected by trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation and their rehabilitation and welfare.

4) Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)

The STEP scheme aims at imparting skills to women, making them employable as well as to become self employed. Various sectors like agriculture, horticulture, handloom, tailoring and fisheries etc are covered under the scheme.

5) Mahila Shakti Kendras

The scheme focuses on empowering rural women through community participation. Community volunteers like students, professional etc will teach the rural women about their rights and welfare schemes.

6) Reservation for Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions

In 2009 the Union Cabinet of the Government of India instituted 50% reservation for the women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. It is aimed mainly at improving

the social status of women in rural India. The states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh among various others have majority of women as elected head of gram panchayats.

Andhra Pradesh Government initiatives for women Empowerment

Government of Andhra Pradesh has been promoting Gender Equality in all Spheres. Economic analyses recognize that low levels of education and training, poor health and nutritional status and limited access to resources not only depress the quality of life of a woman but also limits productivity, hinders economic growth on the whole. Vision 2010 is the guiding policy document for the Government of Andhra Pradesh. Empowering women by building awareness of gender issues and providing them with education, health and employment opportunities is the one of the main objective of Vision 2020.

The state is committed to ensure equal participation of women in the Development. Andhra Pradesh declared the year 1997 as the year of 'Gender Equality with Social Justice'. Various steps have been taken to provide specific provisions for women towards equality in all fields i.e. social, economic, political and cultural. Hence an attempt is made to study different policies, programmes and schemes of women empowerment initiated by Government of Andhra Pradesh.

Andhra Pradesh is one of the few states in the country where a separate department is created to look after the Development and Welfare of Women and Children. Andhra Pradesh Women Commission has been constituted to improve the status of women in the state and to enquire into unfair practices affecting women. It also monitors implementation of the laws in courts concerning women. Different institutions are set up by the Government for the women. Total 34 Institutions are being run such as

State Homes, Rescue Homes, Working Women Hostels, Old Age Home, Homes for Collegiate Girls.

Schemes and Programmes by Government of Andhra Pradesh

a) **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS):** The ICDS Scheme is a centrally sponsored single largest Integrated Programme of Child Development. It was started in Andhra Pradesh in 1975-76. There is a close relationship between Child Development and Women Development. In 2007 ICDS was revised and the key objectives to be addressed were reduction of malnutrition in 0-6 year Children, reduction of Children with low Birth Weight, reduction of Infant Mortality Rate, Maternal Mortality Rate and other measure for improving the over-all health and nutrition condition women and children.

b) **Indiramma amrutha Hastham:** This programme was started in 2013. This scheme is to provide one full meal for pregnant and Lactating women. Under this programme one full meal consisting of Rice, Dal with leafy vegetables, Sambar/veg curry, one boiled egg and 200ml milk to all the pregnant women at each Anganwadi Centre atleast 25 days a month.

c) **MAARPU:** The decline in Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) between 1997 and 2010 has been slow in the state and when compared to other southern states. Still the IMR, MMR low birth weight Children and anemia in pregnant women is very high and a matter of concern. In view of the above circumstances Government has taken the initiative to achieve convergence between the different departments to focus on key parameters related to health, nutrition and sanitation under the efforts called MAARPU.

d) **Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABALA):** It is a centrally sponsored

scheme launched in 2011 in Andhra Pradesh. The Scheme aims to empower adolescent Girls in the age group 11 to 18 years by promoting their education, health, nutrition, life skills and vocational skills.

e) **Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY):** This is a centrally sponsored conditional Cash Transfer Scheme. This scheme is implemented in selected districts of Andhra Pradesh from 2011-12. An amount of Rs.4,000 is paid to the Pregnant and lactating women in three installment on fulfillment of prescribed conditions.

f) **Kishori Sakthi Yojana:** This is also centrally sponsored scheme introduced in 2000. Its main objective is empowering adolescent Girls by breaking the inter-cycle of nutritional and gender disadvantages and to provide a supportive environment for self development.

Domestic Violence Act 2005

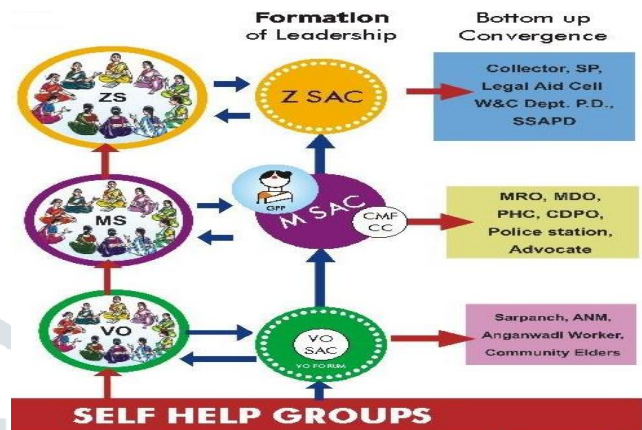
Domestic violence against women is widely prevalent, but has remained largely invisible. This act has been enacted by government of India which came into effect from 2006. For this purpose Government of Andhra Pradesh has appointed 104 Protection Officers and 72 Service Providers are appointed to extend help to aggrieved women PWDV Act-2005.

A Gender Point Person (GPP) is selected from every SHG in the village. GPP is entrusted with the responsibility of enquiring about the well being of the families of all the SHG Women, report gender based violence cases to the WPC at Mandal level, create awareness through rallies, prepare gender action plan, monitor and support adolescent girls groups, identify and create linkages between gender based vulnerable families and various entitlements.

STRUCTURE AND INTERVENTIONS:

Women Protection Committee has been constituted and it functions at village,

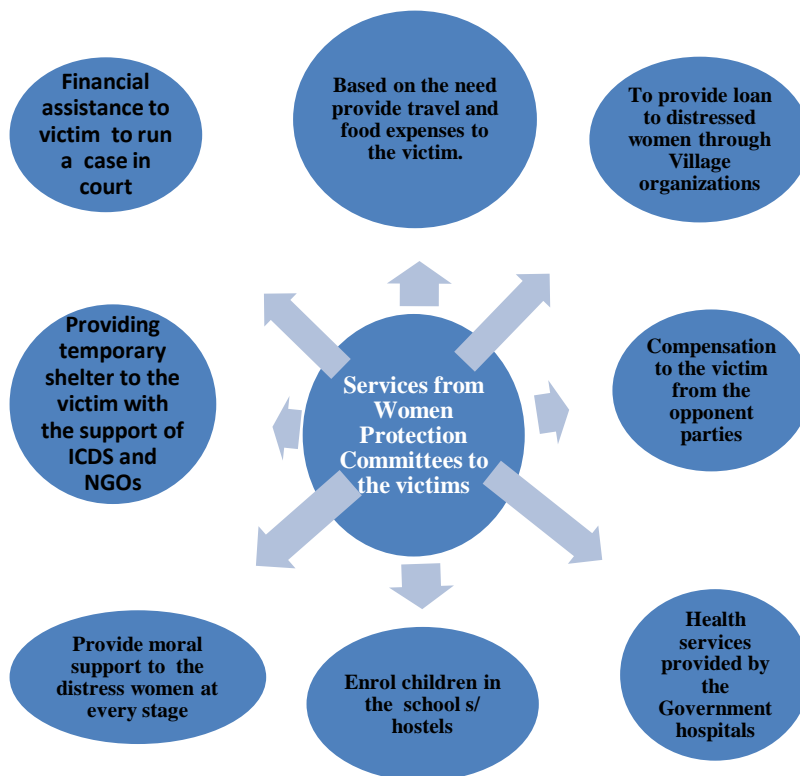
mandal and district levels to resist gender based violence against women.



PROGRESS:

Building up on the experiences from the past, the gender component has adopted the strategy to form a strong support structure in the grassroots level and formed Gender point person(GPP) at village level across the state. These GPPs are further mobilized into Women Protection Committees. Every WPC consists of 4 members/master trainers for better outreach amongst rural women. As on July 2018, 2640 Women Protection Committees have been formed at the Panchayat Level out of 3268 APRIGP GPs. At mandal level 156 Women Protection Committees have been formed out of 161 APRIGP Mandals.

The WPC members collaborate with other local leaders whenever it is required for instance in cases of violence against the members help the woman to seek justice through Gender Fund or Vulnerability reduction Fund, provide support to the victim to file a FIR, continuous moral support and follow up of the victim, demand compensation for the victim from the perpetrator.



The gender component of SERP under APRIGP program focuses on enabling the women of the poorest of the poor households of Andhra Pradesh to overcome their poverty through the self managed institutions like self-help groups, village organizations, mandal samakhyas and zilla samakhyas. Gender programme aims to ensure gender equity, equality and a dignified way of living for rural women. Mobility, participation and decision making will be enhanced through their self managed institutions by providing capacity building trainings.

To ensure women's well being a support structure is available at their door steps i.e women protection committees at village and mandal levels. The objective of the support structure is to ensure justice to the victims immediately within the legal frame without spending money from their pocket.

GENDER STRATEGY:

In order to achieve the objective a gender strategy has been developed and adopted. The key gender strategy focuses on constituting a strong support structure in the grassroots level for rural women to resist gender based violence against them and thereby enable them to participate in the mainstream development process.

Gender strategy ensures that SHG women monitor their social agenda along with financial agenda, increases their autonomy in decision making, freedom in mobility, say in governance at different levels to build a safe environment.

To inculcate the habit of discussion of social and gender issues, a set of agenda has been developed and is as followed

- 1.Ensure violence free families.
- 2.Awareness on nutrition and reproductive health.
3. Resist/prevent child marriages.
- 4.Ensure girl child education.
- 5.Elimination of child labour.

- 6.Ensuring regular attendance of children in schools.
- 7.Elimination of human trafficking.
- 8.Provide support to vulnerable women

As an outcome of the establishment of a strong support structure these SHG women have witnessed an improvement in intra family equity, equality and increased access to resources & services at individual and village levels. Gender interventions have helped to sensitize the beneficiaries and stakeholders about the gender roles and responsibilities, sexual division of labour in their families and in larger society. Sensitization through gender interventions has enabled women to not only exercise increased decision making but also to ensure a gender just, safe and equitable society.

CAPACITY BUILDING TRAININGS AND BEST PRACTICES:

To ensure proper functioning of Women Protection Committee, the members are provided with various forms of trainings on gender issues, women's laws, conflict resolution and counseling skills. They were also trained on creating enabling environment for women in SHG platforms to share their grievances freely and receive adequate support in conflict resolution.

The members of the Women Protection Committee are also expected to follow the best practices promoted by the Gender Strategy which are as follows: 1.Work in coordination with the concerned line departments, seek support and guidance where ever it is necessary. 2. Community Managed Family Counseling cell at Mandal level, 3. Constant review of cases resolved for further reference and 4. Attend trainings on women's laws, conflict resolution and counseling skills for effective facilitation and outcomes.

CAMPAIGNS:

1. Aada Bidda Ku Raksha Gaa Kadhuludham (To provide protection to girl children)

In order to address and highlight the rising crime towards girl children a campaign named "Aada Bidda ku Raksha Gaa Kaduludaam" was initiated by the Hon'ble chief minister of Andhra Pradesh. Through this campaign the Gender Component highlighted the rising crime rate against girl children and further mobilized the communities to combat violence against girls and women.

2.Campaigning with Sadhikara Mithras for Gender Sub-component

In June 2018 SERP conducted a campaign in 161 RIGP Mandals to create awareness and highlight the importance of gender component and to take up gender awareness activities amongst the communities through Sadhikara Mithras.

Gram Panchayat level rallies were conducted by various stakeholders where discussions were raised on various gender issues like child marriages, sex determinations, school dropouts and violence against women. Followed by which the participants were also made aware of Women Protection committees and its importance. To mark the end of the campaign, gender pledge was taken by the stakeholders, beneficiaries and the participants.

BUDGET

An amount of Rs.7.09 crores was released towards implementation of gender activities in 2017-18 under APRIGP Component – III. In 2018-19 an amount of Rs.2.51 Crores was released for strengthening the women protection committees in 161 APRIGP Mandals. Also released an amount of Rs. 66.97 Lakhs to conduct the rallies on 'Aada Bidda Ku Raksha Gaa kaduludaam' in the mandal head quarters and also in all the 3268 Grama Panchayats of RIGP mandals.

Budget for women schemes	(Rs cr)
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SERP	14690
BC Welfare	3186
WCD	1740
MGNREGS(RD)	1374
MEPMA	1002
APSWREI	628
Tribal welfare	618

Women Empowerment Schemes

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme
2. One Stop Centre Scheme
3. Women Helpline Scheme
4. UJJAWALA : A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation
5. Working Women Hostel
6. Ministry approves new projects under Ujjawala Scheme and continues existing projects
7. SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)
8. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)
9. NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR
10. Awardees of Stree Shakti Puruskar, 2014 & Awardees of Nari Shakti Puruskar
11. Awardees of Rajya Mahila Samman & Zila Mahila Samman
12. Mahila E-Haat
13. Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)
14. NIRBHAYA
15. Mahila police Volunteers

SERP

The Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) was established by the

Government of Andhra Pradesh (GOAP) as a sensitive support structure to facilitate poverty reduction through social mobilization and improvement of Livelihoods of rural poor in Andhra Pradesh. As per the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, SERP is divided into AP SERP and TG SERP for implementing Indira Kranthi Patham (IKP). SERP, AP, is implementing Indira Kranthi Patham (IKP) in all the 656 rural Mandals of 13 rural districts in A.P. The vision of SERP is to enable every poor family in rural Andhra Pradesh to come out of poverty and stay out of poverty. SERP works on a comprehensive multi dimensional poverty alleviation strategy by focusing equally on the Livelihoods Value Chain and Human Development Indicators.

With this in mind, SERP has relentlessly worked on a unique structure of community based organization by organizing 69,31,113 rural women into 6,52,440 SHGs, 26,753 Village Organizations, 656 Mandal Samakhya and 13 Zilla Samakhya. SERP has established a unique institutional structure for the Community Based Organizations in the World. This CBOs structure in A.P. has facilitated cumulative bank loans of Rs. 43,596.60 lakhs of commercial bank loans to SHG members.

- ❖ Bank Linkages
- ❖ VLR
- ❖ Capital infusion - pasupu and kumkuma
- ❖ Pensions - NTR Bharosa
- ❖ Chandranna bheema
- ❖ Sthree nidhi
- ❖ Anna sanjeevani shops
- ❖ Vermicompost
- ❖ ISLs
- ❖ Rural retail chains
- ❖ Unnathi for SC and ST.

.On the occasion of International Women's Day, Andhra Pradesh government announced a number of schemes aimed at their empowerment, including opening an

exclusive toll-free helpline '181' for women in distress..

Introduction of free master health check-up for women in the 35+ age group through a 'Master Health Card' with special focus on early diagnosis and treatment of non-communicable diseases, breast and cervical cancer and lifestyle diseases.

Introduction of free tele-ultrasonography services in 223 health facilities for screening of pregnant women, mother and child hospitals with 100 beds each to be made operational within 60 days. A Legislation would be brought in for compulsory registration of girls' and working women's hostels, compulsory establishment of standing committees for women welfare and protection in all local bodies.

The government decided to construction 10,000 **Anganwadi buildings** every year for the next 3 years trying up funding from the MGNREGS.

The government will establish **fast track courts** for expeditions disposal of cases relating to crime against women and girls, the Chief Minister said compulsory establishment of standing committee for women welfare and protection in all local bodies.

Expansion and strengthening of SHE teams in the state to prevent harassment and eve teasing of women and girl, the government decided to provide compulsory non-combat training for girls and establishment of **Kanya Shakti** team in all junior and degree colleges in the state,

Facilitate **compulsory marriage registration** at Gram Panchayats/municipal wards to eliminate harmful practices as child marriages

The State government has formulated the declaration after taking into consideration the opinions voiced by several women during the National Women's Parliament

(NWP) held in February 2017 at Pavitra Sangamam.

'**Amaravati Declaration,**' is a compendium on the guidelines for women empowerment formulated by the State govt, based on the ideas, issues and problems discussed at the National Women's Parliament held in February this year.

The state government of Andhra Pradesh has all set to launch **Chandranna Pellikanuka Scheme** for backward classes which will provide them financial assistance at marriage. This scheme will be launched on the day of the New Year 2018. The objective of the scheme is to provide a monetary incentive of Rs. 30,000 for the girls of Backward Classes during their marriage. Under Chandranna Pelli kanuka Scheme, the government will provide 20% of Pelli kanuka before marriage and 80% on the day of marriage.

Badikostha Bicycle Scheme – Objectives

The main objective of the scheme is to encourage girls to continue their education and reduce the number of dropouts. Through the distribution of free bicycles under the Badikostha Bicycle Scheme, the state government aims to drag the attention of large section of common public, both in rural and urban areas.

Badikostha is a new initiative by the state government of Andhra Pradesh under which bicycles would be provided to the girls students in the state. The state government under the Badikostha scheme would distribute about 1.82 lakh bicycles to the girl students across the state.

The free bicycle scheme has been launched by the Andhra Chief Minister on 17th April 2017 from Vijayawada during a public gathering. As many as 1,81,556 cycles will be distributed under the Badikostha scheme

to students of 5,628 schools including 246 government schools, 4,432 ZP schools, 319 municipal schools, 471 aided schools and 160 model schools at a cost of Rs. 74.93 crore, for the implementation of the scheme.

ABHAYA HASTHAM

In order to secure dignified life to women and providing income security in their Old age, Government have decided to Introduce a co-contributory pension scheme for SHG women to give them a monthly pension. Government of Andhra Pradesh introduced Velugu Pension and Insurance Scheme for the (Rural and Urban) SHG women in November 2009 to provide income security in their old age. The aim was to provide security, to all enrolled SHG women with dignity in their old age.

UNNATHI-SC.ST SUBPLAN 2016-17.

The DRDA-Velugu-, as part of the SC.ST sub plan issuing several loans to the poorest of the poor women of the Self help groups (SHGs) for improvement of their lively hoods /earning better livelihoods. Through the Unnathi scheme, the DRDA is issuing different types of loans with an unit cost of Rs.50,000/- such as purchase of 1.buffalows 2.Cows 3.sheep 4.goat 5.Auto 6.Kiran shop 7.Fancystores 8.hotles 9.Vegetable vending etc as per the needs of the beneficiaries.

For issue of the above loans, the eligible poor women will be selected from the SHG groups and the names will be recommended by the village organization and Mandal Samakya. Loans are being issued through the Sthreenidhi co-op credit society.

Conclusion

Empowering women may easily help to grow each and every member of the family without any extra effort. A woman is considered to be responsible for everything in the family so she can better solve all the problems from her own end. Empowerment of the women would automatically bring empowerment of everyone.

It aims at development of women in education, legal rights, health and nutrition, entrepreneurship, research and innovation, politics, social protection, sustainable development goals, social development and digital literacy. There exists evidence that women's empowerment results in reduction in gender disparities in human development. From this it is concluded that government is showing very much interest in empowering women in all fields, Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self decisionmaking and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality. Then only the Vedic verse (Wherever Women is respected, God resides there) would come true.

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