

# AWARENESS REGARDING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES IN BARMER DISTRICT OF RAJASTHAN

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**Abstract:** Empowerment is the main process of social development which can enable women to participate, in the economic, political and social sustainable development of the rural communities. Today the empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century but practically women empowerment is still an illusion of reality. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones in the society. We observe in our day to day life how women become victimized by various social evils. Women Empowerment is the vital instrument to expand women's ability to have resources and to make strategic life choices. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. The study is based on purely from secondary sources. The present study was an attempt to know utilization of these programmes by rural home-makers. The study was conducted in 50 rural households of two villages selected from one block of Barmer district. The results revealed that few respondents (9.0 %) were aware of the year of women empowerment as well as various empowerment programmes. (11.7%) home-makers who were aware of *Ujjawala* (10.0) and *MNAREGA* (47.0), respectively. However, 15.0 per cent women started using women friendly technologies in their households for drudgery reduction and hence improving their quality of life. Further, only 3.0 % of the respondents was making use of credit facilities for starting their own enterprise to supplement family income as they were completely ignorant about various schemes. Schemes like Widow Pension Scheme, Maternity Benefits and Girl Child Benefits were fully utilized as these provide direct economic gains.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Women empowerment. Rural households, Development programmes

## INTRODUCTION

Women Empowerment can be defined as the process which allows women to take decisions of their own, provide fair laws and rights without gender bias, etc. No doubt the empowerment of women is Nation's empowerment. Let us read various programmes or schemes of the government that provide or facilitate women empowerment.

Women's empowerment is really needed in the societies. It's so important for women self-esteem and also for societies. Empowering women is to give women the right. Women can have equal right to participate in education, society, economy and politically.

The essential factors for empowerment are self-confidence, exposure and independence. Man and women are one of the major components of society. Since the formation of the society, there has been discrimination on how society looks on both the genders. It is through the lens of the society that we build our conceptions.

The four elements of empowerment—information, inclusion/participation, accountability, and local organizational capacity—can be combined to create more effective, responsive, inclusive, and accountable institutions.

The process of women empowerment is multidimensional. It enables women to realize their full potential, empowers them in all spheres of life. Women's empowerment, in fact, begins with the awareness about their rights and

capabilities. Women play a pivotal role for the overall development of the family but still defied equal status. In order to equal opportunities, improve their overall status, to remove various gender biases, the government of India had declared year 2001 as women empowerment year and has launched many useful programmes for awakening women, who in turn can think of raising standard of living of their families.

Government Schemes for Women Empowerment: Government of India implemented various poverty alleviation and rural development programmes. These programmes have special components for women empowerment. At present, the Government of India has over 37 schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. The implementation of these programmes/schemes is monitored specifically with reference to coverage of women. Some of these are as follows:-

1. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)
2. Mahila Samakhya being implemented in about 9000 villages.
3. (Aajeevika) and the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY).
4. Scheme for Gender Budgeting (XI Plan).
5. SIDBI's Mahila Udyam Nidhi Mahila Vikas Nidhi.
6. NGO's Credit Schemes.
7. Crèches/ Day care centre for the children of working and ailing mother.
8. National Mission for Empowerment of Women.
9. Rastriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) 1992-1993

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10. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) (2010).
  11. Swalamban.
  12. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP).
  13. Integrated Child Protection scheme (ICPS) (2009-2010).
  14. Swadhar.
  15. Swayasjdha.
  16. National Banks for Agriculture and Rural Development's Schemes
  17. Khadi and Village Industries Commission.
  18. Hostels for working women.
  19. Ujjawala (2007).
  20. Working Women's Forum
  21. Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October, 1993.
  22. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).
  23. Swa Shakti Group.
  24. Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers.
  25. Short Stay Homes.
  26. Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS).
  27. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 1995-17.
  28. Dhanalakshmi (2008).
  29. Women Entrepreneur Development programme given top priority in 1997-98.
  30. Mahila Samiti Yojana.
  31. SBI's Sree Shakti Scheme.
  32. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 1995-17.
  33. Indira Mahila Kendra.
  34. Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM).
  35. Indira Priyadarshini Yojana.
  36. Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY).
  37. Beti padao beti bacho yojana.
- Government has chalked out impressive programmes and enacted many laws to empower

women but how far these were effective and being implemented could only decide the success of such programmes. Keeping all this in view, present study was intended with the objective to know the utilization of women empowerment programmes by rural home-makers, to know the opinion regarding various empowerment programmes for women and make suggestions for effective implementation of these programmes.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in one blocks Gudamalani of Barmer district. Two villages from block were selected with the help of CDPO (Child Development Project Officer) of concerned block. Twenty five women respondents of age group 20-50 yr were randomly selected from each village, thus making a sample of 50 respondents. The data were collected through structured interview schedule and presented with the help of simple percentage. Scoring technique was used to express opinions of home-makers. It was done by giving 3, 2, and 1 score to agree, neutral and disagree responses, respectively. The mean scores were calculated to express the findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was evident from the data (Table 1) that in selected village, few home-makers (9.0%) were aware of declaration of year 2001 as women empowerment year. The data further revealed that only (6.0%) home-makers were aware of rights of women and *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme* (27.0). There were only (11.7%) home-makers who were aware of *Ujjawala* (10.0) and *MNAREGA* (47.0), which aimed at empowering the teen-aged girls.

**Table 1.** Distribution of respondents according to awareness and use of women empowerment programmes. (N=50)

Programme	Response	
	Yes	No
<b>Knowledge regarding</b>		
a) <i>Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)</i>	47 (94.0)	3 (6.0)
b) <i>Declaration of year 2001 as Women Empowerment Year.</i>	9 (18.0)	41 (82.0)
c) <i>Importance of year 2001, rights of women</i>	6 (12.0)	44 (88.0)
d) <i>Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme</i>	27 (54.0)	23 (46.0)
e) <i>Credit facilities for starting an enterprise.</i>	3 (6.00)	47 (94.0)
f) <i>Women friendly technology for drudgery reduction.</i>	15 (30.0)	35 (70.0)
g) <i>UJJAWALA</i>	10 (20.0)	40 (80.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage.

As regards the women friendly technologies, 15 per cent women started using the same in their homes for drudgery reduction and hence improving the

quality of life. It was observed that (3.0 %) of the respondents was making use of credit facilities for starting their own enterprise to supplement family

income as they were totally ignorant about these schemes. Interestingly schemes like Widow Pension Scheme, Maternity benefits and Girl Child benefits were fully utilized by the women as these provide direct economic gains to them.

Scores of opinion of respondents towards the women empowerment programme were given in table 2. The results revealed that the respondents strongly agreed to the statements that these programmes make women aware of their rights (2.63), will help them in fighting against discrimination (2.55) and also help in improving health of family

members (2.33). whereas, they disagree with the statements that these programmes will help to develop ability to make better decisions and will provide equality of rights between women and men. However, they had no specific idea about whether these programmes will enable women to act as self sufficient. Similarly statements like helps in strengthening family relations, give women confidence to pursue goals, help to improve the status of the women could get relatively low scores in terms of attaining overall betterment of the women folk.

**Table 2.** Opinion scores of respondents regarding the women empowerment programme (N=50)

Sr. No.	Statement	Score
	These women empowerment programmes will	
i	Make women aware of their rights	2.63
ii	Help women in fighting against discrimination	2.55
iii	Help in improving health of family members	2.33
iv	Help in getting financial aid from banks	2.16
v	Enable the women to act as self sufficient women	2.03
vi	Help in strengthening family relations	1.96
vii	Give women confidence to pursue their goals	1.95
viii	Help to improve the status of women	1.93
ix	Provide equality of rights between women and men	1.86
x	Help to develop ability to make better decisions in the family	1.86

**Table 3.** Division of respondents according to their suggestions for proper implementation of these programmes. (N=50)

S. No.	Suggestion	Response	
		Yes	No
1.	Government must play role for generating awareness about various schemes.	35 (70.0)	15 (30.0)
2.	NGO must play role for generating awareness about various schemes.	25 (50.0)	25 (50.0)
3.	Expert guidance should be made available at various stages for improving quality and marketing.	40 (80.0)	10 (20.0)
4.	Training programmes for elderly men and women of households for changing their rigid attitude towards women workforce participation.	38 (76.0)	12 (24.0)
5.	Training programme should be conducted for developing entrepreneurial skills.	36 (72.0)	14 (28.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage.

Suggestions for proper implementation of these programmes were also invited from the respondents. The data pertaining to this aspect was presented in table 3.

The results revealed that the suggestions of respondents for better implementation of these schemes and programmes included provisions for expert guidance (80.0%) at the top most priority followed by training programme for elderly to change their rigid attitude for women workforce participation (76.0 %). Empowerment of women also requires the participation and co-operation from men. We can catch up with the rest of the world

through changing traditional mind-sets that accord women second class status in society (Jayanthi, 2001). Further, 72.0 per cent of women desired training programmes for skill development and 70.0 per cent respondents about awareness generation programmes by government and 50.0 per cent respondents about awareness generation programmes by NGOs. All the respondents were of the opinion that these programmes if implemented in true spirit will definitely improve the quality of life and status of women.

## CONCLUSION

Empowerment of women calls for strict and rigid implementation of all the programmes that have a bearing on their lives. Mere passing of laws and launching of welfare schemes have a little meaning for women. So, it can be concluded that careful planning and implementation of women empowerment programmes on the part of the government across the country with the cooperation of the civil society will go a long way in empowerment of women.

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