

A PARTICIPATORY INTERVENTION PROGRAMME FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

The present work is an interactive and participatory research. Out of one hundred and eleven villages of Naugarh block of Chandauli district, all women (165) of three randomly selected villages having more than 50 percent schedule caste population were targeted as respondents (census sampling). The data was collected with rapport building in various P.R.A. sessions in order to establish effective community dialogue. Due to social and economic backwardness women of the study area were more burdened and they had to share abundant responsibilities in running the family. People were mainly farmers, food gatherers, forest produce collectors. Factors like geographical isolation, lack of seeds, fertilizers, irrigation facilities and impoverished economic etc were responsible for their under development. Illiteracy, poverty, ill health and civic inertia made their socio-economic condition poor. A functional literacy programme was started on extensive demand of local women and the effort proved to be a great success.

Key words : interactive and participatory research, P.R.A.,

INTRODUCTION :

Women constitute one half of the segment of pluralism in India. The 1991 census counted 495.7 million females against a total population of 846.3 million, in which 207.8 millions women live in the rural areas and 27 per cent of the rural women live below the poverty line. Schedule caste and schedule tribes share 16.48 and 8.08 per cent respectively in the total population of India. These sections are among the poorest of poor in the country even after more than half a century of planned economic and social development specially spelt out for their betterment. The lower sex ratio, low literacy rate, economic dependence, malnutrition, poor health status and low participation in decision making process are few indicators, which highlight the pathetic status of women in India. The Gender Empowerment Measure which estimates the extent of women's participation in a country's economic and political activities ranks India as 110th of the 116 nations. The report has identified the three crucial areas i.e. access to education, reproductive health and credit resources where women lag behind. The concept of empowerment is related with the concept of freedom. It refers to "equipping oneself to improve her/his living condition. In the Indian context the empowerment issue is considered as one of the methodology through which efforts are made to integrate women with the development process by means of participatory development programmes on one side and development of their capacity absorb inputs on the other. Therefore,

the present research was designed with the following objectives-

1. To know the socio-personal characteristics of women in the area
2. To plan, implement and evaluate a participatory intervention programme for empowering women through literacy.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Naugarh block of Chandauli district. The area was selected purposely because of schedule caste and schedule tribe population residing in the block. The block is spread in around 211 square km. area of which 60 per cent part is covered with hillocks and forest cover. Out of one hundred and eleven (111) villages, three villages were selected randomly from the list of villages having more than 50% SC population. Villages selected for the study were - (1) Aurawantand, (2) Nunwat, and (3) Karmaband. As it was an interactive and participatory research, all women were targeted as respondents (census sampling). Women were individually interviewed as well as motivated to participate in different P.R.A. sessions to gather information for purpose. Both qualitative and quantitative data gathering tools were adopted in the survey. The participatory process was consisted of principles shared by P.R.A., the menu methods of P.R.A., participatory planning and cross checking of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :

General information about the respondents in selected villages :

Table 1. Caste-wise distribution of the villages

Caste***	Total	
	No.*	% age**
Kharwar	110	66.67
Chamar	18	10.91
Yadav	13	7.878
Musahar	1	0.60
Baniya	2	1.21
Brahman	3	1.82
Muslim	3	1.82
Chauhan	15	9.09
Total	165	100.00

* No. of families counted.

** Figures in parenthesis show percentage of the total population of the respective villages.

*** Caste refers to the class or district hereditary order of society

Here it may be clearly noticed from the table No. 1 that majority (66.67%) of the respondents belonged to Kharwar caste (SC category); Brahmin and Muslims were found to be in marginal percentage (1.82%).

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to their age group

Age**	Total	
	No.*	% age**
20-40	94	56.96
40-60	67	40.62
> 60	4	2.42
Total	165	100.00

* Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

** Age refers to the number of full years completed at time of investigation in.

Table 2. depicts that maximum women belonged to 20-40 years age group whereas senior citizens were rarely found

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to their literacy status

Literacy status**	Total	
	No.*	% age**
Illiterate	157	95.15
Literate	8	4.85
Total	165	100.00

* Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

** It refers to the ability of respondents to read and write with understanding.

Regarding literacy of women, among 3 surveyed villages, few women (8 out of 165) were found literate, i.e. they had some schooling but not enough to be able to read. In terms of conventional schooling as a measure of education, there was no significant difference between the respondents in the different groups of villages. This literacy was among the women of high caste (Brahmin) in Nunwat. Excluding five women of Kharwar caste all

women were found illiterate. Reason for the illiteracy of women in the area was - (1) traditional belief (2) typical agro ecological situation (3) lack of primary schools (4) non-availability of primary school teachers (5) poor transport facilities etc. One school situated in Nunwat village has got only one teacher who does not belong to the village itself. He faces difficulties of proper transportation-facilities, proper accommodation, and lack of drinking water and food items, which hinders him to come regularly to school.

Whatever may be the reason behind low literacy rate among women, it was observed that now, girls of the area are being sent to the schools for education up to primary level. But the belief still looms large that a girl should be more perfect in household jobs rather than be highly educated. However, Women themselves showed much interest to be literate in the participatory intervention programmes of functional literacy.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents according to their annual income

Income** (Rs.)	Total	
	No.*	% age**
< 10000	32	19.39
10000 to 60000	128	77.58
> 60000	5	3.03
Total	165	100.00

* Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

** It refers to the gross money generated by the family through all means (agriculture, wage earning, forest product, collection, animal husbandry, etc.)

Maximum (77.58% families have the annual income of Rs. 10,000-60,000. About 19.39% families were found having an average annual income of less than Rs. 10,000 which. Means that they struggle a lot to meet their basic requirements.

Livelihood analysis reveals the behavior and adjustment strategies of farm families in different socio-economic situations. Major source of income to sustain the livelihood was supported by agriculture and forest. The concept of saving was lacking. Reason behind the same was marginal income which barely met their day to day expenses.

The impact diagram clearly shows the unfavorable effects of environmental degradation on rural livelihood. In this method, the local people described cause-effect relationship, verbally and visually and explained linkages amongst different factors.

Participatory intervention programme- Participatory Intervention Programme takes place beyond initial education. It is a life long process of further enhancing human empowerment for achievement of better and higher quality of life. It was initiated in three

villages among the interested women groups, with the objective of imparting literacy skills to illiterate.

Plan of Programme :

1. Formation of women group—Concept of formation of informal women group was new to the area, as there were no such informal groups in existence. Initially, all women of three villages joined the group, but later on, some of them could not continue it due to several reasons like caste-wise stratification of the area, unwillingness of males and greater work force participation of women etc. However, 45 women willingly got associated with the group. There were 12 women from Nunwat village, 13 from Aurawantand and 20 women from Karmaband village.

2. Identification of needs and resources—Literacy programme was initiated on extensive demand of women. Further, problems and need were analysed in different P.R.A. sessions.

3. Literacy Programm—It comprised of the knowledge of primers, matras, word making and making simple sentences. One alphabetic book named “Vikas Hindi Balpothi”, one slate and pencils were distributed to each woman for the purpose. The programme was implemented for six months. Date and time was decided by the women, which varied according to seasonal work load of the women.

Out line of the programme :

1. Regarding knowledge of the primers (3T) 95% women could read and write. The primers However 20% women had difficulty to write word.

2. Regarding word formation, the most difficult area of second primer was the use of conjunct e.g. in words, the 60% of women were able to write and read simple words.

3. The 10% of the women were found competent enough to make sentences and read and write it.

Implications—If the literate and trained girls of the village are given the responsibility to teach the women in the absence of a teacher, programme could lead to greater success.

Limitation—The programme that were introduced and carried out by the researcher in the study area were of limited duration and it is possible that whatever changes these programme tried to bring about in the society might not be achieved to the full extent because of their discontinuity due to unavailability of any organisation or group to pursue them further.

CONCLUSION :

The P.R.A. (Participatory Rural Appraisal) method which was successfully applied in the present study was found to be an effective technique for collecting meaningful information from the actual beneficiaries. Participatory intervention programme which was organized by the researcher proved quite beneficial and women of the study area actively participated and showed their willingness to learn. Regarding facilitation of education it may be suggested that taboos and unreasonable customs like not allowing women/girls to go out of their houses for studies should be discouraged.

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