
Women Empowerment: Role of Telangana Government

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment means emancipation of women from the vicious grips of social, economical, political, caste and gender-based discrimination. It means granting women the freedom to make life choices. Women empowerment does not mean deifying women rather it means replacing patriarchy with parity. The concept of empowerment flows from the word power. Empowerment of women would mean encouraging women to be self-reliant, economically independent, have positive self-esteem, generate confidence to face any difficult situation and incite active participation in various socio-political development endeavors.

To have a bright future in family, society and country; empowerment of women is essential. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said that to awaken the people, we should first awaken the women, because once a woman has been awakened then the whole nation and family gets awakened with her. Telangana Government has launched several schemes for welfare of women and taken steps to increase representation of women in jobs, education and also industries. The government is not only giving priority to women, but also naming the schemes after women and implementing them successfully with their participation. The main objective of the paper is to know the role of Telangana Government for women empowerment.

Key words: Women, Women Empowerment, Welfare, Schemes, Telangana Government

INTRODUCTION

Women Empowerment refers to complete emancipation of women from socio-economic shackles of dependency and deprivations. The growing conscience is to accept women as individuals capable of making rational and educated decisions about them as well as the society, increasing and improving the economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal-right as men, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for their families and communities. Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai famously quoted "I raise up my voice not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard...we cannot succeed when half of us are held back.", and that sentiment precisely outlines the basis of new age women empowerment.

Honorable Chief Minister of Telangana State, Mr.K. Chandrashekhar Rao is keen on providing women equal growth opportunities in all spheres of life and protection of women was ensured in the state. He said that the government is spending Rs 40,000 crores on as many as 35 welfare schemes. He cited a CAG report quoting that Telangana state stood first in revenue growth in the country by recording 17.82 per cent rate in the financial year 2016-17. The Government is implementing various schemes for Girl Child, pregnant women, mothers, ward members, Anganwadi workers, women health volunteers, women living in rural and tribal areas, ex-servicemen, physically handicapped, nursing women, Lactating mother, widows/destitute, old age women, women self-help groups, women entrepreneurs and Adolescent Girls. Telangana Government has initiated various schemes in order to:

-) encourage women empowerment
-) promote development and empowerment, gender equality and gender justice of women
-) ensure women's social, economic and political empowerment, fulfillment of their rights, promoting their participation and leadership
-) protect women from domestic violence
-) For women development and protection

NEED OF THE STUDY

The need for women's empowerment is felt because of the status they have in society since the beginning. There is a need to redefine the status of women in the society. A change can be brought through the constitution and supportive legislations. The Constitution of India gives women a status equal to men. There have been attempts to reserve seats for women in political bodies. This is no doubt a step in the right direction. Women have the ability to judge for themselves and take right decisions. However merely allowing for reservation of women in Panchayat and legislative bodies without empowering women individually falls short of actual emancipation. The impoverished and illiterate status of most women in society is due to their inability to attain sufficient levels of economic power. To sustain any level of empowerment women have to be educated to be aware of their rights and privileges in a modern society. It is only when they become aware of their status in society that they will be able to take full advantage of the concessions offered to them as a corrective measure.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the hindrances of Women Empowerment
- To know the importance of Women Empowerment
- To study ways to Empower Women
- To know the schemes for Women Empowerment by Telangana Government

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data is collected from various web sources, media reports, press releases and articles published in newspapers and websites.

HINDRANCES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

- Selective abortion and female infanticide
- Dowry and Bride burning
- Domestic Violence
- Child Marriages
- Inadequate Nutrition
- Sexual Harassment
- Poor status of widows
- Not allowed to have combat roles in the armed forces
- Unequal pay
- Honour Killings
- No Property rights
- Gender Discrimination
- Disparity in Education
- Organizational problems
- Child Marriages
- Limited Access to cash, credit and employment opportunities
- Poverty affects women more than men.
- Belief in the inherent superiority of males.
- Families are considered as a private sphere and stays under male control.
- Trafficking of women.
- Lack of awareness about government schemes.
- Status of women in India is inferior to status of men.

IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

➤ **Help in better decision making power**

Women empowerment gives every woman the right to take her decisions whether it is related to family or work. Just like men do everything they wish to, similarly, women too should share equal right to do things as per their wish. This is only possible if we women understand our powers and utilize it to the fullest. Taking that very first step is necessary and it comes when one gets the power.

➤ **Establish their Self image**

Even women have their own identity and it is important to maintain the same. In olden times, women were given name of their husbands but today time has changed and women love to carry their own identity in every walk of life. Whether they are housewives or working professionals, their identity means everything for them. This is definitely a good sign that women are finally moving out of the four walls of their home and taking a big step.

➤ **Move ahead in their life**

Women need to change their mindset that they are not just meant to remain within their home but move outside to live their own life. They have the choice to decide whether they like to work or indulge in other activities. This will fill the gap between men and women and offer them an equal status which was never given to them.

➤ **Lay a strong foundation of the society**

Every child learns from mother so the foundation of the society is laid down by none other than women. By educating them we can certainly ensure a well-educated family. Still, women from under developed countries are not getting enough opportunities to grow and therefore they are lagging behind in everything. Hence if a strong foundation is to be laid, it is essential to empower women as this will bring a huge revolution. They will be able to stand on their feet and play a crucial role in their family and outside. This will help to build a better society where everyone is equal.

➤ **Active participation in country affairs**

There is no denial to the fact that woman has the ability to transform the lives. So if they actively participate in the outside activities it will have a huge impact on the overall development of the country. As we all know that women are efficient in whatever they do, so if the same is utilized in the right direction, they can do wonders for the nation.

➤ **Under employed and unemployed**

Women population constitutes around 50% of the world population. A large number of women around the world are unemployed. The world economy suffers a lot because of the unequal opportunity for women at workplaces.

➤ **Equally competent and intelligent**

Women are equally competent. Nowadays, women are even ahead of men in many socio-economic activities.

➤ **Talented**

Women are as talented as men. Previously, women were not allowed higher education and hence their talents were wasted. But nowadays, they are also allowed to go for higher studies and it encourages women to show their talents which will not only benefit her individually but to the whole world at large.

➤ **Economic Benefits**

Women Empowerment also leads to more economic benefits not only to individuals but also to the society. Unlike earlier days where they stayed at home and did only kitchen stuffs, nowadays, they go outside and earn money. It helps women to become independent and also to earn for their family which grows country's economy.

➤ **Reduction in domestic violence**

Women Empowerment leads to decrease in domestic violence. Uneducated women are at higher risk for domestic violence than educated women.

➤ **Reduction in corruption**

Women empowerment helps women to get educated and know their rights and duties and hence can lead to reduction in corruption.

➤ **Reduce Poverty**

Women Empowerment also reduces poverty. Sometimes, money earned by the male member of the family is not sufficient to meet the demands of the family. The added earnings of women helps the family to come out of poverty trap.

➤ **National Development**

Women are increasingly participating in the national development process. They are making nation proud by their outstanding performances almost in all spheres including medical science, social service, engineering etc.

WAYS TO EMPOWER WOMEN

➤ **Individual Empowerment**

A woman is a being with senses, imagination and thoughts; she should be able to express them freely. Individual empowerment means to have the self-confidence to articulate and assert the power to negotiate and decide.

➤ **Social Empowerment**

A critical aspect of social empowerment of women is the promotion of gender equality. Gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life.

➤ **Educational Empowerment**

It means empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. It means making women aware of their rights and developing a confidence to claim them.

➤ **Economic and Occupational Empowerment**

It implies a better quality of material life through sustainable livelihoods owned and managed by women. It means reducing their financial dependence on their male counterparts by making them a significant part of the human resources.

➤ **Legal Empowerment**

It suggests provision of an effective legal structure which is supportive of women empowerment. It means addressing the gaps between what the law prescribes and what actually occurs.

➤ **Political Empowerment**

It means existence of a political system favoring the participation in and control by the women of the political decision-making process and in governance.

SCHEMES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT BY TELANGANA GOVERNMENT

➤ **Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak Scheme**

Telangana government has implemented Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak Scheme from 2nd October 2014 to provide financial assistance to SC/ST and muslims girls marriage respectively. Previously the amount was Rs. 51116 but this amount is increased to Rs. 75116. The government has also included brides from backward classes and economically backward sections to provide scheme benefits at par with the brides

belonging to SC, ST and minority communities. Till now Rs 47 crores and Rs 32 crores disbursed to 9,368 SC and 6,483 ST brides respectively. 50 crores were distributed to 10,533 brides from Minority sections.

➤ **KCR Kit Scheme**

KCR Kit scheme was announced by Telangana government in its 2017-18 budget for pregnant women and new born baby by allocating Rs.605 Crores. State government provides a kit containing essential items for pregnant women and new born baby. It is designed to get pregnant women nutritious food and to take care of the new born after delivery. Encouraging institutional deliveries in the state is also one of the objectives of the scheme. The idea is to encourage more deliveries in government hospitals, reduce infant mortality rate and female feticide. The kit has 26 items comprising of soaps, Baby oil, Baby bed, Mosquito net, Dresses, Sarees, Hand bag, towel and napkins, Powder, Diapers, Shampoo and Toys for kid etc. This is an affectionate gift given by the government to mother and child. The items provided in the Rs. 15,000 worth KCR Kit would be useful for the new born for up to 3 months.

➤ **Rs. 12000 Financial Assistance to Pregnant Women**

The state government under the KCR Kit scheme provides financial assistance of Rs. 12000 to working pregnant women to cover the wage loss. The amount would be provided in three installments. An additional Rs. 1000 would be given to pregnant women if the baby happens to be a girl.

➤ **Pension Scheme for Single Women**

Telangana government is the first in the country to start pension scheme from April 2017 for single women from poor families to provide them financial support. Under Single Women Pension Scheme, an amount of Rs. 1000 will be provided in the form of pension whose annual income is below Rs 2 lakh and belong to Below Poverty Line families.

As per the guidelines, single women beneficiary should not be earning more than Rs. 1.5 Lakh annually in rural areas and Rs. 2.0 Lakh in urban areas. The “single women” is referred to married women of at least 18 years of age who is separated from her husband from at least one year. If women do not have proof of separation period then details could be ascertained by a local tehsildar. Unmarried women whose age is above 30 years in rural areas and 35 years in urban areas are also eligible to avail the benefits of the scheme. Other women who are eligible for the scheme are whose husband’s are stuck in gulf countries and now in jails , those whose families have abandoned them and widows of farmers, handloom workers, bread earners who committed suicide or died in accidents. In case the single women remarries and or gets permanent employment or economic stability, the scheme benefits would be discontinued. There are about 2.4 Lakhs single women in the state who would be benefited by the scheme as per the survey conducted by the PR & RD Department. The scheme would cost the government approximately Rs. 34 Crore per month.

➤ **Aasara Pension Scheme**

Telangana Government, as part of its social safety net strategy introduced Aasara Pension Scheme of Rs.1000 with a view to ensure secured life with dignity for the poor. This scheme is meant to protect the most vulnerable sections of society in particular the old and infirm, people with HIV-AIDS, widows, incapacitated weavers and toddy tappers, who have lost their means of livelihood with growing age, in order to support their day to day minimum needs .As on 2015-16, It is observed that 9 out of the 31 districts have between 50 and 60 old age persons for every 1000 population who are beneficiaries of this scheme. The districts of Medchal, Malkajgiri and Hyderabad have the lowest density of old age persons with only 10-20 old age persons for every 1000 population who are beneficiaries of this scheme.

➤ **Pension to Beedi Workers**

In some places in Telangana, women are eking out a living by making Beedis and thus supporting their families and their livelihood. But whatever hard work they are doing, they are not earning the amount that would sustain their families. Understanding their plight, the government has sanctioned Rs. 1000 per month as pension.

➤ **Bangaru Talli Scheme**

Telangana Government with a view to restore the gender balance to channelize the capabilities of woman for nation building has resolved to prevent gender discrimination by empowering and protecting the girl children and catalyzing their all round growth, launched Bangaru Talli Scheme which provides incentives for achieving certain milestones to the girl child till she reaches the age of 21 years. It is meant to take care of the girl child in every household from her birth till she completes her graduation. If a woman gives birth to a baby girl, Rs 2,500 will be deposited into her account. Rs 1000 will be given for the first 2 years at the time of immunization. Rs 1,500 will be given every year to the family through Anganwadis till the baby attains the age of 5 years from 3rd year onwards. At the time of admission to school, Rs 2,000 will be given every year for her studies from the first to the fifth standard and Rs 2,500 from sixth to eighth standard, Rs 3,000 for ninth and tenth standard. A girl studying Intermediate will be given Rs 3,500 each year and Rs 4,000 a year during her graduation.

➤ **Arogya Lakshmi Scheme**

The scheme was launched on 1st January 2015 for providing nutritious food to pregnant women and lactating mothers and children up to the age of 6. The programme provides supply of one nutritious meal each day to the beneficiaries at the 31,897 Anganwadis and 4,076 mini Anganwadis in addition to other food items supplied once a month. For the women, the government will provide one fully nutritious meal with 200 ml of milk for 25 days a month along with one egg each day. For children, aged between seven months and three years, the programme will provide their families 16 eggs a month in addition to a 2.5 kg food packet comprising wheat, milk powder, chana dal, sugar and oil. For children aged between 3 and seven years, the government will provide one egg a day in addition to rice, dal, vegetables and snacks. The programme is expected to benefit more than 5.9 lakh women and 18.20 lakh children from economically weaker sections of the society in the state. A total 18,96,844 lactating mothers, 5,18,215 infants and 21,58,479 pregnant women were covered under the scheme expending Rs 627.96 crore in the past year.

➤ **Supplementary Nutrition Programme**

Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) is the main component of ICDS to tackle malnutrition. SNP services are provided to Pregnant & Lactating women and children between 7 months to 6 years. Food models were devised in consultation with stakeholders to provide for calories / protein/RDA as per GOI norms.

➤ **SHE Teams**

SHE Teams were launched on 24th October, 2014 by Sri M. Mahendar Reddy, IPS, Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad. These SHE Teams are headed by Smt. Swathi Lakra, IPS, Addl. Commissioner of Police, Crimes & SIT. About 100 teams were formed keeping in view of the Telangana Government vision for Safe and Secure Environment for Women. The Aim of these Teams is to Curb Eve-Teasing and Harassment of Women in Public Places.

Incident prone areas have been identified which includes Bus stops, Railway Stations, Colleges, Schools, Ladies Hostels, Parks, and Hospitals. The Teams move to these areas for watch over, recording the whole scene with the secret Cameras. After observing the Stalker's behavior, he is caught and brought to the Police Station with proper evidence of the offence. His antecedents are verified. Depending on the nature and gravity of Stalking, appropriate sections of law are booked against him. First time offenders are booked under petty cases according to Sec. 290 IPC, Sec. 70 of Hyderabad City Police Act. If they found to be habitual or if any complaint lodged in specific against the eve teaser, by a Woman/ Victim, cognizable sections of IPC will be filed against the offenders, including Nirbhaya Act (The Criminal Amendment Act, 2013). Initially set up in Hyderabad and Cyberabad police Commissionerates, they were expanded to all the Telangana districts following encouraging results.

➤ **SHE Cabs**

SHE Cab scheme was introduced by the Transport Department of Telangana in September 2015. These taxis will be available round the clock. The SHE Cabs are connected to Police Control Room through GPS and are equipped with a panic button as a safety feature. The '24/7 She Cab service' is explicitly designed and

developed to safeguard the safety of women travellers especially, the working category, students, tourists visiting Hyderabad etc. She cab ensures a safe, responsible and reliable alternative Travel Cab system for the women populace even while on the move. This transformational and unconventional initiative will create an enabling and pro-active environment to address the ever-growing threats on the safety and security of women lives while contributing to the social and economic empowerment of women.

➤ **Bharosa” – Support Center for Women & Children**

The Hyderabad police has launched ‘Bharosa’, a one-stop support centre to provide protection for women and children in March 2016. Bharosa is intended to support women affected by violence in private and public spaces, within the family, community and at the workplace. Aggrieved women irrespective of age, caste, race, culture, marital status education status ,facing any kind of violence due to attempted sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, trafficking, honour related crimes, acid attacks or witch-hunting who have reached out or been referred to the Center will be provided with support and redressal. “Bharosa” is being set up at HACA Bhavan, Saifabad, Hyderabad to provide integrated assistance through Police, Medical, Legal, and Prosecution Services along with Psycho therapeutic Counseling apart from relief and rehabilitation.

➤ **Housing Scheme for the Poor**

This hallmark initiative of Telangana government is intended to provide quality and respectable housing to the poor. The scheme provides for two and three storied buildings with 2 BHK flats in Hyderabad and other urban areas while they are to be built as independent houses in rural areas. The house will be registered on the name of woman in the family. The government has already completed construction of about 80,000 houses in the financial year 2015-16. In the year 2016-17, the state government has set a target of building 1.4 Crore 2BHK homes. The estimated cost of the house is Rs. 5.30 Lakh in urban area excluding the infrastructure cost. A pilot has been taken up at IDH Colony in Bhoideguda, Secunderabad. As many as 396 units - with each comprising of two bedrooms, hall and kitchen - are being constructed in 32 blocks of G+2 on 580 square yards at a cost of Rs 37 crore at 7.9 lakh per flat.

➤ **Land Distribution to Dalits**

The Government provides 3 acres of agricultural land to landless SC women, along with the provision for creation of irrigation facilities, land development and other agricultural inputs for their sustained livelihood. Government distributed 2,524 acres of land to 959 Dalits spending Rs 94 crore in the first year.

➤ **Financial Assistance to Victims of Atrocities**

Government of Telangana provides financial relief to the victims of atrocities i.e., Rape, Dowry Death, Kidnap, Trafficking, Acid Attack etc through WD&CW Department. The financial assistance consists of Gang Rape Rs. 1,00,000, Rape Case Rs. 50,000, Dowry Death Rs. 50,000, Trafficking Rs. 20,000, Kidnap Rs. 20,000, Acid Attacks Rs.1,00,000, Hacked or Throat Slit Rs.50,000.

➤ **E-Panchayat Services**

These E-Panchayat centres would act as one-stop-shop centres and allow people to have access to number of government schemes. The services include payment of taxes, pensions and National Rural Employment Guarantee (NREGA) wages. These centres are run by women, who are specially trained by Panchayat Raj department

➤ **Stree Nidhi**

Stree Nidhi is a unique model of credit delivery using the technology platform to provide timely and affordable credit to Self Help Group Members. Tech savvy rural women are proving second to none when it comes to catching with technology-backed banking operations. So unique is their ease of doing business that they turned into niche players in scripting the success story of branch-less banking operations under Stree Nidhi to the tune of Rs 1,300 crore annually. The entire operations have been run by SHGs. This strong network of committed womenfolk has carved out the unique institution of an exclusive women-centric branch-less banking not present anywhere in the country.

➤ **Others**

) Hyderabad Metro Rail, no doubt will provide easy and convenient accessibility to educational institutions for women. Many of these women normally hesitate to move out of their homes on account of social restrictions or lack of proper transport facilities. HMR would certainly promote better educational and work opportunities for women of lower economic strata society. Social transformation is the need of the hour, and HMR will certainly bring necessary changes that would improve the living conditions of women and girls.

) Women special buses along IT corridor.

) 30 % of Police Constable Jobs allotted for Women

) Special patrolling teams for round-the-clock duties.

) Special women counselors at government departments to deal with workplace harassment.

) A toll free number set up by the labour department for receiving workplace complaints

) Special help desks at reception of all police stations

) Start of Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC) chaired by Cyberabad police commissioner

) The Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC) has provided several solutions to women-related problems and has even developed mobile apps that boost urban safety.

) Partitions in RTC buses

) Installed CCTV cameras in 1,300 RTC buses moving through sensitive routes

SCHEMES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT BY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN COLLABORATION WITH TELANGANA GOVERNMENT

➤ **Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojna (A Conditional Maternity Benefit Scheme)**

IGMSY is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, approved by the GOI in October, 2010, under which the grant – in –aid would be released to States / UTs. It is a conditional cash transfer scheme to be piloted initially in 52 districts across the country. The Scheme is implemented using the platform of ICDS. In Telangana, it is being implemented in Nalgonda district. The objective is to improve the health and nutrition status of Pregnant and Lactating women and their young infants. The beneficiary will receive a total cash incentive of Rs.6000/- in two installments subject to the fulfillment of conditions of GOI guide lines.

➤ **Ujjwala Scheme**

The Ministry of W&CD, New Delhi formulated “Ujjwala”-a Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking, Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation. This Scheme provides food, shelter, clothing, counseling and legal aid to the inmates of Ujjwala Homes.

➤ **Swadhar Scheme**

The Swadhar Scheme purports to address the specific vulnerability of each group of women in difficult circumstances through a Home-based holistic and integrated approach. Swadhar scheme has been designed with a more flexible and innovative approach to cater to the requirements of various types of women in distress in diverse situations under different conditions. It aims at covering the primary needs of shelter, food, clothing besides emotional support, counselling and a package for rehabilitation and reintegration specifically for the Women and girls rescued from trafficking. The Home strength is ranging from 50 - 200 beneficiaries. Presently 19 Homes are implementing the Scheme

➤ **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act**

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 have come into force w.e.f. 26th October 2006. Under the Act abuses such as Physical Abuse, Sexual abuse, Verbal and Emotional Abuse, Economic Abuse are considered as Domestic Violence

➤ **Sexual Harassment of Women at Work place**

Government of India has enacted Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 to provide protection against sexual harassment of women at work place. In accordance to the Act, every employer of the work place in writing, by order should constitute Internal Complaints

Committees at all administrative units where employees are more than 10 members. In every district, the District Officer should constitute Local Complaint Committee to receive complaints from any establishment having less than 10 employees or when the complaint is against the employer

➤ **Dowry Prohibition Act**

The GOI enacted Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 with a view to discourage the traditional system of Dowry which is the root cause for victimization of women

➤ **Women Institutions**

Women institutions run by the Government consists of Rescue Homes, Service Homes, State Homes, Working Women's Hostels, Old age Homes and Home for College Girls. The inmates are provided with free food, shelter, clothing, medical care, education and training in skill development. The inmates are socially and economically deprived women, women in distress, old destitute women, women rescued by police etc.

CONCLUSION

Women empowerment has to begin with women's active participation. Unless women throw off the shackles that ignore their talent, skill and spirit, they cannot be empowered. Unless women are empowered to take a decisive part in the social, political and economic life of the country the very development of the country will be lop-sided. Women have much to contribute socially and economically. Women Empowerment helps to make the society and world a better place to live in and march forward on way to inclusive participation. It means increased happiness for the family and the organisations where women make a difference. Newly formed Telangana State has become a role model for other States in motivating self-help groups, initiatives aimed at women's empowerment, early childhood education, health and nutrition for pregnant women and newly born to improve quality of life.

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