

Education a tool of Women Empowerment

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“A woman is the full circle, within her is the power to create, nurture and transform.”

There was consensus among the participants that ‘Empowerment’ has become one of the most widely used development terms. Women’s groups, non-governmental development organizations, activists, politicians, governments and international agencies refer to empowerment as one of their goal.

The nature of empowerment renders it difficult to define. According to Nelly Stromquist, - “Empowerment is a process to change the distribution of power both in interpersonal relations and in institutions throughout society.”

In talking about empowerment activities I have focused exclusively that empowerment can succeed only if it is a mode of learning close to the women’s everyday experiences and if it builds upon the intellectual, emotional and cultural resources.

It was necessary to clarify the goals of women’s education. The participants agreed that the more important objectives are-

- To develop self-esteem and self-confidence.
- To have knowledge about their bodies and sexuality.
- To have the ability to make their own decisions and negotiate.
- To raise the women’s awareness of their civil right.
- To provide skills for income generation.
- To make participation in community/society and to prepare them to be food women leaders.

Crucial to education work are other complementary activities such as those in the areas of legal reform, transformation of international economies and political relations, action-oriented research and networking. It is stressed that it is equally important to convince men that better education of women will be beneficial to the entire family and the society as a whole.

Empowerment began to be applied within the women’s movements in the mid 1970. The similarities among appraised groups are considerable because they face the common problem of limited willingness by those in control to see the seriousness of their condition and to work to solve it. Under the circumstances, the oppressed must themselves develop power for change to occur, power will not be given to them for the asking.

There is an additional point to be made empowerment is a process which should centre on adult women for two central reasons: first, their adult lives have produced many experiences of subordination and thus they know this problem very well, although they have not labelled it as such and second, the transformation of these women is fundamental to breaking the integration reproduction of patriarchy and male authority.

The psychological component includes the development of feelings that woman can act at personal and societal lives to improve their condition as well as the formation of the belief that they can succeed in their change efforts.

The cognitive component refers to women's understanding of their conditions of subordination and the causes of such conditions at both micro and macro levels of society. It involves understanding the self and the need to make choices that may go against cultural and social expectations, and understanding patterns of behavior that create dependence, interdependence and autonomy within the family and in the society at large.

Women are significantly under-represented in decision making at all levels. While the economic benefits of educating girls are similar to those of educating boys, recent findings suggest the social benefits are greater. Women have the potential to change their own economic status and that of their communities and countries in which they live yet usually women's economic contributions are unrecognized, their work undervalued and their promise undernourished.

In a nutshell, education is important for everyone, but it is a critical area of empowerment for girls and women. This is not only because education is an entry point to opportunity but also because of women's educational achievements have positive ripple effects within the family and across generations.

Education is much more than reading and writing. It is an essential investment countries make for their futures, a crucial factor in reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development.

"Education is not a tool for development individual, community and the nation. It is the foundation of our future. It is empowerment to make choices and emboldens the women to chase their dreams."