Chapter VI

Summary Of Results and Conclusion

In chapter, results, and certain valid conclusion are extracted on the basis of objectively quantified results. As the major objective of the study is to find out the role of NGOs in enhancing the status of women and their overall development and various methods used, the present study helped to understand the actual role-played and various methods employed in the process. The researcher, cautiously, keeping the limitations of the study in mind, attempted to bring out some useful findings, which would help other NGOs, and policy makers to arrive at certain lesson in order to adopt some measures in the implementation of various schemes for the empowerment of women, in the future.

The results of the study are presented in two formats: first include those emerging from the responses about the role, responsibilities and actual performance of the selected NGOs at the grass root level and in the second format, results and observations from the responses of the target women beneficiaries are presented.

Results and Conclusions with regard to role, responsibilities and actual performance of the selected NGOs

By scanning the entire responses of the NGOs management, staff and the field workers and observations of the researcher while participating in their actual activities, study, the following interpretations and conclusions have emerged.

The responses culled out from the questionnaires and presented in the previous chapter about the NGO’s enormous efforts and various methods used in empowering women groups in various ways reveal the following conclusions:

a) NGOs had clear-cut objectives to create equalities among the various communities, to promote standard of living, improvement in economic status, to strengthen the unity among the people, to make them responsible, to remove
Inequality among the men and women, to bring out their potential skill, leadership development among the women, to increase their contribution in successful implementation of the schemes, to identify their needs and problems, to understanding the spirits of the people, awareness generation and to remove dependency, skill and capacity development, to make them realize their potentials, to reduce bureaucracy, social responsibility has improved; social consensus has emerged in various issues; self reliance among the women has been witnessed understanding their problems and offering solution to promote Spirit of voluntarism etc.

b) The Main Activities undertaken by Grassroots Practical - interest NGOs are:
- Organization of literacy: to plug the gender gap in the basic education, the NGOs function as change agents in attitudes towards girls’ education and evolve alternative strategies across the country to improve their access to education.
- Organization of saving and credit groups; the successful working of Mahila Mandal has resulted in the formation of a larger number of Self-Help groups (SHGs). Thus, the NGOs, which work for women, consist of registered non-Profit organization headed by women activist and/or such registered groups, which work for issues of employment, income generation, awareness raising, health and education among women at the grass-root. While, women activist-headed NGOs are more concerned about policy issues, change in laws and all that is required to make women equal with men in all sectors of the society, the second group normally implements women’s development projects/programmes supported by government and/or international aid agencies.

c) Economic empowerment has been taken up by NGOs primarily through small economic generation and skill development projects supported by governments/international aid agencies. However, all these projects included a programme for creating awareness among women beneficiaries on legal rights and eradication of dowry as well as changes in attitudes towards education, health and nutrition of girls.

d) At the NGOs levels, they have involved all the functionaries from top to bottom i.e project executives, middle level functionaries such as coordinators, cluster
Coordinators and field level staffs have actively involved and rendered all round support such as organizational support, attending the meetings, training and campaign, organizing functions etc.

e) This support system has greatly contribute to the process towards women’s development by providing information, resource mobilization, encouragement, grading of the groups, administrative support, motivation, and timely release of revolving funds and activities loans for the Self Help Groups, which have immensely helped the NGOs in the process to empowering the people in general and to women in particular. In the process, NGOs could make the people realize their power; build people’s confidence in NGOs people realized the importance of formation of SHGs number of groups increased; women started saving regularly; women solved their problems by themselves; motivation was generated; level of awareness increased; dependency reduced among the women, etc.,

f) During the process the important problems NGOs faced were such as religion conflict and communal problems; lack of cooperation by traditional leaders; Some local dominant groups discouraged their efforts; some political people threatened their staffs and prevented their functioning; due to the fear towards their husbands, the women did not come forward in the beginning, to form the groups; Opposition of the political nature and vested interest of local leaders, communal related opposition, and all-out efforts of the money lenders to prevent the formation of groups and social mobilization were the main hurdles.

g) Through the NGOs have faced number of problems at the grassroots level as well as the community level, it is learnt that the NGOs have acquired immense experience in the process of organizing programmes for women’s development and their empowerment. The NGOs felt Satisfied and gained confidence to continue their endeavor with same spirit. The NGOs felt encouraged by visible change in the people and as a measure of quid pro que, the status of NGOs also was considerably enhanced. The influence of the efforts of NGOS percolated to the grassroots level and the NGOs earned an identity; the people recognized their services. People accepted their mission and vision, need for services increased, managerial skill developed in their staffs,
Their commitment level also increased and self-motivation development to serve the people in a sustainable manner.

h) The qualitative data revealed that the NGOs have greatly benefited in areas of continuous existence in the project areas (ranges from 10 to more than 50 years), received recognition both at stage, national and international levels received due recognition at the local level, helped to raise more funds from different sources; won the confidence from the funding agencies; became the institutional members in the various State and National level committees, won the brand name to NGOs; new schemes are coming up from various sources in recognition of their Services; sustainability in existence is ensured; become stabilized NGO, and received appreciations at the local and official level.

i) Given the fact that development initiative should be sustained for a long time so that the people become self-sustainable, study revealed that, the NGOs have taken enormous development efforts constantly through mobilization of relevant taken group by formation and involving various local committees, involving youth clubs, formation of block level federation for sustained motivation, credit linkages, promoting income generating activities, frequent visits and contacts, observations of National and International days of importance, and integrating various departmental scheme, etc.

j) Majority of the NGOs revealed that they expect a comprehensive scheme be implemented to sustain motivation, and continuous training in social mobilization & convergences of services of various departments at the grass root level. Also they suggested that NGOs should develop administrative skills; and should use experienced groups members, leaders, and animators in the process.

k) Almost all the selected NGOs do not have any corpus to start their work most of them look for financial support in order to undertake programs for the welfare of the women, and other oppressed sectors of society. They try to plan their work so as to complement the work of the government and get funding from it also. Most of the NGOs are started by social welfare minded groups of
individuals (like Sandesh, Samiksha Jan Kalyan Trust etc.), and then gradually they take up people’s welfare-oriented development programs such as setting up health centers, saving and credit groups for women, non-formal education etc. Gradually the NGOs try to empower the marginalized people through conscientization and setting up collectives while they themselves undertake advocacy role with the government and other power holders in the society.

l) The NGOs can be identified ‘by type’ depending upon their predominant activity such as charitable service oriented; participatory, class organization and empowering; community development oriented NGOs. Since women activist-headed NGOs from a core of the women’s movement, the question arises, under what kind of circumstances NGOs can transform themselves into social movement and can NGOs take over the functions of the movement in case the movement fritters away. The study observes that it is not possible for NGOs to take over the mobilization function of the movement unless they develop an organizational framework which connects and interacts with NGOs from grassroots to the state and national level and the organizational framework is strong enough to give a sense of direction to the NGOs without threatening their autonomy.

m) Most of the voluntary group were organized and led by educated, middle class women at national and state levels. The activists headed NGOs integrated and extended their activities, beyond national and state capitals, by either organizing grass root level groups managed by paid urban/semi-urban educated women under the umbrella of national or state level organizations or collaborating with existing grass-root voluntary groups whom they supported financially for undertaking women’s empowerment projects. This process has strengthened the role of grassroot NGOs and has empowerment poor rural women. However, the middle-class character of the members of the women’s group is a factor restraining them from going one step further and completely integrating urban women with working class or rural-based movements. So far there is little contact or coordination between women’s group taking up the cause of poor agricultural women worker who are mainly Dalit, Adivasi and women from the minorities, with the women’s movement.
n) While the participation of urban, middle class women is undeniable, it is not they who make up the backbone of the process of women empowerment in the region, rather decades of empowerment work done by urban oriented NGOs led by women activists has already led to empowerment of rural, poor women through organization of women’s collectives and other groups in the rural areas.

II. Results and Conclusions emerged from the Responses of women Beneficiaries of the selected NGOs

The first section of this part presents the general demographic data of three groups of respondents: ‘Supervisors’, ‘Fieldworkers’, and Beneficiaries’, and examines the dynamics of their interactions and impact on the status and empowerment of women beneficiaries, in these three groups. The second section will present the data and Section C would list the qualitative findings of the beneficiary surveys.

*Demographic and socio economic data*

The women in our study are both from urban and rural areas surrounding the selected NGOs. There is a wide age spread in the total number of respondents (200). They range in age from 21 to 65; most women are married and lived with their husbands and have an average of 2.74 children. All respondents spoke Hindi and therefore clearly understandable and interpretable in letter and spirit. With reference to caste 60% (120) of the women categorize themselves as low caste or ‘OBC’ or Other Backward Classes. This is a ‘catch all’ category developed by the Government of India census to include some of the most marginalized caste segments of Indian society. Supervisors (20) and the field workers (45) were however largely belonging to higher caste in the region. Family structure is relevant to discussion of empowerment. As many of the questions related to domestic decisions making to establish empowerment levels family structure can influence the responses. The traditional family structure in India is not a nuclear family, It is a joint family. The parents of the husband, in a joint family, tend to hold decision-making authority that often overrides the authority of any of the married sons or their wives. 120 (60%) of the women respondents in our study
live in traditional joint families, whereas the rest lived in a nuclear family setting, which is far less than the norm in region. The women had an average of 9.13 years of education. In this area where alcoholism is rampant, we asked our respondents if they had problems related to alcohol consumption. We find that majority of them had experienced problems related to the alcohol consumption by their husbands. This ranged from beating and the use of household money for alcohol to unemployment.

We then compared the differences of the means of socio demographic variables and the means of the empowerment index between the three groups: ‘Supervisors’, ‘Fieldworkers’ and ‘Women beneficiaries’, to see if they differed significantly on any of the socio demographic variables and empowerment levels. While they appeared significantly different on the number of all counts with the exception of age, the Chi-square test showed that not all the differences were significant and tests reveal that for the variables education and income class were no significant differences between the ‘Supervisors’ and ‘Fieldworkers’, but groups of employees were significantly different from the ‘Women beneficiaries’. This is not surprising, as NGO employees need to be literate and have education to be hired as professional employees. The (income) class variable asked respondents to choose between three classes income: high, middle or low. The result show that respondents only chose either low or middle. This is expected given the poverty level in this area. We find that there were no significant differences between the ‘Supervisors’ and ‘Fieldworkers’, but both groups of employees were significantly different from the ‘Recipient’ group. This may be explained by the fact that NGO employees earn a steady income while the ‘Recipient’ group do not have a steady income and are dependent on the local economy. Only 15 women beneficiaries worked outside the home as compared to all the ‘Fieldworkers’ and ‘Supervisors’. Finally the Chi Square test shows significant differences between all three groups on the empowerment index. Each group was significantly different from the others.

**Empowerment Levels of respondents**

There is a clear downward slide in rates of empowerment as one descends the rank of ‘Supervisors’, ‘Fieldworkers’ and ‘Beneficiaries’. Comparing the E-index
between these groups, we find that it is significantly different between these three groups as given in the table below:

| Table 6.1: Comparison of Socio-economic data and Means of Empowerment Index |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                 | Supervisor | Field Staff | Beneficiaries | Statistical test |
| Mean Value                      |            |            |                |                 |
| Age                             | 40         | 30.34      | 36.34          | 0.818           |
| No. of Kids                     | 3          | 2          | 3              | 5.117*          |
| Income Class                    | 1.79       | 1.65       | 1.32           | 5.348*          |
| Years of Education              | 10.27      | 8          | 1.40           | 51.380**        |
| Year at NGO                     | 10.53      | 6.40       | -              | 0.008**         |
| Empowerment Index               | 21.72      | 17.47      | 9.40           | 37.115**        |

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level of significance  
**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level of significance

Furthermore, we note that test reveals significant differences in the E-Index between the ‘beneficiaries’ and the two employee groups of the NGO. This confirm our initial hypothesis, that NGO employee whose job is to empower the poor and disenfranchised village women do not only resort to rhetoric but also live their own lives significantly differently from that of their clientele. In other words, they ‘walk the talk’ in their own daily lives. As we observed patterns of significant differences in the E-Index between the “Fieldworkers” and “Supervisors” we attempt to uncover the underlying factors that may account for this difference. It is observed that several factors of influence include: age, education, income, and family structure. To this mix we add their ‘tenure in the NGO’. We get the F statistics 37.815 significant at p<.001.

Review of the Independent Variables in our Model:

(i) Age: It is observed that Age is very important factor because as woman’s behavior varies across the stages in the life cycle. As a woman grows older,
grow older and are less dependent on her she can assert herself better without the threat to her children’s well being. Also within the traditional family structure, as a woman gets older and her sons get married and her own in-laws grow older and die, the Indian woman is promoted from the comparatively obedient daughter-in-law to the role of a mother-in-law, the one ‘who must be obeyed’.

(ii) Family Structure: A women’s role in household decision-making control over money matters and other important household matter is a function of the family structure. Whether a woman lives in a joint family (which includes the mother in law), or where she is a mother in law, or if she lives in nuclear family structure will impact her autonomy. We expect that in a joint family she will have less autonomy than in a nuclear family structure. Of course this may be mitigated by age as discussed above.

(iii) Education: It has been argued that education is one of the indicators of empowerment. Indeed, many of the variables that have traditionally been used as proxies for empowerment, such as education and employment, are better described as “enabling factors” or “source of empowerment”. Empowerment includes cognitive and psychological elements, such as a women’s understanding of her condition of subordination and the causes of such conditions. This requires an understanding the self and cultural and social expectations, which may be enabled by education Hence we expect education to be positively linked to the E- Index, as human capital will facilitate empowerment.

(iv) Tenure at NGO: If the NGO is providing model of empowerment through its Leadership and core values, we expect that association and the length of tenure with the NGO will affect the E- Index positively. Although education may be an enabling factor as suggested above, experiences (of self an other) allows a woman to see that the lack and autonomy in her life choices not as given but something that can be changed. We expect that the interventions made by the NGO for women in general give the employees the wherewithal on how changes can be made and the impetus to make further changes in their own lives.
Thus we expect the E-Index to be a function of age, family structure, income class, education and tenure at the NGO. A bivariate analysis reveals that there are no significant correlations among the independent variables and dependent variables expect tenure at the NGO. In order to understand the combined effects of all the conceptualized variables, we use a regression model using the data for ‘Fieldworkers’ and ‘supervisors’ combined, we do not include the ‘Beneficiaries’ group, as they all have zero years at the NGO. This will provide an estimate of the combined explanatory power of the independent variable on the E–Index.

We use the following equation

\[ E = F(A, E, I, F, T) \]

Where:

- EI= E-Index – dependent variable, an aggregate of four separate indexes
- E= Education (years of formal education)
- A= Age in years,
- C= income class (Dummy variable 0=low income, 1 = Middle income),
- F= family structure (Dummy variable 0= nuclear, 1= joint family),
- T =years of tenure at the NGO

Using the T-test for family structure (t=1.29) and Income class (t=.62) these are not significant, p>.05. For years of the tenure at the NGO, Age and education, only Years of Tenure at the NGO is significant at p<.01 (Pearson correlation =0.556 at p<.01)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Sigma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>4.425</td>
<td>0.280</td>
<td>2.831</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Education</td>
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<td>0.210</td>
<td>-0.231</td>
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<td>.050</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income Class</td>
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<td>1.502</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>-1.731</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.202</td>
<td>.639</td>
<td>.526</td>
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<td>Family Structure</td>
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<td>1.328</td>
<td>0.538</td>
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<td>.127</td>
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<td>Years of NGO</td>
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<td>0.131</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.167</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R square 0.40 N=200
The regression in Table 6.3 results in the table below that ‘Years in the NGO’, and education are two significant explanatory variables. In both the bivariate analysis and the regression model, the years in the education are significant. It is interesting to note that education is only significant in the regression model. This suggests, that education in and of itself, may not be sufficient to give a woman a high E-Index. It is likely that a woman with higher human capital is more respective to the experiences of a working in an NGO. Thus we see the explanatory power of education when combined with longer tenure at the NGO.

What needs further explanation is why variables such as age, income class, education, and family structure were not significant in the regression model. One explanation may be, that given the poor rural environment from which these women originate; the social traditions and disenfranchisement of women were similar regardless of their education or age. The income variation was also fairly minor, as our qualitative notes showed. The respondents were asked to say whether they were classified themselves between upper, middle or lower income classes. Almost all said “lower class”. On some prodding, those with any regular source of income put themselves in the middle class. What is surprising to us is how many women lived in nuclear families still scored low on the E-Index. However, they lived in fairly close proximity to their in-laws and extended families, and we think that this negated the influence of family structure.

Qualitative Analysis:

The findings in this section rely on many interviews conducted by the researcher with the Directors, Secretaries and other management staff of the selected NGOs. With regard to the supervisors and field workers, it was observed that there was a marked difference in the outcome of these employees, if they recruited on fixed salary basis from outside the agency and if some of the dynamic beneficiaries of the NGOs picked up and trained as ‘Supervisors’ and ‘Field Workers’. It was noted that noted that in the staff meetings and community meetings these homegrown ‘Supervisors’ and ‘Fieldworkers’ were quick to share their own experiences and thus were effective
models. They showed village women who came to seek assistance from the NGO that they themselves faced similar circumstances could rise above them. Stimulating community discussion among women- through organized village women’s groups (Mahilal mandils) – persuade and encourage women to undertake behavior changes in a supportive atmosphere where every individual effort is lauded. More importantly the audience can identify with the leaders as they are of the same class, religion and geographical region and are therefore subjected to similar oppression yet they are living examples of empowerment and have managed to rise above the subjugation. This realistic modeling, in an appreciative and supporting atmosphere as we have suggested, is a powerful from of vicarious learning and more likely to motivate behavior change especially when combined with persuasion in a supportive and appreciative environment earlier.

Though the modeling of homegrown employees is an effective method of empowering women, many of the employees credited their success to their firm belief in God. This self-efficacy, grounded in a spiritual conviction, is what they conveyed to their clientele. One supervisor put in this way “It is not your karma to the subjugated, rather God expects that you take control of your life and help yourself”. This message was reflected in many ways by many of the “supervisors” and “Fieldworkers”. This spirituality, we were told, acts as social glue among the employees and clientele, connects and engenders trust amongst them and gives support to the overall agenda.

Our in depth interviews allowed us a glimpse into the manner in which the ‘Supervisors’ had managed to transform their own lives before training to assist other women to bring about similar changes into their lives. Although it is not possible to document all their stories what is indicative from our findings is that all of the women employees who had come to the NGO for assistance, despite their education level, would have scored very low on the E-Index before being employed. The qualitative findings from the interviews, give credence to the fact that these women were indeed marginalized before coming into contact with the NGO. In fact almost all of the ‘Supervisors’ had come to the NGO as clients seeking assistance, and today score very high on the Empowerment Index as compared to women from the villages where they live (our ‘Beneficiaries’ group). The NGO through its hiring, trainin and empowering
process provides all four modes: performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion and physical/affective status.

On the contrary, at some other places it was observed that the traditionally disadvantaged position of poor rural women is reinforced by low self-efficacy beliefs that prevent them from undertaking difficult behavior changes and the message of NGOs fall on deaf ears. If they do initiate such changes their low self-efficacy beliefs lead them to give up such changes when they meet with any opposition. However when the message comes from leaders who act as realistic models of empowerment the poor and marginalized women are convinced that they can also transform their lives. If modeling by local employees is seen as one of the most effective ways of empowering subjugated women than rural NGOs should adopt policies that deliberately target, as employees, some of the poorest and marginalized women from the areas that they wish to serve. These women should be carefully nurtured and helped to overcome traditional barriers and, once they are empowered, they should be trained as ‘Supervisors’ and ‘Fieldworkers’ to run an integrated gamut of services that address and enable the various aspects of the lives the women they hope to serve. This also result in a management style that is grounded in the reality of the experiences lived by the employees and clientele alike. The regular staff meeting are a venue where time is set aside to celebrate the efforts of those trying to change their own lives and that of other. This practice shares indigenous practices with others and nurtures an environment, which allows risk taking.

Observations flowing from the findings

The moot point emerged from the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the responses and observations collected during the field work is that if women is to be really empowered through the involvement of civil society organizations, they have mainstream the gender in each of their agenda items. However, while the case for mainstreaming may have been theoretically established, actually putting the principle into practice has been a different matter. Gender cuts right to the heart of people’s identity, their values, attitudes and behavior, their private and public relationships. Quite naturally the majority of people wish to avoid confronting unacceptable truths –
Particularly if this is likely to affect power, privilege and protection which they have inherited through culture, religion or class. Therefore these NGOs will have to prepare their gender strategy process, wherein the focuses need to be given on the following:

- Recruitment of more home grown female facilitators
- Gender balance in the board and trustees
- Integrating gender into the periodical strategic review process
- Gender-disaggregated evaluation of all training courses
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- Family-friendly conditions of service

At the second stage, the gender strategy would explore the following:

- Team training - including team planning - is a key element of developing a gender strategy
- Change take time and needs a mechanism to sustain it - the on-going cycle of reflection, planning and review provides this a documented action plan helps to remind and refocus
- Senior management need to be fully involved and an automatic mechanism for taking team decisions forward has to be established
- Both male and female staff are fundamental to the success of the process
- Action strategies need to be developed from within the specific context and related to specific needs
- Donors need to become more aware of the realities of addressing gender at grassroots level
- Dedicated training on gender is necessary to develop the basic tools and self-awareness
- A gender perspective also needs be integrated into all training courses

Based on these findings and observations, last Chapter will develop certain Recommendations and implications for the policy makers, administrators and practitioners of gender strategy and the process of women empowerment.