Chapter 6

EMPOWERING THE
WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN
SULTANPUR DISTRICT
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"The human race is a two-winged bird. One wing is female the other is male. Unless both wings are equally developed, the human race will not be able to fly. Now, more than ever; the cause of women is the cause of mankind."

- Boutros Boutros Ghali—erstwhile Secretary General of the United Nations

India is one of the developing countries where women’s participation in the workforce continues to remain quite low, both in absolute and relative terms. As per the recent estimates, 28.7 percent of women as against 54.7 percent of men participated in workforce in 2004-05. Not simply such low participation, rather a progressive range of factors—to which paid work is considered to be a critical input—make a higher participation desirable.

India’s most striking feature is its diversity. The country’s population of about 1.2 billion people is composed of several ethnic groups, speaking more than 1,000 languages and following six major religions. With an annual population growth rate of 1.4 per cent, India is projected to become the most populous country in the world by 2035. With 33 per cent of the world’s poor people, 41.6 per cent of India’s population lives on less than US$1.25 a day. Based on the country’s new official
poverty lines, 42 per cent of people in rural areas and 26 per cent of people in urban areas lived below the poverty line in 2004/05. Official poverty estimates for 2009/10 are not yet available, but preliminary estimates suggest that the combined all-India poverty rate was 32 per cent, compared with 37 per cent in 2004/05. India ranks 134 out of 187 countries on the United Nations Development Programme's 2011 Human Development Index – a comparative measure of life expectancy, literacy, education and standards of living for countries worldwide.

Several schemes have been launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development for upliftment of women. These are:

6.1 The Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG), or Sabla, is a centrally sponsored scheme aimed at all-round development of adolescent girls of 11-18 years. The focus is all out-of-school adolescent girls. It aims at making them ‘self-reliant’ by improving their health and nutrition status, promoting awareness about health, hygiene, nutrition, adolescent reproductive and sexual health, family and child care and facilitating access to public services through various interventions such as guidance and counselling and vocational training. It also aims towards mainstreaming out-of-school adolescent girls into formal/non-formal education. Nearly 100 lakh adolescent girls per annum are expected to be benefitted under the scheme. It has been introduced in the year 2010-11 on a pilot basis in 200 districts from all the States/UTs.

6.2 The Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) is a Conditional Maternity Benefit (CMB) centrally sponsored scheme for
pregnant and lactating women. Under this scheme cash incentives are provided to for improved health and nutrition to pregnant and nursing mothers. The beneficiaries are paid Rs. 4000/- in three installments per head, between the second trimester and till the child attains the age of 6 months, on fulfilling specific conditions related to maternal and child health. Pregnant women of 19 years of age and above are entitled for benefits under the scheme for first two live births. This does not include Government/ PSU (Central and State) employees. The scheme was introduced in October, 2010 on pilot basis in 52 selected districts and is being implemented using the platform of ICDS. The grant-in-aid is released to States/UTs, while cash transfer to beneficiaries is being made through Bank Accounts/ Post Office Accounts subject to the beneficiary fulfilling specific conditions. Around 12.5 lakhs pregnant and lactating women are expected to benefit under the scheme every year. In 2011-12, Rs 293.83 crore has been released to the States/UTs for implementation of the scheme.

6.3 Priyadarshini Program in Sultanpur District

Priyadarshini is a women upliftment and livelihood program of Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. The program is being implemented by NABARD on pilot basis in 7 district of country, (5 in UP and 2 in Bihar). The program is being run in Akhand Nagar block of district Sultanpur and Bhetua and Shukul Bazaar blocks of district CSM Nagar. The program is being run through nine Community Service Centers (CSCs) with a minimum of 200 SHGs with each CSC for a total of 1800 SHGs. The process of empowerment is being addressed through two different modules called Assignment-I and Assignment-II. While assignment -I deals with formation, nurturing, empowerment and linkage with the
banks to enable them to involve in income generation activities, assignment-II involves working with existing mature SHGS.

In addition, the Priyadarshini scheme is an IFAD assisted pilot project for Women’s Empowerment and Livelihoods Program in the mid Gangetic plains. It aims at holistic empowerment of vulnerable groups of women and adolescent girls through formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and promotion of improved livelihood opportunities.

6.4 The Ministry of Women and Child Development has also launched the Support to Training and Employment Program (STEP) in 1986-87 with the aim of upgrading skills of women for self and wage employment. The target group includes the marginalized asset less rural women and urban poor. Special focus is on identified focal districts in which women are particularly disadvantaged. The project duration is for 5 years with beneficiaries’ ranging from 200-10000 and a maximum per capita cost of Rs 16000. The funds are directly released to different NGOs and not to the State Governments.

6.5 The Government of India has also launched the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) for holistic empowerment of women. This is a centrally sponsored scheme conceived as an umbrella Mission with a mandate to strengthen inter-sectoral convergence and facilitate the process of coordinating all the women’s welfare and socio-economic development programmes across ministries and departments. The Mission is mandated to facilitate the processes that contribute to economic empowerment of women, eliminate violence against women, social empowerment of
women with emphasis on health and education, gender mainstreaming of policies, programmes and institutional arrangements and awareness generation and advocacy for bridging information and service gaps.

"Priority" should be given to women in the allocation of work "in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women".

- [Schedule II, Para 6, NREGA]

6.6 The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is one of the most progressive legislations enacted since independence. Its significance is evident from a variety of perspectives. First, it is a bold and unique experiment in the provision of rural employment – in India and indeed in the world at large. Second, it is the first expression of the right to work as an enforceable legal entitlement. In a country where labour is the only economic asset for millions of people, gainful employment is a prerequisite for the fulfilment of other basic rights – the right to life, the right to food, and the right to education.

There is much that the NREGA promises from the perspective of women's empowerment as well. Most boldly, in a rural milieu marked by stark inequalities between men and women – in the opportunities for gainful employment afforded as well as wage rates – NREGA represents action on both these counts. The act stipulates that wages will be equal for men and women. It is also committed to ensuring that at least 33% of the workers shall be women. By generating employment for women at fair wages in the village,
NREGA can play a substantial role in economically empowering women and laying the basis for greater independence and self-esteem.

6.7 Women upliftment through ITC way
The need of the hour is to diversify rural livelihoods. Towards this end, ITC has forged an empowering partnership with rural women – the most effective development workers. ITC’s intervention leverages micro-credit and skills training to generate alternate employment opportunities. Increased income in the hands of rural women means better nutrition, health care and education for their children.

Working with NGOs, ITC has organised village women into micro-credit groups. Group members make monthly contributions to create a savings corpus. The corpus is used to extend soft loans to group members, thereby eliminating the stranglehold of the moneylender. The system of mandatory contribution further strengthens the savings habit, leading to capital augmentation.

ITC provides training to group members to handle bank accounts and understand the nuances of government development programmes. Empowered groups function autonomously and take their own decisions, including sanction of loans to fellow-members and collection of repayments. Well-managed micro-credit groups with no default records receive further support from ITC in the form of seed money for self-employment activities.

ITC also conducts skills training to enhance employability. Pickle-making, fish-processing, vermicomposting, spice processing and
agarbatti-rolling in rural areas and chikankari, garment-sewing, driving and computer-aided secretarial training in semi-urban areas are some of the examples. ITC goes a step further to help find employment for these trained women in areas related to its operations. This programme is helping women across Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

6.8 Upliftment of Women in Sultanpur District

Empowerment (Narayan, 2002) refers broadly to the expansion of freedom of choice and action. For poor people, that freedom is severely curtailed by their voicelessness and powerlessness in relation particularly to the state and markets. Thus, empowerment is the expansion of assets & capabilities of poor people to participate in negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.

Thus, the process of upliftment is a process which enables one to gain power, authority and influence over themselves, institutions or society. Upliftment is probably the totality of the following or similar capabilities:

• Having decision-making power of one's own.
• Having access to information and resources to make proper decisions.
• Having a range of options from which you can make choices (not just yes/no, either/or).
• Ability to exercise assertiveness in collective decision making.
• Having positive thinking on the ability to make change.
• Ability to learn skills for improving one's personal or group power.
• Ability to change others' perceptions by democratic means.

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• Involving in the growth process and changes that is never ending and self-initiated.
• Increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma.
• Increasing one's ability in discreet thinking to sort out right and wrong.

6.9 Upliftment of Women through their Participation in the Panchayati Raj Institution

Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It involves the building up of a society wherein in women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure.

One major therapy prescribed by woman empowerment advocates is empowering women through legislation for ensuring participation in political decision making.

Such an approach provides the women with a constitutional platform to stand up to men, to raise their voice on issues concerning women oppression, subjugation and related issues and thus in effect, providing them with an identity in an orthodox male dominated socio-political set up, in addition to providing a much needed forum to seek redressal of problems directly affecting them: the true essence of empowerment.
The Constitution of India is based on the principles of equality. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth. It envisages political equality for men and women but no concrete step was taken by the government before 1993. The committee on the Status of women in India (1974) observed that the rights guaranteed by the Constitution have helped to build an illusion of equality and power which is frequently used as an argument to resist protective and accelerative measures to enable women to achieve their just and equal position in the society. It was only in 1994 that the government of India acknowledging the recommendations of the committee for the status of women report (1974), noting the low participation of women in politics, eyeing the effective implementation of developmental and poverty alleviation schemes from the grassroot level and also drawing inspiration from the experience of Karnataka (which provided reservation for women in the three tier Panchayat Raj system in 1983) brought 73rd Constitutional Amendment act in the year 1999 introducing not less than 33 per cent reservation for women in the panchayat Raj institutions in rural areas. Undoubtedly it is a landmark legislative step in the direction of empowerment of women. With the passing of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Indian federal system has become a three tier federal structure: the union government at the apex and local self-governments — Nagar nigam (urban) and panchayats (rural) at the lowest strata with the States crucially placed at the middle. It is acknowledged that the local self-government is an effective method of governing as well as designing and implementing the developmental schemes at the grassroot level. We are here concerned with local self-government in the rural areas popularly known as Panchayat Raj institutions and these effectively
come under the control of state governments. In the rural areas too a three tier structure has been adopted:

(1) Gram panchayat consisting of a village or a group of villages having a population of not less than 5000 and not more than 7000 or the geographical distance of an area within a radius of five kilometres from the centre.

(2) Block (Taluk ) panchayat for every block.

(3) zilla panchayat for every district.

With the 73rd Amendment the reservation system has been put into practice. It provides for one third of total Constituencies to be reserved for women. Because of the adoption of the policy of rotation, reserved constituencies differ each election which implies that a constituency which is a reserve constituency this year may very well be a general constituency in the next term . The elected representatives continue to hold office for a period of five years.

With the introduction of reservation or quota system in the Panchayat Raj institutions a great beginning has been made in the direction of legislative upliftment of women and it is hoped that along with women’s upliftment through collective voicing and participation in the development stream, it should go a long way in the real upliftment of women. But the critical question is as to how far this step has been really effective in involving women in the decision making process and raising the issues related with women community and getting them integrated with the mainstream of decision making? Has it really worked in solving the basic issues and problems faced by women in the society?
6.10 Women Upliftment and Livelihood Program in Mid-Gangetic Plains

The Program of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Government of India, is being implemented in five Districts of Uttar Pradesh (UP), namely Sultanpur, CSM Nagar, Raebareli, Bahraich and Shravasti, with assistance from International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), an UN Subsidiary organization.

NABARD has been assigned with the responsibility of Lead Programme implementing agency for the project. The Programme aims to reach out to 108000 poor rural households with a mission to form 7200 SHGs and 35000 MSMEs in the above said four districts of UP in a time bound manner over a period of six years. In order to oversee the implementation of the Programme, NABARD has opened District Project Implementation Unit (DPIU) in each of the identified Districts headed by NABARD Officials.

**Rationale:** During the past few years, India as a whole has witnessed substantial increases in economic growth which are projected to continue and to increase even further in the foreseeable future. This growth and accompanying prosperity however has not reached the Mid-Gangetic Plains, especially in Eastern Uttar Pradesh and northern Bihar, where a significant out-migration is indicative of the ever increasing poverty present in the region and is linked to the weakening of the sustainability of past production systems despite the availability of fertile lands and water bodies.
**Programme Goal and Objectives:** The Programme aims at the holistic empowerment of rural poor women and adolescent girls, supported by sustainable and improved livelihood opportunities and strengthening of local institutions that relate to livelihood development, in line with the Government of India’s 11th Plan and Millennium Development Goals. Hence, the purpose of the Programme will be to strengthen community level institutions for social and economic empowerment and enable the target groups to access productive resources, social services and to build a sustainable livelihood base integrated with the wider economy.

**The Programme comprises of the following components:**

1. Empowerment and Capacity- Building of Communities and Support Organizations. This component will include activities related to formation and strengthening of Self-Help Groups and Producer Groups, the establishment of Federations of SHGs and Community Service Centres, and gender mainstreaming activities and life skills training;

2. Livelihood Enhancement and Enterprise Development- This component will focus on expanding and developing micro, small, and medium-scale enterprise; rural financial and non-financial business services; an Equity Fund;

3. Programme Management- This will include the establishment of a Central Programme Support Unit at the MWCD level, a Programme Coordination Unit at the NABARD Head Office level, Programme Management Units at the state level, Programme Implementation Units at the district level and Community Service Centres (CSCs) at the block level.
6.11 People’s Action for National Integration (PANI) for Upliftment of Women in Sultanpur District

The People’s Action for National Integration-PANI is one of the leading state level voluntary development organizations of Uttar Pradesh, India; presently working in 16 districts of eastern UP (both directly and with network partners). It was founded in 1986 by some prominent and devoted social workers from ‘Sarvodaya’ background with Gandhian ideology of integrated development and became a registered society in 1989. It promotes integrated and participatory initiatives for community empowerment & development; and thereby poverty alleviation, and give priority to women, children and the dalit & socio-economically marginalized sections of society.

PANI has been implementing the following projects, which come under its seven program sectors.

1. With the support of MISEREOR Germany, PANI has been implementing People’s Action for Integrated Development (PAID)-Phase-III project and covered women from 4718 dalit and most backward families in BhitI block of district Ambedkarnagar.

2. With support of Andheri Hilfe Bonn (AHB) Germany, PANI has been implementing Collective Action for Upliftment of Marginal (CAUM)-Phase-II and covered women from 2320 dalit and most backward families in Kurebhar block of district Sultanpur.

3. With the support of Oxfam Novib, Netherlands, PANI implemented People’s Action for Sustainable Livelihood Creation (PASLC)
project and covered women from 3200 dalit and most backward families in Sohawal block of district Faizabad.

4. With the support of Oxfam Novib, Netherlands, PANI has been implementing (two-year) Floods 2007 Livelihood Rehabilitation project since December 2007 and covered women from 2500 flood affected families in Puredelai block of district Barabanki.

5. PANI has been implementing Child Centered Community Development Programme (CCCDP) with the support of Plan International, India since 2007 in 24 villages of Bhti block in district Ambedkarnagar and contributing the integrated development of 3500 children through this initiative. The project is focused on child rights, health, education and livelihood.

6. PANI has been implementing Child Centric Community Development Project with the support of Christian Children’s Fund (CCF), India since 1996 in 14 GPs of Bhti block in district Ambedkarnagar and contributing the integrated development of 5400 children through this initiative. The project is focused on child protection and child rights, early child care and childhood development health, education, disability and livelihood.

7. Two projects HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention projects: With the support of UPSACS, PANI has been implementing HIV/AIDS project since July 2008 in urban and semiurban pockets of district Faizabad. Through this intervention, PANI is making aware to 500 High Risk Groups (300 FSW, 100 MSM and 100 IDU).
8. Similarly, the PANI has been implementing other project ‘AIDS Awareness Among Migrants (AAWAM)’ with support of Pact Inc./USAID in 3 locations of district Basti since January 2009; and making aware to 2000 migrant people (both male and female).

9. Integrated Nutrition and Health Programme (INHP-III) project: PANI has been implementing this project in all 15 blocks of district Barabanki since July 2007 and addressing the issues of nutrition and health with 2726 ICDS centres of district.

10. PANI has been implementing Maternal and Neo-natal Health (MNH) project in consortium mode (with 14 sub-partners) in all 14 blocks of district Basti. This project is being implemented with “from community to health system” approach and created a good and

11. Empowerment of Rural Women (ERW) project: Since December 2007, with the support of Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) Mumbai, PANI has been providing capacity building, technical and supportive supervision support to ERW projects, which is being implemented by 10 member organizations of SATHI-UP network in different 9 districts. This project is being implemented with regional focus to address the Right to Food and Right to Work Livelihood issues with women CBOs. PANI has plan to converge the all GP level federations of different districts and to promote a regional women forum to initiate the process of women empowerment in sustainable way.

12. Janani (Reproductive and Child Health-RCH) project: This is network project, and PANI started implementing this project since 1st March 2009 on pilot basis for one year with 4 sub-partners. It is supported by CSR wing of Cairn India. The women and adolescent
girls from Dalit and most backward communities are the beneficiaries of this RCH project.

13. Aroh Campaign (Women Farmer Recognition and Rights Campaign): PANI is coordinating this campaign in 14 districts with support of GEAG Gorakhpur. It has created an enabling environment in area in interest of women farmers.

14. Rickshaw Bank project with support of America India Foundation (AIF), New Delhi in Lucknow urban pockets: PANI recently started implementing this project and benefiting 500 rickshaw pullers of Lucknow city through this initiative.

15. POUZN Safe Drinking Water and Zn Promotion Project: It is an innovative project, supported by AED New Delhi. This project is being implemented 4 districts (Faizabad, Sultanpur, Ambedkarnagar and Basti). The major focus is on promotion of safe drinking water devices and promotion of Zn for prevention of diarrhea among children.

In short, empowerment is the process that allows one to gain the knowledge, skill-sets and attitude needed to cope with the changing world and the circumstances in which one lives. Considering the literature on empowerment, this paper assumes the concept of empowerment on feminist approach and also postulates equal opportunities and status are only two dimensions of empowerment which is a way of defining, challenging and overcoming barriers in one’s ability to shape up her life and environment.