SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Women form a vital human resource and there is no doubt that empowering them economically, socially and politically would hasten the pace of nation's development. In recent years improving the 'status' of women through literacy, skill improvement, access to information, economic independence resulting from income-generating activities and collective action has been realized to be the major strategy for women's upliftment. In line with this thought, a scheme called Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was introduced in 1982-83 by the Ministry of Rural Development of the government of India.

Though DWCRA programme has been in operation since 1982-83, not many, studies have been conducted to assess the empowering nature of the programme. Several studies conducted throughout the country dealt with only the economic advancement of the beneficiaries. Hence, in order to study how the programme has empowered the beneficiaries, the present study titled "Knowledge, Skills and Other Benefits Acquired by Participants of DWCRA Programme in Thiruvananthapuram District" was taken up.

The present chapter summarizes the findings and presents the conclusions arrived at.
Objectives of the Study

The following were the objectives of the study:

1. to identify the overall benefits obtained by the beneficiaries;

2. to find out the knowledge, skills and attitudes of beneficiaries of DWCRA programme;

3. to compare the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the programme in terms of their knowledge, skill possessed and attitude towards women empowerment; and

4. to identify the variables influencing knowledge, skill and attitude of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. Beneficiaries of the DWCRA programme gained personally, socially and economically.

2. Beneficiaries of DWCRA programme have a higher knowledge level than non-beneficiaries.

3. Beneficiaries of DWCRA programme have a higher number of vocational skills than non-beneficiaries.

4. Beneficiaries of DWCRA programme have a higher positive attitude score towards women empowerment than non-beneficiaries.

5. There is a direct relationship between women's participation in DWCRA programme and their present economic status.
6. Age, caste, education, income and marital status have a positive influence on the knowledge scores, number of skills acquired and attitude of DWCRA beneficiaries.

**Methodology of the Study**

The present study was conducted in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala state covering six rural blocks. Totally there are 39 gram panchayats in these 6 blocks. From among these 60 DWCRA units were selected for the study using purposive sampling technique. Readiness to be the subjects of the study, geographical contiguity of DWCRA units and viability of the units were the criteria followed for selecting the samples.

Total subjects taken for the study included 600 women of which 300 were beneficiaries and 300 were non-beneficiaries of DWCRA programme. The beneficiaries were members of DWCRA groups engaged in full-time economic activities. The non-beneficiaries were women of more or less the same characteristics as beneficiaries in age, family structure, religion, caste, education, marital status and were from the same locality.

The tool used for data collection was an interview schedule which consisted of 5 parts. The first part had two sub-divisions. It dealt with socio-economic profile of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of DWCRA and the profile of DWCRA programme in Thiruvananthapuram District. The second part pertained to the benefits received by the beneficiaries classified as personal status gain, social status gain and economic status gain. There were totally forty statements and each was scored on a 2-point scale. The third part of the
schedule pertained to knowledge possessed by respondents on the topics, namely, governmental programmes, means of improving women's status, micro enterprises and legal awareness. There were totally eight questions. A few questions had sub-items also. Each correct response was given a score. The total score was 25. The fourth part contained a check-list to find out the number of skills possessed by the respondents. The maximum number of skills possessed by an individual was six. The fifth part of the tool assessed their attitude towards women's empowerment. Twenty five statements were included in this part. Each of the statement was rated on a 3-point scale which included 'Agree', 'Undecided' and 'Disagree'. The tool had been tested for its validity and reliability.

Data were collected in a face-to-face setting after creating good rapport and a cordial atmosphere. After the data were collected they were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) programme on computer. Statistical measures like averages, t-tests and ANOVA tests were used to analyse and interpret the findings.

**Socio-Economic Profile**

A large proportion of the sample belonged to the age group of 31-40 years and more than half of the sample in both the groups were Hindus. Among the caste group majority belonged to 'Other Backward Castes'. Majority of the sample had secondary and graduation level education. Majority of the samples belonged to the nuclear family set up with an annual income above Rs. 10,000/- in both the groups. Most of the subjects were married women.
Major Findings of the Study

The findings of the study are presented in four parts.

Benefits Acquired through DWCRA Programme

The benefits gained from DWCRA programme were studied in three areas, namely, personal status gain, social status gain and economic status gain. The findings showed that beneficiaries gained in all these three areas.

- In the area of personal gain 93 percent of beneficiaries acquired the capacity to solve day-to-day problems and could convince family members about their abilities. Eighty percent of the beneficiaries acquired self-confidence, leadership abilities and became self-reliant. Seventy seven percent of them became more receptive to change. They gained the ability to approach higher officials and express their views clearly and boldly on aspects like obtaining loan, giving representations about drinking water problems, etc.

- The beneficiaries also gained socially. Eighty eight percent gained the ability to bargain and negotiate with authorities in procuring raw materials, marketing of products and getting loan. Eighty seven percent could lodge complaints against discrimination and exploitation by authorities. Eighty three percent of them felt that they were considered as a guide and philosopher by their peer groups and 80 percent realized that they were respected in the family and community due to their income-earning capacity. Seventy seven percent reported that due to collective action
there was group solidarity and at the time of crisis the group members supported each other either financially or otherwise.

« In so far as economic status gain was concerned ninety seven per cent of beneficiaries felt that since they gained the ability to learn a new trade they were free from the burden of debt. Ninety five per cent managed to save money from their economic activities and could provide good nutritious food to family members and were also able to spend on their children's education. Eighty eight percent of the beneficiaries felt that with their participation in the DWCRA programme their needs were fulfilled and also they were able to fulfill the needs of the family members. Eighty percent of the beneficiaries were able to start their own enterprises. This provided more income to the family. The purchasing power of seventy seven percent of the beneficiaries had increased. This enabled them to add amenities to their living environment like electrifying the house and providing water connection to the family.

The second part of the findings dealt with the level of knowledge, skills possessed by the beneficiaries and their attitude towards empowerment.

Knowledge, Vocational Skills and Attitude of DWCRA Beneficiaries

Participation in the DWCRA programme had brought about a change in the knowledge, skills and their attitude towards women empowerment among the beneficiaries.
Knowledge. Nearly three fourths (69%) of beneficiaries had a medium level of knowledge followed by low and high level of knowledge (16% and 15% respectively). Majority of the respondents (95%) had known about the functional aspects of women development programmes implemented to improve their status of life. With active involvement in group activity they had learnt to operate bank accounts and 86 per cent of them had known about the various marketing avenues available for sale of their finished products. Nearly three fourths of the beneficiaries (70%) knew the importance of training in learning a new skill. Seventy five per cent knew how to select an income-generating activity and the various financial institutions providing loans to set up enterprises.

Skills. Regarding possession of skills by the beneficiary, it was found that 79 per cent of them had acquired 4 to 6 skills and were carrying out 4 to 6 different activities during their spare time. Nearly 77 per cent of the beneficiaries were engaged in skilled income-generating activities like umbrella making, slipper making, metal chipping, book binding, pottery making, soap making and running a petty shop. More than half, namely, 68 % and 58 % of the beneficiaries were engaged in food processing activity and textile/garment making respectively. These activities included weaving, mattress making, ready made garment making, tailoring, spinning, and food processing which included masala powder making, bakery products preparation, pickles making, papad making, catering and running canteen services.
Attitude towards Women Empowerment. Sixty seven percentage of the beneficiaries had medium level of attitudinal empowerment score followed by low level score and high level of empowerment score of 19% and 14% respectively.

All cent percent of the beneficiaries felt that they did not discriminate between their male and female children. Both male and female children were given equal importance in education & health care. They could take independent decisions on matters like family planning, spacing of children and when to get their girls married. They gave freedom to their girls to choose their life partners. Eighty three per cent felt that women should have property rights along with their men folk. Half of the beneficiaries felt that they should be given the freedom to ask for separation from their husbands if ill-treated by them.

The third part of the study compared the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in their knowledge, skill and attitude towards women empowerment.

Comparison of Knowledge, Skill and Empowerment Scores, between Beneficiaries and Non-beneficiaries

It was found that there was a significant difference between the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in all the three aspects measured. Also it was seen that beneficiaries possessed better skills than non-beneficiaries and they had acquired more than four skills. Attitude towards women empowerment also indicated a significant variation between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.
On the basis of the findings, the hypothesis that there is a significant variation between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in their knowledge, skill and attitude towards women empowerment is accepted.

The fourth and the final part of the findings presents data related to the influence of socio-economic variables.

**Influences of Socio-economic Variables on Knowledge, Vocational Skills and Attitude towards Women Empowerment**

One-way ANOVA tests were carried out to ascertain whether knowledge scores varied with socio-economic characteristics. The younger age group, namely, below 40 years had a higher mean knowledge score than the other age groups. Among the beneficiaries, Christians in both categories had a higher score in knowledge gain while other Backward caste groups among beneficiaries had the highest mean score.

Among both the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, the knowledge gained was influenced by the level of education. Higher the educational level higher was the knowledge gained.

The variables, namely, age, educational level and income played a role in skill acquisition among beneficiaries. Higher number of skills were possessed by those below 30 years, those having high education and those having own income of above Rs.10,000.

Beneficiaries who were below 30 years, Christian women and those having higher educational attainment had higher attitude towards women
empowerment score. More married women were taking up self-employment activities to raise their economic status. Their engaging in income-generating activities as a group enabled them to build self-confidence. They could bargain while procuring raw materials and selling their finished products.

Conclusions

The study has proved that DWCRA programme has been effective in making beneficiaries more knowledgeable and more skillful. It also enabled beneficiaries to have positive attitude towards empowerment of women. Thus the beneficiaries were truly empowered. Analysis of the effect of variables makes one reach the following conclusions:

1. In most of the DWCRA groups the highest number of members belonged to the younger age group. Highest number was from higher educational attainment. Majority were from nuclear family set up and were married. One could see that most of the members who were successful belonged to homogeneous groups. Hence there was cooperation among all the members and this cordiality resulted in the members to be more concerned about each other's welfare. The members sharing and pooling their ideas also made a unit a viable and a sustainable one.

2. The programme had made a positive impact in terms of economic advancement. The members could save money, had better purchasing power, could add better amenities to living conditions and knew about financial institutions that could provide loan facilities to carry out their income
generating activities. They were free from the burden of debts and from the clutches of middleman.

3. As the women acquired more skills they would have gained confidence in setting up new enterprises. They acquired the skills of writing and operating bank accounts. They gained confidence while bargaining and negotiating with officials for procuring raw materials and sale of their products. They learnt to keep their units viable and sustainable.

4. Participating in the group income-generating activities provided the members with opportunities to participate in group meetings often which enhanced their leadership ability. They also gained in self-confidence and the ability to express themselves as they were required to move about to distant places to market their products or to procure raw materials.

5. They also gained socially. Since they were contributing to the family income they gained more recognition in the family and could take decisions in matters like buying assets which were approved by family members. In groups they had raised their voice against social evils prevalent in the society like alcoholism, wife-beating, and dowry. Thus they had become empowered attitudewise also.

Policy Implications

Based on the findings, the following policy implications have been identified.
1. For income-generating activities to be viable and sustainable, the groups formed should have members belonging to younger age groups (below 40 years).

2. Women development programmes to be holistic should have as one of their objectives creating positive attitude towards women empowerment. This improve women's participation in Panchayati Raj.

3. DWCRA units having members of high educational level proved to be viable. The importance of education for success in entrepreneurship has been brought out. Hence manifold efforts must be taken to educate illiterates and school drop-outs.

4. Any programme for women development should include skill training.

Recommendations for Future Studies

1. The study may be replicated with samples from different districts in the state as well in different states of the country to get a holistic picture of the programme in empowering rural women.

2. A comparative study between women beneficiaries and men entrepreneurs with the variables knowledge and skill acquired.

3. Skill training is an essential component of empowerment. The present programmes of the government including Swarna Jayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana have the component of skill training. Research may be undertaken specifically on skill training in order to identify the type of skill training that will contribute to the success of DWCRA programme. There
have been many success stories of DWCRA, identification of factors contributing to success will enable the findings to be replicated.

4. A comparative analysis may be done on DWCRA groups and Self Help Groups. Self Help Groups are growing very fast in Urban and rural areas and there have been many reports of success of SHGs in empowering women. Identifying factors that contribute to the success of DWCRA programme and SHGs will be very much useful in designing future programmes of women empowerment.