ABSTRACT

The Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) programme was launched in 1982 for the upliftment of rural women by the Government of India. The present study titled "Knowledge, Skills and Other Benefits Acquired by Participants of DWCRA Programme in Thiruvananthapuram District" was taken up because no indepth study had been done in the area of study.

The objectives of the study were: (1) to identify the overall benefits obtained by beneficiaries, (2) to find out the knowledge, skills and attitude 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, skills and attitude of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. The major hypotheses tested in the study were that beneficiaries of DWCRA programme would possess higher level of knowledge, skills and positive attitude towards women empowerment than non-beneficiaries and that beneficiaries would have been empowered because of personal, social and economic status gains.

The present study was conducted in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala state covering six rural blocks. Total sample taken for the study included 600 women of which 300 were beneficiaries and 300 were non-beneficiaries. The tool used for data collection was an interview schedule which had been pretested. Results showed that the beneficiaries had gained personally, socially and economically. Nearly cent per cent (93%) of beneficiaries acquired the capacity
to solve day-to-day problems. Eighty percent of the beneficiaries had gained self-confidence, leadership abilities and became economically self-reliant. Seventy nine percent gained social recognition in the community. More than half (59 %) of the participants had fought in some way against social evils like dowry. Economically, sixty percent of them had an additional monthly income of above Rs. 400/- and nearly cent percent were (97%) free from the burden of debt. Most of the beneficiaries (95%) had good savings and a good number (77%) had a high purchasing power. Due to this most of the beneficiaries (93%) could provide nutritious food to the family members and educate their children.

Findings showed that more than half (69%) of the beneficiaries had medium level knowledge score; 79 per cent had acquired 4 to 6 skills and 67 per cent had medium level of positive attitude towards women empowerment.

Results also indicated that DWCRA beneficiaries had a higher level of knowledge, acquired more number of vocational skills and had a higher positive attitude level towards women empowerment than the non-beneficiaries.

Findings have supported the hypotheses framed for the study regarding the effectiveness of DWCRA programme.

The variables, namely, age, caste, education, income and marital status influenced the knowledge, skills and their positive attitude towards women empowerment among beneficiaries while it was not so among non-beneficiaries. On the basis of these findings it was concluded that DWCRA has been an effective programme in empowering women in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude towards women empowerment and they had gained personally, socially and economically.