

# Awareness and use of Government programmes by economically weaker group of women in Karnataka State

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## ABSTRACT

The present work is an effort to know the awareness and use of Government programmes by economically weaker group of women in Karnataka state. A sample size of 1800 economically weaker group of women was taken for the study. Study population was chosen adopting multistage sampling that combines cluster method with stratified technique. Questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. 72% of the women are aware of at least one programme of the Government. As many as 28% of women are unaware of the Government schemes. Human sources like friends, neighbours, family members have a major role. 62.22% of women claimed that they came to know about Government programmes through human sources. Nearly two third of economically weaker women claim that available information on Government programmes is moderately useful for them. Concludes that Government alone cannot undertake such tasks of disseminating information to economically weaker women, public libraries also have a major role to play in this regard.

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## 1. Introduction

Information is a raw material for development of any community. Access to information is a key resource for both men and women in maintaining active and independent lives. Globalization provided opportunities of education and employment to urban women and helped them to develop and possess all the rights equally with men. But the problem is that the women in rural areas are still backward in education, social status, economic background, political matters, etc. Hence, the development of the country is inescapably linked with the status of development of rural women. Economic empowerment is one approach to enable women to realize their inherent knowledge, skills and competences for creation of small business enterprises. The Government of India and State Governments have already been formulated social welfare, women empowerment and rural development policies for the betterment of women, backward classes and vulnerable groups [1]. Though so many schemes are in operation, these have not reached to the fullest extent to the end users i.e. women. This is an indication to the fact that due to lack of adequate information support, women have not used the benefits.

Government of Karnataka has so many sections and various departments through this government disseminating information to the people who live in even remote places. In the state there is department of information and publicity. It disseminates information to the common man through advertising, publication, programmes/publicity and district office and various departments.

Institutional sources play a vital role in disseminating information to economically weaker group of women. State

Government or local Governments have set up information centers to disseminate information required by the rural people of the area. Women consult various institutional resources for supporting their various information requirements. Preferred Institutional Sources are Associations and Learned Organizations, Self Help Groups, Gram Panchayat Office, Non Government Organizations, Library, Research Centre, Government office, etc.

Government of Karnataka disseminates information through various departments. These departments include Agriculture Department, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, Commerce and Industries, Co-operation Department, Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms, DPAR-AR (e-Government) Education Department, Energy Department, Finance Department, Food and Civil Services, Forest Ecology and Environment, Food Processing, Health and Family welfare, Home Department, Horticulture and Sericulture Department, Housing Department, Infrastructure Development Department, Department of IT, BT and S & T, Kannada and Culture Department, Kannada and Culture and Information Department, Labour Department, Law Department, Medical Education, Minority Welfare Department, Minor Irrigation Department, Parliament Affairs, Planning Department, Public Works Department (PWD), Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department (RDPR), Revenue Department, Social Welfare Department, Transport Department, Urban Development, Water Resources, Women and Child Development Department, Youth Services, etc. Government of Karnataka has provided all their information on their website and also some useful links which will help citizens and many other to get more information on the state. Hence the present study has been conducted to identify

the awareness and use of Government programmes among economically weaker group of women in the state of Karnataka.

**2. Review of Literature**

Harande [2] observes that rural areas of Nigeria are still not developed and the quality of life of people in the rural areas continues to deteriorate throughout all tiers of government of both politicians and the military regimes. The rural communities' accessibility to pertinent information becomes extremely difficult and impractical. Effective information service in the rural community enhances development.

Prasad and Sreedevi [3] discuss the success story of a government project for poverty eradication using ICT. The case study on 'ICT micro-enterprises by self-help group of poor women' describes the story of a self-help group, which uses potential of ICT for poverty eradication through economic empowerment of poor women. It illustrates how ICT can effectively be used as a technology for micro-enterprises, which are promoted by poor women under self-employment scheme. It is suggested that if a country has the necessary enabling environment permitting the establishment of ICT micro-enterprises, poor women can promote such business for their economic empowerment.

Nwagha [4] describes some factors contributing to the low standard of living of rural people in Africa in general and rural women in particular, and highlights the ineffectiveness of the various governments' programmes to redress the situation highlighted. Mooko [5] investigates the information needs and information-seeking behavior of rural women residing in three non-urban villages in Botswana. The family situations that led them to seek information included health, agriculture, employment, family violence, and basic needs for the family. In addition, the women needed information on government aided funding, welfare subsidies and policies, and training.

**4. Results**

**Table-1 : Awareness of Government programmes (N=1800)**

Awareness of Government programmes	Income			
	No Income	200 to 500	501 above	Total
Yes	470 (76.3)	348 (68.9)	478 (70.4)	1296 (72)
No	146 (23.7)	157 (31.1)	201 (29.6)	504 (28)
<b>Total</b>	<b>616 (34.2)</b>	<b>505 (28.1)</b>	<b>679 (37.7)</b>	<b>1800 (100)</b>

(Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages)

Economically weaker women under study were asked whether they are aware of the programmes of the Government and it is found from table 1 that 72% (N=1296) of the women are aware of at least one programme of the Government. But 23.7% (N=146) of women with no income, 31.1% (N=157) of

Saleh [6] notices that there is a lack of proper information dissemination mechanism in the country and also notes that there are basically five sources through which rural women satisfy their information needs. These are: Government and its agents, Elite groups, Relatives and friends, Market women, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Young [7] examines women's information needs and information seeking behaviour and to develop more effective delivery methods for government information. Women play a major information-seeker role. Women's information seeking experiences and preferences are diverse. Women from low socio-economic backgrounds and minority groups are disadvantaged in information seeking. Cho and Eun [8] describe Women's Development center established by a local government in Korea - Gyeonggi Women's Development Center to empower women's socio-economic activities. This study lists various lessons Koreans have learned through the center, which is dedicated to encouraging women's leadership roles in various informational fields, to contribute to the empowerment of all women in the world.

**3. Scope and Methodology**

The scope of the present study is limited to the study of awareness and use of Government programmes among economically weaker group of women in the state of Karnataka. For the spatial coverage the selection of sample respondents have been made from thirty districts of Karnataka State. From each district one taluka (block), from each taluka (block) two villages have been selected for this study. From each village 30 respondents have been selected. Total 60 villages and 1800 respondents have been chosen for this study which has been conducted using survey method and questionnaire as data collection tool. Study population was chosen adopting multistage sampling that combines cluster method with stratified technique.

women with an income ranging between Rs. 200 to Rs. 500 and 29.6% (N=201) of women with an income of above Rs. 500 are unaware of the Government programmes. The results are significant in the context that, as many as 28% (N=504) of women are unaware of the Government schemes.

**Table-2 : Sources of information to know the Government programmes**

Sources of Information	Income							
	No Income	Rank	200 to 500	Rank	501 above	Rank	Total	Rank
Radio	92 (5.11)	10	46 (2.55)	12	111 (6.16)	8	249 (13.83)	10
Newspapers	154 (8.55)	7	49 (2.72)	11	89 (4.94)	10	292 (16.22)	8
Government Office	51 (2.83)	13	24 (1.33)	13	45 (2.5)	13	120 (6.66)	13

ZP/ZP Members	2 (0.11)	16	2 (0.11)	14	8 (0.44)	15	12 (0.66)	15
Neighbours	396 (22)	2	310 (17.22)	1	411 (22.83)	2	1117 (62.05)	2
Family Members	282 (15.66)	4	206 (11.44)	4	264 (14.66)	4	752 (41.77)	4
Gramsabha Members	109 (6.05)	9	58 (3.22)	8	127 (7.05)	7	294 (16.33)	7
Social Workers	178 (9.88)	5	172 (9.55)	5	239 (13.27)	5	589 (32.72)	5
Television	377 (20.94)	3	240 (13.33)	3	329 (18.27)	3	946 (52.55)	3
Friends	408 (22.66)	1	298 (16.55)	2	414 (23)	1	1120 (62.22)	1
Gram Panchayat Office	87 (4.83)	11	53 (2.94)	10	89 (4.94)	10	229 (12.72)	11
Public Library	9 (0.5)	14	2 (0.11)	14	10 (0.55)	14	21 (1.16)	14
Academic Library	5 (0.27)	15	2 (0.11)	14	3 (0.16)	16	10 (0.55)	16
Associations / Institutions	160 (8.88)	6	110 (6.11)	6	182 (10.11)	6	452 (25.11)	6
Concerned Staff	70 (3.88)	12	56 (3.11)	9	85 (4.72)	12	211 (11.72)	12
Teachers	110 (6.11)	8	71 (3.94)	7	111 (6.16)	8	292 (16.22)	8

(Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages)

A question was asked to know the sources of information to economically weaker women that made them aware of the Government programmes. Again human sources like friends, neighbours, family members have a major role. 62.22% (N=1120) of women claimed that they came to know about Government programmes through their friends, while neighbours with 62.05% (N=1117) of women to make them aware of Government programmes. 52.55% (N=946) of economically weaker women also claimed that they became aware of Government programmes through television. Friends, neighbours and television are the three most preferred sources of information to know the Government programmes. 41.77% (N=752) of women also claimed family members are sources of information while nearly one third section of women identify social workers as sources of information. More than one fourth of women identify associations and organizations as sources of information. 16.33% (N=294) of women became aware of Government programmes through gramasabha members. 16.22% (N=292) came to know about Government programmes

through newspapers and teachers. 13.83% (N=249) became aware of Government programmes through radio, 12.72% (N=229) of women became aware of Government programmes through Grama panchayat office. 11.72% (N=211) claim concerned staff as sources of information. 6.66% (N=120) of women also claim Government office as the source of information. Public libraries and academic libraries are totally negligible sources, including Zilla panchayat and Zilla panchayat members. Hence it can be interpreted that economically weaker women totally depend on human sources like friends, family members, neighbours, social workers as their first choice. Among the mass media, television is the major source of information about Government programmes. Whereas newspapers and radio have totally limited role, institutions like grama panchayat office, zilla panchayat, Government office, public libraries, academic libraries have been approached by a very few women. This clearly indicates that institutions have failed in their role to reach economically weaker women.

**Table-3 : Participation of economically weaker women in Stree Shakti Programme**

Participation in Stree Shakti	Income			
	No Income	200 to 500	501 above	Total
Yes	335 (54.4)	271 (53.7)	370 (54.5)	976 (54.2)
No	281 (45.6)	234 (46.3)	309 (45.5)	824 (45.8)
<b>Total</b>	<b>616 (34.2)</b>	<b>505 (28.1)</b>	<b>679 (37.7)</b>	<b>1800 (100)</b>

(Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages)

From table 3 it is found that half of the women i.e. 54.2% (N=976) do actively participate in stree shakti self help groups. 45.6% (N=281) of women with no income, 46.3% (N=234) of

women with an income ranging between Rs.200 to Rs. 500 and 45.5% (N=309) of women with an income of more than Rs. 500 do not participate in such programmes

**Table-4 : Helpfulness of Stree shakti programme in developing personality**

Helpfulness of Stree Shakti	Income			
	No Income	200 to 500	501 above	Total
Yes	338 (54.9)	276 (54.7)	373 (54.9)	987 (54.8)
No	278 (45.1)	229 (45.3)	306 (45.1)	813 (45.2)

<b>Total</b>	<b>616 (34.2)</b>	<b>505 (28.1)</b>	<b>679 (37.7)</b>	<b>1800 (100)</b>
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(Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages)

From table 4 it is found that more than half of the women that is 54.8% (N=987) feel that stree shakti self help groups help in developing their personality as well as aid in economic development. 45.1% (N=278) of women with no income, 45.3%

(N= 229) of women with an income ranging between Rs. 200 to Rs. 500 and 45.1% (N=306) of women with an income of more than Rs. 500 do not feel that stree shakti help them in any way.

**Table-5 : Beneficiaries of Stree Shakti Programme**

Beneficiary of Stree Shakti	Income			
	No Income	200 to 500	501 above	Total
Yes	314 (51)	257 (50.9)	362 (53.3)	933 (51.8)
No	302 (49.0)	248 (49.1)	317 (46.7)	867 (48.2)
<b>Total</b>	<b>616 (34.2)</b>	<b>505 (28.1)</b>	<b>679 (37.7)</b>	<b>1800 (100)</b>

(Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages)

From table 5 it can be analysed that more than half of the women i.e. 51.8% (N=933) of women are beneficiaries of stree

shakti programmes whereas the remaining 48.2% (N=867) are not benefited from self help groups.

**Table-6 : Usefulness of available information on Government programmes**

Usefulness	Income			
	No Income	200 to 500	501 above	Total
Mediocre	415 (23.05)	323 (17.94)	416 (23.11)	1154 (64.11)
Good	55 (3.05)	25 (1.38)	59 (3.27)	139 (7.72)
Excellent	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

(Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages)

A question was asked to know that to what extent information available on Government programmes to economically weaker women is useful and the data is tabulated. From table 6 it is found that nearly two third of economically

weaker women i.e. 64.11% (N=1154) claim that available information on Government programmes is moderately useful for them. 7.72% (N=139) of women rate usefulness of available information as good.

**Table-7 : Beneficiary of Government Schemes**

Beneficiary of Government Schemes	Income			
	No Income	200 to 500	501 above	Total
Yes	99 (16.1)	135 (26.7)	163 (24.0)	397 (22.1)
No	517 (83.9)	370 (73.3)	516 (76)	1403 (77.9)
<b>Total</b>	<b>616 (34.2)</b>	<b>505 (28.1)</b>	<b>679 (37.7)</b>	<b>1800 (100)</b>

(Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages)

Table 7 reveals to what extent women under study have been benefited from Karnataka development schemes. Only 22.1% (N=397) of economically weaker women are benefited through various development schemes. It clearly shows that more than three fourth sections of women are not beneficiaries of such programmes. Particularly 83.9% (N=517) of women with no income, 73.3% (N=370) of women with an income between Rs. 200 to Rs. 500 and 76% (N=516) of women with an income above Rs. 500 claim that they are not benefited from any Government schemes.

**5. Conclusion**

At present the information is disseminated in the form of product and services. It normally supports economically weaker women in common. They get information from various sources. Information reaches from Central Government and State Government to the layman through various Departments and Ministries. It flows to the Ministries and departments, through state level, district level and block level officials. Through the field level workers the information reaches the common man. Normally, field level workers are the grass root level officials. Grama panchayat secretary, field publicity officers, supervisors, fieldworkers, councillors, anganawadi workers, primary school

teachers, librarians of grama panchayat libraries, asha health workers and postmen, etc. play vital role in disseminating information for the common man.

Government alone cannot undertake such tasks. It requires the help of NGOs and other institutions. The NGOs in the state are very active. There are about 38,000 active NGOs who are making sincere efforts and disseminating information to the weaker women through self help groups, farmers clubs, etc. Some of the NGOs also create innovative programmes by organizing street shows, puppet shows, dramas, skits, etc. Women get information through various sources that are often not geared to their specific requirements. NGOs and the Government departments generate information about women and prepare leaflets, indigenous newspapers, and small booklets, etc. for distribution.

The role of public libraries in disseminating information is quite vital but public libraries have not taken this responsibility as expected. Hence there is a dire necessity for public libraries to play their own role in disseminating information on Govt programmes.

The government produces a good amount of information, which often does not percolate at different levels. Such information should be quickly brought to the notice of the users through the proposed facilities. This is only possible when the government officials and other concerned people become more alert in this matter. NGOs and the Government have come together to make poverty alleviation programmes successful

through women centric initiatives in which poor women have been organized to circumvent the problems of liberal development processes, similarly women have to be made aware of their information needs as well. Once women make their decisions based on information relevant to them, their requirements will also be fulfilled as per their own terms [9].

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