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Extension approaches carried out by awake NGO to promote women agripreneurship

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Abstract

India is having 48.50 per cent of female population at present which constitute nearly half of the population. But the participation of women (aged 15-49) in India's labour force is 29.40 per cent (According to 2021-22 report). Women are having additional disadvantages and hinderance to take part in developmental activities. State and central government also came up with different schemes and programs. Along with government initiatives private and NGOs are also trying to reduce gender gap in economic development perspective. One such NGO is Association of women entrepreneurs in Karnataka (AWAKE) influencing women to take up an entrepreneurial activity. It carries out different approaches for urban, rural and tribal people which is the major factor for their success. Reaching urban area is easy with the use of mass media like phamplet, using brochures, banners, workshops and with the use of social media like facebook and WhatsApp. It reaches rural area with the help of community leader or gram panchayat. It offers Entrepreneurship awareness programmes in villages where it talks about the activities carried in NGO and influence clients to join the entrepreneurship development programs. It also offers counselling, networking, information sharing, mentoring and follow up meeting to guide budding entrepreneur to start up their venture. In general, an entrepreneur maintain contact with NGO for initial five years of their carrier during this time NGO provide links for different exhibition and meelas. It also has a special provision for agricultural sector. All the modules, strategies made AWAKE a unique NGO in the field of women entrepreneur development.

Keywords: Gender gap, entrepreneurial activity, counselling, networking, mentoring

Introduction

India is having 48.50 per cent of female population at present which constitute nearly half of the population. But the participation of women (aged 15-49) in India's labour force is 29.40 per cent (According to 2021-22 report). Hence country realized the importance of women as an agent in the process of development and came up with many programs and schemes which are being implemented by ministry of MSME, Ministry of child and women development, central government *etc* in the past few decades to enhance the position and status of women in India. Example of schemes by Ministry of child and women development includes- Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) which helps in market linkage, support services and access to credit besides enhancing skills and providing job on project basis. Swayamsidha emphasizes on creation of SHGs and promotion of micro enterprises. Other general schemes like Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) have special reservation for women. Even with so

many programs the number of women in the field of development especially women entrepreneurs growth rate is increasing at a very slow phase. Hence, many organizations are also trying voluntarily by joining their hands to empower women and promote women entrepreneurship. Example of such organization are- Working Women's Forum (WWF), Self-Employed Women Association (SEWA), Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency (MYRADA), International Centre for Excellence and Career Development (ICECD), Indian Council of Women Entrepreneurs (ICWE), Consortium of Women Entrepreneurs of India (CWEI) are well recognized nationally and internationally. The impact of AWAKE is well recognized in South India especially in Karnataka. The present study is undertaken to examine on the role, extension approaches and strategies carried out by AWAKE NGO in promoting women entrepreneurship.

Importance of NGO in promoting women entrepreneurship

There are few studies pertaining to the importance of NGOs

in attaining their objectives. NGOs carries out different approaches for urban, rural and tribal people which is the major factor for their success. The NGOs play a catalytic role in mobilizing the local human and physical resources, creating appropriate environment and generating new opportunities (Mukherjee, 2009) ^[1], it causes the overall improvement in the lives of women as a result of the activities of these NGOs (Handy *et al.*, 2003) ^[2]. With this background an effort has been made to find out the peculiar activities of AWAKE NGO.

Objectives

The aim of this paper is to examine the extension approaches carried by AWAKE NGO to promote women agripreneur.

Scope of the study

Changing the mental state of the person is quite difficult job because each person is unique and they require constant motivation and support especially to start an enterprise. So, any institution wants to reach urban and rural people want to use different extension teaching methods, communication methods, mass media channels, training modules *etc.* based on the client system for which they are served. Pointing out these differences may inspire other institutions, extension agents or government in framing most appropriate schemes and policies. So that the success of policies are schemes will be high.

Research methodology

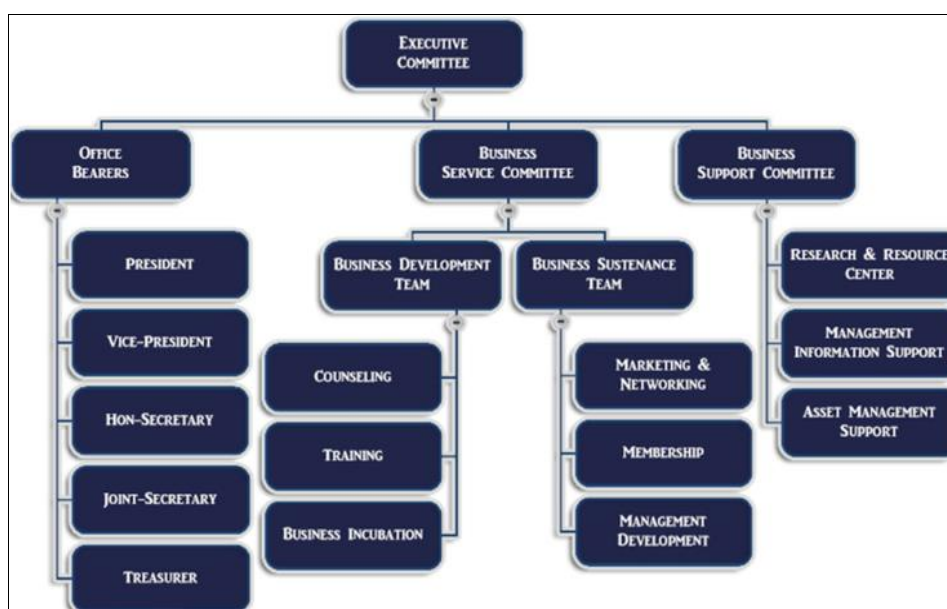
The study is descriptive and analytical in nature. It is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data is

collected from NGO's staff, Committee members, trained women entrepreneurs and secondary data is collected after reviewing papers, AWAKE's official website and its annual reports.

Background of NGO

The AWAKE is an India's premier institutions which is involved in entrepreneurship development of women. It is a non-profit voluntary organization which was established in 1983. The head office of the AWAKE is situated in Bangalore city and other business units were located in Mysore, Bidadi and Bijapur. The pioneering thought behind its inception was the empowerment of women for economic activities. It is working towards the development of under privileged population of India to improve the status of women in the society in both rural and urban areas and to develop successful models of entrepreneurship. The mission of this organization is to create a large pool of entrepreneurs through human resource development and to increase their access to productive resources for their social, political and economic empowerment with the primary focus on the female section of the population.

The organizational structure of AWAKE has a fifteen-member executive committee elected annually by the General Body. This committee is responsible for all policy decisions and plans the activities of the organization. The five office bearers elected by the executive committee are President, Vice-president, Secretary, Joint-Secretary and Treasurer. A sub-committee of twelve members from executive committee makes an internal committee to manage each project and activities of the AWAKE (AWAKE, 2010: Handbook).



(Source: Namita, 2012)

Fig 1: Organizational structure of AWAKE NGO

Extension approaches

AWAKE follows different extension methods like lecture method, group discussion, workshops, case studies, specifically designed location specific business games *etc.* to communicate with the respondents. The means of communication is different for urban and rural areas.

Reaching urban area is easy with the use of mass media like pamphlet, using brochures, banners and organizing workshops. In recent times use of social media is more often used to share information about upcoming trainings and programs. But it is quite different when it comes to spreading information among villagers. Here, the NGOs

with the help of panchayat or any other active local community, arrange a meeting where villagers are encouraged to take part. In these meetings, villagers are provided with the information about the NGO's programmes and schemes. According to the situation, sometimes, the NGOs also visit families in order to convince them to allow their female members participate in entrepreneurial activities.

The lack of educational qualification, decision making ability, extension participation is the main drawback for rural women to become an entrepreneurship. Hence NGO tries to enhance SHG's in rural areas and influence them to start enterprise jointly. If a group of women are running the enterprise the risk, decision making etc, are divided and they can manage it. Few workshops, EDPs and awareness programs are carried on in their villages to make majority of women to participate in program. It first starts with awareness program to inform the clients about services it offers, discuss about business ideas, incentives offered by agencies and motivates them to take up entrepreneurship. Based on the need Entrepreneurship Development Programs (EDPs) will be conducted on an interval.

The relationship between NGOs and Women must be long-lasting, continuous and friendly. To maintain this NGO offers business counselling sessions on each and every Thursday. The successful women entrepreneur who already had an enterprise guide the beginner. This is the innovative approach of AWAKE i.e., entrepreneur teaching an entrepreneur. It is a time-tested module of Counselling-Training-Experience sharing-Peer group support. NGO offers membership services to the persons who are willing to become members and also does information sharing and networking function which adds wings to women entrepreneur to market their produce and gain profit. The follow-up sessions for EDP trainees are conducted up to two years after the training to ensure that the budding entrepreneurs get all the support required to establish their enterprise. All these efforts had helped to achieve a settlement rate of 37.00 to 65.00 per cent as against the national average of 35.00 - 40.00 per cent (AWAKE, 2007 Report).

Special provision for Agriculture

AWAKE gives importance to secondary agriculture by offering training related to processing, value addition and handicrafts. It has worksheed at its Bangalore city center where different machineries are kept for processing and value addition. Entrepreneurs can bring raw materials and process there. AWAKE was the first organization to set up a Business Incubator in Food Processing, in 1988 that has helped nurture many a small and medium enterprise.

Conclusion

The unique modules, techniques and strategies resulted in great success of NGO and it had reached out to more than 1.5 million women. In recognition of AWAKE's work in promoting social and economic self-reliance and self-sufficiency amongst women in rural areas of the state of Karnataka, the Arab Gulf Foundation for United Nations Development Organization – presented the AGFUND Award to AWAKE, which consisted of a Trophy and a cash prize of \$100,000.

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