

AWARENESS OF DWCRA PROGRAMME AMONG RURAL WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

In the year 1982, the Government of India launched DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Area) as a sub-scheme of the Integrated Rural Development Programme. The aim of the scheme was to enable marginal women to cross the poverty line. Since Independence, a number of such schemes have been started and closed by the Government without leaving any marked change in the lives of rural women. This study was therefore undertaken to explore the awareness of rural women regarding the DWCRA programme. A total of 324 beneficiaries from 27 villages of Chiraigaon Block in Varanasi District were selected randomly. Data was collected by the self-structured schedule cum interview method. Analysis of the data revealed that 63% women over 30 years of age were well aware of the activities of the DWCRA scheme while only 37% beneficiaries of less than thirty years had any knowledge about DWRA. Another important finding was that lower caste women were more aware than middle and higher caste women.

INTRODUCTION

The government has long been emphasizing the need for the development of rural women and their involvement in developmental activities. Nevertheless, five decades of planned development in India have not achieved much for women, especially rural women. A systematic analysis of the status and role of women in rural development strategies started with the National Plan of Action for Women (1976). For the first time a chapter on Women and Development appeared in the Sixth Five year plan (1980-85).

It was observed that the flow of financial assistance to women was too marginal to enable them to cross the poverty line, even though women, as members of the target group, had been entitled to certain benefits under the Integrated Rural Development

Programme (IRDP). It was felt, therefore, that a separate scheme should be drawn up, which would motivate women to come together and engage themselves in economically viable activities. With this in view, the Union Government in September 1982 launched DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Area) on a pilot basis as a sub scheme of the Integrated Rural Development Programme.

Its aim was to empower rural women living BPL (Below Poverty Line) by way of organizing them to create sustainable income-generating activities through self-employment. It was the first programme of its kind that specifically focused on improving the quality of life of rural women. A unique feature of DWCRA, unlike other IRDP components, was that along with the improvement in income, it also focused on access to health, education, safe drinking water, sanitation and nutrition. Thus it not only aimed at economic development but also intended promoting social development. Another unique feature of this programme was that it emphasized group activity. It was thought that in the long run, women's empowerment depends on the creation of a movement that promotes awareness and self-reliance.

It was also necessary that the women who were beneficiaries of DWCRA should know about its aims and objectives in order for it to work effectively and smoothly. The present investigation was carried out to assess the knowledge of beneficiaries regarding different perspectives of DWCRA.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in the Chiraigaon block of Varanasi district total 324 beneficiaries were selected randomly. A self-constructed interview schedule was used to assess the knowledge of beneficiaries regarding awareness of DWCRA. Collected data was analyzed and calculated in terms of percentage, chi-square and 'Z' Value.

FINDINGS

The main findings were as follows:

Table 1 Socio-demographic profile of DWCRA respondents

Sr. No.	Socio-demographic profile	Frequency (n)
1.	Age	
	Below 30	120 (37)
	30 and above	204 (63)
2.	Caste / Religion	
	Upper Caste	44 (13.6)
	Middle Caste	103 (31.8)
	Lower Caste	132 (40.7)
	Muslim	45 (13.9)
3.	Educational Status	
	Illiterate	178 (54.9)
	Functionally Literate	90 (27.8)
	Up to Primary	35 (10.8)
	Middle and above	21 (6.5)
4.	Occupation	
	Domestic work	248 (76.5)
	Domestic work and some wages work	76 (23.5)
5.	Type of Family	
	Nuclear	106 (32.7)
	Joint	218 (67.3)
6.	Total Family Members	
	Small	79 (24.4)
	Medium	189 (58.3)
	Large	56 (17.3)

Figure in parenthesis indicate percentages.

Table 1 shows that 63% of respondents were more than thirty years of age followed by 37% less than thirty years. This might be due to the fact that women of this age group have more leisure time and thus be in a better position to relieve the family's economic burden and assist in the economic betterment of their families as a whole.

It shows that most of the respondents were illiterate or functionally literate. I. Bishnoi reported similar findings in 1984 when the maximum number of respondents (224) was uneducated. The next highest number (114) was functionally literate.

Again this proves that literacy has not reached the deprived classes of the country in spite of the best efforts made by the Government.

Gopalkumar (1995 and 1996) concluded in an interstate profile of Kerala and U. P. that the status of women plays a pivotal role in socio-demographic and overall development. Female literacy and female employment in non-agricultural activities can change a woman's status and in turn change the socio - demographic and overall development of the region.

Table 2 Distribution of respondents according to villages covered in spill training under DWCRA Programme

Sr. No.	Name of Productive skills	Number of beneficiaries	Percentage of beneficiaries	Number of villages	Percentage of villages
1.	Fruit preservation	60	18.52	5	18.52
2.	Carpet weaving	36	11.11	3	11.11
3.	SPICE	36	11.11	3	11.11
4.	Buffalo rearing	12	3.70	1	3.70
5.	Handicraft	48	14.81	4	14.81
6.	Making of Washing powder	24	7.41	2	7.41
7.	Rope String making	24	7.41	2	7.41
8.	Mat weaving	84	25.93	7	25.93
	Total	324	100.00	27	100.00

Table 2 reveals that the maximum number of respondents (84) was given training in mat weaving while the lowest number of respondents (12) was trained in buffalo rearing.

Dhillon and Hansra (1991) also investigated the working of the DWCRA scheme. The list

of income-generation activities undertaken under this scheme included tailoring, embroidery,

readymade garments, carving, basket making, agarbatti making, poultry, dairy, piggery, goat rearing, bee-keeping, mushroom-growing and fruit and vegetable processing.

Table 3 Distribution of respondents based on knowledge regarding DWCRA

Variable	Category	Correct Knowledge Frequency (n)	Partial Knowledge Frequency (n)	No Knowledge Frequency (n)	TOTAL Frequency (n)	X ² / Z value
Age	Below 30	13(10.8)	89(15.0)	18(15.0)	120(37.0)	1.78
	Above 30	33 (16.2)	143 (70.1)	28 (13.7)	204 (63)	
Caste/Religion	Upper	1(2.3)	26(59.1)	17(38.6)	44(13.6)	35.84
	Middle	12(11.7)	83(80.5)	8(7.8)	103(31.8)	
	Lower	22(16.7)	97(73.5)	13(9.8)	132(40.7)	
	Muslim	11 (24.4)	26 (57.8)	8 (17.8)	45 (13.9)	
Educational	Illiterate	40(22.5)	120(66.4)	18(10.1)	178(54.9)	60.69
	Functionally literate	5(5.6)	80 (88.8)	5 (5.6)	90(27.8)	
	Up to Middle School	1(2.9)	20(57.1)	14 (40.0)	35 (10.8)	
	Above Middle School	-	12 (57.1)	9 (42.9)	21 (6.5)	
Occupation	Domestic Work	43(17.3)	177(71.4)	28 (11.3)	248 (76.5)	13.65
	Economic Work	3 (3.9)	55 (72.4)	18 (23.7)	76 (23.5)	
Productive Skill	Fruit Preservation	9(15.0)	45(75.0)	6 (10.0)	60 (18.6)	
	Carpet Weaving	6 (16.7)	19(52.8)	11(30.5)	36 (11.1)	
	Spice Grinding	2(5.6)	25(69.4)	9 (25.0)	36(11.1)	
	Buffalo Rearing	3 (25)	8 (66.7)	1 (8.3)	12(3.7)	
	Handicraft Washing	6(12.5)	35(72.9)	7(14.6)	48(14.8)	
	Powder	2 (8.3)	21(87.5)	1(4.2)	24(7.4)	
	Rope/String		21(87.5)	3(12.5)	24 (7.4)	
	Mat Weaving	18 (21.4)	58 (69.1)	8 (9.5)	84 (25.9)	

Table 3 shows that knowledge about the activities of DWCRA increased as the age of the respondents increased. This may be because, after attaining a certain age, women mix freely and can talk to different people and gain any information while younger women are confined to the home.

It was interesting to conclude that lower caste respondents have a more correct knowledge than upper and middle caste respondents. The reason may be that upper class women do not interact much outside their community while lower caste women move freely in rural areas.

CONCLUSION

It is inferred from the findings that mostly middle aged and older women were engaged in the DWCRA programme and older women were more aware of the programme while lower caste respondents had more knowledge of this programme than upper caste respondents. This may be because lower caste women are always searching for any opportunity to learn something new which can enhance their family income.

REFERENCES

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