Women empowerment

Introduction

In the current society, empowerment of women has been among the hot issues being debated on. In this regard, there have been campaigns to empower women given that the societal structure has alienated as well as marginalized them. In fact, women have been kept in the society as housewives and the ones to take care of children. As a result, this has limited them to exploit their potentials. Owing to this point, there is a need to empower them. In essence, a person's capacity to make effective choices and to transform choices into desired actions and outcome is what best defines the empowerment of women. The empowerment of women in so crucial owing to the benefits associated with it; however, it has been faced with a lot of challenges that need to be dealt with in order to achieve the anticipated developmental goals. So to speak, the research question of concern has to do with how to deal with the challenges facing the issue of women empowerment. Numerous ways to empower women have been pointed out and made use of; however, the existing social power relations have hindered the success of the empowerment. Therefore, the empowerment of women must become an organized mass movement with the sole aim to challenge and transform the existing power relations in the society limiting the exploitation of their potentials. Although there have been campaigns and creation of awareness towards the empowerment of women, the existing social power relations has hindered the success. As well, the power to make a definitive choice and the institutional framework in which the choice is made greatly contributes to the success of the empowerment of women.

Literature Review

Sen and Grown (1985) points internal resource mobilization in order that reductions in external aid and resources may be compensated, requires the participation of both men and women. However, women suffer from diminished right of entry to resources and increased demands regarding their labor and time. This is a point that needs to be corrected through women empowerment. Fundamentally, empowerment of women is indispensable for the materialization of new, cooperative and creative solutions. In a more practical stand point, multiplicity of feminisms, reactive to the dissimilar needs and concerns of unusual women and defined by women themselves can serve as an avenue for women empowerment.

The core groundwork to this multiplicity is the widespread opposition to gender oppression and other forms of domination carried out against women in the society. As a matter of fact, women have been participating in their own oppression and as such, it takes time and much investment to be done in order to ensure that he women become aware of the ideology that legitimizes male dominance. Although the women movements have tried to fight for women empowerment, there are times when their efforts have been watered down by the social dictates. Arguably, women empowerment being a process by which those who have been denied power gain power, it takes strength and more awareness if success is to be achieved. The necessitate to 'empower' women acts in response to the emergent recognition that women in developing countries fall short of the control over resources and the self-belief and/or prospect to partake in decision-making procedures.

The social structure has been formulated in such a way that the women are marginalized. Education, employment and politics among others as such, have been associated with men only. In fact, women are left home to take care of children and live as housewives along with the aspect of many being viewed as sexual objects. In the same way, the girl child has been denied education and as such, most societies in the world have made the girl child to be given into forced marriage. This is an aspect that has marginalized women and as such, there is therefore need to empower women so that their potential may be realized. Besides this point, women empowerment movements and projects have been put in place and even though they have had some impact, there is much that remains unaccomplished.

In this sense, there are challenges that have faced the empowering of women. For instance, some of the women have not been able to realize that male domination is a tool that is used by men to limit their potential. Therefore, there has been a problem of women empowerment due to a lacking awareness amongst the affected. Needless to say, there is need to expound on the challenges facing the empowerment of women and how to overcome them. At the same time, the review of the literature in the context reveals that though there have been campaigns, projects, NGOs and creation of awareness towards the empowerment of women, the existing social power relations has hindered the success. As well, personal agency and the context of empowerment as well limits the empowerment altogether.

Methodology

In order that the information related to the empowerment of women may be realized, at least four primary sources of information will be utilized. In this regard, the primary sources will entail the sources that have been developed as a result of a research carried at first hand or as a result of direct observation. Besides this point, there will be a use of secondary sources used as a support to the primary sources used. The sources used will then be found at the last page of the given piece of work simply known as Works cited page.

Research Findings and Discussions

According to Hafez (2003), Islamic women empowerment has been limited in its success by the dictates of the religion. In line with this point, the Islamic women work hard to enhance the development of others rather than directly challenging the male authority or power. As a matter of fact, their empowerment is meant to reach a Muslim goal rather than the enhancing their power over natural resources along with intellectual resources. Islamic women in Egypt do not perceive themselves as liberated individuals in search for self-government from unjust male control.

Instead, they seek to be connected to each other along with their husbands and the family and then finally their commitment to God. In this case, this poses a challenge while empowering women. This is given to the reason that in order to empower an individual, he or she and in this case she, should reaize that there is some male domination and oppression that needs to be dealt with and as such, a need to respond to the aspect of empowerment.

Women's access to education, share of non-agricultural wage employment, and political participation make some of the main factors that can contribute to women's empowerment. In connection to this point, Kabeer (2005) points out that except provision is made to make certain that policy changes are put into practice in ways that allow women themselves to participate, examine, and hold policy makers and corporations answerable for their actions, the prospective for women's empowerment will be restricted (13). This is to bring out the meaning that empowerment of women should be provided for the environment to flourish.

Notably, there are many opportunities such as education greatly contributing to the empowerment of women and as such, they may be limited if the women are not provided with the courage to question unjust practices against them. Basically, the international community should in this case be prepared to provide support for women at the grassroots in order to provide an environment for them to get empowered.

Apart from this, Waterhouse and Neville (2005) assert that since 1995 the DFID has made significant donation through research and support to handy interventions on the issues of gender, voice and accountability. In actuality, DFID has paved way for the empowerment of women through the use of locally and internationally chosen bodies. Such bodies make it possible for the voices of women to be heard.

As well, there has been an ongoing analysis of gendered poverty through the institutional support to ministries of gender together with finance and planning. In the same line of thought, there is also the gender budgeting

initiatives in Rwanda, India and Uganda which have increased opportunities for women as well. In addition, gender sensitive monitoring systems of poverty have been on an increased use and as such there have been mechanisms in this context which have been established in order to ensure that the voice of women is heard. So to speak, the governments have in this case been held answerable to the gender equality related goals.

Following this point, it is imperative to bring out the point that although DFID work has provided women with opportunities to get empowered, there is need to carry out a close examination of the effectiveness of the DFID among other such like bodies. UNIFEM East and Southeast Asia (2005) further explores the UNIFEM's Regional Programme on Empowering Women Migrant Workers in Asia which is based on gender and rights approach. Outstandingly, the program is meant to promote sensitive migration policies and programs to gender. Moreover, the program seeks to provide conducive environment to the realization of the rights of women between the source and destination countries.

Again in this context, Nepal, Philippians, Indonesia and Jordan along with Sri Lanka have been pointed out as to have developed through this program the capacity of women migrant workers and their associations to access and aver their rights. Even though such programs have been put in place, their efficiency cannot be easily determined given that there are pre-existing social power problems which may hinder the progress of the women empowerment to a point of bearing fruits.

Another point to note is in regard to education as a means of empowering women. Presumably, it has been taken as the only means through which the girl child may come to realize her self worth. Along with this point, most of the developing countries are described as to have had low levels of schooling girls resulting to empowerment being equated with a mere participation in the school participation.

Despite the fact that education can empower women to some extent, it is however limited since it makes the assumption that experience and knowledge acquired in school is enough to empower women. The truth is far from this since there is much more to be done in order to realize the full potential of education to empower women (Stromquist 22). Although there are schools providing education, training and textbooks which are gender sensitive, empowering education can do more than that in the development of women empowerment.

Unconventional visions of a gender-equitable society should be imparted by expounding on the course content which only attacks the pre-existing sexual stereotypes. Arguably, non-formal methods of empowering women have proved to be more effective than the formal system of education and this has been made possible by means of NGOs (Stromquist 26). The different spaces provided by NGOs led by women, sponsor organized learning opportunities by means of workshops on tackling topics such as reproductive health, gender subordination and domestic violence. In this framework, they provide the prospect for women to talk about problems with other women. These are some of the ways through which women develop confidence and as such learn how to develop personal agency. By so doing, women become

more able to make decisions which confidence and as such realize their worth.

According to Klugman (2000), policy-making process should involve women and as such this can translate to be a good way of empowering them (98). Even though this is the case, there is a limitation in the sense that this way has been poorly recognized for the capacity. In fact, the 1994 Women's Health Conference is one of the conference through which women realized and as such strengthened their self esteem along with the aspect of building the belief that they had the potential to contribute to the processes of policy (Klugman 98-118). South Africa's abortion legislation was changed by means of ensuring that women empowerment was considered in depth. From this perspective, one can conclude that implementation policy can be used as a means to empower women rather than mobilizing a great number of them. In this case, access to safe abortion in South Africa increased women's ability to control their lives and thus they were empowered through policy implementation.

From a broader point of view, many of the ways of empowering women have fallen short of meeting the targeted goal. Although this is the case, people have so much held to the non-effective ways of women empowerment while ignoring such ways like policy implementation as provided in this case. Grown, Rao and Kes (2005) puts it that the empowerment of women ought to enable them to attain equal abilities in terms of education, health, resource accessibility, access to land and employment along with participation in political matters (130). In line with this point, if the opportunities for post-primary school education for girls are strengthened, then, empowerment

may be achieved. As well, reduction of women's burdens in terms of time by investing in infrastructure, may contribute largely towards the empowering of women. Again in this context, women ought to be given the right to property and inheritance along with increased participation in the politics (Grown, Rao and Kes 5).

Even though such practical ways exist for the purpose of empowering women, a lack of change on a large and profound scale to qualify for alteration in the way societies envisage of and systematize men and women's roles, control over resources and responsibilities. There is actually a need to mobilize committed people to the idea of a gender equitable society; the technological capacity to put into practice change and Institutional processes together with structures to support the revolution and satisfactory financial resources.

According to Martinez and Glenzer (2005), CARE program states that the women empowerment entails women's position to gain freedom from coercion over their physical body. As well, development of a positive self image along with equitable power and influence over household strategies and public resources describe the factors of empowering women. Equally important, the environment should be able to foster the capability to engage in a collective effort. In this context, it is important to bring out the point that if there are any developments that are going to be made in the world today, it is important to empower women since they have the potential to greatly contribute to this.

In the past, women have had less control over material assets and intellectual resources and as such, they have lived in a society where they have been oppressed by male domination. As such, empowerment of women must become an organized mass movement with the sole aim to challenge and transform the existing power relations in society which limit them to fulfill their potential. Even though there are numerous ways to empower women, the existing social power relations need to be addressed in order for success to be realized.

Development of fiscally self-sustaining rural growth institutions along with the commitment of the international community to empower women is a necessary tool to overcome the obstacles brought about by relations in the society. So to articulate, the organized mass movements are presumed to overcome the challenges since the empowerment in this case has many supporters working towards the realization of empowered women. However, more research is required to establish the true challenges and the right strategies to overcome them.

In order to establish, challenge and transform the existing power relations in the society, there is need to employ mass mobilization. In line with this, challenges that hinder the women empowerment and the things that should be done in order to overcome the challenges and thus pave way for change are central in this research.

Remarkably, Deshmukh-Ranadive (2003) point out that woman empowerment is not the often thought to occur when livelihoods develop, groups formed and in the larger perspective incomes generated (1674).

Rather, it is restricted by traditional socio-cultural norms within the family. In essence, those that perpetrate the issues of gender inequality should not be blamed in anyway but rather they are victims of social structure. This is to suggest that the constitution of the society is what in most cases shapes those that perpetrate gender inequality. In order to change the socio-cultural gap of women in the home, it is important to involve the other members of the household in the processes of empowerment (Deshmukh-Ranadive 1674).

Conclusion and Recommendations

In particular, the empowerment of women has been a subject that has received so much attention. As such, various projects, feminism movements and NGOs along with other related programs, have been formulated with the sole aim to help in the empowerment of women. In actuality, the movements and the programs as highlighted have made efforts to create opportunities for women to participate in education, strategic decision making and in the larger perspective participate in politics. The results are described by women getting employed, gaining power over their sexuality, house matters, giving birth, accessing assets and intellectual resources, becoming great political leaders and thus contributing to economic growth.

Although this is the case, challenges of the ineffectiveness of the education system, programs and the NGOs used, has been pointed as to hinder the success thereof. As well, the context of empowering women has presented challenges since the social power relations do not permeate for the empowerment of women. In this respect, it is highly recommended that the

empowerment of women must become an organized mass movement with the sole aim to challenge and transform the existing power relations in the society. In the same line of thought, there should be awareness amongst the women regarding their empowerment. As well, the empowerment of women should become a social and as such a government's goal along with regulation and examination of whether the goals of the empowerment are met. This ensures effectiveness and strategies being permeated while empowering women.

From a general point of view, the challenges facing the empowerment of women which have rendered it less effective may be overcome by otherwise challenging the challenges. In essence, this can be accomplished by use of organized mass movement with the sole aim to challenge and transform the existing power relations in the society. Community awareness on the benefits of empowering women should be carried out in order that the empowerment may be supported by the community as whole. This will easily overcome the existing power relations in the society and thus pave way for women empowerment to be able to make choices, strategic decision making and in the larger point of view gain control over their lives and freedom from male dominance which has so far alienated them.