

The process of Women's Empowerment and its implication: A focus on Uday's programs for women

Development is one of the processes towards Empowerment. Uday Social Development Society in INC envisions empowering the mission areas of both urban & rural communities through women. The focused areas are Sirpur, Aulia, Badi Dhamini, Dharampuri, Indore and Bhopal.

Through the medium of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) poverty alleviation and empowerment of women in terms of decision making in family as well as in the communities are visible indicators found among the target groups. SHGs formed by women in these units have proved that they could indeed bring about a change in the mindset of the conservative and tradition-bound areas.

The programs of Uday has been enabling people especially women to acquire and assert power resources in order for them to make decisions on their own or resist decisions that are made by others which affect them. These gave the Uday team an understanding that the concept of group formation is the best strategy to encourage and build self confidence among women. Grouping of women in to SHGs and later to Federation helped the women to take up more leadership roles which increased their awareness and reduced the chances of exploitation and being submissive.

Till date, Uday has formed 161 SHGs with 1515 members in 4 districts of Madhya Pradesh. These SHGs are grouped in to 20 Federation (Vikas Manch) emphasizing solidarity and collective action. After organizing a series of capacity building program for these women, it is very encouraging to see the impact found among them. The examples of these types are cited below in the form of case studies that are depicted by the team of Uday Community Development Projects (CDP).

Empowerment of women is necessary for sustainable development. Many of the Vikas Manch have acted together in order to gain access to policies and decision-making arenas where their quality of life is determined. In some of the cases, the individual themselves have taken the initiative to revolutionize in their own small or bigger ways.

Another learning for Uday team from our experience is - if we want community development through people which is sustainable, we need to train the members on their leadership role in the villages and slums and less concentration on financial aspects in the federation (the transaction can be among the SHGs but not among the federation). Consideration only on finance matters will lead to few individuals' progress but if the entire community is build up through federation/ Vikas Manch model, the growth affects the entire village or slums. In this way the community takes active participation in the Local Self Governance particularly in

Panchayaths. Having participated in the Panchayaths, the communities will take responsibility of developing their own areas. The best forum is Gram Sabha where people express the issues and concerns related their life and community. Therefore it is high time that we focus on Panchayths and its proper functioning thereby leading to the national growth.

Sr. Lizy Thomas
General Coordinator-Uday Bhopal