

Women's Empowerment for Rural Development

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Abstract: The main objective of this study provides a strategy for women's empowerment for rural development. Empowerment can enable women to participate, as equal citizens, in the economic, political and social sustainable development of the rural communities. The findings outlined in this paper suggest that, designed and implemented in ways that meet rural women's diverse needs, community participation processes that can be important to facilitating social, technological, political and psychological empowerment in terms of rural development. The findings of this investigation can assist rural developers in the implementation of community development strategies based on women's empowerment.

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Introduction

Since the 1990's women have been identified as key agents of sustainable community development and women's equality and empowerment are seen as central to a more holistic approach towards establishing new patterns and processes of development that are sustainable (Handy & Kassam, 2004). The World Bank has suggested that empowerment of women should be a key aspect of all social development programs (Bank, 2001). The term 'empowerment' is a contested concept which connotes different meanings depending on different perspectives of looking at it (Asnarulkhadi & Aref, 2009). The empowerment of women means for them to have the necessary ability to undertake a number of tasks either individually or in groups, so that they have further access to and control of society resources. Empowerment is recognized as an essential strategy to strengthen the well-being of individuals, families and communities, government and non government agencies (Aref, 2010). In other word empowerment is an abiding process which takes place with specific intent so enabling them to have further control over society's resources. (Rezaei, 2007). Numerous studies of empowerment have been published (Aref & Ma'rof, 2009; Aref et al., 2009; Gillman, 1996; Gore, 1992; Humphries, 1994; Lennie, 2002; Peters & Marshall, 1991). This literature suggests that rural researchers need to adopt a more critical approach to the concept and to be more explicit about the processes they claim

have facilitated empowerment. This requires the development of useful models of empowerment and effective methods for evaluating and critically assessing claims for empowerment (Anderson, 1996).

A model of rural women's empowerment

Drawing on Friedmann's framework (Friedmann, 1992) and the meanings and indicators of empowerment identified in the analysis, Figure 1 presents the model of rural women's empowerment that was developed (Lennie, 2002). This illustrates the interrelationships between the four forms of empowerment that were identified, and summarizes the key features of each form of empowerment. Although these four forms of empowerment are discussed separately in this paper, there are clearly many interrelationships and overlaps between them (Lennie, 2002).

The types of women' empowerment

The major types of empowerment can be summarized into four groups (Lennie, 2002).

Community empowerment: Access to new and useful knowledge and awareness, Developing new skills, abilities, confidence and competence, obtaining the friendship and support of other women, participating in various activities with other women.

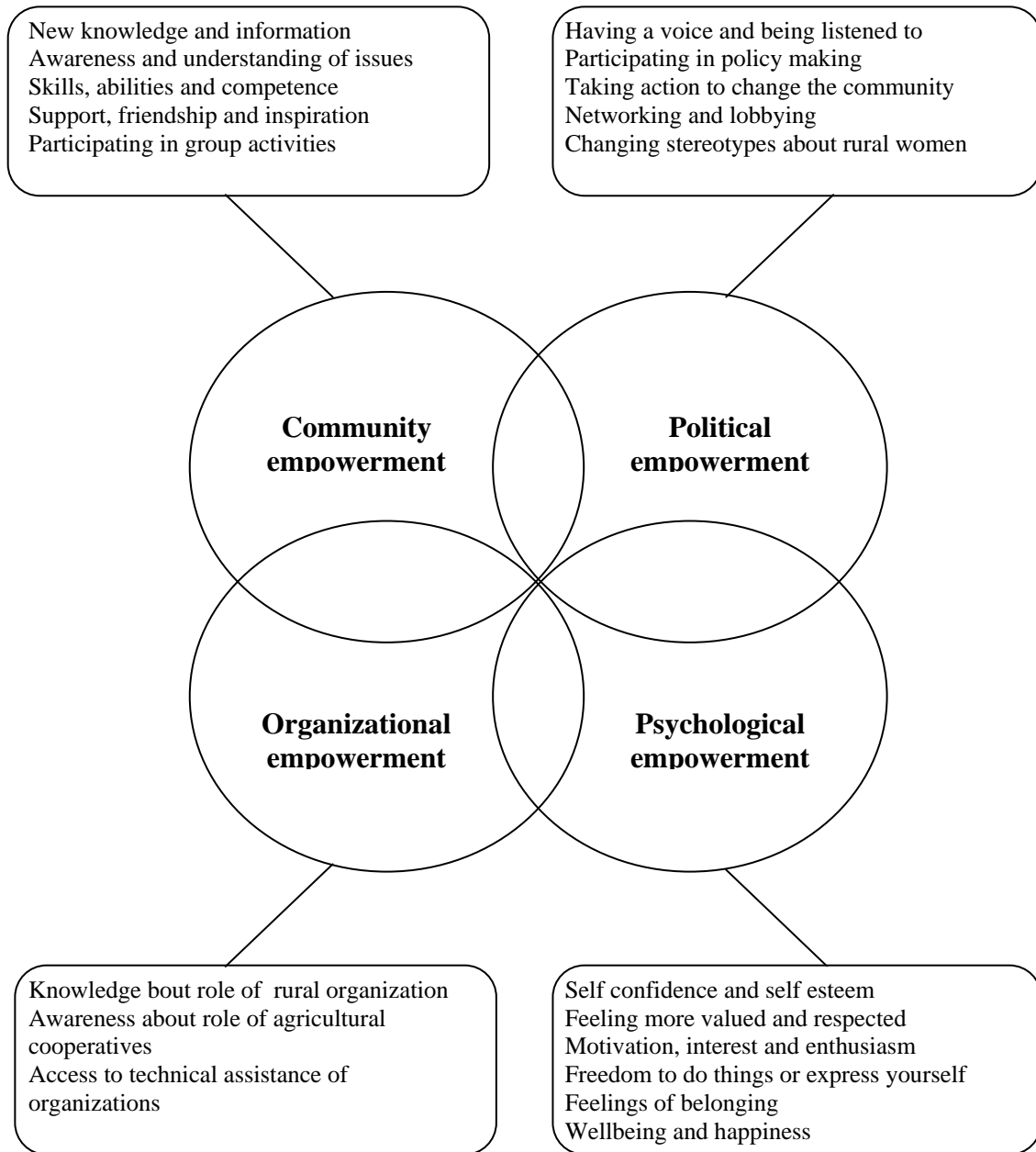
Organizational empowerment: New knowledge and awareness about new benefits of technology for rural development through rural

tourism development or development of agriculture cooperatives.

Political empowerment: Influencing other government policies and decisions that affect on rural communities, changing town-based people’s beliefs, networking with people in government and industry and other women to discuss issues affecting rural women and rural communities.

Psychological empowerment: An increase in self-confidence and self-esteem, Greater motivation, inspiration, enthusiasm and interest to develop new skills and knowledge, to keep pushing for better services for rural people, feelings of belonging related to participation in the online groups in particular (Lennie, 2002).

Figure 1: The key forms and features of rural women's empowerment Adapted from (Lennie, 2002)



Conclusion

The result of this study is suitable for the empowerment of rural women for take control of the management of local development in their villages. Because with the empowerment of women, the elimination of gender discrimination and the creation of a balance of power between men and women, will not only be beneficial to women, but society as a whole shall benefit politically, economically and culturally. The results of this review suggested a range of strategies that could enhance rural women's empowerment, including the use of agricultural cooperatives in this process. Organizational empowerment through agricultural cooperatives was identified as a significant approach to achieving the rural development.

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