

# SMART

## JOURNAL OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT STUDIES

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Vol.3

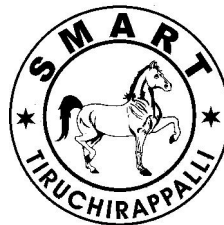
No. 2

July - December 2007

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ISSN 0973 - 1598

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SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT AND ADVANCED RESEARCH TRUST  
(SMART)

***TIRUCHIRAPPALLI (INDIA)***

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# EFFICACY OF WELFARE PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN IN RAMANATHAPURAM DISTRICT IN TAMILNADU

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## *Abstract*

*This paper aims to measure the efficacy of welfare programmes for women in Ramanathapuram District in Tamil Nadu. The study found that every individual should be aware of the various programmes and utilize the same fully.*

The development of any country depends on the quality of its human resources. Economic, social and political empowerment of women, therefore, plays a vital role in leading the nation to prosperity. The Government believes that upliftment of women, children, economically and socially weaker sections of the society will pave the way for overall development of the State. The Government implements various welfare schemes for the people ranging from children to the aged. Girl Child Protection Scheme, Cradle Baby Scheme, Working Women Hostels, Orphanages, Supply of Sewing Machines to Widows and Deserted Wives, Old Age Homes, Formation of Self Help Groups, Rehabilitation of the Disabled, Protection for Neglected and Abandoned Children, Nutritious Meal Programme for Children, Pregnant and Lactating Mothers and Old Age Pension are some significant programmes implemented by the Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme Department.

The findings of the present study on “Efficacy of welfare programmes for women in Ramanathapuram District in Tamil Nadu”, are summarized under the following heads :

A. Socio-economic profile of selected women.

- B. Sources of information about welfare programmes
- C. Welfare programmes and benefits gained by women beneficiaries.
- D. Constraints faced by women beneficiaries
- E. Suggestions given by women beneficiaries.

The age profile of women beneficiaries revealed that majority (46 per cent) of them were in the age group of 20-30 years and 35 per cent of women beneficiaries were in the age group of 30-40 and 19 per cent of women beneficiaries were above 40 years of age. Majority (94 per cent) of women beneficiaries were followers of Hinduism and only a very few followed Islam (4 per cent) and Christianity (2 per cent).

Forty three per cent of women beneficiaries belonged to the most backward caste and 32 per cent of women beneficiaries belonged to the backward caste and 25 per cent belonged to scheduled caste. It shows that there is a positive relationship between the variables, caste and poverty. Usually grassroot level people suffered a lot.

Majority (91 per cent) of women beneficiaries were part of the joint family. It

shows that one of the two pillars of Hinduism (caste system and joint family system), namely, joint family, has not disappeared completely from our social system and women beneficiaries realized that being with elders is a boon and enabled them to lead a peaceful life.

Regarding the size of the family, 56 per cent of women beneficiaries had a family size of below four and 44 per cent of women beneficiaries had above four members in the family. It shows that women beneficiaries are slowly accepting the small family norm, since it is possible for them to provide education and care to their children only in the case of a small family.

Regarding the marital status, 44 per cent of women beneficiaries were married and 26 per cent of them were unmarried. Twenty per cent of beneficiaries were widows and 10 per cent were destitutes.

Out of 100 women beneficiaries, 34 per cent were illiterates. Out of 66 per cent literates, 40 per cent women beneficiaries had studied upto higher secondary level (+2), 19 per cent had studied upto secondary level (10<sup>th</sup> standard) and seven percent women beneficiaries had only primary education.

Living below poverty line was one of the criteria for getting benefits through the welfare scheme. Majority (54 per cent) were under the poverty line and their income was below Rs.500/- per month and 46 per cent of beneficiaries' income was between Rs.500-1000/- per month.

All the women beneficiaries were aware of the social welfare programmes implemented by the Government. Friends (10 per cent), relatives (15 per cent), SHGs (25 per cent) and Government officials (50 per cent) acted as the source of information. Majority (50 per cent) of women beneficiaries benefited out of the schemes through government officials. It is worth recording that government officials were

performing their role competently in implementing the schemes and they took steps to see that the benefits reached the beneficiaries in time.

During the period of pregnancy, women need rest and protection from over work. It is necessary not only for the child they are caring but also essential for their own health and safe delivery. However, most of the poor women are forced to work during pregnancy to earn their daily wages. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Ninaivu Mahaperu Nithi Udhavi Thittam helps women by giving Rs.500 to each pregnant woman though restricting it to two deliveries. Fifteen pregnant and lactating women, who were below poverty line, received a sum of Rs.500/-, free medicine and immunization with periodical health checkup. It results in the decline of maternal and infant mortality rate. All the 15 women beneficiaries revealed that this scheme enabled them to improve their health and fulfil the nutritional requirements and mental acumen of children.

Widowhood is a tragic condition in a woman's life. Widowhood is considered to be a curse and almost equivalent to death. They are in need of supportive services. Ten widows selected for the study benefited from Widow's Pension Scheme. A sum of Rs.200/- and 4 kgs of rice per month with mid day meals, 2 sarees per year – one for Pongal festival and another for Deepavali, are given to those widows who are not capable of earning and having a property value of below Rs.5000/-. The selected women beneficiaries reveal that the pension given to them is inadequate for even their survival. The pension amount must be determined periodically on the basis of current inflation rate and non-earning dependents of widows.

With a view to increasing the employment potential, sewing machines are supplied free of cost to widows, deserted and destitutes below poverty line and to physically handicapped under Annai Sathiyavani Muthu Ninaivu

Mahalir Free Supply of Sewing Machines Scheme. Ten women beneficiaries received the sewing machines. This scheme helped them to empower themselves economically and develop self confidence to become independent.

Entrepreneurship Development Programme for Women gives training to women under SHG to upgrade their skill. Ten SHG women underwent skill training to start their own micro enterprises. Women beneficiaries stated that this training helped them to develop their capacity and confidence and to support their family income.

Ten women, who were engaged in small business, received a loan amount of Rs.50-5000 as micro-credit. The selected women beneficiaries were regularly repaying their loan from profit from their business. In other words, they are economically self-reliant.

Ten widows' children received benefits under the Free Supply of Text Books and Note books for the Children of Poor Widows. The scheme aims at benefiting children of poor widows whose family income is less than Rs.12000/-per annum. The text books and note books are supplied free of cost to the children under this scheme.

<b>Class</b>	<b>Cost per child</b>
I std. to II std.	: Rs.50/-
III std. to V std.	: Rs.125/-
VI std. to VIII std.	: Rs.175/-
IX std. to X std.	: Rs.300/-
+1 and +2	: Rs.600/-

Dr. Dharmambal Ammaiyyar Ninaivu Widow Remarriage Assistance Scheme helps the widows to get remarried and rebuild their lives once again. This economic, social and cultural support for their well being helped them to protect themselves from psychological harassment from the members of the society.

Eight women were beneficiaries of the scheme. It shows that they are empowered against the social evils.

With the noble cause of grooming orphaned girls into good citizens and good home makers, the Government helps them to get married. Annai Theresa Ninaivu Orphan Girls' Marriage Assistance Scheme provides Rs.7000/- by cheque or demand draft to the girls whose income is below Rs.12000/- per year and the bride's age falls between 20 and 30 years. Eight orphaned girls were married and they are no more called orphans.

E.V.R. Maniammaiyyar Ninaivu Poor Widows' Daughters Marriage Assistance Scheme is to reduce the financial burden of the poor widows in connection with their daughters' marriage. Rs.1000/- is given by way of demand draft or cheque to the widows whose annual income does not exceed Rs.12000/- and the bride's age should be between 20-30 years. Seven widows' daughters had received the benefit of the scheme. The scheme helped them to give life to their daughters who, in turn, appreciated the Government help.

Free Tailoring Course aims at giving training to rural women whose annual income is below Rs.12,000/-. The age limit is 16-25. For widows and destitutes, the age limit is extended upto 40 years. One year free training and Rs.60/- per month is given as stipend. Seven women beneficiaries received the benefit and they became economically independent and gained better status in the society.

Destitutes are the ones who are not regular in getting subsistence from their own source of income or through financial support from the family members or other sources. They are helpless and have no place to live and need institutional care. Under the Destitute Pension Scheme, five women received a sum of Rs.200 and 2 kgs of rice per month as benefit. The destitutes revealed that being a woman and

living alone is a risk for which there is a strong need for better coverage of social security.

Regarding the constraints, women beneficiaries reported that money given by the Government is not enough to lead their life in the present situation. The Government should increase the amount which will help them to lead a satisfactory life.

Seventy five per cent of women beneficiaries stated that they are getting the money only after the marriage. It made them debtors because they conducted the marriage only with borrowed money and had to pay interest. To avoid this, the Government should take measures to release the fund before marriage.

Regarding the health services, women revealed that the health centres are located away from villages and transport facility is not available to them. Since they are uneducated, it is very difficult for them to maintain the precious records.

The selected women beneficiaries (75 per cent) suggested that the pension amount for the widows and destitutes should be reviewed periodically on the basis of inflation rate and number of dependents of the widows and destitutes.

With the help of educational institutions and voluntary organizations for women's development, awareness about the monetary benefit available from the Government can be created. Training programmes may be imparted to women belonging to below poverty line groups to make them small scale entrepreneurs in rural based industries. This suggestion was advanced by 65 % of women beneficiaries.

A special scheme for education and employment of the dependents of the widows, deserted and destitutes may be evolved and implemented by the Central and State Government. Fifty four per cent of women beneficiaries had suggested the above idea.

Forty five per cent of women beneficiaries suggested that the Government should organize process monitoring and impact evaluation, so as to know the effective implementation of the welfare schemes.

### **Conclusion**

The Governmental machinery is trying its level best to uphold the status of women by introducing meaningful integrated schemes for holistic development. It is the duty of every individual to become aware of the various programmes and utilize the scheme to the fullest extent possible, so that women become real architects of India.