

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN SEMI-URBAN/SEMI-RURAL REGIONS OF DELHI AND HARYANA

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Abstract

Ensnconced within the urbanized environs of the Delhi metropolis and its umbrella towns, there exists several semi-urban semi-rural pockets which are inhabited by communities with agrarian backgrounds who had sold off their lands to merge with the fast developing city spaces. Still holding on to their traditional socio-cultural ethos, these communities have taken to sundry businesses and fringe jobs to fulfill the requirements of surrounding urban settlements. The womenfolk living in these areas are at an interface between the traditional and the progressing worlds. Despite voluminous research on different sections of city-based women, very little attention has been paid to this particular category. This paper analyzes the scope and potential of women empowerment in such areas. We conducted a survey based on a questionnaire targeting representative womenfolk of four such pockets in and around Delhi. Our findings indicate that there is a latent potential among these women which, with due support is waiting to be tapped for the progress of the human populace.

A. Introduction

In and around the mega-city of Delhi and its umbrella towns, there exist several pockets which represent an interface between the urban areas and the rural hinterlands. These settlements have a dynamic history, undergoing a gradual transition from rural to semi-urban. They are inhabited predominantly by families that had sold off their farmlands for the city's expansion and subsequently, merged with the fast developing city spaces. These communities possess a strongly traditional socio-cultural ethos. However, their agro-based economic activities have been replaced by small scale businesses and unorganized service oriented jobs that cater to the growing needs of their surrounding urban establishments such as shops for electrical appliances, ration shops, vegetable vendors, household helps etc.

The issue discussed in this paper is the perceptions, awareness and aspirations of the women population inhabiting such interface zones or "rural-urban" pockets in Delhi and Haryana, towards Women Empowerment (WE). We developed a questionnaire seeking views from the womenfolk living in the distinctive urban-rural areas, about their notions on different aspects of WE. This paper is a reflection of views taken from 52 such women from the target areas in Delhi and Haryana. We covered four urbanized villages to conduct our study namely, Singalpur Posungipur and NangliJalib situated in different parts of New Delhi and Jagdishpur in Haryana. Through this survey, we seek to analyze the scope and power of women of these areas for making transformations in the Indian society at large and the Indian rural in particular. Our study focuses on the outlook of the respondents, the perceptible benefits and pitfalls of urbanization for

these women and their potential as agents for change. Our findings indicate that the youth among these women are at a keel of self-determination and possess the right mindset for achieving higher socio-economic goals. Their latent potential can be harnessed for societal growth if enough efforts are made towards developing an array of enabling facilities.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section B provides the background and motivation for our study. In section C, we describe our survey questionnaire, ground experiences, results and their analyses. In section D, we provide certain recommendations based on our findings. We conclude the paper in section E.

B. Background

Women of all societies play an important role in the rearing of kids and families. Their productive and reproductive labor is integral for development of the basic structure of the society¹. However, it is found that women are marginalized in societies in terms of empowerment² even though women empowerment contributes to economic development as they are human resources³. Gender inequalities in different socio-economic settings which are disadvantageous to women have been found to be detrimental to overall economic development⁴. Further, it has been found that studies suggest that factors such as education, employment, waged work in gender-equal labor markets and access to credit to women by virtue of micro-finance such as in rural India have a positive impact on overall growth and development processes⁵. Thus, women empowerment in areas where women are restricted in being leaders must be given facilities such as education and access to credit for overall development. In this light, it is important to inculcate women empowerment not only economically but also politically and socially.

In Delhi and Haryana, we find a similar scenario. Women are generally not at par with men in gaining employment in most areas of these regions⁶. However, recent trends have shown that

¹ Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (University of California Press 1999); Jayati Ghosh, 'Informalisation of Women's Workforce Participation: A Consideration of Recent Trends in Asia', (2005) UN Research Institute for Social Development

<http://www.policyinnovations.org/ideas/policy_library/data/01178> accessed 7 Dec 2012

² Naila Kabeer, 'Women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth: labour markets and enterprise development' (2012) International Development Research Centre; SIG Working Paper 2012/1

<http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Documents/NK-WEE-Concept-Paper.pdf>> accessed 7 Dec 2012

³ Ibid; Joy Deshmukh-Ranadive, 'Database Issues: Women's access to credit and rural micro-finance in India' (2002) Human Development Resource Centre <

http://www.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/database_issues_women_access_credit_rural_micro_finance_India.pdf>; Jayati Ghosh, 'Informalisation of Women's Workforce Participation: A Consideration of Recent Trends in Asia', (2005) UN Research Institute for Social Development

<http://www.policyinnovations.org/ideas/policy_library/data/01178> accessed 7 Dec 2012

⁴ Ibid; Sen and Grown (1988); Rowlands (1997)

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Rukmini Shrinivasan, 'Only 8 % of Delhi's women work' *The Times of India* (Delhi, 16 Mar 2013)

<<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/Only-8-of-Delhis-women-work/articleshow/18999280.cms>>

accessed 2 Jul 2013; TS Papola & PP Sahu, 'Growth and structure of employment in India Long - Long term and

more and more women from all walks of life are getting engaged in jobs^{7,8}. In the rural-urban pockets which are the focus of our attention, the proportion of employed women is relatively more than in fully urban areas⁹. Shorn from their secure and well defined roles in their erstwhile fully rural set-up, they actively contribute to their families' income by taking up sundry jobs that fulfill the demands of their neighborhoods such as serving as household helps, construction workers, shop managers etc. Thus, they are at the crossroads of urbanized and traditional lifestyles. While they are exposed to the ramifications of modern living, retrograde patriarchal expectations back home may inhibit their aspirations¹⁰.

Laudable research efforts have been directed towards women based in properly urbanized areas as well as those in rural areas for assessing their roles in the development of a region or the economy as a whole¹¹. Researchers have also contrasted rural and urban needs and facilities¹². However, areas in the "middle zone" which are neither totally urban nor fully rural have largely been ignored. The question arises: What do the women in these interfaces feel about women empowerment? Are they still ensconced in a traditional setup? Are they forward-looking, fitting the description of a modern, urbanized woman who is aware of her legal rights, or is she rooted in her rural, humble roots seeped in patriarchy? Can these women act as agents of change for rural India? The objective of the paper is to assess the opinions, the strengths and weaknesses of

post-reform performance and the emerging challenge' (2012) Institute of Studies in Statistical Development <http://isidev.nic.in/pdf/ICSSR_TSP_PPS.pdf> accessed 2 Jul 2013; Shivani Singh, 'Delhi woman too scared of city to step out and work', *Hindustan Times* (Delhi, 17 Jun 2013) <<http://www.hindustantimes.com/editorial-views-on/Shivani%20Singh/Delhi-women-too-scared-of-city-to-step-out-and-work/Article1-1077454.aspx>> accessed 2 Jul 2013; HT Correspondent, 'Only 1 in 10 women in Delhi work' *Hindustan Times* (Delhi, 12 Jun 2013) <<http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/NewDelhi/Only-1-in-10-women-in-Delhi-work/Article1-1074929.aspx>> accessed 2 Jul 2013; 'Haryana reserves jobs for women, men get 67%' *The Financial Express* (New Delhi, 1 Mar 2013) <<http://www.financialexpress.com/news/haryana-reserves-jobs-for-women-men-get-67-/756398>> accessed 2 Jul 2013

⁷ National Women's Law Center, 'Stronger jobs recovery reaching women' (National Women's Law Centre, 7 Jun 2013) <<http://www.nwlc.org/resource/stronger-jobs-recovery-reaching-women>> accessed 2 Jul 2013

⁸ Tripti Lahiri, 'By the numbers: where Indian women work' (India Realtime, 14 Nov 2012) <<http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2012/11/14/by-the-numbers-where-indian-women-work/>> accessed 27 June 2013

⁹ Rukmini Shrinivasan, 'Only 8 % of Delhi's women work', *The Times of India* (New Delhi, 16 Mar 2013) <<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/Only-8-of-Delhis-women-work/articleshow/18999280.cms>> accessed 23 Sep 2013

¹⁰ John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1869) <<http://archive.org/stream/subjectionofwome00millrich#page/n5/mode/2up>> accessed 28 June 2013

¹¹ Kamla Gupta and P. Princy Yesudian, 'Evidence of women's empowerment in India' (2006) 65 (4) *GeoJournal* <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41148054>> accessed 24 Sep 2013; Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India' (National Family Health Survey) <<http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/OD57/OD57.pdf>> accessed 24 Sep 2013; Reecha Upadhyay, 'Women's Empowerment in India – An Analytical Overview' (The Asia Foundation) <<http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/womensempowermentindiabriefs.pdf>> accessed 24 Sep 2013

¹² Viktoria Hnatkovskaa and Amartya Lahirib, 'The Rural-Urban Divide in India' (International Growth Centre, 2003) <<http://www.theigc.org/sites/default/files/Rural%20Urban%20Divide%202%20Final.pdf>> accessed 24 Sep 2013

the womenfolk hailing from these interface zones and identify measures to empower them further.

C. The survey, its results and analyses

(i) Questionnaire

The questionnaire with 12 objective questions was developed to gather responses on different aspects of WE from women residing in identified rural-urban localities in Delhi and Haryana. In order to prepare a contextual framework for analyzing the results of the survey, related questions are grouped together under a topic denoting a particular dimension in the concept space. The resulting four subsets of questions are enumerated below under the various identified concepts.

- 1. Level of empowerment:** Question numbers 1 to 4 gather information related to the respondent's level of empowerment that she has achieved so far.

Q1. What is your age group?

1. 15-25
2. 25-35
3. 35-45
4. 45-55
5. 55-65
6. 65-80

Q2. What is your primary employment status?

1. Home maker
2. Student
3. Entrepreneur
4. Social worker
5. Employed
6. Self- Employed.

Q3. In what capacity are you involved in any group that works towards women empowerment?

1. Member
2. Leader
3. Active Supporter
4. Sympathizer
5. Not involved in any way.

Q4. Are you a member of any governing council?

1. Yes
2. No

2. Perception on women empowerment: Question numbers 5, 6 and 7 measure the respondents' general perception on women empowerment. These psychometric questions are framed along a 5-point likert scale.

Q5. "Women are better leaders than men".

1. Agree
2. Slightly agree
3. Neutral
4. Slightly disagree
5. Disagree

Q6. "The cultural ethos of the society in which you live treats the notion of women empowerment favorably".

1. Agree
2. Slightly agree
3. Neutral
4. Slightly disagree
5. Disagree

Q7. "The change in women empowerment from pre-urbanization to post-urbanization phase in your village has been for the better".

1. Agree
2. Slightly agree
3. Neutral
4. Slightly disagree
5. Disagree

3. Awareness: Question numbers 8 and 9 test the general awareness of the respondent with regard to WE. These questions solicit additional qualifying information.

Q8. Can you name three or more woman who are well-acclaimed leaders? Name them.

1. Yes
2. No

Q9. Do you have knowledge about a specific law or policy which favors women empowerment? Describe it.

1. Yes
2. No

4. Aspiration Level: Question numbers 10,11 and 12 were formulated to understand the respondents' aspirations towards achieving higher levels of self-empowerment. In order to

enforce a stand that reflect their uninhibited aspiration levels, these questions have only two choices. They are enumerated below:

Q10. Women should be empowered to make important decisions for the family.

1. Agree
2. Disagree

Q11. Women should be financially independent.

1. Agree
2. Disagree

Q12. Do you aspire to be the leader of any governing body?

1. Yes
2. No

(ii) Survey Experiences

Before we embark on statistical analyses, let us recount some of the experiences we encountered during our interactions while conducting the survey in the four identified urbanized villages. Our aim is to bring in a qualitative dimension in our analysis based on real-life ground conditions in these areas.

1. Posangipur Village: We began our survey in Posangipur village in West Delhi. According to the account of some old residents, the village saw construction and urbanization in the 1970s before which it was a village with the Zamindari system¹³. The DDA took over the lands after paying compensation to the land owners. Gradually, the inhabitants of the village shifted from farming to small time jobs. Today the area is a colony of unstructured housing, narrow lanes lined with small shops selling goods such as electrical appliances, clothes and food stuffs. The urban villages in Delhi are no longer governed by a Panchayat¹⁴ but have an Residents' Welfare Association (RWA). We met the all-male members and chief of the RWA and posed our questions on the status of women empowerment in the village. The chief described participation of women in the cultural activities of the society. He claimed that women are responsible for organizing all major events in the village. He asserted that women are very forthright in bringing up complaints about the facilities in the village. He described women as being well-regarded in the community and not being subject to any kind of subservience. However, when asked whether there are any women in the RWA, he replied in the negative. When we asked them for contact details of the women who organize cultural events, the members referred to them as the wives of their husbands and not by their real names.

¹³ This was a system in which landlords occupied areas of land where the peasants worked and paid taxes to the landlords.

¹⁴ Iqbal Narain, 'The Concept of Panchayati Raj and Its Institutional Implications in India' (1965) 5 (9) University of California Press <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2642495> accessed 29 Sep 2013

We proceeded to collect answers from the women about their notions on empowerment of women. Some women were apprehensive about taking the survey as it seemed to suggest defiance to their conditioned mindset towards patriarchy. However, most respondents were eager to take part in the survey, put in thought before answering the multiple-choice questions and were pleased to record their opinions.

One woman who aspired to become a leader talked of her mother as very brave and wielding great influence in the RWA. She was also one of the few women who agreed that the culture/society around her favors the notion of women empowerment. In another case where a housewife showed interest in filling up the questionnaire, her mother-in-law intervened to answer on her behalf arguing that her answers were as good as her daughter-in-law's! We didn't record the answers as that of the woman but of the mother-in-law. The answers reflected a regressive perception on WE and low aspiration level on women's progress.

2. *Singalpur village*: Our next visit was to Singalpur in North Delhi. We met the Pradhan (village-head) who gave an account of the area's history. The original residents of the area were farmers who worked in nearby farmlands in Shahipur, Singalpur, Barola (presently Azadpur Mandi), Pitampura, Shalimar Bagh and Rohini. In 1968, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) acquired land from the peasants and offered them compensation in return. The peasants, who were left jobless, built dense residential colonies in small pockets and gradually adopted small-time jobs as carpenters, shop keepers, vegetable sellers etc. In the 1970s, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) took over jurisdiction of the area from the local Panchayat. There was a noteworthy interaction with an *Anganwadi* worker. *Anganwadi* is a governmental initiative to promote public health services in villages by recruiting local people¹⁵. She wanted to work towards social welfare and aspired to be a leader. The woman belongs to a community which settled in one the most impoverished part of the area, yet her views marked a forthright, progressive and non-patriarchal opinion on women as leaders. Similar opinions were echoed by some of the respondents from similarly weaker economic backgrounds; they had highly positive views on self-empowerment – views that were much more assertive than many women from more well off families. A couple of such women are actually leaders in their own spheres. For example, the *Anganwadi* worker exercised significant influence in the community. There were other instances when we could not interact with ladies due to social pressure. For instance, a member of a locally influential family said that the household does not allow any visitors to interact with women without the permission of the (male) head of the family.

¹⁵ R Palriwala & N Neetha, 'Care arrangements and bargains: Anganwadi and paid domestic workers in India' (2010) 149 Int'l Lab. Rev. 511
<http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/intlr149&div=39&g_sent=1&collection=journals#527>
accessed 30 Sep 2013

3. The next destination for our survey was Nangli Jalib, a settlement located in west Delhi. This area was a contrast of sorts with mud houses facing four-storied bungalows. Our interactions with the women of this area produced striking results. Most women from bungalows remained aloof, but those who filled the questionnaire recorded progressive and knowledgeable views. In another case while interviewing a woman, an elderly male member of the house intercepted her just as she was beginning to fill up the questionnaire, in response to which she ran into the house. In some other encounters too, few women out of fear of their voice being heard or possible “inquiries” for answering questions that invited opinions deviating from established patriarchal norms, refused to undertake the survey. We interviewed a woman who, at first glance represented a poverty-stricken woman who struggles to meet both ends meet. However, her interactions reflected a woman who was highly empowered in spirit. She was actually the head of the Panchayat in her erstwhile village. She was one of the few respondents who had positive notions on the society for her empowerment.

4. Our next target area was Jagdishpur Village of Haryana, located just outside Delhi’s northern border. The area has witnessed recent urbanization as new universities and residential complexes have sprawled up. Stretches of remnant farmlands are still visible. With urbanization, many local farmers shifted from farming activities to working as maintenance and security staff in the universities.

We interviewed several women Haryanvi workers working in one of the well-known universities situated in the area. Nearly all of them regarded the newfound urbanization as an economic blessing as it created jobs for them. However, the forces of capitalism have also made a negative impact as many claimed that their contractors do not pay them regularly. Interestingly, each of such respondents mentioned several women who were head or members of the Khap Panchayats, who were influencing their lives. It was also quite revealing to us that most respondents perceived their society’s attitude towards WE as positive (option ‘a’ of question 6). This contrasts Haryana’s generally poor record on sex-ratio and status of women¹⁶.

Observations: The experiences that we encountered give pointers to certain social phenomena occurring in the urbanized rural areas.

1. The changed economic conditions in the post urbanization phase of these areas have caused the womenfolk to come out of the seclusion of their homes in search of work

¹⁶ For example, Haryana has the lowest sex-ratio among states. See, Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, ‘Provisional Population Totals Paper 2 of 2011 India Series 1’ (Census of India, pt. ‘Population and Sex Ratio by Residence’) <http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/prov_results_paper2_india.html> accessed 25 Nov 2013; National Academy for Training and Research in Social Security Reading Material, ‘Women and Men in Development’ (pt. ‘Sex Ratio’) <http://natrss.gov.in/pdf/reading/women%20&%20men.pdf>> accessed 25 Nov 2013. Similarly, other factors such as literacy rates and health statistics are unfavorable to Haryanvi women. See for example, State Resource Centre Haryana, ‘Literacy Status of Haryana’ (pp. 2-3) <http://www.schooleducationharyana.gov.in/downloads_pdf/achievements/Literacy%20Status%20of%20Haryana.pdf> accessed 25 Nov 2013

to supplement family income. This also leaves scope for exploitation. Nevertheless, there is a choice and their earning status has given them a new found sense of financial and social empowerment, which is not evident in proper villages.

2. There is a predominant streak of patriarchy prevalent in these areas as compared to more developed parts of the city. The village culture is still in vogue. On one hand, women regularly engage in many group activities centered on cultural and religious activities that give them a sense of belongingness to the community, something that is otherwise vanishing from modern households. On the other hand, the same culture restricts women from crossing the threshold defined by a patriarchal society. Their overall aspiration level is thus low.

(iii) Results and Statistical Analyses

Tables 1 to 4 illustrate the statistical distribution of the responses to individual questions collected from 52 respondents from four urbanized villages and also show the summary results for each of the four conceptually related sets of questions.

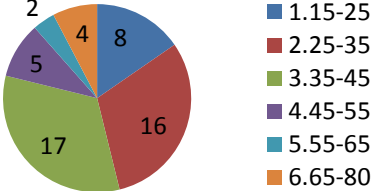
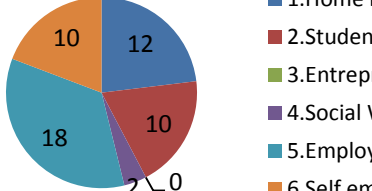
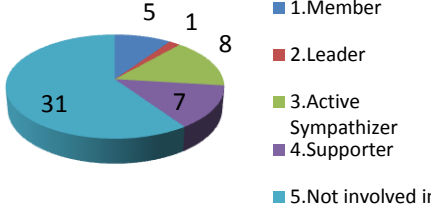
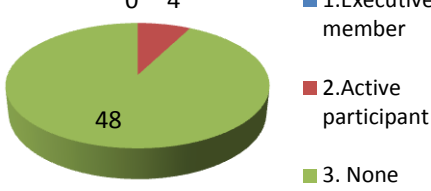
1. Level of Empowerment:

Table 1a shows the pie chart distributions of the responses to the first four questions with their mode and median. Table 1b shows the overall summary analysis on Level of Empowerment achieved.

Summary Rating Method: For each of the questions 2, 3 and 4, we assigned either low or high level of empowerment. Home-makers (low) are segregated women otherwise engaged in some way (high). Women who were not involved with any activity related to WE (low) are segregated from those who were involved in it in some way (high). Women who are not members or actively involved in any governing council (low) are segregated from those who are. Finally, in terms of empowerment, women scoring low on all counts were assigned *Low*, those who scored high in at least one of the three parameters were given *Low-Medium*, those scoring high on two parameters were given *Medium* and those who scored high on all three counts were given *High*.

Observations: The respondents are mostly in the age groups 35-45 followed by the age group 25-35. As many as 28 women (54%) are either employed or self-employed. Only 4 women are actively involved in some locally influencing governing body such as RWA or Panchayat though no one was an executive member.

We observe that as many as 69% women fall in the category of *Low* or *Low-Medium* level of empowerment while the remaining fall in the category of *Medium* level of empowerment. A majority of them fell into the category of *Low-Medium* on account of being employed, albeit predominantly in the unorganized services sector.

| | |
|--|--|
|  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.15-25 2.25-35 3.35-45 4.45-55 5.55-65 6.65-80 |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Home Maker 2.Student 3.Entrepreneur 4.Social Worker 5.Employed 6.Self employed |
| <p>Q1) Age Groups</p> <p>Mode: 3→35-45 years,Median:3→ 35-45 years</p> | <p>Q2) Occupations</p> <p>Mode: 1→Employed Medan: 2 → Employed,</p> |
|  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Member 2.Leader 3.Active Sympathizer 4.Supporter 5.Not involved in any way |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Executive member 2.Active participant 3. None |
| <p>Q3) Involvement in any grp working towards women empowerment?</p> <p>Mode: 5→Not involved, Median: 5 →Not involved</p> | <p>Q4) Are you an executive member or active participant of any governing council?</p> <p>Mode: 2→No</p> <p>Median:2→No</p> |
| <p>(a) Pie chart distributions for the responses to Questions 1 to 4.</p> | |

| Q2. | Q3 | Q4. | No. of Resp. | Level of Empowerment |
|---------------------------|--|---------------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Home maker-option 1 | Not involved in any way-option 5 | None, Option 1 | 3 | Low |
| Home Maker, option 1 | Involved in some way-Any of the options 1 to 4 | None Option 1 | 9 | Low Medium |
| Any of the options 2 to 6 | Not involved in any way – option 5 | None Option 1 | 24 | Low Medium |
| Any of the options 2 to 6 | Involved in some way-Any of the options 1 to 4 | None Option 1 | 12 | Medium |
| Any of the options 2 to 6 | Not involved in any way- option 5 | Active member Option 2 | 4 | Medium |

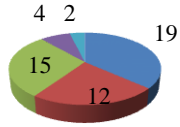
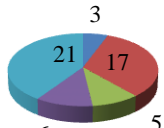
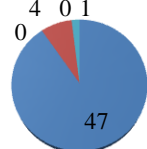
(b) Overall analysis on “Level of Empowerment”

Table 1: Pie chart distributions of responses to questions 1 to 4 and summary results on Level of Empowerment

2. **General Perception:** Table 2a shows the statistical distributions of the responses for the next set of questions 5,6 and 7. Table 2b shows the summarized assessing on the general perception of the respondents on the issue of WE.

Summary Rating method: From Table 2b we observe that in response to question 7, almost all women barring 1 perceived the change in WE from pre to post urbanization of their villages in a positive light. We therefore deduce that urbanization has raised their general perception on WE up to a mark. For the remaining questions 5 and 6, we clubbed together options 1 and 2 (*Agree/ Slightly agree*) and options 4 and 5 (*Disagree/Slightly Disagree*). Out of the nine possible combinations for the responses to questions 5 and 6, the responses were categorized into four major groups as shown in Table 2b.

Observations: A majority 31 women (59%) rate women as better leaders than men. Notably, a matching number of 27 women (52%) do not agree that their society treats the notion of WE favorably. Practically everyone, *i.e.* 51 of them (98%) agree or slightly agree that urbanization has had a positive impact on women’s empowerment. The overall assessment in Table 2b reveals an interesting pattern. The largest single group of 18 women agreed that women are better leaders than men, but simultaneously also feel that the society in which they live does not view the notion of WE favorably. This category was tagged as “Progressive but may be suppressed by patriarchal set-up”. This clearly reflects the changing mental makeup of women who are in the cusp of modern and traditional lifestyles. Whereas they can clearly see the benefits of WE through their interaction with the society outside of their homes, they face subjugation within the confines of their homes. The second largest (single) group is a set of 12 women who are progressive as well as optimistic about society’s attitudes. We found that almost all of them were young school or college going respondents. Very few (3) women, all elderly showed a regressive attitude. Most women (19) were cautious about WE, thereby reflecting a mind-set undergoing transition.

|  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1. Agree ■ 2. Slightly agree ■ 3. Neutral ■ 4. Slightly disagree ■ 5. Disagree |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1. Agree ■ 2. Slightly agree ■ 3. Neutral ■ 4. Slightly disagree ■ 5. Disagree |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1. Agree ■ 2. Slightly agree ■ 3. Neutral ■ 4. Slightly disagree ■ 5. Disagree | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|-----|----|--------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----|-----------------|
| <p>Q5) “Women are better leaders than men”</p> <p>Mode: 1 → Agree</p> <p>Median: 2 → Slightly agree</p> | <p>Q6) “The cultural ethos of the society.... notion of women empowerment favorably”.</p> <p>Mode: 5 → Disagree</p> <p>Median: 4 → Slightly disagree</p> | <p>Q7) Do you perceive the change in women empowerment from pre-urbanization to post-urbanization phase in a positive or negative light?</p> <p>Mode: 1 → +ve, Median: 2 → +ve</p> | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>(a) Statistical Response to questions 5 to 7</p> | | | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="326 1696 586 1808">Q5.</th> <th data-bbox="586 1696 870 1808">Q6</th> <th data-bbox="870 1696 1049 1808">No. of Resp.</th> <th data-bbox="1049 1696 1430 1808">General Perception on WE</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="326 1808 586 1890">Agree/Slightly Agree</td> <td data-bbox="586 1808 870 1890">Agree/Slightly Agree</td> <td data-bbox="870 1808 1049 1890">12</td> <td data-bbox="1049 1808 1430 1890">Progressive and</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Q5. | Q6 | No. of Resp. | General Perception on WE | Agree/Slightly Agree | Agree/Slightly Agree | 12 | Progressive and |
| Q5. | Q6 | No. of Resp. | General Perception on WE | | | | | | | | |
| Agree/Slightly Agree | Agree/Slightly Agree | 12 | Progressive and | | | | | | | | |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----|---|
| | | | optimistic |
| Agree/Slightly Agree | Disagree/Slightly disagree | 18 | Progressive but may be suppressed by patriarchal set-up |
| Disagree/Slightly disagree | Disagree/Slightly disagree | 3 | Regressive |
| All other combinations | | 19 | Cautious |

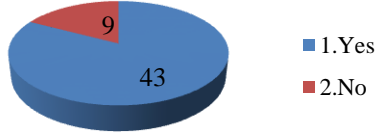
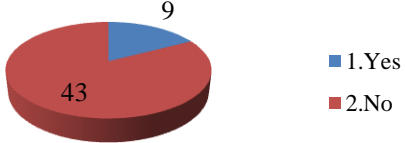
(b) Summary Analysis on General Perception on WE

Table 2: Response to questions 5 to 7 and analysis on “General Perception on WE”

3. **Knowledge level:** Table 3a shows the pie chart distributions of the responses to questions 8 and 9. Table 3b summarize the overall assessment on the respondents’ general awareness on WE.

Summary Rating method: Along with *Yes/No* answers, these two questions seek further qualification. Out of four possible combinations, *Yes-Yes*, *Yes-No*, *No-No* and *No-Yes*, the responses fell into first three categories as shown in Table 3.

Observations: The pie chart distributions in Table 3 clearly show that while most women know some woman political leader, *very few women were aware of women’s legal rights*. In fact included many school/college going girls were also ignorant about legal backing for women’s issues. Only 9 women (about 17%) women could quote laws related to women’s issues. Another 17% of the women questioned had no knowledge about either any woman leader or any law on women’s issues.

| | |
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|  |  |
| <p>Q8) Can you name three or more woman who is a well-acclaimed leader?</p> <p>Mode: 2→Yes, Median: 2→Yes</p> | <p>Q9) Do you have knowledge about a specific law or policy which favors WE?</p> <p>Mode: 2→No, Median: 2→No</p> |
| <p>(a) Statistical distribution to the responses to questions 8 and 9</p> | |

| Q8. | Q9. | No. of Resp. | Level of Awareness on WE |
|-----|-----|--------------|---|
| Yes | Yes | 9 | Well knowledgeable, aware of legal rights |
| Yes | No | 34 | Generally informed, but not aware of legal rights |
| No | No | 9 | Not knowledgeable |

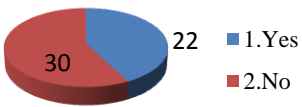
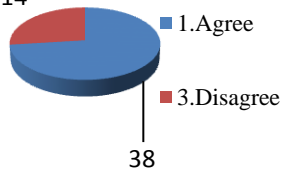
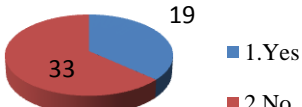
(b) Summary assessment on Level of Awareness on WE

Table 3: Response to questions 8 and 9 and assessment on Level of Awareness on WE

4. Aspiration level: Table 4a shows the pie chart distributions, mode and median of the responses collected for questions 10,11 and 12. Table 4b illustrates the summary results on the respondents’ aspiration levels.

Summary Rating method: Given the bipolar answers to the three questions, there are 8 possible combinations, out of which we received 6 combinations that are shown in Table 4. No respondent who opted for *Yes* for question 12 (aspiration for being a leader) ticked *Disagree* for question 11 (financial independence).

Observations: While more women disagreed on women making important decisions for the family (30 *Disagree* versus 22 *Agree*), a much larger number of women *viz* 38 (73%) agreed with women being financially independent. The large number of women who voted for financial dependence indicates the growing appreciation for this aspect. In fact, the average level of women’s employment in these areas is quite high. A reasonable number of 19 (about 36%) respondents aspired to be leaders and wield influence in society. This may be contrasted with not a single woman actually being a leader in any public body.

| | | |
|---|---|--|
|  |  |  |
| Q10) Should women be empowered to make important decisions for the family? | Q11) “Women should be financially independent.” Mode: 1 → Yes | Q12) Do you aspire to be a leader of any governing body? |

| | | | | |
|--|--------------|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Mode: 2→No Median:2→No | Median:1→Yes | Mode: 2→No Median: 2→No | | |
| (a) Statistical response to questions 10, 11 and 12 | | | | |
| Q10. | Q11. | Q12. | No. of Resp. | Aspiration level |
| Yes | Yes | Yes | 12 | High, assertive |
| Yes | Yes | No | 4 | High |
| Yes | No | No | 6 | Cautious |
| No | Yes | Yes | 7 | High |
| No | Yes | No | 15 | Cautious |
| No | No | No | 8 | Low, conservative |
| (b) Overall assessment on Aspiration Level | | | | |

Table 4: Response to questions 10, 11 and 12 and overall assessment on Aspiration Level

D. Recommendations

On the basis of our observations, we recommend the following steps in furtherance of empowerment of women in rural-urban areas of the metropolis of Delhi and its satellite townships:

1. **Harmonize development:** Evidently, economically stronger women have higher faculties for personal development and growth. Therefore, it is important for the State to harmonize the process of development in these hitherto neglected areas with that being carried out in the surrounding areas. This includes building high quality neighborhood schools and vocational training centers and providing support for developing small scale industry based on local capabilities.

2. **Provide Legal aid and awareness:** Taking a cue from the conditions of casual workers from the Jagdishpur village of Haryana who are harassed by contractors, adequate legal mechanisms should be put in place in order to prevent injustices caused by fast paced urbanization.

3. Encourage local leadership: Efforts should be made to identify potential local leaders among women and provide them facilities for leading masses of people towards positive change. The contribution of women in various leadership roles in local governing councils need to be enhanced.

4. Conduct Sensitization programs: The interface zones that we targeted in this survey are in a state of cultural flux where tradition mores and modern outlook co-exist. In order to integrate them into the mainstream, it is necessary to introduce programs that aim to eliminate patriarchal biases from such societies by means of sensitization programs. Women from younger age groups who showed greater inclination towards women empowerment can be engaged in spreading awareness by conducting street plays, engaging in activities that build leadership and participating in group discussions.

E. Conclusion

In this paper we surveyed and analyzed the perceptions, strengths and weaknesses of the womenfolk residing in semi-rural, semi-urban areas in and around Delhi, *vis-à-vis* issues related to women empowerment. Our study indicates certain interesting patterns. A majority of women opine that urbanization has given them greater economic freedom and that women should be financially independent. Most women also believe that women leaders have had a positive impact on society. However, most of them do not feel that the society in which they live favors the notion of women empowerment. By and large, it reflects a mental orientation that is conditioned by patriarchal traditions as most of them still feel that women should not make important decisions for their families. Also, not many aspire to take on leadership roles in society. Thus, it is apparent that the women in the cusp of modern and traditional lifestyles are undergoing significant changes in their perceptions.

The analysis indicates that the womenfolk in these areas do have a latent potential for enhancing our socio-economic structure that needs to be awakened. This requires proactive efforts towards harmonization of development efforts in these areas at par with more posh parts of the city. Mechanisms to provide legal aid and counseling need to be put in place to arrest exploitation of casual workers. Further, platforms may be created to groom local leadership among women so that they can act as agents of change in their societies. Sensitization programs can go a long way in raising awareness and gradually removing patriarchal biases. Such investments will transform into sound socio-economic gains as the women will prove to be efficient human resources and agents of change.