

The Pitfalls of Empowerment Initiatives in India: Overcoming Male Resistance to Women Empowerment Through Community Outreach, TVET, and Improved Sanitation

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Abstract : Empowering marginalized populations, especially women, with greater economic, social, and other leadership roles has been shown to have a profound effect on entire communities. There are discernible links between sustainable development, poverty reduction, and skill training for empowerment; however, one of the major challenges with implementing empowerment programs is to establish an understanding within the community that investing in women's education carries the potential of high return for everyone. Effective strategies that can both empower women, and overcome the complex social issues normally faced, need to be developed and shared across stakeholders. Amrita University's AMMACHI Labs, a research lab engaged in women empowerment through Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), has launched a new initiative, WE: Sanitation, a project aiming to train women to build their own toilets and promote healthy sanitation practices in rural villages across India. While in some cases, the community has come together and toilets are being built, there has been resistance by the community, especially men, in many places. This paper will explore the experiences of field workers and the initial results of the WE: Sanitation project, including observations on the trends of community dynamics, raise important questions for the direction of development work in general, and especially for sanitation projects in rural India.

Keywords : community-based development, gender dynamics, Indian sanitation, women empowerment, TVET

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