UNIT 11: RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ODL

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11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- define rural development and distance education
- discuss coursesof study related to rural development
- outline the concept of empowermentof women

11.2 INTRODUCTION

You must be aware of the fact that rural development is an essential index of a country's overall development. Rural development programmes aim at reducing poverty and unemployment among the rural masses and target all the socially discriminated classes and groups so that they can reap the benefit of development. Around 70% of the population in India lives in villages with agriculture and allied activities as their main occupation. The rural areas or the country stand at the opposite pole of the urbanized areas and perennially suffer from lack of facilities available for the urban population. They have a low population density, and most of the land is

devoted for agriculture and allied activites. Contrary to this, the urban area is characterized by higher population density and diverse occupations which are based on secondary and service sectors. Urban areas may be cities, towns or semi- urban places where the pace of development is visibly faster than the rural areas. But real development will take place only when the rural areas are developed and the rural - urban disparity becomes less pronounced. Infact, rural and urban developments are complementary to each other. Rural development means both the economic betterment of the people and greater social transformation. In order to provide the rural people with better prospects for economic development, increased participation of people in the rural development programmes, decentralization of planning, better enforcement of land reforms and greater access to credit are necessary. Initially, the main thrust for development was laid on agriculture industry, communication, education, health and allied sectors, but now it has been realized that accelerated development can take place only if the educational sector is developed at the grass root level.

Women empowerment is also closely connected with rural development. You may be aware of the fact that women constitute about 46% of the population and the 70% of women live in rural India (2011). It is also true that their literacy is low and they are mostly employed in the unorganized sector or unpaid employments. These problems can be addressed through education. Education is the most important requirement for inclusive growth and for empowering the individual and the society. To educate women is to educate the society. Providing education to all, whether belonging to the urban or rural areas is a formidable challenge for the planners. It is all the more important to provide education to the unreached and this is largely possible through open and distance learning. In this unit we will acquaint you with the concept of rural development and women empowerment and how distance mode can be effectively used for imparting useful knowledge and skill to the rural women through some academic courses so that they will be truly empowered to share the fruits of development.

11.3 CONCEPT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural development in general refers to the actions and initiatives taken to improve the standard of living in non-Urban neighbourhoods, countryside, and in the remote villages. Here agricultural activities are prominent and economic activities primarily relate to the primary sector-the production of food stuff and raw materials.

Rural areas are usually referred to as small, inward-looking, and idyllic Communities are held together by kinship relations and support and interdependence among them in basic agricultural occupations. The characteristic features that differentiate the rural from the urban areas include: size, particularly areas inhabited by the people, low population density, homogeneity, presence of few social classes, low standard of living, presence of few / no social amenities such as electricity, pipe-borne water, low social mobility,agrarian character . The rural areas also produce the bulk of food items consumed in urban areas. Besides, there is the attendant problem of the drifting of young, able-men to cities in order to benefit from the urban resources and modern life.People living in rural areas are characterised by low capital investment, low savings, and low production.The poverty level is usually higher among women than men. Women continue to struggle with dual responsibilities of economic production and domestic labour and most of them are confronted by poverty, illiteracy, high health risks, inadequate access to productive resources, and lack of credit/market access.



Idyllic: extremely happy, peaceful and picturesque

Rural development programmes mostly aim at the social and economic development of the areas. These programmes generally flow from local or regional authorities and also from NGO's, national government and international development organisations. In fact, you can see that many of the developed-countries have very active rural development programmes. The main aim of the rural government policy is to develop the underdeveloped villages.

Around 70% of the State's populations are living in rural areas.Mahatma Gandhi is of the opinion that "India lives in their villages"

and it is equally true even today.To ignore the villages and the remote far flung areas is to the halt the march of progress and development. Ideally the people in rural areas should enjoy the same quality of life as is enjoyed by the people living in sub urban and urban areas. Further, there are cascading effects of poverty, unemployment, poor and inadequate infrastructure in rural areas on urban centres causing slums and consequential social and economic tensions which lead to urban poverty and economic deprivation of a vast section of the urban population. Seen in this context, rural development is an imperative for the rural people to whom it provides adequate and quality social services and minimum basic needs. In the today's context rural development mainly focuses on poverty alleviation,better livelihood opportunities, provision of basic amenities and infrastructure facilities through innovative programmes for promoting wage and self-employment and vocational education.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Define rural development in 30 words.

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Q 2: How are rural areas identified?

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Q 3: What does rural development action aim at?

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11.4 DISTANCE EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Distance education or learning refers to teaching and learning where the learner is physically separated from the instructor, but is still with regular

contact. While there may be occasional meetings between the instructor and learner, the actual amount of face to face contact is always limited or sometimes non existent. Let me tell you that now-a-days, distance education is no longer a matter of choice but a compulsion of the times.

The mode of distance learning has emerged as a blessing in disguise to those who aspire to become learned and knowledgeable but could not access the regular mode of collegiate education due to their economic compulsions or for some other reasons. So, distance education plays a major role in rural development and it has rightly been given importance in the developing countries of Asia which are characterized by high incidence of rural poverty. Through this system even the low income people who have no access to education in formal universities can improve their knowledge base and acquire qualifications. This, in turn, contributes towards increasing the literacy rate, and in the long run can be useful towards eradicating poverty and other such problems.

So, you can see that despite the existence of large urban centers, India is still predominantly a rural society with approximately 70 percent of the population living in villages. Rural development implies the comprehensive and sustainable development for people and places in the rural areas. It depends on several interrelated components such as the development of appropriate production technology, dissemination of modern technology to the farming community, formulation of suitable policies for growth in the farm and rural non-farm economies, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, and provision of infrastructure and social services. So, for achieving rural development and for responding to these global challenges their will be required trained professionals with a wide range of relevant expertises. They are needed to work in government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and in the private sector. Such professionals are needed who can formulate appropriate policies and plans, design and implement development projects, disseminate appropriate technology and information to farmers and small-scale entrepreneurs, and manage businesses and the efficient delivery of services in rural areas. Apart from that you can see that most of the Indian belonging to the rural

weaker sections are village based illiterate agricultural labourers and most of the Indian tribes are forest based illiterates. Therefore,the need of the hour is the occupational modernization of these weaker sections and tribes and this can be possible only through education and particularly education in vocational areas. There are well established Open Universities in India which can serve the purpose. Most of these universities have started offering professional programmes in the field of rural and agricultural development. Indira Gandhi National Open University offers various programme in rural development. Besides IGNOU, other open universities have also launched various programmes in rural development. Infact,YCMOU (Yaswantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University) has done a commendable job in reaching out to the rural tribal people of Maharashtra for their sustainable development. Programmes through distance mode like plumbing, lathe operating etc. have been launched. It has also successfully launched ten crop based programmes for the farmers in the state. These open universities have rightly adhered to the objectives of making quality higher education available to the deprived and disadvantaged segments especially in rural and remote areas, women, SC/ST and besides tailor made innovative programmes. The concept of 'Prayog Parivar' launched by the university way back has been a successful venture. This concept provides the farmers a common platform with a common goal to discuss their problems, experiment and generate knowledge or record the locally available agriculture innovations based on their field experiences. IGNOU has signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Institute of Rural Development to develop more rural development specific programmes in future. There are a few examples of how the universities in the ODL system can offer services in rural development.

Distance learning programs are increasingly being explored in many areas of education. In particular, schools in rural settings, which have traditionally been underserved and dislocated from their urban counterparts, are now seeing the benefit of distance learning technologies.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Define distance education.

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Q 5: Recall any two steps that have been taken to empower the rural poor through education.

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11.5 WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

The concept of empowerment refers to the process of bringing about a transformation in all walks of life of every individual citizen of the country. The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'empower' as 'authorize, licence (person to do), give power to, make able (person to do)'. The need for empowerment arises from the inability of an individual or a group of people to realise their dreams and reach their greatest potentials due to artificial barriers created by individuals and other groups within the same society. Okeke (1995) stated that "to empower means to give power to, to give authority to, to enable a person or a group of persons gain power". Let me tell you that the word 'women empowerment' means many things to many people due to different ideological or preconceived notions. Women empowerment aims at ensuring a balance between the sexes so as to create a more equitable distribution of power in society.

The Constitution of India is considered a forward looking Constitution because its preamble recognises the principles of social, economic and political justice. Indian Constitution guarantees several rights to women. Constitutional provisions promise to provide equal opportunities to women by removing gender bias. Article 14 provides equality before law and equal

protection by the law. Article 15 (1) assures not to discriminate on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Article 15 (3) declares the State to make special provisions in favour of women and children.

Article 16 reassures equality of opportunity for all citizens in public employment. Article 39 declares the state to direct its policy towards securing equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Similarly, Article 51 lays down the provision to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. So you can see that although the Constitution of India provides equality and justice yet in actual practice in India itself, women are the weakest segment of the disadvantaged groups. Females are not at par with their male counterparts and have remained deprived and underprivileged. Women at large experience multiple barriers in gaining access to employment, housing land, food and social security and education.The urban women are somehow able to manage their pace with the mainstream to some extent because of the availability of better facilities to them, in terms of education, employment etc; but the rural women are still at a considerable disadvantage in education and other sectors and the reasons for their backwardness are more than one. The low rate of literacy among women is caused by the low enrolment and high drop out rate among the school going girls. The women in rural areas maintain an over alllow profile. Different barriers like unequal status of women in rural society, their confinement to household, early marriage, negative attitude of parents towards their female children among others are some of the factors responsible for the illiteracy of women in rural areas. We know that women constitute about 48.46% of the population and that about 70% (Census of India 2011) of women live in rural India. It is seen that women are mostly employed in the unorganized sectoror unpaid employments and their literacy is low.

The first Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said, "To awaken the people, it is women who must be awakened; once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves" (quoted in Pillai, 1995; p. 62).

Women Education:

Education for girls is vital not only on the grounds of social justice but also because of the fact that it accelerates social transformation. As stated by Jawaharlal Nehru, by educating a woman we educate the whole family. Given that a woman has put the responsibility of the whole family on herself, an educated woman is better capable of taking care of health, nutrition and education of her children and more importantly can be an active agent in the social and economic development of the country .Let me tell you that economic success everywhere is based on educational success. Literacy is the basic building block of education. No society has ever liberate itself economically, politically or socially without a sound base of educated women. Education has a direct impact on women empowerment, as it creates in them an awareness about their rights, their capabilities and the choices and opportunities available to them. Education of girls has become a national goal. Considering education as an essential instrument of the nation building process in the Nehruvian era, the University Education Commission was established under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. It is known as the Radhakrisnan Commission and it submitted its report in 1949 with a full chapter on women's education. It is mentioned there that there could not be educated people without educated women. The First Five Year Plan put that the general purpose and objective of women's education could not be different from those of men's education. But the Mudaliar Commission of 1952-53 seemed to be less pre-occupied with gender differences. The National Committee on Women's Education, 1956 shifted its focus from higher education to school education.According to the recommendations of this committee a Council of Women's Education was set up. In 1964-66, Kothari Commission observed: "In the modern world, the role of women goes much beyond the home and the bringing up of children. She is now adopting a career of her own and sharing equally with men the responsibility for the development of society in all its aspects." In 1971 the Committee on the Status of Women in India was constituted by a resolution of the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare. The report of this committee is considered an eye opener to the stark inequalities existing

between men and women in India. The culmination of all these government efforts was the National Policy of Education, 1986. The Policy states that education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. The National Education System will play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women. Women's studies will be promoted as a part of various courses and educational institutions will be encouraged to take up active programmes to further women's development. Major emphasis will be laid on women's participation in vocational technical and professional education at different levels.

The Plan of Action, 1992 also had also special parameters on empowerment of women. But the National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001 had given a greater charter for women's empowerment in all fields. Among the most vital inputs for the empowerment, the policy envisaged equal access of women to healthcare, quality education at all levels , career and vocational guidance , employment etc.

Since already these are constitutional declarations, government policies, besides a number of commissions being set up to deal with the question of women empowerment the first decisive step to be undertaken is to enhance their literacy level and uplift their entrepreneurial skill and the Open and Distance learning can be used as a viable alternative to the traditional mode in addressing the issue. The ODL system has already been put to use. For example IGNOU has introduced various programmes which aim to improve the quality of women's life by empowering them to determine and exercise their life options, and influence the direction of change through their own control over crucial material resources. Education - especially professional and technical education - is also likely to enhance women's economic independence by equipping them with the skills necessary to take up paid employment opportunities. At the national level, educating women has resulted in improved productivity, improved income and economic development, as well as in a better quality of life, leading to a notably healthier and better nourished population. Recently, the demand for skilled labour has risen significantly as a result of globalisation, changes

in technology, and as a result of the re-organization of work. The process of skills development in the informal sector in developing countries is more important since formal training institutions do not have the capacity to train a large number of aspirants. Therefore, open and distance education has become an alternative tool for providing skills-based education and training. Open and Distance Learning otherwise referred to as Distance Education,is clearly a realistic alternative.

The mission of 'Open and Distance Learning' aims to include greater dimensions of openness and flexibility, whether in terms of access, curriculum or other elements of structure. The concept of open and distance education is a scheme that affords a nation the opportunity to transmit effectively the educational benefits to all its citizens and especially to those who are unreached or denied access on the basis of one social consideration or the other at an affordable cost.

Through the ODL, education can be imparted to the class of women who are full time housewives, many of whom have never had access to formal education or had to give up school at early stages of their lives. Women in this group are not usually enthusiastic about formal education because their husbands had indicated that they are to sit at home and take care of the home and the children. Such women are usually unable to leave their spouse and children to travel away to attend a conventional university system. The challenges posed by this social system is far reaching, in the sense that the woman cannot venture out of the home to a formal school or university system where she can pursue the much craved training, skills development and education. Many of them have to be content with seeing their dreams come alive in their children's lives and they unconsciously transfer their dreams to their children's lives. Women in this category will definitely be grateful for distance education, since it allows them to sit at home and study for a programme without affecting their family obligations or neglecting their children. It is certainly a means of fulfilling the life dreams of many women who have been saddled with the work of a full time house wife. The issue of women education is essential for rural

development. Women are not well equipped to contribute their useful quota to the society because of illiteracy and lack of education.

Again,distance education can cater to the needs of the working women in the unorganized sector. Many of them marry early without completing their school/ college education and the responsibilities of raising their children while still being engaged in an unrecognised and unremunerative labour make them discontinue their studies. They also have other responsibilities and obligations to bear in respect of their husband's family. All these make it impossible for them to go back to studies in a formal set-up. The Open and Distance Learning may be an answer to this unfulfilled desire for higher studies by offering varieties of courses which they can pursue without affecting their normal work schedule and family obligations.

So you can see that open and distance education is fast emerging as a dominant mode of education to meet the growing needs of aspiring learners in the fast changing world. This popularity of distance education is mainly attributed to its ability to accommodate a large number of aspirants through its flexible and cost effective structure. Empowerment of women has visible links with the educational attainment of a society. The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and program of Action revised in 1992 placed women's education in the priority list and stated that it would play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women.The objective of the National policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001 is to bring about overall advancement, development and empowerment of women. With the 'learner centred' mode of education, ODL enables students to 'earn while they learn' the ultimate goal being to create a learning society. It may be mentioned that the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) included for the first time in the history of the planning in India a separate chapter on ' Women and Development '. Vocationalization has becomea keyword in the higher education scenario where attention is being increasingly drawn to better linkages between education and employment.The purpose of providing education to women is to enable them to think critically, identify

their strengths and take conscious, informed decisions, empowering them to play a positive role on their own in the development of the nation. Empowerment of women through education implies the improvement of status in the family, community and society which helps reduce the gender gap and this empowerment is possible through open and distance learning.

Women of India have made considerable progress in the last 60 years after independence. But still the women's literacy rate in India is 57.93 percent (Census of India 2011). Inspite ofthe Constitutional provisions and recommendations of so many other problems confronting women in India are: early drop out of girls from school, dowry death, domestic violence etc. The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) rightly states that there still exists a wide gap between the goals enunciated in the Constitution , legislation , policies , plans , programmes and related mechanisms on one hand and the situational reality of the status of women in India on the other . In the 20th century education was a means for a women's empowerment, but today she has a right to education as a citizen



LET US KNOW

To call women the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If by streng this meant brute strength, then indeed, woman is less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power , then woman is immeasurably man's superior: has she not greater intuition , is she not more selfsacrificing ,has she not greater powers of endurance , has she not greater courage ? Without her man could not be. If non violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman?

Mahatma Gandhi



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What is empowerment?

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Q 7: How can open and distance learning can be useful in case of women empowerment?

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Q 8: What is the objective of the National Policy for Empowerment of Women 2001?

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11.5.1 Courses for Women Empowerment and Rural Development through Distance Mode

Distance education is specially designed to address the 'inaccessibility' of the weaker sections of the society or 'reaching out to the unreached'. Distance education has reduced the disciplinary constraints of the conventional university system and in India, in particular, distance education has opened up new disciplines that are relevant for self employmentand potential employability. Over a period , the open and distance education in India has emerged as complementary to conventional higher educationand has ben playing a significant role in bringing about empowerment as a whole .You can see that most of the open universities and dual mode universities are offering various programmes specially for women and rural folks. IGNOU is a pioneer in this field and other open universities,including K K Handiqui State Open University, are the following its lead.

IGNOU has introduced various programmes which aim to improve the quality of women's life by empowering them.They have developed courses such as M.A. in Woman and Gender Studies and P.G. Diploma in Women Studies.Courses like child care guidance, jewellery designing, pottery making, Montessori training, knitting, fashion designing, beautician certificate course, course in nutrition are some of the programmes that can be offered by universities in the ODL mode. These courses are meant for self employment. IGNOU also offers a number of post graduate programs in rural development. Other state open universities of India also offer similar types of courses. Infact, in the context of Assam, K.K.Handiqui State Open University is taking a leading role in offering vocational courses in rural development and women empowerment. Courses like Scientific Piggery Farming (CSPF), Commercial Goat Rearing (CCGR), Commercial Broiler Farming (CCBF), Commercial Duck Farming (CCLF),Commercial Layer Farming (CCLF), Mobile Repairing, Maintenance and Repairing of Audio Video Equipments are offered. These are certain vocational programmes which can directly benefit the women and finally enhance women empowerment through self-employment and entrepreneurship development. These programmes include, inter alia, Fashion Designing, Beautician, Garment Manufacturing, Nursery Management, Food and Fruits Preservation etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: What kind of courses can be offered in the ODL system for rural development and women empowerment?

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11.6 LET US SUM UP

- Rural development in general is used to refer to the actions and initiatives taken to improve the standard of living in non-urban neighbourhoods, countryside, and remote villages.
- Rural development actions mostly aim at the social and economic development of the areas. These programs are usually top-down from the local or regional authorities, regional development-agencies, NGOs, national governments or international development organizations.
- Distance education or learning refers to the teaching and learning where the learner is not regularly in contact with the instructor, but still with regular contact through the use of ICT and othe forms of communication.
- Distance education or learning refers to the teaching and learning where Most Indian rural weaker sections being village based illiterate agricultural labourers and most Indian tribes being forest based illiterates, the need of the hour is the occupational modernisation of these rural weaker sections and tribes and this can be possible only through distance education and education in vocational areas.
- Distance education or learning refers to the teaching and learning where The concept of empowerment refers to the process of bringing about a transformation in all walks of the life of every individual citizen of the country.
- Distance education or learning refers to the teaching and learning where IGNOU has introduced various programmes which aim to improve the quality of women's life by empowering them to determine and exercise their life options, and influence the direction of change through their own control over crucial material resources.
- Various courses are developed by open universities to empower women and develop the rural sector.



11.7 FURTHER READING

1) BhatnagarTinku Paul ,(2011): Women, Employment and Empowerment New Century Publications , New Delhi

2) Pillai, J.K. (1995): Women and employment,: Gyan Publishing New Delhi
3) Sharma, R. (1996): Empowering women through distance education. Indian Journal of Open Learning.
4) Trivedi Tanuja.(2009):Women and Rural Development, Jnanada Prakashan, New Delhi

11.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q N. 1: Rural development in general refers to the actions and initiatives taken to improve the standard of living in non-urban neighbourhoods, countryside, and in the remote villages. Here agricultural activities are prominent and economic activities primarily relate to the primary sector- the production of food stuff and raw-materials.

Ans to Q N. 2: Rural areas are usually referred to as small, inward-looking, and idyllic communities. They are held together by kinship relations and support and interdependence among them in basic agricultural occupations.

Ans to Q N. 3: Rural development actions mostly aim at the social and economic development of the areas.

Ans to Q N. 4: Distance education is a mode through which knowledge is imparted to the learners not by direct face to face classroom transaction but by indirect and informal manner of teaching through various learner support services including short contact programme from time to time and use of ICT.

Ans to Q N. 5: The two steps that have been taken to empower rural poor through education are by way of offering professional programmes in the field of rural and agricultural development and enhancing skills through launching different courses in ODL system by various universities such as Indira Gandhi national open university and Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, YaswantraoChavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU) etc.

Ans to Q N. 6: The concept of empowerment refers to the process of

bringing about a transformation in all walks of life of every individual citizen of the country. The word 'Empowerment' includes self-strength, control, self-power, self- reliance, own- choices, life of dignity in accordance with ones values, capacity to fight for one's rights, independence, own decision making, being free and getting awakened about the one's capabilities etc.

Ans to Q N. 7: ODL, education can be imparted to the class of women who are full time house wives, many of whom have never had access to formal education or had to give up school or college at early stages of their lives.

Ans to Q N. 8: The objective of the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001, is to bring about overall advancement, development and empowerment of women.

Ans to Q N. 9: Various ODL universities and other distance education directorates can offer a number of post graduate programs in rural development and women empowerment such as Scientific Piggery Farming (CSPF), Commercial Goat Rearing (CCGR), Commercial Broiler Farming (CCBF), Commercial Duck Farming(CCLF) ,Commercial Layer Farming (CCLF), PG Diploma in Women Empowerment etc.



11.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions (Answer each question in about 50 words)

Q 1: Define the concept of empowerment.

Q 2: What is the meaning of women empowerment?

Q 3: What is distance education?

Q 4: How do you differentiate rural areas from the urban areas?

B. Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Write a short note on rural development.

Q 2: What kind of courses can be launched for rural development and women empowerment?

Q 3: How can open and distance mode of learning be useful in case of women empowerment?

C. Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Define women empowerment and how can it contribute to the India's economy?

Q 2: Discuss the role of education in the socio-economic development of a state.

Q 3: Give your comment on the courses that are offered by various open and distance institutions for women empowerment and rural development. What according to you could be a major thrust area of women empowerment and how can distance education address the issue?

Q 4: How is open and distance education related to rural development?

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