



Rural Women Empowerment through Entrepreneurship Development

Abstract

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Empowerment of women has emerged as an important issue these days as a Sine-quo-non of progress for the national economy and is of paramount importance to political thinkers, social scientists and reformers. Women constitute 90 percent of total marginal workers of the country. Rural women engaged in agriculture constitutes 78 percent of all women in regular work and the contribution of women and their role in the family as well as in the economic development and social transformation are pivotal. Women are engaged in various farming activities, livestock management, post harvest and allied activities. The need of the hour is to empower them technically to cope with the changing times and productivity using their free time and existing skills for setting and sustaining enterprises. Micro enterprises could be an effective instrument of social and economic development and rural women possess abundant resources to take up enterprises. The economic empowerment of women leads to development of family and community”.

Rural Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship may be defined as “a force that mobilise other resources to meet unmet market demand”. “The ability to create and build something from practically nothing”, “the process of creating value by pulling together a unique package of resources to exploit an opportunity”. The emergence of women entrepreneurs and their contribution to the national economy is quite visible in India. Women’s entrepreneurship has been recognised during the last decade as an important untapped source of economic growth. Women entrepreneurs create new jobs for themselves and others and also by being different. They also provide the society with different solutions to management, organisation and business problems as well as to the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities. Women in entrepreneurship has been largely neglected both in society in general and in the social sciences. Not only have women lower participation rates in entrepreneurship than men but they also generally choose to start and manage firms in different industries than men tend to do.

Economic vitality of a country is no doubt a necessary condition for social vitality. Without it other important factors that make living attractive in certain areas, such as education, health, social services, housing, transport facilities, flow of

information and so on can not be developed and sustained in the area in the long run.

Women Agriculture

Development of the society is directly related with the Income of its members with agriculture, as the key income generation activity the entrepreneurship on farm and home can directly affect the income of a major chunk of our population. Entrepreneurship is the only solution to the problems of unemployment and proper utilization of both human and non-human resources and improving the living condition of the rural women [Prabha Singh, 2009]. Women can effectively undertake both the production and processing oriented enterprises. Entrepreneurship development among rural women helps to enhance their personal capabilities and increase decision-making status in the family and society as a whole.

Women play a vital role in farm and home system. She contributes substantially in the physical aspect of farming, livestock management, post harvest and allied activities. Her direct and indirect contribution at the farm and home level along with livestock management operation has not only help to save their assets but also led to increase the family income. She performs various farm, livestock, post harvest and allied activities and possesses skills and indigenous knowledge in these areas. They were engaged in

starting individual or collective income generation programme with the help of self-help group. This will not only generate income for them but also improve the decision-making capabilities that led to overall empowerment.

Diversification into non-agricultural uses of available resources such as catering for tourists, blacksmithing, carpentry, spinning, etc. As well as diversification into activities other than those solely related to agricultural usage, for example, the use of resources other than such as water, woodlands, buildings, available skills and local features, all fit into rural entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial combinations of these resources are, for example: tourism, sport and recreation facilities, professional and technical

training, retailing and wholesaling, industrial applications (engineering, crafts), servicing (consultancy), value added (products from meat, milk, wood etc.) and the possibility of off-farm work. Equally entrepreneurial, are new uses of land that enable a reduction in the intensity of agricultural production, for example, organic production.

Micro enterprises for Rural Women

Depending on number of factors ranging from landholdings, subsidiary occupations, agro climatic conditions and socio-personal characteristics of the rural women and her family member the areas of micro-enterprises also differ from place to place. Micro enterprise is an effective instrument of social and economic development. For empowering poor women. It helps to generate employment for a number of people within their own social system. This is more beneficial for women in rural areas as it enables them to add to the family income while taking care of their own home and livestock centred task. Rural women possess abundant resources to take up enterprises.

The micro entrepreneurships are strengthening the women empowerment and remove the gender inequalities. Self Help Group's micro credit mechanism makes the members to involve in other community development activities. Micro credit is promoting the small scale business enterprises and its major aim is to alleviate poverty by income generating activities among women and poor. Therefore, they could achieve self-sufficiency. Now-a-days economic development is one of the factors that have changed the entire scenario of social and cultural environment within the country especially for the women. The rural women are engaged in small-scale entrepreneurship programme with the help of Self Help Groups. Through that they were

economically empowered and attaining status in family and community.

Micro Enterprise development in to agriculture and allied agricultural activities like cultivating to organic vegetables, flowers, oil seeds and seed production are some of the areas besides taking up mushroom growing and bee – keeping. Some more areas can be like dehydration of fruits and vegetables, canning or bottling of pickles, chutneys, jams, squashes, dairy and other products that are ready to eat. Livestock management activities like diary farming, poultry farm, livestock feed production and production of vermi composting using the animal waste can be an important area in which women can utilize both her technical skills and raw materials from the farm and livestock to earn substantial income and small scale agro-processing units. Household based operations like knitting, stitching, weaving, embroidery, bakery and flour milling, petty shops, food preparation and preservation.

Conclusion

Rural women can play a significant role by their effectual and competent involvement in entrepreneurial activities. They have basic indigenous knowledge, skill, potential and resources to establish and manage enterprise. Now, what is the need is knowledge regarding accessibility to loans, various funding agencies procedure regarding certification, awareness on government welfare programmes, motivation, technical skill and support from family, government and other organization. More over Formation and strengthening of rural women Entrepreneurs network must be encouraged to motivate other women to take up entrepreneurship ventures in agriculture and non-agriculture operations..

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