

A Case Study on Empowerment of Rural Women through Micro Entrepreneurship Development

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Abstract: Empowerment of rural women has emerged as an important issue in today. The economic empowerment of rural women is being regarded these days as a very popular sign of progress for a country, hence the issue of economic empowerment of women is a paramount importance to the Economists, Political thinkers, Social scientists and economic reformers. Self Help Groups (SHGs) have smoothed the way for economic independence for rural women. The members of Self Help Groups are involved in Micro Entrepreneurship. Through that Rural Women are becoming economically independent and providing employment opportunities to others in the nation. Basically, this article deals with empowerment of rural women through micro entrepreneurship and the role of micro entrepreneurship among the rural women. Economic empowerment of rural women led to development of family, community, society, state and nation therefore it is very necessary to give keen of our attention over empowerment of women in the rural area for the real development of our country in all spheres.

Keywords- Entrepreneurship, Micro-Enterprise, Rural Women and Self Help Groups.

I. Introduction

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.”

-By Jawaharlal Nehru.

The empowerment of rural women generally refers to the process of improving the quality of life and the economic wellbeing of women living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. According to the census of India, 2011, the population of India is more than 1.21 billion and out of it 72.20% population belongs to the rural area. Women constitute nearly 50 per cent of population, perform two-thirds of the work and produce 50 per cent of food commodities consumed by the country. They earn one third of remuneration and own 10 per cent of the property or wealth of the country. Women are regarded as the “better half” of the society and at par with the men. But unrealistically, our society is still male dominated and women are not treated as equal partners both inside and outside the four walls of the house. In fact they are treated as weak and dependent on men. As such Indian women enjoy an unfavourable status in society. Especially Rural Women in India constitute 77.00 per cent of the female population. They share abundant responsibility and perform a wide spectrum of duties in running the family, maintaining the household activities like rearing, feeding, attending to farm labour, tending domestic animals and the like, even then they suffer from being both economically and socially invisible. Within the framework of democratic policy, our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women’s advancement in different spheres.

The objective of this paper is to analyze the role of empowerment of women in rural India. It is giving lawful power or authority to act. If women were empowered they would be able to participate in the planning, execution and implementation of developmental schemes in rural development. Empowerment leads to development, which further leads to greater empowerment. The various programmes for women empowerment such as Swasthikti, Swayamsidha, Streeshakti, Balikasamrudhiyojana and another two thousand projects reveal that little has been done or achieved through these programmes for development of rural people in the country. The discrepancy in the ideology and practice of the empowerment policy of women in India constitutes its continued social, economic and social backwardness.

The purpose of this paper is to strengthen Rural Women in our nation by increasing their participation in Micro Entrepreneurship and to refine their decision-making capabilities. The implications of these findings and the importance of this study are discussed.

II. Rural Women and Entrepreneurship

The emergence of rural women entrepreneurship and their contribution to the national economy is quite noticeable in India. The numbers of women entrepreneurs have grown over a period of time, especially in late 20th century. Women entrepreneurs need to be lauded for their increased utilization of modern technology, increased investment, finding a niche in the global market, creating an extensive employment for others and setting the trend for other women entrepreneurs in the organized sector. While women entrepreneurs have demonstrated their potential, the fact remains that they are capable of contributing much more than what they already are. Therefore women entrepreneurs are needed to be studied separately for two more reasons.

First, women entrepreneurs have been recognized during the last decade as an important unexploited source of economic growth as they are creating new jobs for themselves and others and also by being different. They also provide the society with different solutions to management, organization and business problems as well as to the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities.

Secondly, women entrepreneurs have been neglected largely both in society in general and in the social sciences as well. 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.

Hence, 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.

III. Entrepreneurship Development of Rural Women through Self Help Groups (SHGs)

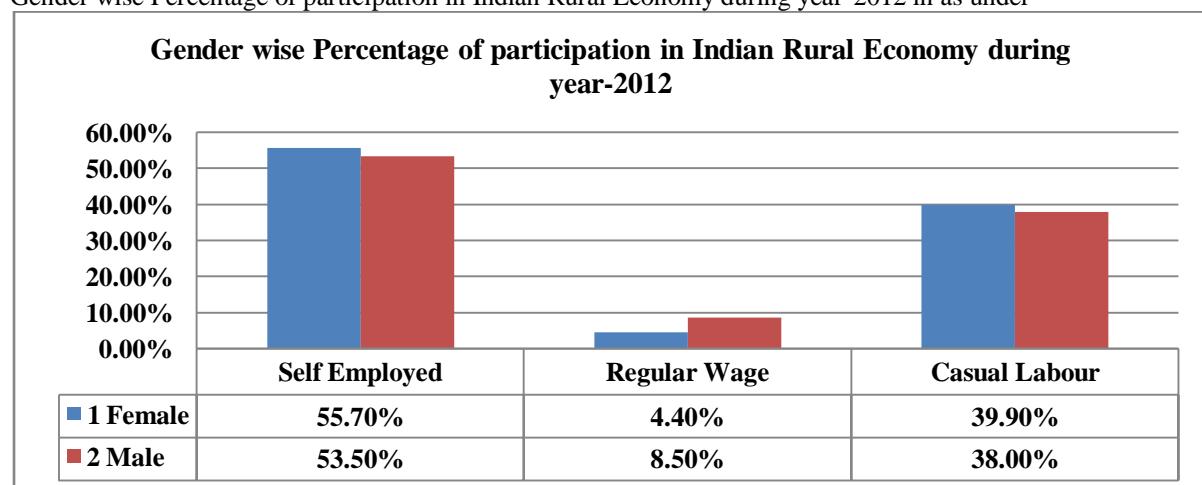
Women comprise half of human resources they have been identified as key agent of sustainable development. The contribution of women and their role in the family as well as in the economic development and social transformation are essential. Women constitute 90% of total marginal workers of the country. Rural women who are engaged in agriculture form 78% of all women in regular work.

Men and the project administrators are low that determine extent to which empowerment may or may not take place. Micro credit is promoting the small scale business enterprises and its major aim is to alleviate poverty by income generating activities among rural women. Therefore they could achieve self-sufficiency. Role of Self Help Group's is to improve the social and economic development of women and give the better status to women in households and communities at large. The micro entrepreneurship is strengthening the women and removing the gender inequalities. Self Help Group's micro credit mechanism makes the members to involve in other community development activities.

Now-a-days economic development is such a strong factor that has 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 programs with the help of Self Help Groups. Through that they were economically empowered and attaining very good status in family and community. Because development of society is directly related with the income generation capacity 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 mass of Indian population. Entrepreneurship on small scale is the only solution to the problems of unemployment. The delivery of micro finance to the poor is smooth, effective and less expensive if they are organized into Self Help Groups. All Self Help Groups are promoting micro enterprise through micro-credit intervention.

Gender wise Percentage of participation in Indian Rural Economy during year-2012 in as under-



As per above graphical representation 55.70% Rural women are Self Employed while the ratio of male is only 53.50%, 4.40% Rural women are engaged in regular wages while male candidate are 8.50% and casual labour comprise 39.90% of women and 38.00% of men in rural economy of India. As per result it makes us clear that interest of rural women is being increased towards the entrepreneurship in India.

The micro finance is an agenda for empowering rural women and micro enterprises are an integral part of planned strategy for securing balanced development of the economy. In fact Rural Women's participation in agro based activities is much more than what statistics expose and this is mainly due to the fact that most of the work done by the women at farm and home is hidden as a routine work. Mechanization and easy availability of labor provide more time to energetic women to engage themselves in self-employment. There is no scarcity of resources in our country to run the small enterprises based on rural. Rural women possess abundant resources to take up enterprises. Rural people have the benefit of easy availability of farm and livestock based raw material and other resources. Rural women play a vital role in farming and home system as they contribute substantially in the physical aspect of farming, livestock management, post-harvest and other allied activities also possesses unbelievable skills and indigenous knowledge in this area. The direct and indirect contributions of rural women in the said activities have not only help to save their assets but also led to increase the family income. They have always been found in various individual or collective income generation programs with the help of Self Help Groups. This will not only generate income for them but also improve the decision-making capabilities that led to empowerment in all spheres.

IV. Scope of Micro-Enterprise Development

Scope of micro-enterprise depends on number of factors from landholdings, subsidiary occupations, agro climatic conditions, political and socio-personal characteristics and family member of the rural women. It also differs from place to place. Generally, micro-enterprise development is classified into three major heads like,

- 1.1. Agriculture and allied agriculture activities, like cultivating to organic vegetables, food grains, seasonal fruits, flowers, oil seeds and seed production besides mushroom growing and bee-keeping. Some more areas can be like dehydration of fruits and vegetables, bottling or canning of pickles, chutneys, jams, squashes, dairy and other products that are ready or semi ready to eat.
- 1.2. Livestock management activities, like dairy farming, poultry farm, domestic animals feed production and production of dung cake using by animal waste can be an important area in which women can utilize both of their technical skills and raw materials from the farm and livestock to earn substantial income and small scale agro-processing units.
- 1.3. Household based operations, like knitting, stitching, weaving, embroidery, bakery flour milling, petty shops, food preparation and preservation etc.

“Micro finance cannot provide a definite answer to the challenges of poverty alleviation, but it can lead to financial inclusion by providing credit to the customer as per his/her own needs.”

Rural Development Minister, Shri Jairam Ramesh

V. Role of Micro-Entrepreneurship in Rural Area

Empowering women especially in rural area is a great challenge and micro enterprises in rural area can help to meet these all challenges. The roll of micro-entrepreneurship is not only enhance national productivity, generate employment but also help to develop economic independence, personal and social capabilities among rural women like

- Economic empowerment
- Improves standard of living
- Self confidence
- Increases social interaction
- Engagement in political activities
- Increases participation in different meetings and seminars
- Enhance awareness
- Sense of achievement
- Improves the leadership qualities
- Improves decision making capacity in family and community
- Expertness in problem solving matters related to women and community
- Participation in seminars and conferences

Finally we can say with confidence that economic empowerment of rural women through micro entrepreneurship led to the empowerment of women in so many things such as socio-economics opportunity,

property rights, political participation and representation, social equality, personal right, market development, family development, community development, societal development, state development and at last development of the nation.

VI. Conclusion

No economy can sustain itself without participation of all its eligible working members. Government has devised many programs to empower rural women in various avenues. Empowering women to participate in economic development is not only a daunting and challenging task but also paving path for future sustainable development. Women's entrepreneurship is both about women's position in society and about the role of entrepreneurship in the same society. Because women entrepreneurs have to face many obstacles specifically in market their product that have to be overcome in order to give them access to the same opportunities as men. While in other developed countries, women may experience obstacles with respect to holding property and entering contracts. Increased participation of women in micro enterprises and labour force is a prerequisite for improving the position of women in society self-employed women. The entry of rural women particularly in micro enterprises will be encouraged and motivated. Rural women can do wonder by their effectual and competent involvement in entrepreneurial activities. Women entrepreneur networks are major source of knowledge about women's entrepreneurship and are increasingly recognized as a valuable tool for its development and promotion. This network helps to deliver lectures, printed material imparting first hand technical knowledge in production, processing, procurement, management and marketing among the other rural women. Also micro entrepreneurs are motivating other rural women to engage in the same activities with the right assistance and strengthening their capacities besides adding to the family income and national productivity.

Micro enterprise is an effective instrument of social and economic development and is only perfect solution to the growing employment among rural youth. It really helps to generate employment for a number of people within their own social system and is best tool for rural women as it enables them to add to the family income while taking care of their own home and domestic animals centered task.

Empowerment would not hold any meaning unless they are made strong, alert and aware of their equal status in the society particularly in rural areas. Policies should be framed to bring them into the mainstream of society. It is important to educate the women particularly in rural areas. The need of the hour is to improve female literacy as education holds the key to development women in rural India.

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