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RESEARCH ARTICLE

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT BY LIVELIHOOD PROJECT FOR RURAL WOMEN OF CHHATARPUR AND TIKAMGARH DISTRICT MADHYA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

This paper tries to find out the facts and status of women livelihood in India in recent years. Women typically invest in their families and communities significantly to increase the quality of life for themselves and their families. Financial independence enables women to organize themselves increase their self-reliance and it provides greater autonomy. It ensures participation of women in policy and decision-making the process at domestic and public levels. This research paper tries to put forward the current status and contribution of women workers in garment industry as well as importance of skill upgradation and training to improve the living conditions, livelihood status and entrepreneurial opportunities of women, especially in Two district of Madhya Pradesh, i.e. Tikamgarh and Chhatarpur.

INTRODUCTION

Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest sons of India, quoted that, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved, It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing."¹ Therefore, the inclusion of "Women Empowerment" must be as one of the prime development goals of India. It has been evident that women in India have made a considerable progress in almost every sector since the time immortal; such as education, politics, philosophy, science art, literature and culture. As well as if talking about pre and post-independence, then we must consider that women have greatly contributed in freedom movement, sports, service sector, social welfare and science and technology. But somehow, due to the deep-rooted patriarchal mentality in the Indian society, women are still victimized, humiliated, tortured and exploited. They still have to suffer and struggle against many taboos and social evils in the male-dominated society. There are still a lot of factors exist in the modern society of India that resists the forward march of its women folk. Marking the International Day of Rural Women, the United Nations stated that "especially rural women suffer unaccountably from poverty, and face multiple forms of discrimination, violence and insecurity as compared to rural men and urban men and women."² If wants to attain the status of a developed country, India needs to metamorphose its immense women force into an effective human resource and

this is possible only through the empowerment of women. Women empowerment means liberation of women from the nasty grips of social, economic, political, legal, caste and gender-based discrimination. That means consenting women the freedom to make their own life choices.⁴

Major landmark steps taken for women empowerment: Provisions made under the Constitution of India such as: Right to equality under Article 14 of the Indian Constitution guarantees to all Indian women equality before law; Equal pay for equal work under Article 39(d), guards the economic rights of women by guaranteeing equal pay for equal work;⁵ and Maternity Relief under Article 42, allows provisions to be made by the state for securing just and humane condition of work and maternity relief for women⁶. Prime focus of our women empowerment policy should be on learning skills, capacity building, girl education, gender equality, and skill based livelihood. The social and economic liberation will increase the involvement of women in decision making and strengthen their position in family and society as well as fast-tracks growth and reduce poverty in a sustainable way. Economic independence through livelihood is a process of acquiring power for women in order to understand their rights and to perform their responsibilities towards oneself and others in a most effective way. In order to empower women through sustainable livelihood, Govt. of India is running various welfare schemes and policies, both at State and Central levels for the empowerment of woman.

Various government policies and schemes: The Government of India Some of the major programs and measures include Swadhar (1995), Swayam Siddha (2001), Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP-2003), Sabla Scheme (2010), National Mission for Empowerment of Women (2010) etc. All such policies focus on overall empowerment of women of various age groups. In order to improve women employment and participation in workforce, three strategies have been outlined in this section. The strategies highlight the importance of financial inclusion, technology and community participation in improving access to livelihood opportunities and quality of work. Formation of Self Help Groups which may help to mobilize and empower members of the society through their common interest, resource planning and improved access to social services. Providing access to physical, social and financial support offers opportunities to organize and generate business and thus empowering women.

1. Leveraging technology and providing skill development trainings to create alternative job/entrepreneur opportunities.
2. Enhancing livelihood through financial inclusion.

This goal may be achieved through women livelihood and entrepreneurship, which now has been recognized as an important source of economic growth. This is such opportunity that can and is making a strong contribution to the economic well-being of individual, families and communities, also a huge effort in the direction of eradicating poverty and enabling women empowerment; thus contributing to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) such as:

1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. To achieve universal primary education
3. To promote gender equality and empower women,
4. To develop a global partnership for development, etc. as stated in the report of United Nations' 2000 Millennium Summit held at UN Head Office in New York from 6th to 8th Sept. 2000. Here I mentioned only those directly related to women and their wellbeing.⁷

As a result, governments across the world as well as various developmental organizations are actively undertaking promotion of women entrepreneurs through various schemes, incentives and promotional measures. Kirithana Ramarapu is the Master Franchise owner of 'Kinder dance India', Bangalore. He says that 'Women entrepreneurship' is like a discipline for a child that begins at home. Women have been entrepreneurs in different ways. A house wife is an entrepreneur as she manages her time, strategizes and plans on ways to secure her children's future, passionate about her home and family and wears so many more different hats for a successful life. Today, we have given it a name "Entrepreneur" as she steps out into the arena. In today's world, women have scaled greater heights in different industries." "A women Entrepreneur is one who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent."⁸

METHODOLOGY

This is an Analytical research which includes information from a range of sources but focuses on analyzing the different viewpoints represented from a factual rather than opinionated

standpoint. The paper will be with a summation of the findings and a suggested framework for further study on the issue. 24 number of women trainees from District Tikamgarh and Chhatarpur, Madhya Pradesh, were interviewed during their 20 days training conducted at NIFT Bhopal centre in June 2017 as well as a one day demonstration workshop conducted at NIFT Bhopal under the craft cluster activity in Nov. 2016. Based on the discussion and the observation of the work of women trainees produced during the training, the study has been framed; with literature review based on MP State Government reports, TRIFED reports, demographic studies, cultural studies and various journals, reviews, books and articles to substantiate the authenticity of the research.

In summary, women are less likely than men to start a business, and the entrepreneurial gender gap increases with higher stages of economic development. Women who believe they are capable of earning their livelihood and starting a business have greater odds of reporting entrepreneurial activity, regardless of the stage of economic development, while age and education have a variable impact.

Limitations: This research was conducted with two groups of trainee women who belong to Tikamgarh and Chhatarpur District of Madhya Pradesh and attended an advanced skill development training organized by Tejaswini Rural Women Empowerment Programme, M.P. with technical support of NIFT, Bhopal.

Data Highlights: Tikamgarh and Chhatarpur districts lie in the northern part of Madhya Pradesh that is also known as Bundelkhand region known as Jaishakti (the name derived from the ruler's name) or jujhauti indicating the "land of warriors". The districts were the part of vast empires successively ruled by the Mauryas, the Sungas and the imperial Guptas. It was in the first quarter of ninth century A.D., that Mannuka founded a new dynasty the Chandel dynasty in this area. Tikamgarh along with Khajuraho and Mahoba formed part of extensive Chandel Kingdom. Tikamgarh District, in the Sagar region is a district of Madhya Pradesh with its administrative headquarters located at Tikamgarh city. According to 2011 census, the district encompasses a geographical area of 5048 sq km and has a population of 14,45,166 (persons) including 7,60,355 (males) and 6,84,811 (females). The district has a sex ratio of 901 (females for every 1000 males). The major religions in the district are Hindu (95.73%) and Muslim (3.05%) of the total population respectively.

The literacy rate in the district is 61.43% (persons), 71.77% (males) and 49.97% (females). Main spoken languages are Hindi (99.49%), Urdu (0.31%) and Sindhi (0.07%). Chhatarpur District, in the Sagar region is a district of Madhya Pradesh with its administrative headquarters located at Chhatarpur city. According to 2011 census, the district encompasses a geographical area of 8687 sq km and has a population of 17,62,375 (persons) including 9,36,121 (males) and 8,26,254 (females). The district has a sex ratio of 883 (females for every 1000 males). The major religions in the district are Hindu (95.15%) and Muslim (3.99%) of the total population respectively. The literacy rate in the district is 63.74% (persons), 72.66% (males) and 53.59% (females). Main spoken languages are Hindi (99.09%), Urdu (0.62%) and Punjabi (0.04%).⁹

DISCUSSION

Livelihood for women: Empowering women through livelihood projects plays an imperative role in the growth of any society. Development of entrepreneurship culture is the major requirement for industrial growth. Commercial skills are essential for industrialisation and for alleviation of mass unemployment and poverty. With an evident growth in technology that gear up lives, women are an emerging economic force, which cannot be neglected by the policy makers. Women are trying their level best to attain quality of opportunity in various ways which are different over the time and among societies. A self-employed woman is gaining better status and it enables her to take part in decision making in their family affairs. Employment can help women's economic independence and their improved social status. Through this economic independence automatically women gets empowerment also. Development of women employment as well as entrepreneurship enables men to understand and appreciate women's abilities. This in turn can lead rationalisation of domestic life and it creates awareness about the potential in women through which, individual families and society at large can benefit. Women employment through enhancing their status with men also can lead to integration of women in economic development.

Role of women in garment industry: In urban cities, more and more women are successfully running day care centers, placement services, beauty parlours etc. On the other hand, In rural areas, Self-help Groups (SHGs) bank linkage have changed the face of rural India. Women groups account for nearly 95 percent of SHGs, who use these funds to take up and expand micro businesses. Employment opportunities for women are increasing in the garments sector and related activities; consequent to the growth in demand in the domestic market as well as in the export market. Acknowledging the overwhelming presence of women workers in the unorganized sectors, these sectors could be aptly called as the female sector.. According to Papola, about 90 per cent of the total workforce in India is in the unorganized sectors; women workers in them form a still higher proportion, about 97 per cent.¹⁰ We may understand the fact by a few examples, such as SEWA, RUAAB and KUMBAYA. SEWA is a trade union registered in 1972. It is an organization of poor, self-employed women workers. These are women who earn a living through their own labor or small businesses. SEWA's main goals are to organize women workers for full employment. Full employment means employment whereby workers obtain work security, income security, food security and social security (at least health care, child care and shelter). SEWA organizes women to ensure that every family obtains full employment. By self-reliance we mean that women should be autonomous and self-reliant, individually and collectively, both economically and in terms of their decision-making ability.¹¹ Ruaab SEWA represents a unique model of garment production and sourcing that is owned and managed by women producers, which ensures ethical and transparent supply chain.¹² SPS Kumbaya's unique significance of Kumbaya is that products are made by women from one of the most remote, backward and poor regions of India, village Bagli, because of a new skill and employment opportunity introduced in a predominantly agrarian region where there have been no traditional marketable crafts.¹³ The women were trend to produce beautiful craft with left over fabrics to create patch work which produces zero waste and making the women self-

reliant. These are a few examples to showcase that women are excellently exhibiting their skill and talent if given proper opportunity, education and training.

Tejaswini rural women empowerment programme

Tejaswini Rural Woman Empowerment Programme is being implemented by the Madhya Pradesh Mahila Vitta Vikas Nigam, Bhopal in the six districts of M.P, namely Balaghat, Dindori, Mandla, Panna, Chhatarpur and Tikamgarh, with the financial assistance of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The project started in the year 2007 and is to be completed during financial year 2018-19. Under the project, 205644 rural women through 16361 women SHGs were mobilized in six districts named above. Objective of the programme is to make women socially, economically and politically empowered and connect them to the mainstream of the society. These groups, as well as the group members were provided with different empowerment inputs/trainings, namely group management and accounting, decision taking and prioritizing their needs, conflicts management, gender sensitization, income enhancement inputs, legal awareness, health & hygiene and management of the group funds for improving the lives of the member women. The overall goal of the programme is to enable Tejaswini women to make use of choices, spaces and opportunities for their improved wellbeing.

Introduction and background of the project: Through initial discussions and as per the approval received from Madhya Pradesh Mahila Vitta Vikas Nigam, NIFT Bhopal provided a 20 days training to women of Chhatarpur District to upgrade their skill in pattern making and garment construction. Basic Pattern development and industrial pattern making techniques and Understanding of different components of construction methods with prototype development was to be delivered to a group of 24 women. NIFT Bhopal prepared a detailed report after the training is completed considering the above points.

Project objective and scope: The objective of this rigorous training workshop is to provide livelihood to rural women of Chhatarpur and Tikamgarh district through Pattern making and garment manufacturing techniques with industrial sewing machine.

Approach, methodology and processes: This training modules familiarized the participants with industrial sewing machine, common and essential sewing skill. It educated them to use pattern making on unstitched fabric for apparels (different kurti, bodice block, crop top, different skirts etc.) which will ultimately enhance their designing skills and thus, would help them to construct their product financially viable and finally creating livelihood in tourist places like Khajuraho.

Target Group: This was a 20 days module based course; designed for a set of 24 no. of trainees from District Tikamgarh and Chhatarpur (M.P.) who have done a basic tailoring course.

Training and deliverables: Through this course, the participants learnt

- Machine operation & practice, Plackets, Seams, Heming, Fasteners, Necklines, Collars, Sleeves, Bodice Block, Ladies kurti/ kurta, Crop top, Skirts etc.

Technical support of national institute of fashion technology, Bhopal: A training module and Curricula was

prepared by Textile Design faculty of NIFT, Bhopal for the SHG women of Tikamgarh and Chhatarpur District of Madhya Pradesh. This training was aimed to develop the range of products, especially women apparels over Industrial sewing Machines using various modern techniques and patterns as per the need of today's readymade garment sector. The aim was to enhance the skill of SHG women so that the hard working females can get employment in turn to their enormous efforts of creating their livelihood through the entrepreneurship. The idea behind this was to purely provide benefit to SHG women and to make them self-dependent in terms of livelihood. The updated knowledge and skill would help them to create the range of contemporary apparels which can easily secure their place in today's aesthetically educated customer's closets. Keeping in mind, a comprehensive research was done and the 20 days' workshop was technically supported and materialized by NIFT, Bhopal at centre. Accordingly, the curricula was planned and structured taking care of the level of trainees, and the desired outcome. The curricula was planned and structured taking care of the level of trainees, and the desired outcome.

SWOT

Strength: Participants were more enthusiastic towards learning; hence, took less time to adopt the deliverance. They have the basic knowledge of garment construction as they had attended basic training of tailoring which make it easier to learn the technical aspect. They were responsible and disciplined members with Good cooperation, unity with Good participation of all.

Weakness: Trainees were lacking in visualization and exposure; thus, they could not make highly designed garments. The trainee women were literate but not highly educated, thus it was not easy to teach them drafting patterns and technical intricacies. Literacy rate was too low and some of them didn't even know the numbering and basic measurement calculations.

Opportunities: The training would help the SHG women to make their livelihood and uplift economic conditions. They can work for factories and designer's workshops, which will uplift their family income and social status. As SHG groups, they can start their Small Scale Industry at their own place to fulfil the demand of local market which would promote entrepreneurship and create livelihood not only for them but for others who will join the group as vendor, worker etc.

Threats:

- Lack of family support.
- Lack of cooperation from outsiders, apparently service providers.
- A third set of factors is related to economic management of group enterprises.
- Marketing and management related issues need continuous assistance by support providers including Government's line departments.
- Above all- competitors, who are continuously trying to capture the need of local market.

Impact of training programme

As per feedback received from the coordinating agency, Madhya Pradesh Mahila Vitta Evam Vikas Nigam; the women who received advanced training of stitching and

pattern making have done substantial and remarkable achievement. Few are as follows-

- Fashion Tailoring Centres have been established in Tikamgarh.
- Participants from Chhatarpur started training centre at District Panna, M.P.
- Some have got employment in Kaushal Unnayan Kendra.
- Also, They are repeatedly exhibiting their garments in Bhopal Haat and DB City mall, Bhopal for sale.

Thus, the module remain successful and the collaborative efforts of National Institute of Fashion Technology, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh Mahila Vitta Evam Vikas Nigam and IFAD could achieve a level of satisfaction through the conduct of training programme.

Suggestions

"Empowerment of women is essential for an empowered and stable society", said A.P.J Abdul Kalam, Former President of India on the occasion of International Women's Day. Empowerment of women was essential as their thoughts and value systems led to the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation. When women were empowered, society with stability was assured, he said while extending greetings to women for their role in shaping the destiny of the nation. Women empowerment should embody various factors like equality of work and wages, expansion of education, self-sufficiency over multiplicative life, access to ownership of land and property, training and technology, access to credit and markets. If women are to be empowered economically it is fundamental to provide them with channels of credit, employment, training leadership skills and social security. All these on the other hand require creation of an environment through suitable policies, programmes and adequate financial resources. The rural women are willing hard workers and enterprising; it is just they need proper timely guidance and support whether it is related to marketing of their product or any financial assistance for better growth and development of their business. Regular training and exposure to current trends and systems would lead to better management by these women of their business and growth. The number of women entrepreneurs has grown over a period of time, especially in the 1990's. According to the second All India Census of registered Small Scale Industries (for the base year 1987-88) share of women in the SSI sector was only 7.70 per cent. In 1998, it is estimated that women entrepreneurs comprise about 12 per cent of the total entrepreneurs in India. It is also clear that this percentage is growing and if the prevailing trends continue, it is not unlikely that in another five years, women will comprise 20 percent of the entrepreneurial force in India. Sixty percent of the garment workforce across India is female¹⁴, with significant variation by region. 28 India has high rates of informal and home-based work, particularly among women, so the number of women contributing to the global apparel sector is likely much larger. Economists recognize that India will not be able to reach its economic potential without increasing women's participation in the formal workforce and economy. Recently, the government launched programs to bring "trainees" from rural areas to urban centers like Bangalore to learn trades and work in facilities like apparel sector factories. These trainees are often the first unmarried women from their villages to migrate to the

city, and these jobs are likely their first formal employment opportunities. As such, the number of women participating in India's formal economy is set to rise significantly, and addressing vulnerabilities and preventing abuses will be key to the country's on-going development and success.

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