

## EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN FOR SERICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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**Following are the roofs of women's vulnerability :**

- The limitations of natural resources against increasing population.
- A skewed resource and power structure which continues to persist inspite of change in policies.
- Uneven development of agriculture productivity through irrigation, scientific agriculture, access to inputs, infrastructure etc.,
- Patriarchial social/family ideologies which discriminate in terms of women's access.
- Most of the agricultural extension programmes focus on male farmers, so women must rely on second hand information.
- Women have difficulty in obtaining credit due to lack of education, assets etc.
- Women's legal position remains inferior. They are home bond without access to productive resources such as land, credit, technology, inputs and markets.
- The traditional hierarchial structure of rural society which dictate women's role and status.

**This situation presents a rather tragic picture hence, the women consider sericulture as the multiple advantageous to pursue as it is.**

- Easy to pursue in comparison with the land nature of farm labour.
- Highly income generating and contributes successful maintenance of livelihood for small, marginal farmers and also land less families.

- Labour convenient to pursue since it can be synchronized with other household activities.
- She can control her timing, rather than having to be at some other persons beck and call.
- She control her own earnings the harder she works more she earns.
- She is ensured of a year round income
- She learns to deal with people outside her home/community develops her own personality and self confidence, and
- Technology simpler and lighter than other activities and most suitable to women mainly under the shade.

With the view to facilitate greater participation of women in sericulture and to highlight their active involvement in sericulture activities the following areas have been identified:

1. Improving access to resources
2. Enhancement of managerial autonomy
3. Imparting better knowledge and skills
4. Improving social recognition and prestige.

Following are the action plans undertaken, major operational problems identified and the suggestion to overcome with special reference to sericulture in each of the areas identified.

**1. Improving Access to Resources**—To improve the access of women to resources, the following action plans have been undertaken.

- Allotment of rested land to women beneficiaries either as individual or in groups for taking sericulture activities.
- Access to leased land by women groups for taking up sericulture.

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- Access to credit both on farm and non-farm activities
- Names of wife and their husbands should be written jointly in the sericultural passbooks and all the facilities normally available on its production are extended to women also.

**Major operational problems affects its implementation are :**

- In case of assignment of Government land to women groups, the land was earmarked, but patta in their names is yet to be recorded and paper to be handed over. As a result, the women are facing sense of insecurity in respect of their tenure and status.
  - The allotted land to the women's groups is located far off from their homes. The women find it difficult to regularly supervise mulberry cultivation as they have to carry out household responsibilities also. As a result, the crop growth gets affected and in turn the feed quality becomes poor leading to poor growth of the worms.
  - Ownership of land being traditionally a male prerogative, men will be ridiculed by fellow farmers when they decide to transfer land to their wives names or for co-titleship. Women being part of the same socio-cultural setup, disagrees on this on the ground that it is against tradition and leads to family disputes. Moreover, land is always in the names of eldest/oldest person of the family for the sake of security, so that, other family members take care of them in the old age. Breaking this custom is a challenge to the implementation scheme.
  - Lack of possession of assets in the women's name hinders to avail credit.
- For this following measures are suggested :
- Distribution of land rights through joint ownership or co-title in the form of patta should be expedited to secure more enthusiastic response.
  - While selecting the land for allocation,

proximity to the village should be one of the prime considerations.

- Women should avail the credit without possession of assets. Tie-up arrangements are made between banks and cocoon markets just like in seed areas.
- Establishment of Self Help Groups (SHGs) or co-operatives for their own credit network.
- Women entrepreneurs in groups can be linked with DWCRA project, wherever possible. These groups can be registered as an associations or Mahila mandal on their own or be grouped under established well reputed NGO's. Credit facilities are extended to the registered associations or Mahila mandals either on individual basis or group basis under IRDP (like Karnataka State Department of Sericulture)
- At least 33 per cent of the credit facilities should be available under various schemes for women.

**2. Enhancement of Managerial Autonomy**—To enhance managerial autonomy among women cocoon markets were made women friendly by providing certain facilities exclusively for women. The strategies adopted are as follows :

- Separate space is provided in the cocoon markets, priority is given to auction, weighing and paid at the earliest in preference to men separate rest rooms with sanitary facilities was provided in the markets.
- Promotion of women groups for taking up sericultural activities like manufacturing of sericultural inputs, running of CRCs, reeling units, spinning of silk wastes etc.
- Support was given to Mahila mandals to establish sales-cum service centres for silkworm rearing equipments and bed disinfectants.
- Trainings were imparted among women groups for leadership development



- Awareness and appreciation of new technology was created among women sericulturist through study tours and demonstrations.
- The field staffs were motivated through gender sensitization programmes to involve the women in development programmes in a meaningful way for implementation.

**Major operational problems identified during its implementation are :**

- In facilitation marketing of cocoons, the extent of women participation varies from region to region. Generally, women find it difficult to take part in marketing in view of their domestic work, childcare etc. As a result, the men dominate in the cocoon markets with less number of women.
- Assistance to women groups to take up sericulture as one of their group income generating activities. This envisaged optimum level of DFLs brushing by each member of the group. Based on such assumption equipments like trays and mountages are purchased. But in reality the women are not able to produce sufficient mulberry leaves, which reduced brushing capacity. Thus good number of trays and mountages remain unutilized.

**To enhance managerial autonomy among women following measures may be taken :**

- In view of the prevalent problems of women attending centralized marketing centres, establishment of cluster wise collection centres and monitoring will facilitate more effective participation (like Silk Exchange Markets in Karnataka).
- Cocoon marketing committees should include women members, so that problems and facilities for women will be taken care.
- The women need to be properly educated on the various technological dimensions of sericulture and closer monitoring by sericulture department is needed to ensure appropriate utilization of infrastructural facilities.

- Organize entrepreneur development programmes for women sericulturists.
- Develop and popularize women friendly technologies to reduce drudgery and enhance productivity and quality.
- Organize trainings in management

**3. Imparting Better Knowledge and Skills**—Towards this end, the following programmes are contemplated for women.

- One month training in silkworm rearing at sericulture school
- Ten days training camp at village level in silkworm rearing.
- Three months training in reeling activities. The trainees would be assisted with capital and equipment
- Conducting study tours both inside and outside the states.
- Training the trainers in effective transfer of technology
- Developing special teaching aid's in the form of charts, models and audio-visual aids for effective communication to the women sericulturists.

**Operational problems which affects its implementation are :**

- The demonstrations/trainings are mostly conducted at the premises of the big farmers representing the upper castes in the villages. The women belonging to the disadvantaged sector feel reluctant to attend such demonstrations/trainings. Thus, the transfer of technology capability of such women gets affected and is evidenced through gaps in knowledge and skills required to take up sericulture effectively.
- Even the sericulturists camp of few days duration also dominated by women from upper castes. As a result, the problems faced by the lower caste women do not get reflected properly.
- Then women being mostly illiterate or neo-literate find it difficult to comprehend the information mostly given through verbal media.



- Generally, in the absence of female extension workers the technical information reaches women through males of the household or through neighbouring women in their gossip groups, but rarely through extension personnel was an another handicap.
- Low participation in training programmes by women sericulturists.

**For this, the following measures are suggested :**

- The social dynamics should be looked into more effectively, while conducting demonstrations/trainings for women sericulturists in the villages,
- It is advisable to use adequate and appropriate visuals and audio-visuals in trainings.
- Appointment of female extension workers to work in sericultural villages with the women. So technical information reach the women sericulturists directly. Since rural women interact more easily when the trainers too are women.
- Enrollment of women for training programmes in greater number
- Organize apprenticeship training for women in improved diversified or on alternative skills.

**4. Improving Social Recognition and Prestige**—To improve the social recognition

and prestige less/no action plans have been undertaken. Therefore, the suggested measures are :

- The important role played by the women in different fields of sericulture should be emphasized through increased contacts by sericultural workers,
- Organizing seminars with women beneficiaries where they can come in contact with their counterparts from other areas and also find a forum for mutual exchange of ideas.
- Best successful women in different fields of sericulture should be awarded suitably and regularly.

## CONCLUSION

The process of women's empowerment in sericulture is conceptualized in terms of access to resources like land and credit, enhanced managerial autonomy, imparted knowledge and skills and also improved social recognition and prestige. Empowerment of women in sericultural field is not much complicated process because of its multiple advantages, limited areas and few strategies. Under each area several implemented projects need to be modified, new projects are to be formulated and carried out.

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