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Women Entrepreneurship and Milk Cooperatives in India

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ABSTRACT

Women entrepreneurship has been recognized as an important source of economic growth. The improvement of women's livelihoods is to be seen as a necessary precondition to sustainable development. Government of India taken up a project called White Revolution / Operation Flood through cooperatives by implementing Anand Pattern throughout India for improving the living standards of the rural people, rural economy as well as empowerment and entrepreneurship of Women. The milk cooperatives at various levels give concentrated attention to encourage women to take up departmental work. The main aim of this article is to analyze the phenomenal growth of women entrepreneurship through encouraging household women farmers to keep more milch animals, movement of procurement and input systems, enrolment, registering and managing women milk cooperative societies. The main objective of the study is to analyze the improvement of socio economy status, entrepreneurship and empowerment of women farmers.

KEYWORDS : Women Milk Producers, Socio Economy, Empowerment, Entrepreneurship

INTRODUCTION

Women entrepreneurs create new jobs for themselves and others and also provide society with different solutions to management, organization and business problems. Women's entrepreneurship can make a particularly strong contribution to the economic well-being of the family and communities, poverty reduction and women's empowerment, thus contributing to the millennium development goals. Thus, governments across the world as well as various developmental organizations are actively undertaking promotion of women entrepreneurs through various schemes, incentives and promotion measures.

Dairy sector has assumed much significance by generating income not only to the rural but also to the urban and semi-urban population in the state especially to women folk by providing self employment opportunity. Milk and milk products provide essential nutrition to all walks of life. Dairying provides the main source of income next to agriculture. In a tropical country like India, agriculture may fail sometimes, due to monsoon failure but dairying never fails and gives them regular, steady income.

Milk production in India is characterized by the fact that almost every farmer and a large proportion of landless agricultural workers are milk producers. Nearly two-thirds of milk producers are small and marginal farmers and landless agricultural workers. Operation Flood had produced many indirect benefits to the rural population. Dairying helped the economic emancipation of women in many villages. Exclusive Societies for Women producers have been formed in India, where women have emerged as leaders and formed social groups to promote the welfare of women, especially those belonging to the economically weaker section. All these developments clearly demonstrated that dairying can establish itself as a very effective instrument of women's socio-economic change in the rural areas.

OPERATION FLOOD

The world's largest dairy development programme ever undertaken, the Operation Flood (OF) undertook the gigantic task of upgrading and modernization milk production, procurement, processing and marketing with assistance provided by the World Food Programme, the European Economic Community (EEC), the World Bank and other international agencies. Designed and implemented by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and the Indian Dairy Corporation (IDC), the project was launched in July 1970. Its basic concept comprises the establishment of cooperative structure on the Anand Pattern and its aims are to increase milk production in the villages and to improve the living standards of the rural poor and rural economy by increasing supplementary income, fair prices to producers and consumers and employment opportunities in the rural areas and reduce malpractices by milk traders and merchants introduced by Dr.Varghese Kurian who is popularly known as the milk man in India and father of White Revolution. He said that it is the elimination of the intermediaries that is responsible for the success of the Anand pattern of dairy cooperatives.

Operation Flood was implemented in three phases and the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) has initiated a special training programme for women.

WOMEN IN MILK COOPERATIVES

Women contribution is grateful to the economy. Employment of women is a index of their economic status in society specially with reference to equality. It is significant to point out that women constitute 90% of the total marginal workers – of course, regional variations are wide. Of the total employment of women, the organized sector employment forms only 4% whereas, the rest of the women are engaged in the unorganized sector. Several factors account for this situation. Among these are absences of appropriate marketable skills. Women also tend to get easily displaced by new technologies. With the introduction of new macro-economic policies, skill and vocational training for women assume key importance.

It is important that poorer the family, the greater is dependence on women's economic production. These women's earnings increase the aggregate income levels of these poor households. Also important is the fact that Indian women contribute a much larger share of their earnings to basic family maintenance than do men. Increases in women's income translate more directly into better health, childcare, and shelter.

In a nutshell, women's earnings, in the short term, have an immediate positive effect on the incidence and severity of poverty at the household level. In the long term, there are important intergenerational effects on the quality of human capital.

It is assumed that dairy-farming has the greatest potentiality to benefit the rural population including the small and marginal farmers and agriculture labourers for economic growth and development as stated in the National Commission on Agriculture Report (1971).

It is also assumed that the NDDB, Anand pattern for development of dairy cooperatives is appropriate for land-poor and land-less women because:

- dairying is recognized as being women's work,
- the products and income from dairying can be controlled by women,
- the Anand Pattern takes the household with a small number of milch cattle as the unit of production – which is the traditional mode of production.

The Operation Flood Programme, to which these action programmes are a response, is a marketing infrastructure for dairy development in the country. It is assumed that poor can take care of themselves; the poor, however, need a whole package of inputs and services to generate adequate returns from their assets. Whereas many of these inputs and services are available, under OF

Programme, the entire package of inputs, especially loans, are yet not part of the OF Programme, in practical terms. Although these inputs are available through various government programmes, they are not, as the experience goes, always easily accessible to poor rural women.

WOMEN DEVELOPMENT

Milch cattle in India are mainly tended by women. Amul realized this and built women development activities as an important component of its dairy development programme. In the early phases of Operation Flood, the strategy was to train women in modern animal husbandry practices, and a large number of training programmes were specifically organized for them. Special incentives were given to all women dairy cooperative societies in order to encourage participation of women in governance of the cooperatives.

Exclusive milk societies for women producers have been formed in India, where women have emerged as leaders and formed social groups to promote the welfare of women, especially those belonging to the economically weaker section. All these developments clearly demonstrated that dairying can establish itself as a very effective instrument of women's socio-economic change in the rural areas.

In its 1976 report on rural employment, the National Commission on Agriculture observed that next to crops, animal husbandry programmes have the largest employment potential. The most important features of these programmes are that they provide subsidiary occupation, offer gainful employment at the location itself, and make better utilization of female and child labour. Most of these programmes are particularly suitable for weaker sections of the rural community and have re-distributive effect on rural income in favour of them.

Operation Flood has also played an important role in generating employment for women. With 3.5 million milk supplies, "it is reasonable to assume that 5 per cent represented women who were able to stay at home rather than go out for work. This withdrawal of women from the labour force will have created an additional 1,75,000 labouring jobs, pre-dominantly for the very poor", reveals the assessment report of the World Bank in 1998.

SOCIO ECONOMY OF WOMEN MILK PRODUCERS

To improve the socio economic conditions of poor rural women belongs to SC/ST, asset less women and Self-help-Group, the Government of India sponsored Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) Scheme at a total cost of Rs.649.464 lakhs, with 90% Government of India share of Rs.584.518 lakhs and the balance 10% share of Rs.64.946 lakhs to be met by the implementing agency. The period of the scheme is 3 years from 2002 to 2005 and further extended to March 2008, with an objective to identify Self-Help-Group women who are interested in Dairy Sector, for organizing exclusive Women Dairy Cooperative Societies and to provide training and employment opportunities by arranging milch animals loans and to collect milk from them.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Rural women are not only engaged in routine household work as wives and mothers but also significantly contribute to family income through their productive family labour of looking after the dairying part of the mixed agricultural farming enterprise round the year. They enhance their day-to-day family income by increasing the productivity of their milch animals through the optimum use of technical inputs and services made available at their doorstep at a reasonable cost through their own village cooperative. The Kaira study indicates that 71 percent of the households (92 percent of milk producing households), utilizes the technical inputs provided by the cooperatives. They are also apprised of the various aspects of scientific animal husbandry and indirectly become conscious of their own social welfare regarding family health, nutrition, family planning etc., which leads to the technical modernization of rural society.



WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Women entrepreneurs may be defined as the women or a group of women who initiate, organize and operate a business enterprise. Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs as an enterprise owned and controlled by a women having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of employment generated in the enterprise to women. Like a male entrepreneurs a women entrepreneur has many functions. They should explore the prospects of starting new enterprise; undertake risks, introduction of new innovations, coordination administration and control of business and providing effecting leadership in all aspects of business.

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WOMEN'S DAIRY COOPERATIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME (WDCLP)

The women's Dairy Cooperative Leadership Programme (WDCLP) was launched in 1995 as a pilot programme with the objective of strengthening of dairy cooperative movement by significantly increasing women's participation as active members and as leaders in the governance of village level cooperative societies, district level milk unions and state level milk federations. NDDB provided assistance to milk unions in conducting several activities to achieve WDCLP objectives. Some of the milk unions are taking this concept forward.

As part of the WDCLP programme milk unions identified women staff to participate in training designated to develop their latent potential. At the village level, the key strategy was to train and position of local women as a resource person to encourage and support women's involvement in their dairy cooperatives.

ALL WOMEN DAIRY COOPERATIVES (WDCSS)

Government of India provides financing for district milk unions which implement the "Support to Training and Employment Programme" (STEP). Under this programme, dairy cooperatives are formed with membership as well as the management entirely composed of women milk producers. NDDB recognizes the importance of STEP as a way to encourage increased women's participation in their dairy cooperatives. Whether eligible for STEP funding, or otherwise, milk unions are encouraged to organize all Women Dairy Cooperatives. Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP) primarily focused on

women's role in White Revolution. The main objective of STEP is 'organization of All Women Cooperative Milk Societies', wherein all the members of the managing committee and even the society working staff are women.

CONCLUSION

The membership in most of India's is heavily dominated by men. The picture is now gradually changing in favour of women. The income of women dairy farmers rose sharply after the formation of women milk cooperative societies.

Among various interventions, Training and organization are found to be most crucial by the women's dairy cooperatives. Special training programme for women have successfully been initiated by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).

Some successful initiatives by the dairy organizations sponsored under Operation Flood Programmes have established viable all-women dairy cooperatives and obtained membership for women producers in mixed cooperatives. By linking up with special sources of credit for livestock purchase, establishing a pre-cooperative state, and modifying some regulations regarding membership - these efforts also succeeded in opening up dairy cooperatives as a source of self employment for landless and near-landless women.

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