

A Case Study :

Rural livelihood pattern of women of Assam and impact of training on human development

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India has a population of about 7.736 billion people and two-third of households live in rural areas. Even though overall growth in India has recently accelerated, it has largely bypassed rural areas and agriculture. It is agreed that the ratio of rural to urban poverty has increased. As a consequence, some of the marginalized groups in a society that is already characterized by a high level of inequality in opportunities and segregation along lines of gender, caste and social status are widely reckoned to not have benefited from overall growth. Moreover, farmer leaders have alleged that modern agriculture is not remunerative with the high cost for inputs like chemical fertilizers, pesticides, seeds and farm machinery. The policy makers thus face the problem of providing alternative sources of better livelihood options or strengthening the prospect of the existing livelihood options which are at subsistence level. To enable women and backward castes to expand their livelihood opportunities, a vast range of government programmes has been initiated and large amount of resources are being channeled to poor areas. In India women has extensive work loads with dual responsibility for farm, household production, and their work is getting harder and more time consuming due to ecological degradation and changing agricultural technologies and practices. For the upliftment of rural women and to improve their livelihood pattern, the women have to be sensitized and empowered. Keeping these in mind, the present study was undertaken with the following objectives : to study the existing livelihood pattern of rural women, to

improve knowledge of women relating to health and nutrition status through training, to provide scientific know-how related to post-harvest operations to achieve food security at household level, to train the women folk to develop a small scale enterprise for better economic development.

The study was carried out in 3 blocks of Jorhat district namely, Baghchung block, Dhakorgora block and Sipahikhula block covering around 900 rural women (300 from each block) belonging to different self-help groups. The existing livelihood pattern and income generated was studied. Different need based trainings on health, nutrition, post-harvest operations were given. Skilled oriented training on processing, preservation, biscuit making, cake making and preparation of confectionery items were also undertaken, so that the women on her own or as a SHG can develop a small-scale enterprise and improve their livelihood pattern.

To make learning more effective, the result-oriented 30 numbers of trainees were included in each training programme. Pre and post knowledge testing was done on different aspects before and after training, using a standardized interview schedule.

Livelihood pattern of rural women :

From Table 1 it can be observed that out of 300 respondents from each block, the percentage involvement of rural women was different in respect to different activities under different blocks. Out of all the activities, it was found that highest percentage of involvement was in agriculture (30%), followed by weaving (26.7%), pickling (13.5%), confectionery and animal rearing (11.6%).

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