

## Empowerment of women for rural livelihood

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### ABSTRACT

Agriculture is still the single largest livelihood system in Asia, employing nearly 60 per cent of the work force. It is not only the main source of employment, income and food for over 70 per cent of the population but also the main culture for rural families. Women play a significant and crucial role in agriculture and allied fields. Rural Indian women are extensively involved in agricultural activities. However, the nature and extent of their involvement differs with variations in agro-production. Their roles range from managers to landless labourers. Women are the sole providers of the household food supply. In animal husbandry women have a multiple role. Their activities vary widely ranging from care of animals to processing of milk. Women are typically involved in post harvest processing of food and non-food products. Women's employment in family farms or business is rarely recognized. Access to assets is the single most urgent need for the upliftment of women in general and farm women in particular. Rural women still do not have ownership on land. Due to this they cannot take independent decisions. Education can be an effective tool for empowering women to contribute to social development. Empowering women with economically productive work will enhance their contribution to agricultural development. Women have not an easy access to inputs and credit. Majority of the women remain unemployed. It is necessary to develop entrepreneurship among women and encourage them to take a independent income generating activities so that significant work force of the country may be utilized more efficiently in order to generate more income, reduce unemployment, minimize incidence of poverty etc. But women entrepreneurs have been facing many problems such as twin responsibility, lack of information and experience, scarcity of raw materials, marketing problems, limited mobility, problem of finance, lack of risk bearing capacity etc.

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Women constitute half the world's population, accomplish about the two-third of its working hours, receive one-tenth of the worlds' income and less than one-hundredth of the worlds' property. Agriculture employees 4/5<sup>th</sup> of all economically active labour force and 48 per cent of self-employed farmers. Women play a significant and crucial role in agriculture and allied fields. Rural Indian women are extensively involved in agricultural activities. However, the nature and extent of their involvement differs with variations in agro-production. Women are the sole providers of the household food supply. In animal husbandry, women have a multiple role. Their activities vary widely ranging from care of animals to processing of milk. Women are typically involved in post harvest processing of food and non-food products. There are 75 million women against 15 million men in dairying and those engaged in animal husbandry, accounts for 20 million as against 1.5 million men. Because of "low visibility" of their contributions, they are not regarded as equal partners in the developmental process. The gender inequality prevailing in Indian villages adversely affects the development

process of the nation. For the overall development of our nation, it is essential to ensure advancement of women in all spheres of life. Gender equality is possible only by filling the gap between planning and implementation of women friendly government policies. Empowerment of women needs to get utmost priority in any national planning process and its implementation in its true spirit.

"Empowerment" is a multidimensional process which enables women to know their complete identity and powers in all the spheres of life. Although the Ministry of Rural Development is putting efforts through its rural development programmes to improve the status of women but there is a need to intensify the efforts. All government and non-government agencies and rural masses should join hands for this purpose. The women should be empowered in the following areas:

- Educational
- Social
- Economic
- Political
- Technological

### Key words :

Empowerment,  
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