

Obstacles and ways to facilitate skill development among rural women

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■ **ABSTRACT :** The Honorable Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi has stated that “Today, the world and India need a skilled workforce. If we have to promote the development of our country then our mission has to be skill development” and “Skilled India”. Skills and knowledge are the engines of economic growth and social development of any country. Women constituted almost 48.5 per cent of the total population of India, but their input to economic action is far beneath the potential. Female workforce participation rate in India stands at 31.8 per cent which is almost half of the male workforce participation rate at 73.2 per cent and these women have also been paid very low wages for the same work as compare to the men due to lack of skills. Skill development among rural women is the necessity of the hour to make them self possessed, self reliant and to enroot in them the ability to be a component of decision making at home and outside. Therefore, there is a great need to properly skill the significantly large work force so that they can become a major part of the economy. Skill development is a key to women empowerment as it leads to enhancing household productivity, employability and income earning opportunities for women. The idea of skill development in India has been greatly acknowledged and programmes and policies like Pradhan Mantra Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), UDAAN, Standard Training Assessment and Reward (STAR) and many more has been formulated to initiate this concept. Despite the various efforts by the government, there is yet a prolong way to bring the skill development mission to accomplish due to existence of various obstacles in the path of rural women. So, there is great need to identify various obstacles faced by the rural women and ways of facilitating skill development among rural women.

■ **KEY WORDS:** Rural woman, Empowerment, Skill development

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In India, women constituted almost half of its total population (Anonymous, 2011). Contribution of women in monetary activities in formal sectors of industries, services and agricultural sector is quantifiable, but activities of women in informal sectors such as

household works, rearing livestock, care of children and elderly members of family and activities in agricultural fields are hard to quantify. Although women make up a little less than the half of the economically active populace, but their input to monetary activity is far beneath

the potential. A report produced by the United Nations Development Programme indicated that women over the world manage nearly all of the unpaid household work at homes and societies (Human Development Report, 2015). It is surprising that on an average, an Indian man gave 4.5 hours to social life and entertainment, while these hours for women were reduced to 3.9 only. There is a great need to empower rural women. Empowerment is the power of obtaining basic opportunities for women. It also includes encouraging and developing the skills for self efficiency. Numerous aspects like social, cultural, political and economical concede women a below par status that hinder the struggle for women empowerment and leads to further impoverishment, inequity, prejudice and discrimination (Singh and Singh, 2005).

In India, more number of women residing in the rural areas is unskilled as compared to men. The studies conducted by Dinesha and Chandra (2016) revealed that more than 90 per cent of women workers are working in the informal sector where the condition of women in the informal sector is miserable, mostly they have been paid very low wages for their work as compare to the men. Lack of skill among women is one of the main reasons of this problem. Therefore, there is a great need of skill development of rural women so that they can become a major part of the economy. In India, the concept of skill development is not properly spread and acknowledged but in all over the world, numerous programmes, policies, educational and training centers have been entrenched to execute this notion. Numerous training centers have been entrenched to impart skill development activities among the individuals living in urban as well as rural areas, like production skills, manufacturing skills, literacy skills, computer skills, artisan skills and so on by the government and non-government agencies.

Skills development is a driving force for enhancing household efficiency, employability and money making chances for rural women and also for supplementing food safety and encouraging environmentally imperishable rural development and livelihoods (Anuradha and Reddy, 2013). Skill development in rural women on small scale is the main priority for the Indian government as it is the only formula to the trouble of unemployment and complete usage of both human and non-human resources and upgrading the living conditions of the common people. India has verified the exceptional progress under the

National policy for skill development and entrepreneurship 2015 over the years. The Vision of the Policy is "to create an ecosystem of empowerment by Skilling on a large Scale at Speed with high Standards and to promote a culture of innovation based entrepreneurship which can generate wealth and employment so as to ensure Sustainable livelihoods for all citizens in the country". The manifest of the policy is to extend an outreach, impartiality and approach of education and training. It has aimed to complete this manifest by inaugurating several vocational schools, technical schools, industrial training institutes (ITIs) and professional colleges to assist adult learning, sector-specific skill development, e-learning, training for self employment and other forms of training. Therefore, the government assigned extensive supply through its entire stratagem in the form of required financial, infrastructure and policy support (Knowledge paper, 2012).

Objectives:

- To study the obstacles faced by rural women in skill development.
- To identify different ways of facilitating skill development for women empowerment.

Obstacles in skill development for rural women (Bhavna, 2015):

During the last decade, India's faster growing global economies and transition has been a incredible event. In order to sustain its growth speed, an efficient and ongoing system of skill development for its human resources especially for rural women is critically imperative. Despite the various efforts by the government, there is yet a prolong way to bring the skill development mission to accomplishing due to existence of various obstacles in the path of rural women. Some of the obstacles in skill development faced by the rural women are as following:

Illiteracy among rural women:

Women literacy rate in India is very low as compared to its male counterpart and it is one of the major obstacles that need to be taken care. Uneducated rural women do not have the understanding of basic accounting and measurement, which further leads to frequent incompetent to do research and acquire necessary training. Therefore, rural women are ignorant

of new technology or unskilled.

Lower access and retention in education:

Access and retention can be analysed by focusing on rates of enrolment at a particular level of education. Trouble of gender inequality and differentiation begin with access to schooling. Insufficient attention is being given to social and cultural barriers which prevent girls and women from entering the education system. Issues like long distances to school, poor sanitation facilities, poverty, higher drop-out rates in female's etc. impact the access to education.

Gender-insensitive facilities at training institutes:

- Long distances to schools/training institutions and lack of public transport.
- Lack of secure and approachable boarding and poor provision of sanitary facilities in training institutions.
- High cost of education and training fees as women basically have small cash in their hands.
- Discriminatory attitude of trainers and educators towards girls and women.
- Shortage of female teachers and trainers, particularly in rural areas.

Social norms and negative attitudes:

Social norms and negative attitude of the society towards the girls is another obstacle in skill development of women. In developing countries like India, boys are considered as “perpetual assets” while girls as “transitory assets” – not worthy of long-term investment, as they have to leave their parents home after getting married.

Lack of self- confidence and decision making power:

In rural areas, over 50 per cent of adolescent girls have lack of provision of good sanitation facilities, due to which women and girls are subjected to teasing, sexual harassment, and violence and inevitably to feeling of humiliation, insecurity and distress. Due to dominating male headed society, the involvement of women in decision making and to business activities is comparatively very less. Further, because of the social norms and morals in the family towards girls, they lack confidence, support, and decision making power.

Molestation, sexual abuse and violence against

women:

Anxiety of sexual molestation and insecurity to visit schools and training institutions is the utmost suppressing factor obstructing parents from openly sending their girls to school/ training units. In India, seldom any public space performs in a manner to make women feel firm and self assured.

Dual responsibility:

In today's contemporary society, innumerable women carry the dual burden of responsibilities *i.e.* managing a home and profession. Due to the dual responsibility, women are unable to organize their work effectively as she has lack of time, attentiveness and overburdened personal obligation. The necessary infrastructure to support the women in organizing their work like dependable childcare, creches, help from spouse, instruments to make housework easier, is still not in place.

Depreciation of women labour :

The women labour is recognized particularly with the generative and household sphere, it underlies the perspective in many societies that for domestic socialization women required skills in the generative sphere and not in education. Domestic responsibilities including child rearing, household chores, care of elderly etc either take them out of the market for a prolonged periods or force them to assume lower paying part time roles (Jonathan, 2016).

Limited fields of training courses for women:

Vocational training courses conducted for rural women are usually providing a limited horizon of female-dominated fields that fortify their traditional roles and responsibilities in the society. For a while we can say that it may boost their income-generating slot, but it will not permit them to take advantages from newer and non-traditional fields like Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Non-Traditional Agricultural Export (NTAE) industries that can provide better technical or managerial jobs which will further lead to higher earnings for them.

Stereotypes about women:

From the ancient times, Indian society is delivering training to a female child to make her a good wife rather

than to raise her as an entrepreneur. She is not permitted to evolve network with other business men because it is considered as a sin. Abundance of women in all over India is expected to voluntarily give up their individual independence for the well being of their children, husbands, household, society and community. Women have been typically seen as caretakers of both, people and other beings and things.

Misconception about vocational training courses:

India is continuously working towards knowledge thrift, where skills are widely acknowledged as an essential level of economic growth, but the impression about vocational training courses is still questionable. It is mainly meant for those individuals who fail to get admittance in the formal system. Thus, it yet needed time to be appraised as an applicable alternative to formal education. Due to lack of awareness about industrial requirements and the availability of matching vocational courses, most of the prospective rural women in the country do not go for vocational education (DGE&T, 2017).

Non-cooperative attitudes of implementing authority:

This has become a serious constraint, of recent. Since most of these Contractors are Political Stalwarts, they can hardly complete one single project given to them according to specification and design. The projects are either executed haphazardly or unduly delayed or absolutely abandoned on the pretext of “unavailability of funds”.

Lack of infrastructure in training institutes (Okada, 2012) :

One of the basic necessities for the proper execution of the skill and training development programmes is the accessibility of the basic infrastructure. The condition is more critical in case of institutions located in semi-urban and rural areas. These institutes need rapid expansion and up gradation in order to provide efficient training capabilities to prospective aspiration. Hard infrastructure including equipments, machines and tools etc. are not available in majority of the institutions. As a result, workers get trained on outdated machines and find themselves deficient in skills when employed.

Lack of trained trainers:

Training of trainer is one of the fundamental key of the skill development structure. A dearth of the same would results in serious bottleneck in the execution of skill development projects. The prime area of concern is the accessibility of superior and excellent trainers. There is a great need to emphasis on development of trainer’s training programmes.

From the above discussed obstacles it is very clear that status of the women in India is far below than its male counterpart. Here, the numerous women need to be literate, build in them the self confidence and make them skilled by providing vocational training courses in newer and non-traditional fields to boost their income generating slot. Due to lack of training and advisory services on managerial and technical skills to solve production problems of enterprises, their growth and the competitiveness is immensely challenged by a lack of business management, marketing and technical skills besides the overall weak infrastructure and complex legal frameworks for business operations, especially in global online transaction context.

Ways of facilitating skill development activities among rural women:

There are numerous ways to facilitate the advancement of skill development activities among rural women, which are as following (Kapur, 2014).

- Gender-responsive strategy: Development of a gender-responsive strategy in terms of increasing the enrollment rates from primary to secondary education. In other words, efforts should be made to reduce the dropout rate of girls in school.
- Free and quality education: Girls education goes beyond just getting girls into school. It is about increasing girls participation in free and quality basic education equally with boys and ensuring that girls learn and feel safe while studying in schools. Quality education of girls will lead to proficiency, confidence to earn higher incomes, marry at a later stage which means less number of children and better health care for her and her children. All these factors combined, will help women to productively compete in the labour market and to rectify the problem of inequality.
- Enhancing the skill development infrastructure: Creating and enhancing the skill development infrastructure all over the India.

– Establishment of skill development centers: Skill development centers should be established in rural and urban areas, especially where women can reach easily.

– Offer of differential wages: Divergent and better wages should be proposed to the skilled and certified workforce to stimulate acknowledgement of the skill development programmes by the society so that more and more women can join them.

– Encouragement of social benefits: There should be encouragement of social benefits such as proper and safe working environments, mutual co-ordination, team work, adequate means of communication, leadership skills, planning, management and organization of performances.

– Support rural women's networks and groups: Government should support rural women's networks and groups such as co-operatives to make them self employed. Groups can lead to informal learning of skills and provide the collective power that may be required to reach new markets.

– Financial assistance for skill development programme: Financial constraint is the major issues particularly for the unskilled rural women who are bounded in four walls of house, hence to boost up the women skill development programmes, some measures should be developed to overcome the difficulty of finance.

– Employment for rural women in industries: The programmes that can encourage the women employment in industry as semi-skilled/skilled and highly skilled workers should be implemented to increase the number of women skilled personnel especially in rural areas. On the basis of their skills they should be provided the work opportunities, so that they can earn higher income (The World Bank, 2017).

– Integration of skill development: Integration of skill development programmes along with the work duties in all kind of institutions, organizations, associations and companies should be there, so that employees can learn beyond their job assignments.

– Training of local leaders: Training of local leaders is essential for strengthening the skill developing programmes in rural areas. This will accelerate implementation of on going efforts as rural women are more familiar and comfortable with their local leaders.

Conclusion:

The concept of skill development in India has been

largely acknowledged and numerous programmes and policies have been constructed to establish this concept. Skill development among rural women is the necessity of the time to make them self possessed, self reliant and to enroot in them the ability to be a component of decision making at home and outside. Involvement of women in vocational training courses is very low as compared to men. Therefore, it is essential to enlighten the women and their families on the benefits of skill development and vocational training courses in order to enhance the enrolments. The combined endeavour of government, local leaders and local institutions to aware people about skill development may lead to better employability. Particularly, rural women should be targeted by explaining that how inculcating income-generating skills and activities within them would later steer to upgrading their social and economic status. Skill development surely steer to progress of the individual, the skills and knowledge that he/she obtained may not be applicable instantly but it always proves to be helpful in the long run. Therefore this is the responsibility of the government and civil society to enable upgradation in the quality of life of such vulnerable sections of the Indian population by ensuring a targeted education and training strategy.

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