

# Economic empowerment of rural women of Patiala through skill development and group dynamics

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Home science component of Krishi Vigyan Kendras organize skill development trainings under the aegis of ICAR throughout India for the upliftment of rural women. These trainings are geared towards the needs of rural women in a particular context keeping in view their social needs, culture and geographic realities. The present study was carried out to assess the economic empowerment of rural women of Patiala through skill development and group dynamics. One hundred and twenty four respondents participated in the study. Primary data were collected through interview schedule during the year 2016. Results reveal that about 80% of the respondents improved their skills in stitch and needle craft while 87% respondents contributed to family income. Seventy per cent respondents agreed that they have better leadership and communication skills after skill development. Findings indicated that organizing women into self-help groups was a relevant strategy for empowering them, as poor women demonstrated a strong tendency to derive strength from being a member of the group. The intervention of KVK had a positive impact on functional status of self help groups. Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala was able to find a perfect fit between skills, resources available, technological options and marketing avenues.

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■ **KEY WORDS**: Skill development, Group dynamics, Self-help groups, Rural women, Empowerment indicators

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The economic empowerment of women is being regarded as a sign of progress for a country. Hence, the issue of economic empowerment of women is of paramount importance to policy makers, developmental scientists as well as social workers. Economic empowerment is the initial aspect of women development. The economic empowerment means greater access to financial resources inside and outside the household, reducing the vulnerability of poor women

to crisis situations like famine, riots, poverty, death and accidents in the family and significant increase in women's own income. Economic empowerment gives women the power to retain income and use it at her discretion. It provides equal access and control over various resources at the household level (Singh *et al.*, 2013). Financial self reliance of women both in household and in the external environment leads to empowerment of women in others spheres. To change the face of socio-

economic scenario, micro-enterprises and SHGs are playing significant role in the self-employment by raising the level of income and standard of living of rural people especially women. In our country, self employment through skill development has been recognized as an essential force of development in rural areas. Skill development is planned in such a way so as to improve the socio-economic life and mainly focuses on extending the benefits of development to the poorest in the rural areas. By formation of SHGs, the low income segments are being integrated with rest of the rural community by ensuring them better participation in the benefit of development (Jain, 2003). These groups not only speed up economic growth but provide jobs and help improve the quality of rural life towards self reliance. Keeping these points in view, the study has been planned with the following objectives:-

- To study skill development of rural women through vocational training programmes and extension activities.
- To assess gainful employment avenues for rural women after skill development.
- To study the role of self-help groups in economic empowerment.
- To assess capabilities and leadership qualities of rural women.

## ■ RESEARCH METHODS

The study was conducted under the aegis of home science component of Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala, Punjab Agricultural University. District Patiala is 29<sup>th</sup> district of Punjab. It consists of 9 blocks and 4 sub divisions. The study was based on primary data. The data was collected from 12 self help groups and 124 members. A sample of 124 women respondents was taken on the basis of criterion that they should be running their enterprise in a self-help group. A self designed, well

structured and pre-tested interview schedule was used to collect data needed on different variables in order to achieve the objectives of the study. The study contained both qualitative and quantitative data. Frequency and simple percentage distribution was used for statistical analysis.

## ■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study as well as relevant discussion have been presented under following heads :

### Skill development of rural women :

Rural enterprise development is an important pathway for poverty alleviation in rural India and it is an important mandated activity of all the Krishi Vigyan Kendras established by ICAR throughout the country. Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala is continuously engaged in upliftment of rural women through entrepreneurship development. Perusal of Table 1 revealed that through its mandated activities, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala organized 135 short duration training courses on various home science technologies during 2011 to 2016 benefitting 3375 girls and rural women. Similarly, 21 vocational trainings were organized covering aspects like dress designing, hand embroidery, needle work, painting, tie and dye and preparation of decorative utility articles that improved skills of 630 girls and rural women. Similarly, 16 in-service training courses were also organized by the centre to update the skills of village level workers like Aanganwari Workers and Helpers. These hands on training programmes are modulated in such a manner so that rural women can understand scientific methods of nutrition, grain storage, stain removal and designing of garments etc. They were also trained on group dynamics of SHG formation so that they can maintain the cohesiveness. In addition to training programmes, many extension activities like organization

**Table 1 : Skill development courses organized (2011-2016)**

Type of activities organized	No. of activities	No. of beneficiaries
Short duration trainings	135	3375
Vocational trainings	21	630
In-service trainings	16	320
Mahila Goshties	28	593
Exposure visits	18	540
Celebration of important events like National Nutrition Week, World Environment Day, International Day for women in agriculture etc.	24	1820

of mahila goshties (28), celebration of important events like World Food Day, National Nutrition Week, World Environment Day, Seminar on role of women in agriculture-cum-*phulkari* fair (24) were organized by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra in different villages of Patiala

to sensitize women regarding health, nutrition, gender mainstreaming and improving entrepreneurial skills of rural women.

The effectiveness of these courses revealed that adoption rate of some vocations like dress designing, value addition of household linen and preparation of utility articles among rural women was 68%. Similarly, for *Phulkari* embroidery adoption rate was 56% (Kaur and Sodhi, 2014). Some skills like candle making, preparation of detergent, fabric and pot painting and preparation of nutritious snacks were adopted only at household level. During the period under investigation, it was observed that 12% of these trained women have started their boutiques and shops for earning livelihood and have opened their own centres for training of rural girls. 3% of these have been employed as master trainers by Government agencies like Punjab Co-operative Department, NABARD, Government Schools and Non-government organizations like Nabha Foundation, Manav Vikas Smiti etc. Similar results have been reported by

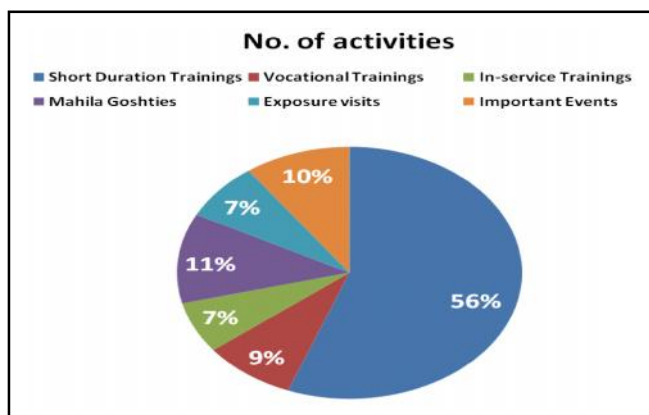


Fig. 1 : Skill development courses organized (2011-2016)

Name of SHG (Village)	No. of members	Economic and social activities	Marketing avenues
Baba Puran Dass Memorial (Rorgarh)	10	Value addition to <i>Phulkari</i> embroidery, detergent making, inter-loaning and social activities	Kisan Mela, <i>phulkari</i> Mela, SARAS Fair, Ropar; International Surajkund Fair
Hari Kirpa (Kalyan)	12	Contemporary uses of <i>phulkari</i> craft, catering at social functions, inter-loaning and social activities	Kisan Mela; SARAS Fair, Patiala; Gandhi Shilp Bazar, Navi Mumbai; Kurukshetra Maha Utsav. Master Trainer of <i>Mai Bhago</i> Istri Shashtikaran Yojana
Saraswati (Assemajra)	11	Needle and crochet work, tie and dye of garments, inter-loaning and social activities	Kisan Mela; <i>Phulkari</i> Mela;; Credit linkage under <i>Mai Bhago</i> Scheme
Sukhmani (Jahlan)	12	Contemporary uses of <i>phulkari</i> craft, block printing, knitting work, inter-loaning and social activities	Kisan Mela; SARAS Fair, Hyderabad and Navi Mumbai; International conferences by ICAR; Group got financial support from NABARD for setting up of a sale point; Credit linkage under Kalyani Yojana
Gurukirpa (Kalyan)	12	Catering Unit, Needle and crochet work, stitching of garments and <i>Patiala</i> Shahi Salwars, inter-loaning and social activities	Kisan Mela; Punjab International Trade Fair, Amritsar; Conferences by ICAR and PAU.
Mata Gujri (Lang)	10	Dress making, hand embroidery, inter-loaning and social activities	Kisan Mela; Master trainer of <i>Mai Bhago</i> Istri Sushastrikan Yojana, Delhi Haat
Bibi Bhani (Bhankher)	12	Knitting, stitching of garments, hand embroidery, inter-loaning and social activities	Kisan Mela; Master trainer of <i>Mai Bhago</i> Istri Sushastrikan Yojana; Credit linkage under <i>Mai Bhago</i> Istri Sushastrikan Yojana.
Guru Nanak (Hiana Khurd)	10	Dyeing of dupattas and turbans, quilt work, stitching of garments and <i>Patiala</i> salwars, inter-loaning and social activities	Kisan Mela; Master trainer of <i>Mai Bhago</i> Istri Sushastrikan Yojana
Sadbhawna (Kalyan)	11	Stitching of garments, Soft Toys making, detergent making, inter-loaning and social activities	Kisan Mela; Tailoring Shop, Boutique
Simran (Jahlan)	12	<i>Phulkari</i> enriched products Bagh, <i>Phulkari</i> , Suits, Fans, inter-loaning and social activities	Kisan Mela; CII, Chandigarh Fair, Kisan Agri. Show, New Delhi and Zira.
Nirmal (Khokh)	12	Jute bag making, tie and dye of garments, <i>phulkari</i> dupattas and suits, inter loaning and social activities	Kisan Mela, Craft Fair, Patiala

Kaur and Sodhi (2013) and Kaur and Garg (2017).

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala has mobilized trained rural women into making self help groups so that they can collectively reap the benefits due under various welfare schemes planned by Government of India. Perusal of Table 2 revealed that 124 women of self help groups were involved in vocations like stitch and needle craft, crochet, macramé, catering and meal planning, tie and dye and quilting. It is also clear that all of them are involved in micro-credit saving. They were selling their handicrafts through shops and direct exhibitions organized by PAU and other allied departments. Acharaya and Samanthi (2013) also reported that SHG based women are involved in micro-credit savings. Self-help groups are those groups who carry out self owned economic activity for earning their livelihood. SHGs are increasingly assuming the role of harbinger of credit distribution to rural poor in a sustained manner. They form a source for poverty alleviation, serve as a tool for empowerment of women, provide sustainable and rapidly extending economic base in the village, promote the habit of thrift, promote opportunities among the members for government exposure and bring out hidden talents and leadership qualities (Prashad, 2007; Singh, 2015 and Deka

and Borgohain, 2016).

### Empowerment indicators of rural women organised into self help groups by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala :

Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, great decision making power and control of the transformative action (Fredrick, 2009). The empowerment of women covers both individual and collective transformation. KVK, Patiala focused attention on empowerment of women centred rural self-help groups and made them financial and socially stable. Exhibition spaces provided by KVK have opened a new dimension in promotion of rural products and encouraged the trainees in the development of novelty products like *Patialashahi* salwar, *Phulkari* crafted bags and kits. KVK, Patiala has provided a platform not only for direct sales of rural markets, giving exposure to rural artisans/ entrepreneurs to various aspects of marketing, and developing linkages with various other markets.

Different indicators of empowerment of women as per their opinion are analysed and presented in Table 3. This table reveals the opinion of the respondents regarding empowerment where 64.51 per cent of the respondents agreed that they are able to improve their skills in vocations like stitching and quilting of garments and traditional *Phulkari* embroidery, 70.96 per cent of them agree that they are more aware about various health, hygiene and nutritional practices, 56.45 per cent of the respondents agreed that they command better leadership and communication skills, 54.83 per cent of the respondents agreed that they now make decisions in the household, village and community, 87.09 per cent of the respondents felt that they are now earning members of the family and 62.90 per cent of the respondents agreed that they have improved standard of living.

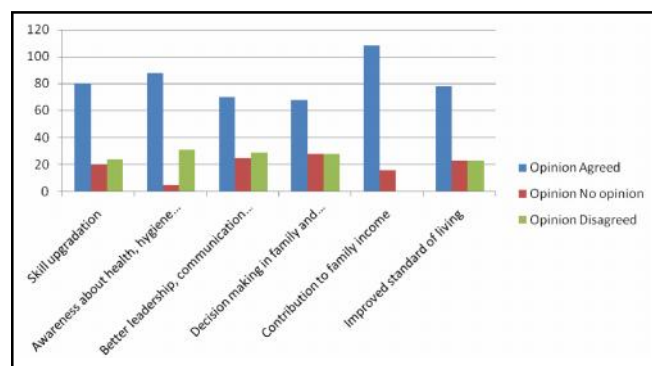


Fig. 2 : Empowerment of rural women organized into self help groups by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala

Table 3 : Empowerment of rural women organized into self-help groups by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala

Indicators of empowerment	Opinion			Total
	Agreed	No opinion	Disagreed	
Skill upgradation	80 (64.51)	20 (16.13)	24 (9.35)	124
Awareness about health, hygiene and nutrition in daily life	88 (70.96)	5 (4.03)	31 (25.0)	124
Better leadership, communication skills and functional literacy	70 (56.45)	25 (20.16)	29 (23.38)	124
Decision making in family and society	68 (54.83)	28 (22.58)	28 (22.58)	124
Contribution to family income	108 (87.09)	16 (12.90)	0	124
Improved standard of living	78 (62.90)	23 (18.54)	23 (18.54)	124

Figures given in ( ) indicate percentage

Similarly, Singh (2017) also reported that SHG had positive impact on rural women and they were economically empowered.

### Conclusion :

Skill improvement package of KVK has resulted into participation of rural women in income generating activities. Thus, KVK has improved their income, saving and empowered them. Economic empowerment of women increases their confidence and social status which led to improvement in their quality of life. The members of SHGs have taken the lead and are playing an important and pivotal role in social transformation, welfare activities and infrastructure building. So, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala has proved to be a significant instrument through which empowerment of women in terms of decision making, better leadership, utility and skill up gradation became possible.

### List of abbreviations :

KVK	Krishi Vigyan Kendra
ICAR	Indian Council of Agricultural Research
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
SHG	Self-help group
SARAS	Sale of Articles by Rural Artisans
PAU	Punjab Agricultural University
CII	Confederation of Indian Industries

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