



NATIONAL
WORKSHOP

ON

ENTREPRENEURIAL
WOMEN
IN THE RURAL INFORMAL
SECTOR

14-16 MARCH, 1995.

EDI CAMPUS

EDI - BRITISH COUNCIL - NABARD

NATIONAL WORKSHOP

Entrepreneurial Women in the Rural Informal Sector- Intervention strategies and alternative approaches.

THE CONTEXT

Promotion of self employment among the entrepreneurial poor has been a critical component of both government sponsored and NGO initiated programmes and projects targeted at the economically marginalized sections. Though the former with their highly standardized approach and bureaucratized implementing machinery have made only a marginal impact on the rural societies, they have created, what may be called, a dependency syndrome among the rural population. On the other hand, the activities of NGOs, which were expected to act as effective alternative to government initiatives have had to limit themselves to minimalist programmes and, very often, implementation of government sponsored projects. It is true that some innovative organisations in the voluntary sector did succeed in attending to the specific problems of the rural populace in certain geographical pockets. The spurts of entrepreneurial events consequent upon such sporadic efforts, by no means, could have become sustainable.

The issue of rural intervention strategies assumes significance in the current scenario of economic restructuring in the country. Organizational credit is becoming more and more inaccessible to the marginalized sections of the population. NGOs are being persuaded from all quarters to become more business like and be self-reliant. A perceptible shift is taking place in this sector away from welfare oriented activities towards market oriented ones. In sum, the whole philosophy of development appears to be undergoing drastic changes.

In this situation, there is every likelihood that development activities in the rural sector are going to be redefined. The brunt

of this will naturally be borne by women, who serve as the back bone of rural societies. The official estimates show that 30-35 per cent of the Indian rural households have female at the head and nearly 60 per cent of them survive through self-employment. In their efforts for a livelihood, they have to fight against the triple disadvantages of having (a) lower rates of literacy and fewer technical skills (b) less access to credit and (c) reduced time and mobility owing to family responsibilities. All these act together to limit the options available to them and force them into smaller and least profitable ventures.

The drive for restructuring that is sweeping across the country will have grave consequences for rural women. With an overall reduction in employment, more and more women will be pushed into the informal sector. The quality of their economic activities however, are not likely to improve substantially.

AIMS AND FRAMEWORK

The aim of the workshop is to initiate a debate on these issues in a wider forum consisting of activists, academics and policy makers. Four themes have been identified which will serve as focal points of deliberations in the workshop. They are :

- * Government initiatives in rural development and the gains therein for women.
- * NGO involvement in promotion of rural women
- * Training needs of women in the informal sector
- * Finance for women.

The resource persons and the participants will work closely together on these aspects. At the end of the exercise an exhaustive document will be prepared containing the crucial issues raised during deliberations as well as the suggestions of the working groups.

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

March 14, 1995

Presentation of the Concept Paper

**Promoting Entrepreneurship among Rural Women :
Resources, Institutions and Policies**

1030 - 1100 hrs.

Theme Paper I

**Government Initiatives in Rural Development and Poverty
Alleviation - What did the Women gain ?**

1100 - 1115 hrs.

Discussion

1115-1130 hrs.

Questions & Clarifications

1130 - 1200 hrs.

(Tea/Coffee)

1200-1230 hrs.

Theme Paper II

**NGO Involvement and Promotion of Rural Women :
Role, Strategies and Prospects.**

1230 - 1245 hrs.

Discussion

1245 - 1300 hrs.

Questions & Clarifications

1300 - 1400 hrs.

(Lunch)

Theme Paper III

**Meeting the Training Needs of Rural Women :
What does the Present System offer ?**

1430 - 1445 hrs.

Discussion

1445 - 1500 hrs.

Questions & Clarifications



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