

SUSTAINABLE GREEN LIVELIHOOD FOR RURAL WOMEN IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

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Abstract

The Objective of this Paper is to share the experiences of developing an innovative Forest Based Livelihood option for the rural women residing in mountains of Himachal Pradesh. My Brother Vivek Sharma, PG in Rural Management was instrumental in introducing new handicraft in the region- Pine Needle Weaving Craft- when he was associated with the NGO Kangra Mahila Sabha in various capacities as Secretary, Advisor and Consultant. The craft has grown from few women to over 1000 women trained in it. The paper will present the need for developing the livelihood, its conceptualization, the growth, challenges and future planning of the craft. It highlights the role of innovation and support of NGOs/ Professional in sustaining the livelihood.

Key words; Sustainable livelihoods, rural development, skill-development, handicrafts, Pine needles

Introduction

Germinating from theory regarding sustainable development, a sustainable livelihood the perspective of sustainable livelihood tailors the collective concerns for environmental and economic resources and individual focus. The term Sustainable Livelihood was first introduced in a rural context, and was later amended by the Brundtland Commission. It basically highlights the measure of well-being and how an individual's well-being contributes to their ability to survive well.

In 1992, United Nation's Conference on Environment and Development proliferated the concept upholding the achievement of sustainable livelihoods as a comprehensive goal for poverty eradication.

Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway (in 1992) propounded the following coalescent definition of a sustainable rural livelihood, which is applied most commonly at the household level: "A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term."

Sustainability in livelihood is important if we aim to last the poverty reduction. The concept Sustainability livelihood rests on several pillars - environmental, economic, social and institutional. Sustainable livelihood implies in:

- being resilient in the face of external shocks and stresses;
- being self dependent and not dependent on external support (or if they are, this support should itself be economically and institutionally sustainable);
- maintaining the long-term productivity of natural resources.

Arnold (1998), in analysing the contribution of forests to sustainable livelihoods, defines forests "to include all resources that can produce forest products. These can comprise woodland, scrubland, bush fallow and farm bush, and trees on farm, as well as forests". Arnold's definition focuses not on holding on free vesture as the basis for expounding a forest, but on the potential for producing products. Moreover, the contribution of forests` is measured not only by the products they provide, but also by the impalpable services they offer.

Nobody can deny the general contributions of forests to livelihood outcomes.

Talking about the Forest sector in India forms the second largest land use after agriculture. In remote forest bourn villages about 300 million tribal and other local people depends on forest for their subsistence and livelihood and about 70% of India's rural population depends on fuelwood to meet its domestic energy needs. For about 100 million of them, forests are main source for livelihood and cash income from fuelwood, non-timber forest products (NTFP) or construction materials. Mentioning the most disadvantaged section of society, more than half of India's 70 million tribal people, eke out on existence from forests.

The forests of Himachal Pradesh (H.P.) constitute two-thirds of the state's geographic area and form an important part of the region's environmental and economic well-being. They are a repository of rich biodiversity and play a vital role in preserving the frangible Himalayan ecosystem while being a primary livelihood source for its rural population. The majority of the rural populace depend on the forests for survival.

The new Himachal Pradesh Forest Policy of 2006 states "sustainable forest management" as its chief goal and lists the following principles as its priorities: sustainable development, integration of natural resource management, decentralized governance, gender equity, and that forest policy should be more of a process—enabling it to be reviewed, adapted and revised as needed. In its objectives the policy lists the following:

- Conserving and improving the natural resource base (faunal, floral and biodiversity) through effective management based on watershed principles
- Conservation and management through sustainability and good forest practices—economically, socially and environmentally.
- Providing livelihood security to the forest dependent poor through forest goods and services.
- Participatory approach involving integration and involvement of all stakeholders.
- Meeting forest sector national obligations with regard to policies, laws, international agreements and covenants.
- Forest sector capacity building through research, training, extension, education and awareness.
- Adaptability, monitoring, review, and revision as needed.
- Appropriate land use.

Background

Sustainable livelihood has been always the problem of the rural mountain women in Kangra District. Women in the Himalayan region face several problems in increasing their income and are among the neglected part of the society. In the rural areas the women have to work all day and yet their work goes unrecognized. Most of the families in rural areas have men immigrating to cities leaving behind the women with task of raising family. To assist women in this task was work of Kangra Mahila Sabha an NGO working for past couple of decades in District Kangra of Himachal Pradesh.

Kangra Mahila Sabha (KMS) was established in 1980 in Himachal Pradesh with mission of empowering the social, economic, political, cultural and personal life of women in mountain communities. Geographically it is focusing its operations in District Kangra, which is the largest district in terms of population in State. KMS is working on Capacity Building; Information dissemination; Networking and Mobilisation; Implementation at grassroots level. The various stakeholders are Women from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Below Poverty Line, and Geographically tough regions. KMS has undertaken activities with support from various national and international agencies like Central Social Welfare Board, NABARD, CAPART, DRDA (Kangra), Chief Medical Officer (Kangra) H.P. Forest Sector Reform Project of DFID, and PRIA (New Delhi). KMS has promoted 75 Self Help Groups in District Kangra with support of NABARD and CAPART. These women groups have been linked with financial institutions for saving and credit mobilization.

The organisation tried to meet this through various interventions like self help group formation, running crèches, sewing courses for women. After promotion of SHGs the main problem faced was linking them to income generation activity. No unique activity was present that could generate income for women based upon their skill level.

In 2006 KMS was looking for developing sustainable livelihoods options for women. It was felt that Development of unique skills in handicrafts will provide long-term income to the women. However KMS also wanted that a handicraft should be developed which had the following features:

- It should be unique for the region
- It should involve low investment
- It should use locally available raw material
- It should make use of the present skill of women
- It should be easy to replicate

Conceptualization

Consultant Vivek Sharma went about looking for the options and came across Pine Needle Weaving Craft as an option. The skill of Pine needle weaving was present in Canada and Alaska. Consultant knew that this craft would have all the features that were raised by KMS as above.

- First Pine Needle Weaving Craft was unique for the region—it was not present in India.
- Second on investment from the consultant studied the technique on internet and found that the technique involved low investment.
- Third the technique made use of Pine Needles which was available in plenty in the region. Chir pine scientifically known as *Pinus roxburghii* (family Coniferae) is one of the six pines of India and the most widely occurring. It is also known as Himalayan long needle pine, long leaved Indian pine, Indian chir pine, chir or chil. The vernacular

names of the species are: Kulhdin, sarol, sirli (Garhwal and Jaunsar); Chir (Hindi and Punjabi); Nyit (Lepcha) and Dhup (Nepali). Chir pine is a native of the inter-ranges and principal valleys of the Himalaya, beginning from Afghanistan in the west and ending in Bhutan in the east it extends through Pakistan, India and Nepal. The total area under chir forests in India is estimated to be 8,90,000 hectares and occurs between 450 m to 2300 m altitude. Chir pine forms pure forests in its habitat but in its upper and lower limits occurs mixed with other conifers and broad leaved species though rarely: In its upper limits it is found in association with deodar, kail, ban oak, burans (Rhododendron) etc. and in the lower limits with sal, sain, khair, harad, bahera, amla, jamun etc. In Kangra chir forests occur scattered between 450 m – 1050 m over the outer Siwalik hills and lower Himalayas.



Figure 1Women Collecting Dry Fallen Pine Needles from Forest

- Fourth, consultant found that women of the region had the skill of making baskets called Chhadd from local grass or wheat chaff. These baskets were used during the weddings and considered sacred. Now these baskets are not being made as wheat grain is separated in thresher machine. The skill is dying but could be revived in new art form.
- Fifth the craft could be replicated easily not only in the state but everywhere as Pine has its presence in the states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Punjab, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, and Northeastern states. Thus this activity can be taken up in every region.
- In addition Pine needle were considered as nuance as they caused forest fires and degraded the soil below. Pine Forests had been source of constant criticism for the forest department. The pine needles when dry catch fire quickly and cannot be used as fodder. The only existing use in Himachal Pradesh was for mulching. Some efforts were made to make briquettes, but they failed on commercial scale. With this new use the pine forest will be considered useful for the local community.
- Further on internet search it came out that Pine Needle basket fetch good price so the return on investment will be high as labour will be major cost of product. Thus, this activity would be financial attractive for the women.

Concept Replication and Scaling

KMS saw an opportunity in the concept. Then KMS started inquiring whether women in Kangra would be interested in this skill. It found that some women already know weaving handicraft products from local grass. KMS showed the pictures downloaded from Google to these women and told them to make products. The women made bowls, trays, pots. The products were shown to District Rural Development Agency, Kangra who has agreed to support training of 500 women in the skill. The women were happy that they have a new skill at their disposal. KMS further improved upon the design of the products and finalized upon using fishnet thread for weaving the products. It developed a standard 10 days training schedule which covered aspects such as:

1. Selection of Pine Needle
2. Harvesting of Pine Needles: Good and Bad Practices
3. Weaving of Pine Needles
4. Basket Making
5. Tray Making
6. Bowl Making

7. Mat Making
8. Dying Pine Needles in colours
9. Treatment of Pine Needles for longer lives
10. Finishing of products
11. Research and Development of new products

In order to strengthen the skills an expert Pamela Talsky from Wisconsin USA was invited. She trained over 30 women as experts in various stitches and using various accessories. KMS Consultant developed backward linkages for sourcing of fishnet thread, dyes and wooden bases of the product. A product manual has been prepared to ensure easy replication. The present product range of craft covers products like hot plates, pen stands, trays, bowls, fruit trays, bangles, earrings table mats, flowerpots, purse, coasters.



KMS worked regularly to provide recognition to this craft. It participated in exhibitions like Indo Asean Trade Fair, Chandigarh Trade Fair, Gita Jyanti SARAS Mela, CSR CII Enclave to provide an audience to the craft.

Concept was widely appreciated across the government departments and KMS was able to build capacity of women in the pine needle weaving skill in Districts of Chamba, Bilaspur, Hamirpur, Solan, Sirmaur, Kullu. It was supported by NABARD through a Rural Innovation Fund project. Further the success of concept was ensured when KMS was selected as Cluster Implementation Agency under the Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana of Ministry of Textiles Govt. of India. At present over 1200 women have been trained in this skill. Further State Tourism Department and local NGOs are also coming forward to replicate the products.

Women have started caring for the Pine Needle forest. They are preserving dry needles and not letting the dry pine needle burn in forest. They are making products for self use in daily life.

Future Plans

The founders of the Concept have started a commercial venture called HIMPINE Handicrafts to develop the products. A Unit for centrally processing the Pine Needles is being developed in District Kangra. Over 40 women artisans have been enrolled with this venture. These women artisans are being provided support through Artisan Card Scheme of Development Commissioner Handicrafts. A marketing strategy will be formulated to effectively provide market linkages and ensure sales for products made by the artisans. Part of the profits from the sales will be distributed to members and part will be kept for further business development. The Master Trainers - cum - Artisans will charge for the trainings they provide. The Cooperative/ Federation will make efforts to increase membership. Linkages with Design institutes like NIFT, Kangra need to be developed for new product development.



Figure 2 Logo of New Venture

The commercial venture has been supported under the CM Start up Scheme in Himachal Pradesh and getting incubation support at Institute of Himalayan Bio resource Technology CSIR Palampur, Himachal Pradesh.

The Products have been displayed and liked by People in Surajkund Craft Fair 2020. Products worth Rupees 50000 have been sold.

Conclusion

The concept demonstrates:

- That the local community can care for their natural resources if such resources are linked to their daily lives.
- That diminishing crafts and skills among mountain women can be revived by innovative solutions.
- Innovations needs to be encouraged in Forest based Livelihoods by Government Sector.
- This Craft needs to be well researched.
- Local NGOs can play a transformative role by identifying new opportunities and replicating them.
- Women are willing to engage in livelihood if NGOs/ entrepreneurs are supporting such experiments.
- Startup Schemes can provide support to nurture Forest Based Livelihoods.

Pine Needle Weaving Craft Trainings held in District Chamba with support from DRDA Chamba and Block Development Offices of Tis, Chamba, Mehta, Saloom and Bhatiyat.



Pine Needle Products



KMS work highlighted in Local Newspapers



संवाद : योह जी की यात्रियों से हेक्टोरेशन का बुनार गोपनीयता के लिए एक्सीजन तुलना में बहुत अधिक बड़ा बदलने का बीड़ा उत्पन्न है।

चीड़ की पत्तियों से डेकोरेशन पीस-चटाइयां
चंबा में डीआरडीए ने महिलाओं की
आर्थिकी सुधारने का उठाया बीड़ा

कार्यालय संचारदण्ड, देश प्रेस वा। इसमें उन्होंने चीज़ की खीं

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चीड़ के पत्तों के उत्पाद बना रही महिलाएं जिला की बख्तपुर पंचायत में चल रहा प्रशिक्षण शिविर

चंबा, 3 मार्च (स.ह.): गरीबी रेखा से नीचे जीवन यापन करने वाले महिलाएं इन दिनों चौड़े के पेड़ की पत्तियों से उत्पाद तैयार करके सर्वोच्चर अपने की दिशा में कार्य करते हैं। जिता प्रार्थनी विकास अभियान के सौजन्य से विकास खंड मैलंग ली की बहुतायु पंचायत में चल हो प्रशिक्षण शिविर में कांगड़ा महिला सभा का समस्य एवं पंचायत मंगला, बहुतपुरी गरियार व कुपाड़ा की महिलाओं को प्रशिक्षित कर रहे हैं। इस प्रशिक्षण कायोक्रम के द्वारा महिलाएं चौड़े के

में अपनाएंगी ।
वहाँ महिलाओं को प्रशिक्षण प्रदान कर रही कांगड़ा महिला सभा की सदस्य सीमा देवी ने बताया कि यह प्रशिक्षण हासिल कर महिलाएं दामन की दीयावारी अपने उत्पादों की बिक्री हेतु एक सकृती है और इसके उत्तरां अच्छे दाम मिलते हैं उड़ने कहा कि एक दोकरी 100 रुपये जबकि पर्स 80 रुपये तक बिक जाते हैं । उन्नें कहा कि प्रशिक्षण के दीयावारी महिलाओं को चौड़ी के पक्षों से फालावक पोट, पर्स, दीपिया आदि उत्पाद बनाने के तरीके सिखाएं जा रहे हैं ।

चीड़ सुधारेगा महिलाओं की आर्थिकी

- ▶ पाइन नीडल उत्पादन केंद्र में सिखाए जाएंगे पत्तियों से उत्पाद तैयार करने के गुरु

पालमपुर, 21 मार्च
(भृगु): चौड़ी की पत्तियाँ
से उत्पाद तैयार कर उसे
मिहानी की अधिकता से
जोड़ने की काव्यद आरंभ
कर दी गई है। ऐसे में
लालांगों को चौड़ी पत्ती से
उत्पाद बनाना एक स्थिरणे
के तेहश्य से अवैरों में जिला
के प्रथम पाइन नीडल
प्राइवेन्ट संस्टर की आपाना
की गई है। कांगड़ा मिहाना
सभा रैत के तत्वावधान में

दक्ष केंद्र में चीड़ी पत्ती न-न-भिन्न प्रकार के विविध पत्तों के गमले बनाने का एक दिया जाएगा। इस डिग्ल संस्कार का सुधारण्य सेवा परिषद के हरिहरनगर सुरारे ने जबकि इस अवसर पड़ा महिला सभा की दुसरी बार कुमारी विप्रस्थ में दस हजार और इस के प्रत्येक दस हजार तक उन्हें अर्थिक रूप

बनाने का यह है। उद्धरने वाले कुमार को भारी बनाया गया है। इस अवसर पर संघर्षन के संयुक्त सामिक्षण अवधेश कुमार सैनी ने बताया कि प्रत्येक विकास का खंड में इस तरह के केंद्र स्थापित किए जाएंगे, वहाँ से उत्तरानन्द को विकिको के लिए वेबसाइट तैयारी की जाएगी। इस अवसर पर बजरंग मुवालिक वल्लभ कुमार, विचार कुमार व रामेश कुमार, नन्द कुमार विशाल रूप से उत्प्रस्थित थे।

चीड़ की पत्तियों से बनेगा
घरेलू उपयोग का सामान

- कांगड़ा की गैर सरकारी संस्था महिलाओं को देणी प्रशिक्षण
- चंबा के पांच विकास खंडों में आयोजित होगा प्रशिक्षण शिविर
- प्रशिक्षण के दौरान महिलाओं को प्रतिदिन 125 रुपये मानदेय भी मिलेगा

प्रतिनिधि, बौखेत : डॉ आरडॉए के तत्वावधान में जिला कांगड़ा की एक गैर सरकारी संस्था ने जिला चबा के पांच विकास खंडों को एक हजार महिलाओं को चौड़ी एक परियो से घेरेलू उपयोग का समान बनाने का प्रशिक्षण देने का बोड़ा उत्तराया है।

विकास खंड सलूणी से इस प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम की शुरआत की गई है। कांगड़ा महिला सभा रेत से यहां पहुंचे प्रशिक्षक दल में 11 महिलाएं व एक पुरुष शामिल हैं। सभा की प्रधान सदर्शना कुमारी व

संस्था जिला चंवा के पांच विकास खंडों
भिट्यात, सलूणी, तीसा, मैहला व विकास
खंड चंवा की एक हजार महिलाओं जो कि
आई आरडीपी परिवारों से संबंध रखती हैं
को यह प्रशिक्षण देंगी।

प्रत्येक विकास खंड में 200 महिलाओं को चीज़ों की परिवर्ती से भेद उपयोग का सामान बनाने का प्रशिक्षण दिया जाएगा, ताकि महिलाएं अपनीनभर बन जायें। उन्होंने कहा कि आविन्दन कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत विकास खंड समूहों से की गई है, जहाँ पांच स्थानों पर लैंड, सुंडला, दियूर, मंजीर-प्रमाण व मंजीर द्वितीय में 30-30 महिलाओं को दस दिवसीय प्रशिक्षण दिया जा रहा है।

उक्त स्थानों पर संस्था की मास्टर टेन सीमा देवी, इंद्रा देवी, रेशमा देवी, सतोष देवी, कांता देवी, गोहड़ी देवी, बिमला देवी, सीमा व वृद्धा आदि महिलाओं को प्रशिक्षित कर रही हैं।

संगी ने बताया कि इस प्रश्नक्षण कार्यक्रम का पूरा खंड डीआरडीए द्वारा बहन किया जाएगा व प्रश्नक्षण प्राप्त कर रही महिलाओं को खंड कार्यलय द्वारा 125 रुपये प्रतिनियन के हिसाब से मनदेव भी दिया जाएगा।



चंद्रा : जिला की बख्तपुर पंचायत में चल रहे प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम के दौरान चीड़ के पेड़ों की पत्तियों से उत्पाद तैयार करती महिलाएं। (राजनेत्र)

HIM PINE Products at Surajkund International Craft Fair 2020



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