

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 populace¹¹ 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 principles⁸ . • 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 1 Women 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 nuisance 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 Tina, Chamba, Mehla, Salooni and Bhatiyaa.



Pine Needle Products



KMS work highlighted in Local Newspapers



चीड़ की पत्तियों से डेकोरेशन पीस-चटाइयां

घंवा में डीआरडीए ने महिलाओं की आर्थिकी सुधारने का उठाया बीड़ा

कायालिय बंधावदहता, चंवा

महिलाओं की स्वरोजगार के बेहतर अवसर प्रदान करने तथा उन्हें आर्थिक और पर माबुस बनाने के उद्देश्य से कारकाइ के स्वर्ण वर्षीय योजना के तहत चीड़ की पत्तियों से डेकोरेशन पीस बनाने का हुनर सिखाने का बीड़ा डीआरडीए (जिला ग्रामीण आभिकरण सेवा) ने उठाया है। डीआरडीए की परियोजना अधिकारी रम्या चौहान ने बताया कि जिला कारकाइ की एक स्वयंसेवी संस्था 'चाइव' द्वारा 'चीड़ काइ' के प्रस्ताव को एक प्रस्ताव

पेश था। इसमें उन्होंने चीड़ की पत्तियों द्वारा घर में बचने के लिए डेकोरेशन पीस चटाइयां इत्यादि बनाने के लिए प्रशिक्षण देने की बात कही थी। इस पर कारकाइ चंवा ने इस प्रस्ताव पर काम करने की मंजूरी दे दी है। ग्रामीण चीड़ाने ने बताया कि जिला कारकाइ से आई स्वयंसेवी संस्था चाइव द्वारा डीआरडीए की अध्यक्ष सुदर्शना कुमारी तथा युवाओं के संयुक्त सचिव आशुतोष कुमार सेठी की अगुवाई में प्रशिक्षकों ने इस योजना पर कार्य शुरू कर दिया है। उन्होंने बताया कि चीड़ की पत्तियों से बनने वाले दो पीस की पूरे देश में

हिमाचल प्रदेश में ही बनाया जा रहा है। जहाँकि पत्तियों से यह सौंदर्यको, दक्षिण अफ्रीका तथा उत्तराखंड में बचाई जाती है।

परियोजना अधिकारी ने बताया कि जिला के बीबीडल परिवारों तथा बेल्ला हनुम सुन की महिलाओं को कारकाइ की महिला सभा में प्रशिक्षण देना शुरू कर दिया है। इसमें 'चाइव' महिलाओं की आर्थिक स्थिति सुधारेगी, जहाँ चीड़ की पत्तियों की सहाई की जाएगी तथा जंगलों में जला जलने का खतरा भी कम होगा। उन्होंने बताया कि चीड़ की पत्तियों द्वारा तैयार छोटी-छोटी डेकोरेशन, टेबल क्लवदन इत्यादि की भारी मांग है। स्वर्ण वर्षीय स्वरोजगार योजना के तहत महिलाओं

कांगड़ा की स्वयंसेवी संस्था ने नयी प्रतिष्ठान

एक हजार की हुनर सिखाने का लक्ष्य

को टाइ-टाइम दिन का प्रशिक्षण दिया जा रहा है तथा प्रशिक्षण पर खर्चों को महिला कारा 'काइ' की बचत जा रहा है।

इसमें उनके लिए टाइम फिट तथा जाने-बाने का खर्चों तथा लाइव डिजिटल डिजिटल है। पहलक तथा चंवा कारा की 30-30 महिलाओं की प्रशिक्षण दिया जा चुका है। इस काम के लिए एक हजार महिलाओं की प्रशिक्षण देने का लक्ष्य रखा है।

चीड़ के पत्तों के उत्पाद बना रही महिलाएं

जिला की बख्तपुर पंचायत में चल रहा प्रशिक्षण शिविर

चंवा, 3 मार्च (स.ह.): गरीबी रेखा से नीचे जीवन यापन करने वाली महिलाएं इन दिनों चीड़ के पेड़ की पत्तियों से उत्पाद तैयार कर स्वरोजगार अपनाने की दिशा में कार्य कर रही हैं। जिला ग्रामीण विकास आभिकरण के सौजन्य से विकास खंड मैहला की बख्तपुर पंचायत में चल रहे प्रशिक्षण शिविर में कांगड़ा महिला सभा की सदस्य चार पंचायतों मोला, बख्तपुर, रठियार व कुपाहड़ा की महिलाओं को प्रशिक्षित कर रही हैं। इस प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम के दौरान महिलाएं चीड़ के

पेड़ों की पत्तियों के प्रयोग से मैट, फ्लावर पोट, टोपियां, पर्स व चाय की ट्रे बनाने का प्रशिक्षण हासिल कर रही हैं। प्रशिक्षण हासिल कर रही बी.पी.एल. परिवार से संबंधित मंजूर देवी, कुपला देवी व शर्मिला देवी का कहना है कि भविष्य में स्वरोजगार अपनाने के लिए पाइन नीडल का यह प्रशिक्षण उनके लिए काफी लाभदायक रहेगा और इस दौरान वे बहुत कुछ सीख रही हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि इससे उनका जीवन स्तर भी ऊंचा उठेगा और वे इसे स्वरोजगार के रूप में अपनाएंगी।

वहीं महिलाओं को प्रशिक्षण प्रदान कर रही कांगड़ा महिला सभा की सदस्य सीमा देवी ने बताया कि यह प्रशिक्षण हासिल कर महिलाएं मेलों के दौरान अपने उत्पादों को बिक्री हेतु रख सकती हैं और इसके उन्हें अच्छे दाम मिलेंगे। उन्होंने कहा कि एक टोकरी 100 रुपये जबकि पर्स 80 रुपये तक बिक सकता है। उन्होंने कहा कि प्रशिक्षण के दौरान महिलाओं को चीड़ के पत्तों से फ्लावर पोट, पर्स, टोपियां आदि उत्पाद बनाने के तरीके सिखाए जा रहे हैं।

चीड़ की पत्तियों से बनेगा घरेलू उपयोग का सामान

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

संस्था जिला चंवा के पांच विकास खंडों भटियात, सलुणी, तीसा, मैहला व विकास खंड चंवा को एक हजार महिलाओं को कि आईआरडीपी परिवारी से संबंध रखती है को यह प्रशिक्षण देगी।

प्रत्येक विकास खंड में 200 महिलाओं को चीड़ की पत्तियों से घरेलू उपयोग का सामान बनाने का प्रशिक्षण दिया जाएगा, ताकि महिलाएं आत्मनिर्भर बन सकें। उन्होंने कहा कि प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत विकास खंड सलुणी से की गई है, जहां पांच स्थानों भलेई, सुंडला, डिपूर, मंजीर-प्रथम व मंजीर द्वितीय में 30-30 महिलाओं को दस दिवसीय प्रशिक्षण दिया जा रहा है।

प्रतिनिधि, बनीखेत : डीआरडीए के तत्वावधान में जिला कांगड़ा की एक गैर सरकारी संस्था ने जिला चंवा के पांच विकास खंडों की एक हजार महिलाओं को चीड़ की पत्तियों से घरेलू उपयोग का सामान बनाने का प्रशिक्षण देने का बीड़ा उठाया है।

विकास खंड सलुणी से इस प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत की गई है। कांगड़ा महिला सभा रत से यहां पहुंचे प्रशिक्षण दल में 11 महिलाएं व एक पुरुष शामिल हैं। सभा की प्रधान सुदर्शना कुमारी व सहसचिव अवधेश सेणी ने बताया कि

सेणी ने बताया कि इस प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम का पूरा खर्च डीआरडीए द्वारा वहन किया जाएगा व प्रशिक्षण प्राप्त कर रही महिलाओं को खंड कार्यालय द्वारा 125 रुपये प्रतिदिन के हिसाब से मानदेय भी दिया जाएगा।

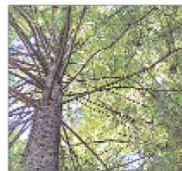
चीड़ सुधारेगा महिलाओं की आर्थिकी

पाइन नीडल उत्पादन केंद्र में सिखाए जाएंगे पत्तियों से उत्पाद तैयार करने के गुर

पालमपुर, 21 मार्च (धृगु) : चीड़ की पत्तियों से उत्पाद तैयार कर उसे महिलाओं की आर्थिकी से जोड़ने की कवायद आरंभ कर दी गई है। ऐसे में महिलाओं को चीड़ पत्ती से उत्पाद बनाने के गुर सिखाने के उद्देश्य से अक्टूबर में जिला के प्रथम पाइन नीडल प्राइडेशन सेंटर की स्थापना की गई है। कांगड़ा महिला सभा रत के तत्वावधान में

आरंभ इस केंद्र में चीड़ पत्ती के भिन्न-भिन्न प्रकार के आकारों के गमले बनाने का प्रशिक्षण दिया जाएगा। इस पाइन नीडल सेंटर का शुभारंभ समाज सेवा परिषद के निदेशक हरिकृष्ण मुरारी ने किया जबकि इस अवसर पर कांगड़ा महिला सभा की अध्यक्ष सुदर्शना कुमारी ने बताया कि प्रदेश में दस हजार महिलाओं को इस उत्पादन से जोड़कर उन्हें आर्थिक रूप

से स्वावलम्बी बनाने का लक्ष्य रखा गया है। उन्होंने बताया कि अजय कुमार को इस केंद्र का प्रभारी बनाया



गया है। इस अवसर पर संगठन के संयुक्त सचिव अवधेश कुमार सेनी ने बताया कि प्रत्येक विकास खंड में इस तरह के केंद्र स्थापित किए जाएंगे, वहीं उत्पादों को बिक्री के लिए बैवसाइट तैयार की जाएगी। इस अवसर पर बजरंग युवा क्लब के कृष्ण कुमार, विजय कुमार व राकेश कुमार, नरेंद्र कुमार विशेष रूप से उपस्थित थे।



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

HIM PINE Products at Surajkund International Craft Fair 2020



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