

# Challenges encountered in promoting sustainable development

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**Abstract:** Women form an integral part of the society. They are the most neglected part of our society especially those who are residing in the rural areas. They have very passive role in the family decisions due to their low educational level. Looking into the scenario, this study was conducted in one of the Krishi Vigyan Kendras of Punjab state to find the practical challenges encountered in promoting sustainable development. Trainings were conducted and imparted to rural women/ girls to empower them in present society. In the last five years, twenty one trainings on different aspects of Home Science were imparted to rural women/girls to enhance their knowledge. After attaining knowledge from these trainings, it was expected that some of these rural women would start some work either at household level or commercial level to earn their livelihood in a better way. One third of the trainees were contacted to study the adoption of these trainings in their life with the start of an enterprise to overcome the challenges in their overall development. The reasons for start of small enterprise were unemployment ranked at the top followed by financial problems, hesitation in adoption of new technology, domestic obligations etc. It was noticed that one fourth of the respondents started stitching at household level followed by one fifth of the respondents for preparation of preserved foods like pickles etc. The main constraints for development of various products at commercial level were lack of money, lack of time, male dominance, availability of raw material in nearby market place, market for sale of produce etc.

**Keywords:** adoption, challenges, girls, trainings and women.

## Introduction

**W**ith the increasing population, demand for basic needs has been steeply rising during the past few decades. The growing populations need food, clothing, shelter, fuel for themselves and fodder for their livestock. The majority of the population in India lives in villages. The economic development of our country largely depends on the progress of rural areas and the standard of living of rural masses. Village or rural industries play an important role in the national economy, particularly in the rural development. Rural entrepreneurship is based on stimulating local entrepreneurial talent and the subsequent growth of indigenous enterprises. It recognizes opportunity in the rural areas and accelerates a unique blend of resources. It brings an economic value to the rural sector by creating new methods of production, new markets, new products and generate employment opportunities thereby ensuring continuous rural development.

Rural entrepreneur is one of the most important inputs in the economic development of a country and of regions within the country. Rural entrepreneurship can be considered one of the solutions to reduce poverty, migration, economic disparity, unemployment and develop rural areas and backward regions. Development of the society is related with the income generation capacity of its members. The entrepreneurship based on home can affect the income of a major chunk of our population. The growth of modernization processes such as industrialization, technical change, urbanization and migration further encourage it. Poverty, unemployment are not individual problems but affect the public at large. Individual problem affects one individual or one group. Against this, a public issue affects the society as a whole.

Youth unemployment and underemployment is prevalent around the world because young people lack skills, work experience, job search abilities and the financial resources to find employment (United Nations, 2003; ILO, 2006; Matsumoto et al., 2012). In developing countries, this situation is exacerbated by poverty and the competitive pressures that result from a rapidly growing labour force. Globally, young people are, therefore, more likely to be unemployed or employed on more precarious contracts. This is the case during good economic times of a country. In the midst of a severe recession, youth find it increasingly difficult to both acquire a job as a new entrant in the labour market, particularly as a consequence of hiring freezes, and remain employed, since they are more likely to be laid off than workers with more seniority (Verick, 2009).

According to ILO's Global Trends Report 2012 on Youth, nearly 75 million young people are unemployed across the world, which represents an increase of more than 4 million since 2007. The report highlighted a drop in the number of unemployed youth to 73.3 million in 2014. That is 3.3 million less than the crisis peak of 76.6 million in 2009. Compared to 2012, the youth unemployment rate has decreased by 1.4 percentage points in Developed Economies and the European Union and by half a percentage point or less in Central and South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) and CIS, Latin America and the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa. The remaining regions East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa saw an increase in the youth unemployment rate between 2012 and 2014, or no change in the case of South Asia (ILO, 2015).

Number of schemes were introduced from time to time to empower the youth in different professions. Entrepreneurship on small scale is the only solution to the problems of unemployment and proper utilization of both human and non-human resources and improving the living condition of the poor masses (Prabha Singh, 2009). Entrepreneurship is the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth (Kuratka and Richard 2001). This wealth is created by individuals who take the major risks in terms of equity, time and career commitment of providing value to some products or services the product or service itself may or may not be new or unique but value must somehow be infused by the entrepreneur by securing and allocating the necessary skill and resources.

Empowering women particularly rural women is a challenge. Micro enterprises in rural area can help to meet these challenges. Micro – enterprises not only enhance national productivity, generate employment but also help to develop economic independence, personal and social capabilities among rural women. Some of the personal and social capabilities, which were developed as result of taking up enterprise among rural women (Sathiabama K 2010) are economic empowerment, improved standard of living, self confidence, enhance awareness, sense of achievement, increased social interaction, engaged in political activities and increased participation level in gram sabha meeting. In addition to this, improvement in leadership qualities, involvement in solving problems related to women and community and decision making capacity in family and community are also considered capabilities.

In India, over 60-70% of the people are living in rural areas who neither have adequate land holdings nor alternate service opportunities to produce or procure the necessary commodities. In the absence of adequate employment opportunities, the rural people are unable to generate enough wages to sustain their livelihood. Traditional Indian communities being male dominated, women have been suppressed till recently. Education of girls was felt to be unnecessary in the past and this has seriously affected their quality of life. Illiteracy has also suppressed their development due to lack of communication with the outside world. They are slow in adopting new practices, which are essential with the changing times. Apart from lack of communication, social taboo has also hindered their progress.

Rural women are key agents for development. They play a catalytic role towards achievement of transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. But limited access to credit, health care and education are the major challenges. These are further aggravated by the global food and economic crises and climate change. Empowering them is essential, not only for the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities, but also for overall economic productivity with the participation of women in the agricultural workforce.

The World Bank has suggested that empowerment of women should be a key aspect of all social development programs (Bank, 2001). Since the 1990's women have been identified as key agents of sustainable community development and women's equality and empowerment are seen as central to a more holistic approach towards establishing new patterns and processes of development that are sustainable (Handy and Kasam, 2004). The empowerment of women means for them to have the necessary ability to undertake a number of tasks either individually or in groups, so that they have further access to and control of society resources. To face the challenges in society, women empowerment is recognized as an essential strategy to strengthen the well being of individuals,

families and communities. It is an abiding process which takes place with specific intent to have further control over society's resources (Rezaei, 2007).

The challenges and constraints are faced by women at all levels i.e., social, political, cultural and economic. To empower them to face the challenges needs control over resources and autonomy in decision making. At the individual level, it refers to enhancing individual capabilities and at the collective level, it stands for the ability to organize and mobilize, to take action and to solve their problems. Economic Empowerment involves the ability of women to engage in income generating activities which will give them an independent income. Economic independence requires that women be provided opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills which leads to technical as well as social empowerment. Income generating activities are considered as those initiatives that affect the economic aspects of people's lives through the use of economic tools such as credit. Income generating activity is an important tool for empowerment of rural women. The self-help group provides an appropriate platform for initiating and sustaining income generating activities for the women.

Training of the farm women and farmers is essential for effective transferring of technologies from laboratories to the field. The skill levels of those who join the labour market early are low as they are often school drop-outs and haven't had the opportunity to undergo vocational training (Kumar, Mitra and Murayama, 2011). Thus, it becomes difficult for them to find suitable employment, particularly in the early stages of their career when they lack adequate experience as well. The contribution of women and their role in the family as well as in the economic development and social transformation are pivotal. Different agencies have been promoting different income generating activities for economic empowerment of farm women. State Agricultural Universities particularly Krishi Vigyan Kendras are taking initiative for economic upliftment of the farm families.

#### **A case of KVK's of Punjab**

The environment in the family, society and support system is not conducive to encourage rural people to take up entrepreneurship as a career. It may be due to lack of awareness and knowledge of entrepreneurial opportunities. The young and well educated mostly tend to leave. As per circumstances, rural people by force may be more self-sufficient than their urban counterparts, but the culture of entrepreneurship tends to be weak.

Though the ultimate test of women entrepreneurship development programs is not just how many women entrepreneurs set up enterprises, but how many survive and grow over a period of time. The performance of such programs leaves much to be desired. Without claiming reliability of data in absence of any systematic studies, observations indicate that still under half of the women living in poverty who are trained in entrepreneurship programs ultimately set up enterprises. Therefore, the present study was conducted to find the practical challenges encountered in promoting sustainable development and to assess the effect of trainings imparted to rural women/girls.

#### **Methodology**

A number of trainings are conducted at Krishi Vigyan Kendras in Punjab. Twenty one trainings on different aspects of Home Science i.e. stitching of garments, preservation of fruits and vegetables, soft toy making, painting & embroidery, soap & detergent making, quilting, weaving and tie & dye were imparted to rural women/girls. They were conducted by Home Scientists at Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Ferozepur under Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, Punjab. The purpose of these trainings was to enhance their knowledge. The data was gathered from the trainings conducted during the last five years. After attaining knowledge from these trainings, it was expected that some of these rural women would start some work either at household level or commercial level to earn their livelihood in a better way. In these five years three hundred and twenty six rural women/girls have attended trainings. Out of these around one third of them i.e., one hundred fourteen trainees were personally contacted to get the data regarding the various reasons for the start of enterprise, adoption of the enterprise and the challenges/constraints faced by them towards development.

#### **Results and Discussion**

Women population constitutes around fifty per cent of the world population. A large number of women around the world are unemployed. The world economy suffers a lot because of the unequal opportunity for women at workplaces. Women are equally competent. Nowadays, women are even ahead of men in many socio-economic activities. They are as talented as men. Previously, women were not allowed higher education like men and hence their talents were wasted. But nowadays, they are also allowed to go for higher studies and it encourages women to

show their talents which will not only benefit her individually but to the whole world at large. The money that women earn does not only help them and or their family, but it also help develop the society.

The reasons for the start of small enterprise by the rural girls/ women are discussed in table 1. Unemployment was ranked at the top by all the respondents (100%). Poor socio-economic conditions i.e., financial problems were ranked second rank (94.73%). It was followed by hesitation in adoption of new technology by 90.35% of the respondents, domestic obligations by 88.59% of the respondents. Problem in decision making like admission of their children in schools, marriage of their girl child were also the reason for the start of enterprise ranked fifth, sixth rank was given to male dominance, seventh rank was given for achieving empowerment. Last rank was given to inadequate knowledge.

**Table 1 Reasons for the start of enterprise**

n=114			
Characteristics	No of respondents	Percentage	Ranks
Unemployment	114	100.00	I
Financial problems	108	94.73	II
Hesitation in adopting new technology	103	90.35	III
Domestic obligations	101	88.59	IV
Problem in decision making	99	86.84	V
Male dominance	94	82.46	VI
Empowerment	93	81.58	VII
Inadequate knowledge	78	68.42	VIII

It is evident from the table 2 that nineteen respondents were selected from each of the trainings with the total of one hundred and fourteen respondents. Out of these respondents the ones who had started their enterprise either at household/ commercial level or adopted the particular skill was noted.

During trainings in stitching of garments, stitching of various suits, *kurta pyjamas*, kids garments were demonstrated. It was explained that practice of this skill at home can be done besides doing other household activities where the customers give fabric at home and get it stitched on the said time. Guidance was also given for starting of boutiques by taking a shop on rent. Out of these respondents 26.31% of the respondents had adopted this skill and started work mostly at household level.

**Table 2 Assessment of Home Science trainings**

SNo	Name of training	No of respondents	No. of resp adopted skill	% of adoption
1	Stitching of garments	19	5	26.31
2	Preservation of fruits and vegetables	19	4	21.05
3	Soft toy making	19	2	10.53
4	Painting & embroidery	19	3	15.79
5	Soap & detergent making	19	2	10.53
6	Quilting, weaving and Tie & dye	19	3	15.79
	<b>Total</b>	114	19	<b>16.67</b>

Trainings were provided on preservation of seasonal fruits and vegetables. The respondents were trained in the preparation of various pickles, chutneys, squashes, murrabbas, jams, amla candy etc. from the seasonal fruits and vegetables which are abundant during the bulk season. Some of the respondents had sold the products during Kisan Melas and many other exhibitions organized by the KVK during the course of time. As evident from the table, 21.05% of the respondents had started their small enterprise for preparation of preserved foods like pickles etc.

Trainings on soft toy making were provided to the respondents. Guidance was given for the establishment of crèche/day care centre. Further these prepared soft toys can be displayed in the crèche or day care centre and provided to the kids as well. Knowledge was imparted to give training to the school students in soft toy making by taking nominal fees which can in turn become their good source of income. It was observed that 10.53 percent of these respondents had started preparing toys and selling them at different levels.

In the training on painting and embroidery, the respondents were trained in applying different strokes during painting of the garments and many of the traditional embroideries were also practically done on dupattas etc. Using both the techniques of painting and embroidery together was also explained. Besides this the respondents were also enlightened with the printing techniques which included block (conventional and wooden) printing, stencil printing, screen printing etc. The respondents were demonstrated the preparation of bed sheets, pillow covers, bolsters, curtains, mats, coasters, suits, towels etc during the training. Since very less cost for the start of this enterprise is employed in this, it can be practiced easily. But only 15.79% of the respondents had started this enterprise.

During trainings on soap and detergent making, hands on experience were done on preparation of a number of cleaning agents including soap, detergent, hand wash, phenyl, multipurpose cleaner, lissapole etc. This skill was adopted by 10.53% of the respondents. A few of the respondents are earning their livelihood with this particular skill only.

During the training on quilting and weaving, demonstrations were given for the preparation of different products by sandwiching of the old garments/ interlinings for the preparation of quilted bed sheets, pillow covers, bolsters, baby mats, bibs etc. During the training on tie and dye of fabric, the respondents were enlightened with the different techniques of tying like binding, knotting, folding, pleating, random texturing, tritik etc., after that the procedure of dyeing in different colours was demonstrated. It was observed that 15.79 percent of the respondents had adopted this skill of quilting, weaving, tie and dye.

For the success of microenterprises, especially in manufacturing, development efforts have come to depend on the entrepreneur. Failures in making significant breakthrough in rural and underdeveloped areas have generally been due to a lack of local women entrepreneurs (Shah, 2013). Thus, there is a need to locate, encourage and develop women entrepreneurs for accelerated rural development, regional spread of industrial activities, and non-farming employment generation to alleviate poverty.

However, despite attempts to bring out the entrepreneurial capabilities of women, there are substantial challenges that inhibit their capabilities to perform, including lack of access to support networks, issues relating to gender or cultural acceptance (Singer et al, 2014), lack of basic education, lack of technical skills and knowledge about business and the lack of market knowledge which makes them vulnerable to exploitation by market forces.

Further the challenges faced by the respondents in developing the products at commercial level were analyzed, after studying the adoption of these trainings.

As discussed in table 3, the respondents (94.74%) felt that lack of financial support was the major constraint in case of stitching of garments followed by male dominance from 84.21% of the respondents, lack of time by 73.68% of the respondents. Market for sale of produce and high cost of raw material were not the problem for these respondents as they got the fabric to be stitched at home by the customers.

Lack of financial support was a major challenge for the respondents (89.47%) who started their enterprise in selling of preserved fruits and vegetables too. It was followed by lack of time (78.95%), male dominance by 73.68% of the respondents. Lack of space was not a constraint for them as work could be done in one part of kitchen also. Availability and high cost of raw material was not an issue for them as fruits and vegetables are available in bulk at low costs during harvesting time in nearby fruit and vegetable markets.

The same trend was followed by the respondents trained in soft toy making in regards of lack of financial support. Majority of the respondents i.e., 94.74% felt financial problem and male dominance as the major constraint for the start of new enterprise. Lack of time was considered as a challenge for 89.47% of the respondents as this task was time consuming. Sale of soft toys was felt a challenge for 84.21% of the respondents as these products have better sale in urban areas for which the respondent was supposed to tie up with someone at a farther place from their village. For this these entrepreneurs had to depend on middleman for marketing of their products who pocket large

amount of profit. Lack of space was not a constraint for them as this process could be attempted in part of a room also.

All the respondents who wanted to start an enterprise in painting and embroidery had lack of financial support as they were not able to buy embroidery machines for commercial purpose. Male dominance was a challenge for 89.47% of the respondents followed by lack of time by 84.21% of the respondents. These respondents didn't consider space as a constraint as they did hand embroidery and painting in open area of their house or in part of the rooms. High cost of raw material was not a constraint for them as they got the fabric from the customers to work upon.

All the respondents considered lack of financial support as a major challenge for the start of soap and detergent making at commercial level. Lack of time and availability of raw material was a constraint for 89.47% of the respondents. In this case, male dominance was a constraint for 57.89% of the respondents. The males rather helped in sale of soap, detergent and other cleaning agents.

**Table 3 Challenges/ constraints for developing products at commercial level**

Constraints	1(19)	2(19)	3(19)	4(19)	5(19)	6(19)	Total (114)
Lack of financial support	18 (94.74%)	17 (89.47%)	18 (94.74%)	19 (100%)	19 (100%)	17 (89.47%)	108 (94.73%)
Lack of time	14 (73.68%)	15 (78.95%)	17 (89.47%)	16 (84.21%)	17 (89.47%)	16 (84.21%)	95 (83.33%)
Lack of space	1 (5.26%)	-	-	-	9 (47.37%)	3 (15.79%)	13 (11.4%)
Availability of raw material	2 (10.52%)	-	5 (26.31%)	-	17 (89.47%)	-	24 (21.05%)
Market for sale of produce	-	11 (57.89%)	16 (84.21%)	2 (10.52%)	7 (36.84%)	3 (15.79%)	39 (34.21%)
High cost of raw material	-	-	3 (15.79%)	-	9 (47.37%)	-	12 (10.52%)
No regularity of monthly salary/ payment	5 (26.31%)	-	-	4 (21.05%)	-	3 (15.79%)	12 (10.52%)
Male dominance	16 (84.21%)	14 (73.68%)	18 (94.74%)	17 (89.47%)	11 (57.89%)	18 (94.74%)	94 (82.45%)

\*(1- Stitching, 2-Preservation of fruits and vegetables, 3- Soft toy making, 4- Painting and embroidery, 5 -Soap and detergent making 6 -Quilting, weaving and Tie & Dye)

Male dominance was the major constraint for the respondents (94.74%) working in quilting, weaving and tying and dyeing of fabrics. It was followed by another challenges in their path to success i.e., lack of financial support (89.47%), lack of time (84.21%) of the respondents. Availability of raw material was not a problem for these respondents as material for this was available in abundance in local markets.

Overall, lack of financial support was considered as a major challenge/ constraint for developing products at commercial level. It was followed by lack of time as women are engrossed in various household activities like rearing children, cooking activities, washing clothes etc.

The growth of rural entrepreneurs is not very healthy in spite of efforts made by government due to lack of proper and adequate infrastructural facilities. Risk element is a very important aspect. Since rural entrepreneurs have less risk bearing capacity due to lack of financial resources and external support.

Major problems faced by marketers are the problem of standardization and competition from already established entrepreneurs and other large scale units (Saxena S 2012). They face the problem in fixing the standards and sticking to them. Competition from large scale units also creates difficulty for the survival of new ventures. New ventures have limited financial resources and hence cannot afford to spend more on sales promotion. These units are not having any standard brand name under which they can sell their products. Procurement of raw materials is really a tough task for rural entrepreneurs. They may end up with poor quality raw materials.

## Conclusion

Income generating activities are the important tool for empowerment of rural women. Rural entrepreneur is a key figure in economic progress of India. Rural entrepreneurship is the way of converting developing country into developed nation. It is the answer to removal of rural poverty in India. Women's entrepreneurship is both about women's position in society and about the role of entrepreneurship in the same society. In this study, the reasons for the start of small enterprise were unemployment ranked at the top followed by financial problems, hesitation in adoption of new technology, domestic obligations etc. One fourth of the respondents started stitching at household level followed by one fifth of the respondents for preparation of preserved foods like pickles etc. The main challenge for development of various products at commercial level were lack of money, lack of time, male dominance, availability of raw material in nearby market place, market for sale of produce etc. Women entrepreneurs face many obstacles specifically in marketing their product including family responsibilities that have to be overcome in order to give them access to the same opportunities as men. The problem is that most of the rural youth do not think of it as the career option. Therefore, the rural youth need to be motivated to take it up as a career, with training and sustaining support systems providing all necessary assistance.

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