

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women's issues are development issues and bypassing them in development programmes means leaving almost half of human resources outside development interventions. Feminisation of poverty, lack of access and control over productive resources, limited opportunities to participate in decision-making process at various levels are among the critical issues that need to be addressed on an urgent basis.

Building of social capital by mobilising rural women in Assam: Social mobilization provides a suitable framework for development, first by catering to the needs and aspiration of the poor and second by engineering social change for their self-reliance. A large number of SHGs in the rural areas of Assam have been developed through social mobilization process. Social capital so built has created an enabling environment for socio economic development of rural women in Assam. Rural women have been closely involved in economic, social, cultural and political processes having direct bearing on their life.



Women for the first time in the state have come out in large number to build their own organization for their development. Visible changes have been observed in socio economic status of rural women by organized participation in development process through SHGs. SHGs have become platform for women for human resource development including overall personality development.

**NUMBER OF WOMEN SHGs ASSISTED UNDER DIFFERENT PROJECTS OF SIRD, ASSAM**

Sl. No.	Name of the project	Number of groups assisted	Number of families covered
<b>SGSY</b>			
1.	Farm mechanization - I	63	632
2.	Farmers' Service Centre	7	74
3.	Micro enterprise development	1852	18529
4.	Handloom	226	2347
5.	Training, Technology & Marketing Development	128	1288
6.	Farm mechanization - II	78	708

7.	Mushroom cultivation	348	3485
	Sub total	2702	27063
8.	Entrepreneurship development through agro processing with support services for marketing	43	430
	Sub total	2745	27493
<b>NEC</b>			
9	Diversification of handloom products	150	1500
<b>STATE GOVERNMENT PROJECT, P &amp; RD</b>			
10	Cluster Development project on Duckery	500	5526
<b>ACTION RESEARCH</b>			
11	Key economic activities	317	3000
<b>EMPLOYMENT GENERATION MISSION</b>			
12	Agriculture, handloom, small business	52	260
<b>CHIEF MINISTER'S JEEVAN JYOTI</b>			
13	Self employment of educated youth	200	700
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3964</b>	<b>42479</b>

The institute has been implementing two special projects exclusively for developing poor women in the villages namely economic empowerment through backyard rearing of duck and product diversification of handloom sponsored by the State Government. Under the projects the institute developing SHGs / JLGs in the villages.

Economic Empowerment of Women through backyard duck rearing: Ducks have played an important role in the socio-economic sphere of the rural people of Assam since time immemorial. Ducks are seen in almost all the villages of Assam because of its suitability for rearing in the backyard. To produce egg and meat, ducks are most suited to our climatic condition. The unique ability of the bird to utilize low quality food that normally go unharvested is incomparable.

In Assam villagers in their households rear ducks in small units as tradition. They are allowed to move freely to nearby water sources or fields for foraging. Most of the ducks raised in our villages belong to non-descript breed popularly known as pati which can lay about 50 to 60 eggs per year. Improved breeds



having high egg laying capacity have been introduced under special SGSY for adding value to this traditional activity in Assam.

### **Background and approach:**

- ▶ Rearing of Ducks in backyard condition is a traditional Income Generating Activity of the rural households of Assam.
- ▶ It is a source of income for the poor women of the villages.
- ▶ Natural condition of Assam is very much suitable for Duck Rearing.
- ▶ Duck egg and meat is very popular among Assamese people.
- ▶ Indigenous breeds of Ducks and eggs have very low egg laying capacity-40 to 50 eggs per Duck per year.
- ▶ Large number of eggs flow in to the State daily.
- ▶ The SIRD Assam in association with Kerala Agriculture University, Thrissur, selected improved breeds through field study in Kerala.

- ▶ Selected Chara Chemballi Ducks, they are indigenous breeds of Kerala, having laying capacity of 200 eggs per year.
- ▶ The SIRD found that the adaptability of Charra Chemballi Duck to the local condition of Assam is excellent.

## **IMPACT**

Women who were dependent on their husband are now entrepreneurs at their own right.

Quick changes have been observed in the quality of the lives of the families.

Enhanced income, removed indebtedness.

Enhanced decision making capacity of the women - inside the households and outside.

Considering the demand of the women folk the Government of Assam has continued the activity under State Plan for assisting 5000 women annually in clusters.



## **RED LETTER DAY**

His excellency Dr APJ Abdul Kalam visited the cluster and interacted with the members of the Self Help Groups to know about the transformation in their lives through rearing of Charra Chemballi duck on 17th October 2006.

After his visit to the village the then president referred to the economic empowerment of rural women in duck rearing in Gumoria clusters in national Conferences.

**ADDRESS OF HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT OF INDIA DR. APJ ABDUL KALAM at the Powerless, New Delhi ,20 November 2006**

*"In Gumoria village in Assam, the Self Help Groups are developing duck rearing practices based on inputs from agricultural specialists from Kerala with the initiative of Assam Government. Pride was writ large on the women as they explained their accomplishments."*

## **My experience in Gumoria village**

"When I think of genetic research , I m reminded of my visit to Gumoria village in Assam where the SHGs members are developing duck rearing practices based on inputs from agricultural specialists from Kerala and with the initiative of the Assam govt. This has resulted in improving thee eco conditions of the whole village by improving the duck productivity substantially."



## **Economic empowerment of women through product diversification of Handloom:**

**Background:** Assam presents a unique picture in respect of handloom and textile sectors. Weaving of fabrics is a way of life for a large number of small holders and rural artisans who earn their livelihood from this sector.

Looms are a part of the household in the villages of Assam and weaving is integral to rural life but this is not exploited on a commercial way. Traditional handloom activities got a new face through diversification and value addition of the items produced by the SHGs under SGSY in Assam.

**Sericulture:** Assam's handloom industry is basically silk oriented. The salubrious climate of Assam is suitable for flora and fauna. Four varieties of silk worms and their host-plants, mulberry, Eri, Muga and Oak Tassar are popular and important for economic and commercial purposes. Sericulture is an important cottage industry of Assam. Eri and Muga have been producing silk traditionally since long back. Muga is the pride of the Assamese



ladies. Oak tassar was also introduced in Assam. Activities under sericulture have been organized in a systematic and scientific manner under SGSY with the help of SHGs.

Spinning and reeling: Assam was one of the first places where the practice of rearing silk worm and bringing out the silken yarn from the cocoons began to be practiced. Initially it was done manually by the rural women, now, mechanized system has been introduced under SGSY for reeling and spinning of muga yarn. SHGs in Assam in different pockets have contributed in converting cocoons into yarn thereby adding value to the activity.

**Initiative of the institute.**

- ▶ Next to agriculture handloom is the major income generating activities for rural poor in the state.
- ▶ Every rural household in Assam has got a traditional loom in the backyard.
- ▶ Eri and muga are two famous Assam Silk having high potential for economic empowerment of the weavers.



- ▶ Transfer of appropriate handloom technology for production of value added items is the urgent requirement.
- ▶ The SIRD, Assam during the last couple of years assisted around 7500 weavers in SHGs and JLGs under special projects of the Government.
- ▶ Groups have been developed in cluster of villages to facilitate convergence of services.
- ▶ The weavers received bank loan and other support.
- ▶ The other support in terms of infrastructural facilities, improved training, marketing linkages etc.
- ▶ Loan repayment is very good and some of the SHGs have cleared their loan accounts.

### **Objectives and approach**

- ▶ Production of diversified handloom items.

- ▶ Emphasis on eri and muga.
- ▶ Economic upliftment of rural weavers.
- ▶ Convergence of support services through growth centres.
- ▶ Application of improved looms and other accessories.
- ▶ Skill upgradation for product diversification.
- ▶ Transfer of appropriate handloom technology.
- ▶ Credit mobilization for sustainability.

Implementation of special projects for diversification and value addition of handloom products:

Handloom weaving is the oldest widespread industry in the rural areas of Assam. It has been a way of life since time immemorial. The loom is the prized possession in every assamese woman household.



The SIRD has implemented the following handloom related projects to further diversify and add value to the handloom items produced by the weavers in the state.

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>Number of groups</b>	<b>Number of families assisted</b>
1.	SGSY special project sponsored by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India	370	3712
2.	NEC sponsored project	150	1560
3.	Bijoy Nagar Integrated Handloom Cluster Development Project, sponsored by Ministry of Textiles, Government of India	500	5000
4.	Oil India Limited sponsored project	18	180

5.	Chief Minister's Jeevan Jyoti Swaniojan Yojana sponsored by Government of Assam	400	2000
6.	Employment Generation Mission, Government of Assam	300	1500
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1738</b>	<b>13952</b>

**Objectives of handloom related activities of the institute:**

The SIRD has been implementing the special projects of handloom with the following objectives:

1. Economic empowerment of rural weavers.
2. Production of diversified and value added handloom items.
3. Upgradation of skill and application of handloom technology.
4. Introduction of improved looms and machineries.
5. Providing infrastructural support to SHGs for production.



6. Providing technical guidance through experts and consultants.
7. Establishment of wider marketing linkages.

### **Common Facility Centres:**

The SIRD has been running 7 (seven) Common Facility Centres in different places of the state to provide support services to the SHGs taking up improved handloom activities. The Common Facility Centres have facilities for improved training, mechanized reeling and spinning, dyeing, calendaring, computer designing etc.

Because of the facilities available, the centre has become important for training of weavers from different districts. It has also become a centre for exposure visit for people from different states.

- a. Training on skill development: Training on skill development are being organised by the centre in the following manner:
  - a. In campus.
  - b. Off campus



**In campus training on skill development are:**

- i. Upgradation of skill on weaving of fabric with good texture including blending of yarns.
- ii. Making of improved designs through use of jacquard machines.
- iii. Use of mechanised reeling and spinning machines.
- iv. Design making and colour combination.
- v. Calendaring and dyeing

**Off campus training on skill development are:**

- i. Master weavers of the centre are going to different districts and organise training in villages on the use of improved looms and jacquard machines, mechanised reeling and spinning machines, improved design etc.
- ii. Trained up weavers are also organising training in the field as the Master weavers to train up other weavers in the villages.



Training on skill development covering both in-campus and off campus programmes of the centre - around 1200 numbers.

In campus and off campus courses of training programmes helped the weavers to improve the quality of their products. The products of the weavers are now mostly being sold locally because of improved quality and design after training. Thus, the weavers are generating more income than before.

**Team of Master weavers.**

- ▶ A team of Master Trainers have been built.
  
- ▶ Master trainers underwent training in NIFT, Kolkata and Central Silk Board, Bangalore.

**Exposure visits.**

Selected weavers are sent on exposure visits to handloom clusters outside the state.

**Linkages with NIFT, Kolkata & NID, Ahmedabad:**

The SIRD has established linkages with National Institute



of Fashion Technology, Kolkata and National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad for improved training of the weavers. Selected weavers have undergone training in these institutes.

**Impact.**

- ▶ Diversification of the products and their value addition has enhanced their income two to three times.
  
- ▶ The monthly income varies to Rs. 2500/- to

Rs. 5000/- per weaver which was Rs. 500/- to Rs. 1000/- only before implementation of the project.

- ▶ Arrangements have been made for establishing wider marketing linkages through Trade Fairs, Exhibitions, Melas etc.
- ▶ The State Government has decided to continue the approach under a state project.
- ▶ Quality of the products attracted buyers from different parts of the country.