

## **Role of Women Dairy Cooperative for Empowerment & Economic Emancipation in Women Developmental Process**

**\*Ashok Sharma**

### **Abstract**

Women focused approach was advocated as a part of the strategy under which sufficient number of women dairy cooperative (WDC) societies were formed at village level with the point of view that WDC would provide a source of additional income and an organized platform to seek redress of personal, social and other grievances of women to empower them. To assess the women empowerment level through WDCs, random sampling method is used. Most of the respondents had medium level of social empowerment, cultural empowerment, psychological empowerment, economic empowerment, technological empowerment, while, most of them had low level of legal and political empowerment. Empowerment under psychological component was the strongest while under political it was found to be the weakest. Herd size, milk production, milk sale, income from dairying, social participation, training received and information seeking behaviour were found to be positively and highly significantly correlated with dairy women empowerment. It could be inferred from the regression model that social participation, training received and information seeking behaviour were playing a major role in empowering the women. The role played by WDC is much appreciated which can also be replicated in other parts of the country.

### **Key Words**

1. WDCs- women dairy cooperative
2. (STEP)- Support to Training and Employment Program

### **Introduction**

“One motivation for women’s empowerment is basic fairness and decency. Young girls should have the exact same opportunities that boys do to lead full and productive lives....the empowerment of women are smart economics.”

The Dairy Co-operatives in India have been formed to improve the economic conditions of milk producers, especially of the weaker sections in rural areas, by providing them facilities for improved breeding and better feeding of cattle, introduction of quality milch animals, adequate health care and above all an efficient organisational structure for procurement, processing and marketing of their products. The development of dairy farming through co-operatives results in enhancement in milk production and improvement in the economic conditions of milk producers.

### **Rural women and Dairy Co-operatives**

Bringing better prospects in rural areas is possible only by women and dairy co-operative societies located at the gross root level. The policies, programmes and plans of governments and international organizations reflect that their major development agenda is women empowerment and development.

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Most of the rural women farmers depend on thousands of dairy co-operatives for their survival. In this context, dairy co-operatives have the potential to facilitate empowerment process among the rural women for facilitating them to share their resources with women members. By accessing information and sources, women can have control over resources and make independent decisions without any hindrance.<sup>1</sup> In India, the role that women can play in every dimension of developmental activity has been recognized. The various plan strategies have also emphasized women's participation in the social and economic activities both within the family as well as society. This is to enable them to inculcate a sense of confidence and bring about awareness about their own potential for development, rights and privileges.

Female population constitutes nearly half of the total population in India indicates potential strength of women in the total human cannot be neglected. But unfortunately they still remain far being from the main stream, which is a subject of concern today. Woman, God's beautiful creation on earth is a symbol of W wisdom, O-Origin, M-Motherhood, E-Energy and N-Nectar. The combination of these qualities is the rising sun of every nation.

Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity – building resulting in greater participation, greater decision-making power and control, and transformative action. Empowerment is a process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives. It includes control over both resources (physical, human, intellectual and financial) and ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes)

Woman empowerment tries to ensure participation of women in the key areas of development like economy, society, politics and culture and involvement in decision-making process, which will enable them to control their lives.

#### **Characteristics of Women Empowerment**

Empowered women define their attitudes, values and behaviour in relation to their own real interests. They have autonomy in claiming freedom from existing male hierarchies, whether they live in traditional or modern or industrial societies. Empowered women maintain equal-mindedness, rather than play roles that merely confront and challenge male dominance.

Empowered women do not aim at being superior to men. They may act as equal and co-operate in order to achieve the common goal.

Empowered women use their talents to lead a better life. They have not only survived the harshness of their own subjugation, but they have also transcended their subjugation, this moving themselves through survival of their strength in the presence of the pressures of family, religion and work and they contribute to the empowerment of all women.

Empowered women may continue to fulfill their family responsibilities and participate in religious activities. They not only shoulder their traditional responsibilities, but they force their own ways of doing things.

The empowerment of women is linked with their educational and economic status in society. Women are in a state of economic, social, political and academic disempowerment. The solution lies in reversing this trend and empowering them socially, economically and politically. This status can be achieved through capacity – building facilities like access to education, knowledge, skill development and information.

Cooperative institutions work for the integrated development of their members and the society at large. They not only promote economic betterment but also strive for social and political well-being of the

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members and the society. There are many factors responsible for organizing co-operative societies by men and women.

The members get better opportunities elsewhere because of the experience; they have gained in the co-operative societies.

Many women undertake private jobs to work and earn more because experience gained in co-operatives provides a place for their members to meet and discuss matters of mutual interest. So there is an opportunity to exchange views on many aspects of life and they come to know of each other and develop concern and care for others. The result is that they share their views on solving problems and on promoting welfare measures. Those activities in the long run create a sense of unity and a human approach and bondage among the members.<sup>5</sup>

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- To understand the linkage between cattle rearing as a secondary source of income;
- To examine how the number of cattle and milk derived from them contribute to the earnings of dairy farmers;
- To identify whether education level plays a vital role in empowering women; and
- To examine if dairy income has led to the empowerment of women.

#### **MODEL (THREE-TIER MODEL)**

1. Milk Producer
2. Milk Producing Village Cooperative Society (VCS)
3. District Level Milk Producing Union and State Level Cooperative Milk Producing Union (State Level Federation).

Women and work in the livestock economy an introduction and revealed that the women faced problems regarding lack of adequate leadership qualities. The cooperatives were dependent on male due to non-development of technical skills among the women.

WDCs have made positive impact particularly on well-being of the weaker sections of the rural community through their re-distributive efforts of rural income in favour of them. Their activities resulted in increase in milk production, income, family assets, necessitated the opening of their personal account in bank, control on expenditure and savings of households giving women a suitable environment to experience their worth as a part of the society. Economic empowerment also boosted their confidence to express their power and rights.

Milk sale had highly positive and significant association with dairy women empowerment. As already stated, milk production was more accordingly milk sale was also more. In addition, assured market located near the vicinity of village for milk sale could generate regular income resulted in more empowerment of women.

Increase in number of animals resulted in increase of income accordingly it helped in psychologically boosting their morale. As the village women became the members of WDCs, they were provided with loan to purchase crossbred cows which acted as a gizmo to increase their assets.

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Income from dairying was found to have significant association with dairy women empowerment at one per cent level of probability. Unusual from crop farming, dairying is a source of regular cash inflow, received daily, weekly or at least fortnightly. Women were able to make savings, mostly through women self-help groups.

Information seeking behaviour had highly significant positive relation with empowerment of women. Different activities carried out by the WDCs created hunger of information among the members for their empowerment. Due to social participation and trainings attended, it obviously leads to the urge for seeking more information about on-going issues leading to an overall empowerment of women.

Respondents further used the income from dairying for crop production, marriage functions, to pay back loan, meet out personal expenses, etc. which empowered them economically.

Dairying is an occupation that supports the livelihood of women, especially the rural poor women in India. Dairy cooperatives ensure inclusiveness and livelihoods for small holders, especially women (Anonymous, 2012). Dairying in India is a female dominated enterprise (Fulzele and Meena, 1995). It is established beyond doubt that women always participated in dairy and animal husbandry activities in addition to their daily household chores (Belurkar et al., 2003). Women play crucial and significant role in livestock rearing, but their contribution in livestock rearing has not been given the due place they deserve.

NDDDB (1995) studied that the activities pertaining to enhancing women involvement in cooperatives were intended to increase women's participation in cooperatives, as members, leaders and employees. Women empowerment was the result of specific activities focused on enhancing women's leadership skills, promoting thrift and credit groups as well as health, education and economic activities. Empowerment of women dairy farmers in India and revealed that empowered female Indian dairy farmers touched on same specific issues of empowerment as owning their own milk cows, making decisions about artificial insemination, vaccination of their animals, and controlling the milk sales payments.

Dairying has played a prominent role in strengthening India's rural economy. It has been recognized as an instrument to bring about socio-economic transformation. The vast potential of dairying in employment generation and poverty alleviation is well recognized. The rainfed areas, which account for 70 percent of the net cultivated areas of the country, have not benefited from modern developments in agriculture. Of this 70 percent, about 30 percent area is under dryland agriculture where annual rainfall is up to 400mm.<sup>1</sup> Small and marginal farmers and landless labourers, who derive a substantial part of their livelihood from sale of milk, own about 70 percent of cattle in the rural areas. The White Revolution has transformed India's dairy industry. It has increased the availability of milk as well as provided a reliable source of income and employment to millions of rural families, thus improving the quality of their life. As of 2005, the cooperative network covered more than 115,000 lakh Dairy Cooperative Societies with 12 million farmer members are in existence throughout the country.<sup>5</sup> The National Dairy Development Board (NDDDB) has formulated a Perspective Plan 2010 which is expected to take the number of dairy cooperative societies in the Operation Flood areas over 1 lakh at present to over 1.29 lakh benefiting over 156 lakh dairy farmers by 2010.<sup>6</sup>

Milk has enjoyed a pride of place among all foods in India, being regarded as "nectar" since the dawn of Indian civilization some 5,000 years back. There is something very special about milk. Any brand of milk or milk product is not a simple sale item. It carries a symbol of trust. Milk is not a status symbol; rather it is the symbol of nutrition. Milk is an essential ingredient of food and by its very indispensable nature, it has one of the biggest markets, both nationally and globally. The dairy sector is important for its

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complementarity with agriculture and for its capability to provide protein-rich diet to the vegetarian population. Consequent to the remunerative price being received by the milk producer, the milk economy is transforming from a subsistence activity to commercial activity. The consumer has also benefited because the increase in milk prices has been generally lower than the rate of inflation and in comparison to other products.

### CONCLUSION

Women participate at different levels in almost all the activities of dairy farming, right from collecting fodder, grazing the animals, preparation of feed, providing feed and water for animal, cleaning the sheds, taking care of artificial and natural breeding and washing the animals. But some activities like the purchase of animals and the purchase of concentrated feed are mostly done by men, while most of the dairy – related activities are performed by women. Their crucial role in women empowerment cannot be under estimated.

From the foregoing analysis of the theoretical background of the concept of empowerment and the way in which the co-operative societies empower women, it is evident that a Dairy Co-operative organization is a powerful tool for the social and economic emancipation of women who have been neglected for a long time in different spheres of activities.

India has achieved a rapid and commendable progress in agriculture during last few decades. But today the country is facing a challenging task of maintaining food security to meet the demand of its ever growing population. Agriculture is the main source of income and food for over seventy percent of the population. But these days agriculture is not very rewarding enterprise especially for marginal and small farmers with small land holdings. On the other hand, allied agricultural sectors such as vegetable cultivation, floriculture, dairy farming etc. have greater potentialities for growth and livelihood sustainability. India is a densely populated country and maximum people live in villages. Majority of them are involved in agriculture. India produces only five percent of the total quantity of milk produced in the world. This amount is too inadequate to meet the country's demand. The supply of milk in some parts of India is higher than the local demand. On the other hand, supply of milk in the rest of the country as well as in urban areas is much lower than the demand. Many dairy cooperatives have been formed to meet local demand and to develop dairy industry.

member's participation of women in dairy management activities was high; therefore training camps/course for skill development of women engaged in dairying may be organized at village level by Government and Non-Government Organization.

The major milk producing states in the country are: Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu accounting about three fourth of the total milk production in the country.

Women dairy projects being implemented under —Support to Training and Employment Program (STEP) for women by the Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. STEP is being implemented to ensure well-being of women in traditional informal sectors. It aims at increasing self-reliance of women by enhancing their productivity and enabling them to take up income generation activities. A number of state level dairy federations took up organizing women dairy co-operative societies under STEP. Women dairy co-operative system is

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owned, controlled and managed by women only. It was therefore planned to focus attention on functioning of women co-operative societies and their impact on empowerment of members.

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