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**“A study to promote rural women empowerment-A pragmatic model crafted for self-employment”**

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**ABSTRACT:**

An empowered woman is a source of infinite strength. Empowering a woman is about creating awareness about one's strengths and eventually about rights and opportunities for self-development in all important spheres of life.

India is an agricultural country and the major source of employment in rural India is farming. While a lot of thrust is being given to save the rural farmers by providing monetary help, little is being talked about the specific steps required to provide employment options for rural India, especially the rural women. India's rural women are forced to navigate in their search for economic empowerment and professional success. It is important to provide them with employment options with the available resources i.e. their farms. So the present paper focuses on the developing a model to provide employment to rural women. The study is conducted in selected villages of the Jalgaon district.

**Keywords**

Women Empowerment, rural health, self-employment.

**Introduction**

India is an agricultural country. Recent research shows that there is lot of migration from rural to urban India. People migrate in large number from rural to urban areas in search of employment. The agricultural base of rural areas does not provide employment to all the people living there. Even the small-scale and cottage industries of the villages fail to provide employment to the entire rural folk. Contrary to this, urban areas provide vast scope for employment in industries, trade, transport and services. There is a need to create self-employment opportunities for youth and women in rural India.

The regional gap is huge and there is a need for empowerment as the rural women still is a disadvantaged segment of the Indian society. While a lot of thrust is being given to

save the rural farmers by providing monetary help, little is being talked about the specific steps required to provide employment options for rural India, especially the rural women. This paper intends to address this specific issue. This paper highlights the importance of helping the rural women to set-up their independent poultry farms on their farmlands. Attempts are also made to improve the rural health while providing employment option that empowers the rural women.

This project will generate a model which will not only provide self-employment opportunities to the youth and women, but it will also create awareness of protein rich diet in rural India. It will increase availability of poultry products in Rural areas which otherwise does not meet the requirement especially in rural areas. Rural women still is a disadvantaged segment of Indian society. Statistics show that whereas 86.1 per cent females are engaged in agriculture, the figure of males is 74 per cent. But there are hardly any special programs for enhancing women's skills. But most of the training programs have hardly any female participation. While rural males have opportunities in construction, trade, transport, storage, and services, these are mostly denied to rural females. Obviously, opportunities must be created to enable them to acquire the skills necessary for entering these newly emerging occupations.

Approximately 60 million children are underweight in India. Given its impact on health, education and productivity, persistent under nutrition is a major obstacle to human development and economic growth in the country, especially among the poor and the vulnerable, where the prevalence of malnutrition is highest. The progress in reducing the proportion of undernourished children in India over the past decade has been modest and slower than what has been achieved in other countries with comparable socioeconomic indicators. While aggregate levels of under nutrition are shockingly high, the picture is further exacerbated by the significant inequalities across states and socioeconomic groups. The crafted model will create awareness among the rural people about nutrition and also increase the availability of protein rich food in rural India

## ➤ Overview of Literature

There are three major aspects of the project the first one being to increase the self-employment opportunities for youth and women.

People migrate in large number from rural to urban areas in search of employment. The agricultural base of rural areas does not provide employment to all the people living there. Even the small-scale and cottage industries of the villages fail to provide employment to the entire rural folk. Contrary to this, urban areas provide vast scope for employment in industries, trade, transport and services. About 8.8 per cent of migrants migrated for employment in 1991 and 14.7 per cent of migrants migrated for employment in 2001 (Dr. R. C. Tyagi, Tarannum Siddiqui, 2016)

There is a steady decline in agricultural jobs: census enumerated 96 million cultivators for whom farming is their main occupation only, down from 103 million in 2001 and 110 million in 1991. More than 2,000 farmers lose their 'Main Cultivator' status every single day for the last 20 years. Other figures from National Sample Survey series indicate that 23 million agricultural full time jobs have been lost between 2005 and 2010 only. During this period, the share of total workforce in agriculture (cultivators and labourers) has declined from 58.2 to 54.6% out of which one-third is marginal workers, meaning that they work less than six months a year in the agricultural sector. In others words, only 38% of the workforce is working full-time in farmlands. During the 2001-2011 decade, the net total workforce expanded of about 79 million to reach almost 482 million. One-third of it was absorbed in the agriculture and the rest in non-farm sectors. The main shift is toward non-farm jobs (Eric Denis and Marie - H  l  ne Z  rah, 2014).

Rural women still remain a disadvantaged segment of Indian society. Statistics show that whereas 86.1 per cent females are engaged in agriculture, the figure of males is 74 per cent. But there are hardly any special programs for enhancing women's agricultural skills. While 7.1 per cent rural females are engaged in manufacturing, the percentage for rural males is 7 i.e. less than that of females. But most of the training programs have hardly any female participation. While rural males have opportunities in construction, trade, transport, storage, and services, these are mostly denied to rural females. Obviously, opportunities must be created to enable them to acquire the skills

necessary for entering these newly emerging occupations (ACCU, Asia-Pacific cultural center for UNESCO).

This project will generate employment opportunity for youth and women in rural India. This will reduce the rural to urban migration problem

Second major aspect of the project is to increase the availability of Poultry products like eggs in rural areas to eradicate under nutrition and malnutrition. The global community has designated halving the prevalence of underweight children by 2015 as a key indicator of progress towards the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. Economic growth alone, though impressive, will not reduce malnutrition sufficiently to meet the nutrition target. If this is to be achieved, difficult choices about how to scale up and reform existing nutrition programs or introduce new ones have to be made by the Government of India and other agencies.

Approximately 60 million children are underweight in India. Given its impact on health, education and productivity, persistent under nutrition is a major obstacle to human development and economic growth in the country, especially among the poor and the vulnerable, where the prevalence of malnutrition is highest. The progress in reducing the proportion of undernourished children in India over the past decade has been modest and slower than what has been achieved in other countries with comparable socioeconomic indicators. While aggregate levels of under nutrition are shockingly high, the picture is further exacerbated by the significant inequalities across states and socioeconomic groups – girls, rural areas, the poorest and scheduled tribes and castes are the worst affected –and these inequalities appear to be increasing

Livestock and poultry rearing is an imperative factor for improving the nutritional security of rural poor in India. Rural farmers rear Desi type chicken with low egg and meat production in backyard system (Pathak,, 2013).

Poultry is one of the fastest growing segments of the agricultural sector in India with an average growth rate of 8 to 10 per cent per annum. As a result, India is now the world's 3rd largest egg producer (next to China and USA) and 5th major producer of broiler chicken meat (after USA, China, Brazil and Mexico). If taken into account the

domestic requirement as well as India's share of export market, there is existence of huge production gap of poultry products in the country. Increase in population growth, changing life style, shifting of food habits, rapid urbanization, increased per capita income, increase awareness on health, increase in size of young population, etc., are contributing towards more demand on poultry products. In the current market scenario, the poultry products are cheapest source of animal protein of high biological value. This increased demand of poultry products is expected to create more than 10 million jobs of various categories in poultry industry (A.K.Panda, 2015).

### ➤ **Farming Conditions in Jalgaon District**

Jalgaon is a major city in western India, located in north of Maharashtra state within region of Khandesh. It is bounded by Satpuda mountain ranges in the north, Ajanta mountain ranges in the south. The major source of earning for rural jalgaon is farming there is little or no industrial development. Jalgaon has got pretty diverse climate. It is exceptionally hot and dry during summer with temperature reaching as high as 45 degrees Celsius. Jalgaon receives about 700 mm rainfall during monsoons. Rural areas or villages in jalgaon district are often in the news for droughts and farmer suicides. Mostly there are small-time farmer in the villages. These farmers have small farmlands, which do not yield much. They can hardly earn back the investments made with the yield from their land. Due to increasing rates of farmer suicides mostly the women are left with no option.

Also the farming is seasonal so there is no continuous source of income for the farmers

### ➤ **Employment options for women in villages**

In rural areas, women work in sectors of agriculture. Though agriculture continues to be a major field for women's employment, they are not recognized as farmers and are assigned supplementary work to that of men such as weeding, winnowing, and transplanting. Also, land is never in the name of the women folk of the family even though they are actively involved in the cultivation, production and tilling of land. Faced with deprivation, women from rural areas migrate to urban sectors but since they possess negligible skills, they end up working in sectors of construction, processing, domestic labor. It is to the credit of Indian women, both in the organized and unorganized sectors, that they face difficulties with grit and determination, project with positive self-image and seek empowerment through their work.

An empowered woman is a source of infinite strength. She can empower the entire family and the entire village as well. Most women in villages are not much educated. So they should be provided with a self-employment option with the available resources and education. It should be an “Earning and Learning” experience for them.

### ➤ **About Poultry Farming**

This type of project requires investment in preparation of house for birds, feed and water system. One may invest more money to provide good quality cages and good quality feed to take proper care of the bird for quality production. The birds should be vaccinated properly and vitamins should be supplied for good growth of these birds.

Livestock and poultry rearing is an imperative factor for improving the nutritional security of rural poor in India. Rural farmers rear Desi type chicken with low egg and meat production in backyard system. For developing the rural poultry farming, improved backyard poultry is utmost important.

The backyard poultry farming can provide a way for sustainable agriculture in rural areas and a self-employment option for rural women. Poultry farming can be regular source of income to the rural households especially the women. It integrates well with other agricultural operations. It Aids in enhancing the soil fertility in backyards.

### ➤ **Model for empowering rural women**

Women are the backbone of a family. If a women is empowered the entire family is empowered. Rural women empowerment is essential as they need to migrate to urban areas for their livelihood. This can be stopped only if the rural woman is provided with employment opportunity in the villages itself. They need a proper training and financial assistance for setting up their own business. As we are targeting the women already having own farmland, and the areas where they can hardly earn back the investments made with the yield from their land. This way they can use the land for a business which will provide them income on a regular basis. This business can be started individually or a group of females can come together and start the business. This depends on their financials.

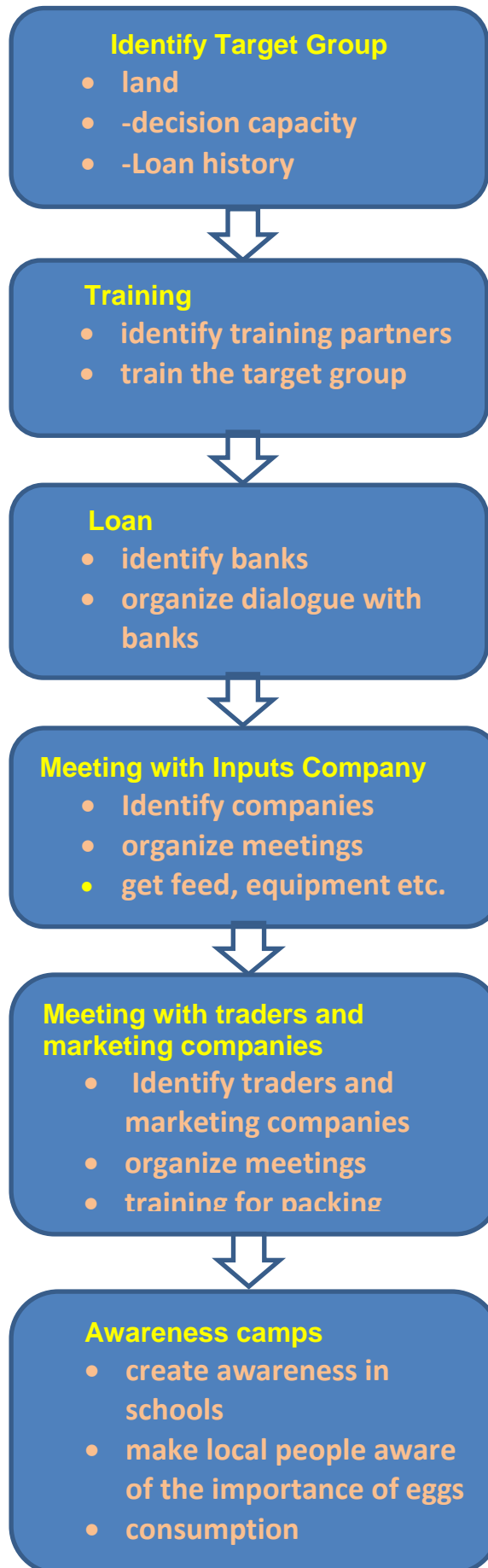


Figure 1: Framework of the Model

➤ **Identify the target group**

Visit the villages and call group meetings of women to brief about the business. Help from the sarpanch and few learned women in the villages can be taken during the briefing

The target group should satisfy the following criterion

1. Should own a farmland
2. Loan history of the individuals will be checked so that they should fit in the criterion to avail loan for the starting the business.
3. The women should be willing to start the business.

➤ **Training**

Training the identified group is important as they are completely unknown to the business model. Poultry farming needs training as there is a particular way the business should start and be carried out. After identifying the training partner the training should be given on following parameters

1. Care of the poultry farm.
2. Feeding the birds (what, How, When).
3. Hygiene of the cages.
4. Understanding the cycle of eggs.

➤ **Financial assistance**

The banks which are ready to give loans for such a business have been identified. A dialogue should be organized between the banks and the budding women entrepreneurs.. The complete process of taking loan and repayment will be explained. The loan process will be initiated.

➤ **Meetings with Input Company**

Meeting with the inputs company is organized. Following things will be procured from the inputs company

1. Equipment's



2. Chickens
3. Feed

➤ **Meetings with traders and marketing companies**

Meeting with the traders will be organized. Training will be provided for packaging. Awareness camps will be conducted in schools and importance of high protein diet i.e consumption of eggs will be explained.

Eggs will be collected by the traders on scheduled timings and will be taken to cities for sale or to the processing industry.

➤ **Awareness Camps**

Awareness camps to promote the business in the surrounding areas will also help the business. This will not only help to promote the business but would also help to improve the rural health and eradicate malnutrition. Promotional camps can be conducted in schools. School students can also be given egg in their mid-day meal. Awareness amongst the Locals can also create about healthy eating and the importance of consumption of eggs in their daily foods.

➤ **Conclusion**

The villages in jalgaon district are still void of employment options especially for women. There is a need to provide them with employment option with available resources i.e. their farms. This paper proposes a model and provides a framework for setting up poultry farms on their existing farmlands. This will definitely help empower the rural women in jalgaon district.

➤ **Acknowledgement**

This research was supported by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi. I feel privileged to acknowledge the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi, for providing financial assistance for the minor Research Project entitled” Design and Development of a Model for Rural Health Improvement and Women Empowerment through Self-Employment Option” for the year2017-18.

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