

EVALUATION REPORT ON SUPPORT TO TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN (STEP)

1. The Study

As per the 1991 census, 90 per cent of the women work force was engaged in the informal sector for their livelihood. In the absence of proper legislative protections, they were considered highly vulnerable to various forms of social and economic exploitations. In order to ensure economic justice to the women particularly those living below the poverty line and to introduce protective measures against the women, the Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) was started in 1986.

At the instance of Planning Commission, the Programme Evaluation Organisation undertook the study to assess the impact of the programme on socio-economic status of the beneficiaries. The main focus was on the problems encountered in implementation, if any, and to suggest the measures to overcome the same.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study were the following:

- i) to study the type of training provided, its adequacy and usefulness in skill upgradation,
- ii) to study the availability of extension services for mobilising women in viable group for employment generation,
- iii) to study the extent to which the support services including access to credit have been made available,
- iv) to assess the impact of the programme on socio-economic status of the beneficiaries, and
- v) to study the extent to which the objectives of the programme have been fulfilled and to examine the monitoring arrangement.

3. Sample Size/Criteria for Sample Selection

Ten states namely, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal where the programme had been in operation, were selected. One Project from each of the State, two districts from each project

(except West Bengal), one with the maximum and the other with the minimum number of societies, were selected. Four societies, from each district were selected randomly. 1041 women beneficiaries were also selected. In all 10 States, 10 Projects, 19 Districts, 76 Societies and 1041 beneficiaries were selected for the study.

4. Reference Period

The study was conducted during October-December 1994. The reference period for the study was from 1986-87 to 1993-94.

5. Main Findings

1. The implementation of the training aspect was found to be weak at the grass root levels.
2. A vast majority of 63.87 per cent self employed and 77.87 per cent wage employed women were earning their income in the lower range, Rs.500/- and above per month.
3. In many of the projects, the linkages with other Government Departments and Voluntary Organisations for providing the support services to the women were not established.
4. The arrangements for coordination and monitoring were found to be inadequate in most of the projects.
5. The role of extension services in mobilisation of the women in viable groups was found to be lacking in most of the societies.
6. The awareness regarding, the small family norms and the legal issues, like marital rights, property rights, minimum wage, etc., was found lacking among women in most of the cases.
7. The participation of women in developmental works was also found to be limited.
8. No society was reported to have been formed in the two States of Haryana and Kerala. Of the total 731 societies formed under the eight projects, 22 (3.01 per cent) were reported to be defunct in the two States of Bihar and Karnataka.
9. The prescribed norm for funding pattern of 90 per cent as Central Grant and 10 per cent borne by the State/Implementing Agencies was followed during the period under reference. However, the matching share from the

States/Implementing Agencies had not been released in the two States of Bihar and Kerala.

10. It was found that of the total beneficiaries, 65.23 per cent were trained on technical aspects for skill upgradation, while only 30.36 per cent were trained on gender issues. Further the high percentage of trained women on technical aspects were found in the two States of Karnataka and Kerala.
11. The utility of training imparted was reported as positive by the vast majority of trained women.
12. An inter state comparison revealed that the progress on employment generation was not encouraging especially in the three states of Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala.
13. Of the total beneficiaries, 50.34 per cent reported to have received the assistance in getting the raw material under the STEP, of which 93.70 per cent were found satisfied with the assistance received by them. However, four States of Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu reported that no assistance in providing raw material was given to them.
14. Of the total, 53.51 per cent women reported to have received the marketing facilities under the programme whereas such facilities were not made available to the women in the four States of Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
15. The Programme had not made any special efforts in making available the credit facilities to the beneficiaries as only 22.96 per cent of the sample women were reported to have received the credit as well as subsidy facilities.

6. Major Suggestions

1. An integrated approach to training covering all the important aspects both under technical and gender issues needs to be adopted under the STEP for ensuring skill upgradation of the women. Moreover, training through the important methods, like audio-visual exhibitions and visits needs to be imparted also.
2. The backward and forward linkages including access to credit need to be strengthened at the implementation stage in order to engage the women in wage employment in the sectors like Handicraft, Handloom, Weaving and Spinning, etc.

3. There is need to identify the link agencies for ensuring the delivery of the support services.
4. The arrangement for coordination and monitoring should be strengthened in order to improve the implementation of the programme.
5. A strong network of trained extension workers needs to be created in the identified rural areas.
6. The women need to be educated particularly about the small family norms and the legal issues, like marital rights, property rights, minimum wage, etc.
7. The participation of women in developmental work is essential which needs to be mobilised through awareness generation.