

Augmenting entrepreneurial attitude among tribal women of Jharkhand through a skill development programme in fish value added products

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Tribal women participating in hands-on training in preparation of fish value-added products.

India as a nation has come a long way from a literacy level of just 14 per cent (Shah, 2013) and a life expectancy of 32 years at the time of independence (Ahuja, 2022), to around 70% literacy and 70 years of life expectancy. As a diverse country with a heterogeneous society, it is to be expected that development has not taken place evenly. Due to the effects of social hierarchies and structures, some communities need special attention and focus to make them active participants in the development of our country.

Today, tribal people comprise 8.6 percent of the Indian population (Kumar et al., 2020) and are one of the most disadvantaged sections of society. Many tribal groups in different parts of the country depend on natural resources for their livelihoods, which are slowly being eroded due to mining and stringent environmental laws. There is a serious effort from both the states and central government to assist these communities and enable them to improve their livelihoods and standard of living through various initiatives such as Stand Up India, the Tribal Sub Plan and different scholarship schemes for tribes.

Poverty among plenty

Jharkhand is one of the richest states of India in terms of natural resources, but the majority of its population is still poor, a perfect example of poverty amongst plenty.

Jharkhand's population is around 26.67 percent tribal (Ekka, 2020), in fact state's inception bifurcating from its mother state Bihar was a movement led by tribal groups. It is just two decades since Jharkhand came into existence; but it has improved significantly in terms of development although there is a long way to go. In this mission to further develop the state and improve the livelihoods of the people, everyone, be they from the state government, NGOs, civil societies, educational institutions, or the private sector, have a crucial role to play in progressing Jharkhand and its tribal communities on the path of development.

Fisheries were first recognised as an important activity for livelihoods and food security by Sir Nicolas in the 1870s to combat drought and food shortage. Ever since, governments have passed legislation and regulations gradually improving the conservation and development of fisheries resources in the country. In recent times, fisheries have also been recog-



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nised as an important source of livelihoods by both central and state governments. However, many of the schemes that have been introduced are skewed more towards production and less towards value addition. We still lack infrastructure in processing, and we are still exporting semi-processed fisheries products in international markets, which has limited our export earnings through fisheries, although they have improved significantly.

ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Kochi

The ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology was established in 1957 as the only national centre where research in the areas relating to fishing and fish processing is undertaken. Its headquarters are located in Kochi and its subcentres are located in Veraval, Vishakhapatnam and Mumbai.

College of Fisheries Science, Gumla

The College of Fisheries Science, Gumla was founded in 2017 under the auspices of Birsa Agricultural University. It's first batch of BFSc graduates was out performed the expectation at the national level exam for JRF and 17 students were able to qualify and took admission to other national and state universities.

Training Programme at the College of Fisheries Science, Gumla

The college, despite being young, started undertaking extension activities. Recently it secured a project worth Rs. 1 million for the training of tribal fish farmers under the Tribal Sub Plan from ICAR-CIFT.

With the financial support from ICAR-CIFT the college, under the able leadership of its Associate Dean, began training fish farmers in preparation of value-added products, which was the first of its kind in the state. Although the Directorate of Fisheries, Jharkhand, also provides numerous training programmes to fish farmers, many of the training modules are oriented towards production rather than processing and marketing. Seeing this gap, the College of Fisheries Science started providing training programmes to meet the need, aiming to improve post-harvest activities from the grass roots level to the top, with a view to financially empowering local communities.

To empower women from economically and socially marginalised tribal communities the College of Fisheries Science was granted a project from ICAR-CIFT under the Tribal Sub Plan. Within a short period, the college was able to undertake seven training programmes for tribal women from different districts in value addition to fisheries products.

The training programme was mainly oriented toward instilling skills among the tribal women that would unlock their micro-entrepreneurship capabilities so that they can launch their own business in fish value added products. The women were given hands-on training in the complete process of preparation of value added fish products from dressing and filleting of fish onwards. The different value-added products produced included fish pickles, fish cutlets, fish fingers and fish momo. The women were also encouraged to translate the skill acquired during the training into a livelihood option that would transform them into financially independent, empowered and productive participants in the rural economy. In addition, the trainees were also allowed to sell the products that they prepared during the three days training programme, which has also given them exposure and experience in marketing.

Training programmes such as this provide women from marginalised communities hope and strength to break with tradition and help them to become financially independent.





Tribal women awarded certificates after successful completion of the training programme in the presence of District Magistrate Gumla, DFO, Gumla and Former Director of Fisheries, Jharkhand.

Conclusion

Tribal communities, and in particular tribal women, are one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of society in many places around the world. These communities are historically dependent on natural resources for food and livelihoods, and due to climate change, developmental activities and conservation policies, have been gradually losing access to these means. Governments have made many attempts to bring these communities into the mainstream through various schemes and initiatives, to improve their livelihoods and economic status. The training programme at the College of Fisheries, Gumla, with financial assistance from ICAR-CIFT under the Tribal Sub Plan, is a step in this direction to augment the entrepreneurial skills among the tribal women of Jharkhand. As we know women make up 50 per cent of our population and if we can provide additional opportunities for them to contribute to our economy this will greatly improve the holistic development of our nation at large. The College of Fisheries Science, Gumla shares this vision is committed to serving the state of Jharkhand and nation at large.

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