

3.3 Fostering Female Empowerment: Entrepreneurship Training for Rural Women

Vulnerable sectors of societies are often the first to suffer consequences when water and food is scarce and the lack of resilience of these groups to climate change will exacerbate these societal inequalities further. Interdisciplinary teams across TIGR²ESS undertook a series of trial community interventions with the primary aim of empowering rural women to take on sustainable business opportunities, ensuring health and nutrition for them and their communities.

Fostering Entrepreneurship Amongst Rural Women

A first step towards developing entrepreneurial skills in women living in rural regions was to understand the current knowledge baseline and attitude of these communities towards entrepreneurship and gauge their awareness of government initiatives. The Panjab University team found cultural idealisms impacted rural women's decisions on business ventures, with over 90% of respondents unfamiliar with concepts of entrepreneurship and unaware of supportive government schemes. Interdisciplinary expertise was required to design products and train women in technical skills, entrepreneurship and social media marketing strategies.

Sewing Techniques, Sustainable Product Designing and Production & Entrepreneurship Development

Training units were set up in two villages of Punjab - Pandwala and Bagh Sikandar. Workshops ran in conjunction to teach business and marketing-related skills, with progress evaluation on skill development and improvement in self-esteem recorded at regular intervals.

Participants were able to exhibit and sell their sustainable products at village events enabling cultural and experience sharing sessions. Participants developed skills to design and sew products and were able to generate income from the local community and beyond.

Bank linked Self-Help Groups (SHG) were formed in both villages; profits are distributed among the members after covering costs and keeping some reserve. This made them economically self-reliant; they acquired self-confidence and improved their status in society. The model was self-perpetuating, with the aid of the SHG cooperative, working towards bringing more women from other villages into the fold, thereby serving the wider rural community.

'With this training our routines have changed significantly. Now we are excited about going for our sewing sessions and quickly finish off the morning household chores. We get to learn something new every day. Our lives are more meaningful as we are doing something. This also provides an economic opportunity...we can start this home-based work ...improve our economic condition and become financially independent'.

Sonia, President, Pandwalian SHG, Village Pandwala, Punjab



Engaging and training women with sewing skills and entrepreneurship for community and self-sufficient business ventures.

Going forward training will be extended to ensuring business skills such as book-keeping, leadership and decision making within the SHG are sufficiently supported for long-term sustainability of entrepreneurial initiatives.

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