



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN BY COOPERATIVE: EVIDENCE FROM DANG DISTRICT (GUJARAT)

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Abstract

Women play a vital role in the dairy sector of India. Dairy cooperatives provide sustainable livelihood to millions of household in rural India. Keeping cattle is like a diversification from the existing agriculture activity. Largely, rural women engage in farm as well as non farming activities. They supply the produced milk to the well established district cooperative dairies working successfully on the “Amul” model. The present paper is an effort to study the role of “Vasudhara Dairy” of Valsad District Cooperative Milk Producers’ Union Limited in helping the rural women to be self-reliant and empowered. The study was conducted in Dang district of Gujarat state.

Keywords: Dairy Cooperative, Women Empowerment.

Introduction

The dairy co-operative movement in Gujarat is a success story by itself. The cooperative movement in Gujarat started with a modest attempt to organize 20 villages in Kheda district of Gujarat to collectively produce and supply milk to Bombay. This model of co-operatives was later expanded to Kheda district to form Anand Milk Union, widely known as Amul, and then, under the National Dairy Development Board, to other districts of Gujarat in the 1970s and to 170 districts of India in 1980s. The village co-operatives are linked to the markets through district level cooperatives. Between 1977-78 and 1991-92, the production of milk in Gujarat increased from about 2 million tones to about 3.6 million toned (an average growth of about 4.3 percent per annum).

The dairy co-operatives have made good impact on the social and economic life of the people in the State. The impact of the white revolution can be seen in the villages in the form of generation of funds for community development and social welfare and creation of self-employment opportunities etc.

Women play a vital role in the dairy sector of India. (Meera et al.2013) Keeping cattle is like a diversification from the existing agriculture activity (Seela K.S. et al, 2013). Largely, rural women engage in this activity. They supply the produced milk to the well established district cooperative dairies working successfully on the “Amul” model.

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) (Batiwala and srilatha, 1994).

Social empowerment is understood as the process of developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, and acting individually and collectively to change social relationships and the institutions and discourses that exclude poor people and keep them in poverty. (<http://www.gsdc.org/topic-guides/voice-empowerment-and-accountability/supplements/social-and-economic-empowerment/>) Social empowerment deals with issues of exclusion and inclusion. They become important in a religiously diverse, multicultural, and highly stratified society like India where rural poor face many forms of exclusion. (Sheela and Ramegowda, 2013)Enhancing women’s status and their empowerment can play a decisive role in the success of many development programs and bring about positive social changes. (Poonam and gunnar,2012)

Economic empowerment is thought to allow poor people to think beyond immediate daily survival and to exercise greater control over both their resources and life choices. (<http://www.gsdc.org/topic-guides/voice-empowerment-and-accountability/supplements/social-and-economic-empowerment/>). The economic empowerment aspects of deal with connecting people and their institutions with markets. (Sheela and Ramegowda, 2013)

Cooperatives have a role to play in alleviating different shocks, and paving the way towards recovery that is socially and economically sound and sustainable. Ultimately, cooperatives can create a safe environment where women increase their self-confidence, identify their own challenges, make decisions and manage risks.

(Tsfay and Tadele, 2013)

The present paper is an effort to study the role of Valsad District Cooperative Milk Producers’ Union Limited (Vasudhara Dairy) in helping the rural women of Dang district to be self-reliant and empowered in economic and social aspects.

Objectives

1. To study the demographic profile of women dairy farmers.
2. To study the economic and social empowerment of women after membership of Valsad District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Limited. (Vasudhara dairy)

Methodology

- **Location of the Study:** Dang district
- **Data Collection:** Primary data were collected by conducting personal interview of women farmers engaged in dairy activities. For this study three villages were selected from each clusters viz. Ahwa, Waghai, Shamgahan, and Subir of the Dang district. Further 10 women dairy farmers were selected by making use of convenient sampling from each village. Thus total sample size comes to 120.
- **Research Instrument:** With the help of Interview Schedule required data were collected from women dairy farmers

Result and Discussion

Table: 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents n=120

Age of the respondents	Frequency	Percentage
below 20 years	06	5.00
21- 30	38	31.67
31-40	52	43.33
41-50	19	15.83
51-60	05	4.17
Above 60 Years	0	0.00
Education level of respondents		
No study	27	22.50
Primary (1-4)	24	20.00
Middle (5-8)	32	26.67
Secondary (9-10)	30	25.00
Higher secondary (11-12)	06	5.00
Graduation	01	0.83
>Graduation	00	0.00
Family size of respondents		
1-4	77	64.17
5-8	40	33.33
>8	03	2.50
Marital status		
Married	95	79.17
Unmarried	11	9.17
Widow	13	10.83
Divorced	01	0.83

Source: Field Survey

Highest number of respondents falls under the age group of 31-40 years (43.33%) followed by 21-30 (31.67%) and 41-50(15.83%). Most of the respondents have completed middle education *i.e* upper primary level study (26.67%) followed by secondary education (25.00%), while 22.50% respondents have not attended school at all. Highest numbers of respondent's marital status found to be married (79.17%) and the family size of 1 to 4 members (64.17%).

Table: 2 Years of membership of Dairy Cooperative n=120

Years	Frequency	Percentage
0-2	16	13.33
3-5	18	15.00
6 or more	86	71.67

Source: Field Survey

It is found that highest number of respondents is associated with Valsad District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Limited. (Vasudhara dairy) for more than 6 years (71.67%) followed by 3-5 years (15.00%).

Table: 3 Increase in income of respondents

Increase in income after joining	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	98	81.67
No	9	7.50
Don't Know	13	10.83

Source: Field Survey

Highest number of the respondents (81.67%) said that their income is increased after joining Valsad District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Limited. While 10.83% respondents are of the opinion that there is no increase in their income after joining, however 7.5% respondents have no idea about change in their income after joining Valsad District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Limited.

Table: 4 Proportionate increase in average income of respondents n=120

Annual Income	Mean
Before joining	16716.67
After joining	56708.33

Source: Field Survey

It is evident from the above table that average annual income of the respondents has increased more than three fold. However, this increase may also be affected by various other factors like inflation etc.

Table: 5 Increase in savings of respondents

Increase in savings after joining	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	89	74.17
No	20	16.67
Don't Know	11	9.17

Source: Field Survey

Highest number of the respondents (74.17%) said that their savings has increased after joining Valsad District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Limited. While 16.67% respondents are of the opinion that there is no increase in their savings after joining, however 9.17% respondents have no idea about change in their income after joining Valsad District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Limited.

Table: 6 Proportionate increase in average savings of respondents n=120

Annual Savings	Mean
Before joining	5033.33
After joining	17016.66

Source: Field Survey

It is evident that there is a visible increase in savings of respondent women.

Table: 7 Opinion of respondents towards economic empowerment. (Percentages in parenthesis)

Opinion indicator	Increased	Remained same	Decreased
Access to credit	95 (79.17)	25 (20.83)	0 (0.00)
Access/control of financial resources	89 (74.17)	31 (25.83)	0 (0.00)
Food consumption	80 (66.67)	16 (13.33)	24 (20.00)
Material possession (Assets at home)	60 (50.00)	45 (37.50)	15 (12.50)
Purchase of gold	45 (37.50)	75 (62.50)	0 (0.00)
Purchase of immovable asset in own name	63 (52.50)	57 (47.50)	0 (0.00)
Confidence in financial transactions	86 (71.67)	34 (28.33)	0 (0.00)

Source: Field Survey

Opinion of respondents was collected on various indicators of economic empowerment. Majority of the responses were in favor of increase of economic empowerment *viz.* access to credit, access/control of financial resources, confidence in financial transactions etc. after association to Valsad District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Limited.

Table: 8 Opinion of respondents towards social empowerment. (Percentages in parenthesis)

Opinion indicator	Increased	Remained same	Decreased
Communication Abilities	98 (81.67)	22 (18.33)	0 (0.00)
Extension Participation	26 (21.67)	79 (65.83)	15 (12.50)
Awareness to Govt. policies	102 (85.00)	18 (15.00)	0 (0.00)
Participation in organization (Village panchayat, co-op. Society mahila mandal)	106 (88.33)	10 (8.33)	4 (3.33)
Leadership qualities	81(67.50)	39 (32.50)	0 (0.00)
Literacy (E.g.) able to sign	99 (82.50)	21(17.50)	0 (0.00)
Involvement in social issues	40 (33.33)	60 (50.00)	20 (16.67)
Leisure time profitable used	100 (83.33)	0 (0.00)	20 (16.67)
Self image in family	109 (90.83)	11 (9.67)	0 (0.00)
Decision making in family	120(100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)

Source: Field Survey

Opinion of respondents was collected on various indicators of social empowerment. Majority of the responses were in favor of increase of social empowerment *viz.* decision making in family, self image in family and participation in organization etc. after association to Valsad District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Limited for dairy activities.

Conclusion

Valsad District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Limited is playing a vital role in economic empowerment of women by creating employment opportunities for women, increasing their access to income and access to credit. This is a sure march towards economic empowerment of women. It further helps in social empowerment of women. Dairy cooperatives have greater potential and can play a bigger role in empowering rural women.

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