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**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH COOPERATIVE DAIRYING IN UTTAR  
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Women consists of almost half of the population but their economic, social and political status is not equal to that of men. Perhaps that was the reason behind declaration of year 2001 as "Women Empowerment Year" by Government of India. The objective is to improve the economic, social and political status of women and also attracting attention of society towards condition of women. Women empowerment is a new concept coined by the policy makers, keeping in view the emerging role of women in the society. Indian Society has basically been a male dominant society and women are limited to household affairs in majority of the cases, especially in rural areas. The employment opportunities have also been very limited in the rural areas. Realizing this fact, Government of India as well as State Governments had made several efforts to increase employment opportunities. Dairy cooperative is also one of the efforts on the part of Govt. of India to improve economic status of rural population, including women.

Indian dairy sector is engaged in empowering women for the last several years, especially the rural segment of women population. Empowerment of women can be considered as an indicator of their economic, social and political status in the society, especially with regard to equality. In dairy sector, it is very important and relevant to expedite how millions of rural women can be used for the purpose of dairy development. Anand Pattern Dairy Cooperative movement well recognizes this fact and operates with a premise that:

- Dairying at household level is an ancient occupation of women in India.
- Income from dairying can be controlled by women, and
- Dairying can be practiced at a small scale level.

The membership in most of India's village level Dairy Cooperative Societies (DCS) is heavily dominated by men. The picture is now changing in favour of women. Efforts are going on to give them their due place in dairy development. Though women membership has fairly increased in DCS, women constitute less than 3% of total board members (as per industry estimates available). The major factors that hamper success of women's cooperatives are basically:

- Resistance to women as cooperative members
- Low literacy rate amongst women
- Resistance from the upper socio-economic section of village community towards poor women
- Lack of awareness among women themselves
- Social norms
- Lack of sense of involvement among women members
- Lack of funds (or basic inputs etc.)

Keeping in view all the above stated factors and similar other problems, several steps were taken by Govt. of India and the State Governments. For example, National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), Anand had encouraged its member state level federations to enroll women members in DCS on top priority basis. Govt. of India has initiated STEP (Support Training and Employment Programme) to encourage women DCS. At the state level different state governments have initiated different programmes to encourage women DCS in their respective states. The results are very encouraging.

### **Mahila Dairy Pariyojna (MDP) in Uttar Pradesh**

Mahila Dairy Pariyojana (MDP) was initiated by Pradeshik Cooperative Dairy Federation (PCDF) Ltd., U.P. in 1991 to encourage women membership in DCS. MDP has proved to be a grand success in empowering rural women through dairy cooperatives.

Women are integral part of rural economy (also urban, but they have adequate access to information and employment opportunities etc.) but because of certain reasons like customs and traditions, they are backward in education, awareness and leadership. Consequently, they are socially backward and there is a lack of self confidence and decision making. Mahila Dairy Pariyojana (MDP) was implemented in U.P. to look after the interest of women in cooperative sector. MDP also intended to improve the economic condition of women and thereby improving their income level, capital creation capacity, self confidence level and decision making power. Thus, MDP was basically entrusted with a critical task of overall personality development of women, especially rural women.

It was proposed to implement Mahila Dairy Pariyojana (MDP) in selected district of U.P. Certain district were covered under MDP. Apart from this AVRY (AmbedkarVisheshRozgarYojana) covered certain districts and STEP also covered certain districts. The table given below explains the physical progress made under the three projects under one single title MDP.

**Table 1: Status of MDP, AVRY and STEP**

Activity	MDP 2000-01	AVRY 2000-01	STEP 2000-01
District Covered	33	24	15
Women DCS	930	532	398
Women Membership	32111	17629	14482
Women Chairman	930	532	398
Women in Managing Committee	8370	4788	3582
Women Secretary	930	532	398
Average Daily Milk Production (Ltrs)	32392	14637	17555
Employment Generation (Man days)	83026	49328	33698

Sources: Author's Compilation from the various annual reports

The table 1 reveals that MDP, AVRY and STEP had given an opportunity to rural women to work for their own and got self employed. The number of DCS has also increased under three

projects. Average daily milk procurement is also increasing, meaning thereby more money in the hands of members of DCS. The overall employment generation has also increased under these plans for women.

### **Rationale of MDP**

MDP was implemented in UP to achieve certain objectives, as intended by Govt. of India, State Govt. and NDDDB. There were:

- Attracting rural women towards milkcooperatives at DCS level.
- Creating employment opportunities for women.
- Making them self-reliant.
- Developing their overall personality by improving their quality of life.
- Organising regular training sessions to make them aware regarding health, hygiene and legal matters and thereby bringing them in social main stream
- Above all, to empower women and provide them a platform for economic, social and political power to improve their quality of life

### **Constitution of Women DCS**

To achieve the above stated objectives and also empowering women the following steps were proposed to be implemented:

- Selecting villages after extensive surveys for constituting milk societies and also milk routes.
- Enrolling them as members, minimum eligibility being ownership of one milch animal.
- A minimum of 30 women members were proposed to be motivated to form a DCS.
- Providing inputs and administrative set up to DCS (based on Anand Platform).

### **Evaluation of MDP**

Small farm household women need timely finance (Credit) for short-term investments to manage their enterprise in an effective manner. I mean to say, they cannot meet the needs of cattle feed, fodder and other essential inputs without ready cash. Facilities should also be made available for timely breeding of dairy animals and also health care. A World Bank Study of Operation Flood (OF) project in villages suggests that lack of credit for the initial purchase of dairy animals remains a major constraint to OF's ability to reach the poorest households.

MDP, AVRY and STEP were implemented in the state of U.P. to remove the obstacles stated above. MDP provided them necessary funds (credit) and input facilities to not only own a milch cattle but also breeding and health care and then provided them necessary guidance to form a village level milk society (DCS). This helped the women in remote areas to get motivated towards MDP, AVRY and STEP.

**Table 2: Physical Progress of MDP**

Activity	Year	
	1991-92	2000-01
Districts Covered	5	59
Women Societies	119	2335 (2441 in Aug 2001)
Women Members	4679	88949
Women Chairman	119	2335
Women Members in Managing Committee in DCS	1467	21015
Milk Secretary	119	2335
Average Milk Procurement Ltrs/Day	3254	88869
MahilaSikshaKaryakram	47	1005
Health Education Programme	200	1364
Employment Generation	5036	142471

Sources: Author Compilation from various reports

The table 2 shows the success story of Mahila Dairy Pariyojana in UP. The table indicates that MDP (MDP+ AVRY + STEP) is operational in 59 districts of the state in 2000-01 as against only 5 districts in 1991-92. The member of women DCS has also increased enormously i.e. 2335 in 2000-01 as against only 119 in 1991-92. The women membership in MDP is also encouraging. The women membership has increased from 4679 in 1991 92 to 88949 in 2000-01 i.e. in just 10 years of time. The milk procurement by these women DCS has also increased to a significant level to the tune of 88869 ltrs/day in 2000-01 as against 3254 ltrs/day at the starting the MDP in 1991-92. Employment generation through MDP/AVRY/STEP for women is also excellent. Employment generated through MDP was 1,42,471 man days in 2000-01 as against 5036 man days in 1991-92. Other programs like women education program has also been organized i.e. 1505 programmes in 2000-01 as against only 200 in 1992-93, 1364 health education programmes have been organized in 2000-01 for the overall welfare of women in the state. This shows that Mahila Dairy Pariyojana is really involved in economic well being and empowerment of women in the state through a very productive activity and is also providing them access to training in modern dairying and cooperative management. Now the ball is in women's court.

### Major Problems

Like other programmes, Mahila Dairy Pariyojana is also having certain problems which hamper the attainment of objectives. These problems can be identified as:

- Prevailing social norms, which prevent women to participate in MDP
- Male psychology in also one of the major problem which prohibits women to participate in MDP
- Lack of sense of involvement among women members participating in MDP

- It was intended that a women DCS will attain self sustenance in three years, but practically it is not happening, because of one reason or the other. And the Govt. can not run a DCS at its cost forever.
- Lack of awareness among women that MDP is operational for their benefit and not for the benefit of PCDF, State or any other only. The women members must be educated for having a positive attitude for MDP

### Suggestion

One suggestion will be important and relevant to be given. Women should be imparted training in dairy husbandry, cooperative management and marketing. Also there is a need for a social organisation at the pre-cooperative stage to help in the formation of cooperatives as well as dissemination of the economics of dairy activity.

### References

- Reports published by Pradeshik Cooperative Dairy Federation (PCDF) Ltd
- Support Training and Employment Programme (STEP) bulletin and reports
- Dairy Cooperative Societies (DCS) reports
- Mahila Dairy Pariyojana (MDP) progress reports
- AmbedkarVisheshRozgarYojana bulletin and reports