

## Sustainable Livelihood for Women through Sericulture: A study of IBSDP beneficiaries, Aizawl District, India.

Dr. K. Angela Lalhmingsangi

Asst. Professor, ICAI University Mizoram Durtlang North, Aizawl

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**ABSTRACT:** Sericulture in India is a fairly organized activity and is largely rural based and labor intensive. Sericulture play very effective role in the utilization of the natural resources and is plays a vital role for socio-economic upliftment of rural farmers by providing them with livelihood, employment and income generation. Women play a major role in various activities of sericulture right from egg production to weaving. Many studies have shown that women participation in sericulture proved to be an effective source of employment and income generation. To encourage permanent settlement of farming, the Central Silk Board introduced New Scheme of Sericulture Project called Intensive Bivoltine Sericulture Development Project (IBSDP) for the permanent economic settlement for Mizoram. The study is concentrated among the women beneficiaries under IBSDP in Aizawl district. This study attempts to identify if adopting sericulture practices can provide for sustainable livelihood among rural women. Both primary and secondary source were used for the study. The study shows that sericulture practices indeed provides for sustainable livelihood among the women farmers. The IBSDP undertaken by the sericulture department has proved to be especially beneficial among the women beneficiaries. All the women beneficiaries are of the opinion that taking up sericulture practices have substantially improved their income and they will continue this activity since it can be a source of sustainable livelihood.

**KEYWORDS:** Sustainable livelihood, Sericulture, IBSDP, rural women

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Date of Submission: 03-04-2019

Date of acceptance: 19-04-2019

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### I. INTRODUCTION:

In India, agriculture and agro-based industries play avital role in the improvement of the rural economy. Limited availability of land, limited cash returns and agriculture being confined to one or two seasons in theyear have made villages to look for supporting rural industries such as sericulture (Rai, 2006). The word “Sericulture” has been derived from the word “Su” (Si) which means silk. Sericulture is basically an agroindustry. It is divided in two sectors namely farm and industry (Shrivastav, 2005). Sericulture broadly comprises inter-linked activities such as food plant cultivation, maintenance to feed the silkworms, silkworm rearing to produce the silk cocoons, reeling the cocoons for unwinding the silk filament, yarn making, weaving and processing of fabric (Ahmed and Rajan, 2011).

Sericulture in India is a fairly organized activity and is largely rural based and labor intensive. Sericulture play very effective role in the utilization of the natural resources in a most effective manner for socio-economic upliftment with livelihood, employment and income generation (Malik et al., 2008) Sericulture is a potential sector of the agriculture to raise economic status of the farming community and also earning foreign revenue (Thapa and Shrestha, 1999).

Fairly good numbers of references are on record about livelihood opportunities and employment generation. Sericulture is the activity of low investment and high output (Benjamin and Jolly, 1987). Women form more than half of all agriculture labor in India. Different Women studies have proved beyond doubt that women’s contribute sericulture is quite significant. Women contribute to the family income generation in rural through sericulture to a great deal. If the rural households are to be made economically viable self-sustaining units the employment and income generation rural women need to be given utmost priority. Women play a major role in various activities of sericulture right from egg production to weaving. Income generating employment opportunities sericulture where woman are actively participating:-

- I. Mulberry Cultivation.
- II. Silkworm Rearing.
- III. Silk Reeling.
- IV. Weaving.

It is possible that mulberry cultivation and rearing of silkworms may be carried out as two separate and distinct activities. Some sericulturists may specialize in maintaining a mulberry garden, sell themulberry leaves to the silkworm rearers and earn an income. Similarly, the silkworm rearers may specialize in cocoon production

and realize an income by selling cocoons to the reelers. But in practice the farmer who grows mulberry also engages himself in worm-rearing. In fact, these two activities are combined together into a single economic enterprise; the mulberry leaves are taken as input for sericulture and the cocoon output, its final product. The agricultural part of sericulture comes to an end with the production of cocoons and marketing them to realize an income. The first stage of sericultural income is realized with the sale of cocoons.

## **II. SCOPE OF THE STUDY:**

The study is concentrated among the women beneficiaries under IBSDP in Aizawl district. This study attempts to identify if adopting sericulture practices can provide for sustainable livelihood for rural women.

## **III. NEED FOR THE STUDY:**

The Economy of over 60% of the population in Mizoram is based on Farming and Jhuming/ Shifting Cultivation which was traditionally practiced. To encourage permanent settlement of farming the Central Silk Board introduced New Scheme of Sericulture Project called Intensive Bivoltine Sericulture Development Project (IBSDP) for the permanent economic settlement for Mizoram. It is now realized that Mizoram has tremendous scope for Mulberry cultivation for Rearing of Silkworms and generate steady income and livelihood. The Temperature during Summer season varies from 20°-34° Celsius and in Winter season 8°c - 17°c. Soil is acidic ranging from 4.5 – 5.6 PH which is most favourable for Sericulture.

## **IV. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

The main objective of the study is to find out if Sericulture provides sustainable livelihood for women farmers

## **V. METHODOLOGY:**

Both primary and secondary source were used for the study.

Primary source of information was collected through telephonic interview with women farmers who were beneficiaries of the IBSDP, Aizawl District.

Secondary information were obtained from the unpublished records of Sericulture Department, Mizoram and mpccmizoram website.

## **VI. SOME SUCCESS STORIES:**

- Smt. C. Lalmangaihi is one of the women Farmer amongst the selected Beneficiaries of IBSDP. The Project was started during 2015 – 2016 envisaged for sustainable Development of Silkworm Rearing by producing qualitative and productivity improvement of Bivoltine as specified in the project. She cultivated 2 Acres of Mulberry Plantation and also started Rearing in the same year .



She received Financial Assistance for Construction of Rearing House, Mounting Hall and maintenance of Mulberry Farm. With this implementation, she produced 185 kgs of Commercial Cocoons and sold to the

Department @ Rs. 250/- on cash payment. Her total income from sericulture was Rs. 46,250/-. Besides this, she earned additional income from seasonal crops like mustard, Ginger and Pineapple prepared on the same plot. So, she earn additional Rs. 6,000/- yr from the other crops. So, her total income increase to Rs. 52,250/- during 2015-16. Further, she also attended Technical Training conducted by the Sericulture Department and also received Rearing equipments etc. At present by increasing the area under mulberry cultivation, her income has doubled from sericulture activities. She now have 2 greenhouses where she plants tomatoes and other vegetables. She is able to manage her family needs from her income and is hopeful to achieve more in the future.

- Smt. Laldampuii of Saitual is another successful beneficiary of IBSDP which was implemented during 2015 – 2016. She started Mulberry Plantation with 1 ½ Acres with high yielding variety of S1635 & TR 10. She received Financial Assistance right from the beginning for Plantation Development and Construction of Rearing House, Mounting Hall and Rearing equipments etc. She produced 185 kgs of Commercial Cocoons and sold the Cocoons @ Rs. 250/- per kgs on cash payment to the Department earning Rs. 46,250/- from sericulture that year.



She is most grateful that she took up Sericulture, because she now can earn regular Income from selling of Cocoons and also get additional Income from Papaya, Ginger and Seasonal Crops etc. in the same plot which earn her about Rs. 10,000/- Yr. So, her total income that year reached Rs. 56,250/-. At present ,she have increased her production by increasing her cultivation area and she claimed that she has doubled her sales this year. She now can purchase washing machine etc to make their family life more comfortable.

- Smt. Laltha-i of N. Khawlek Village is a noteworthy Beneficiary of IBSDP which was started during 2015 – 2016. With Mulberry Plantation of One (1) acre of Land, she planted high yielding Mulberry variety such as S1635 and TR10. She just started Silkworm Rearing in the current Year 2016. After the advent of IBSDP she received Financial Assistance for Construction of Rearing House, Mounting Hall, Rearing Equipments and received Technical Training provided under the Scheme/Project. Within a short span of time she produced 295 kgs of Commercial Cocoons and sold the Cocoons @ Rs. 250/- per kgs on Cash payment to the Sericulture Department. She earned Rs. 73,750/- that year. Besides the Sericulture activities, she produced other Crops from the same plot like Cabbage, Mustard and Vegetables etc. She received additional income of Rs. 6000 – 7000/- .So, her total earning reached Rs. 80,750/- that year. She now have 4 greenhouses and increased her mulberry cultivation area to 4 acres. Her income have increased considerably. She is enable to purchase assets like Television, Refrigerator and also upgrade their house.





The Government of Mizoram have realized the importance of Sericulture as one of the most effective means in weaning away the devastating Jhuming cultivation in the state. Introduction of Silkworm rearing among the Mizo people especially in the rural areas is necessary for the upliftment of rural economy and also to increase the silk production in the country. The number of families in the rural areas have taken up sericulture practice for their permanent occupation. Till date a total of 5054 nos of families are engaged in sericulture activities. A total of 5313 hectares of land is covered under muga, Eri, Mulberry and oak Tasar Silkworm food plant in Mizoram

Sector	Food Plant Area(Hectare)
Mulberry	3843(9607.5 Acres)
Eri	736(1840 acres)
Muga	608(1520 Acres)
Oak Tasar	126(315Acres)
Total	5313(13282.5 Acres)

Source: Achievement Report of sericulture Department. 2015-16.mpcmizoram.org/achievements on sericulture

Sericulture produces cocoons which are a cash crop and as such, it has to compete with other cash crops. In assessing the comparative merits of sericulture and other cash crops in an area, it is necessary to compare the net incomes of sericulture with the returns of other competing cash crops.

## **VII. MAIN FINDINGS FROM PRIMARY DATA:**

### **Socio demographic profile:**

- Majority of the women farmers are between the age 40 years to 55 years.
- The educational qualification for most of the women farmers was of middle school level
- The family size of majority of the women farmers are 5 to 7 members
- Most women were involved in subsistence farming before they were involved in sericulture practices under the IBSDP.

### **Impact on livelihood and standard of living:**

- The income of all the respondents have substantially improved after they took up sericulture.
- Through the Financial Assistance from the Sericulture Department the women were able to construct silkworm Rearing House, Mounting Hall and also afford maintenance of Mulberry Farm.
- Since cocoon rearing has off season, most of them have greenhouse where they grow tomatoes, broccoli etc which gives them extra income.
- All the women practice cultivation of other crops or fruits in the same plot where they grow the mulberry .
- Most of the women start cultivating their mulberry trees in 1 to 2 acre of land but now most of them have extended their cultivating area to 3 to 5 acres of land.
- In the first year, most of them were able to sell 1 to 2 quintals in 2015-16, but during 2017-18, many of them have sold 3 to 5 quintals of their products. The cocoons were sold at Rs.250 per KG and purchased by the Sericulture department.
- Most of the women were able to purchase TV, refrigerator, two wheeler etc through their income from sericulture
- All the women faced no problems in selling their products.
- All the women attended the technical training conducted by the Sericulture department and all the women greatly benefitted from it.

**Main Problems faced:**

- The major problems faced by the women Sericulturist is the lack of enough water supply.
- Another problem faced is the frequency with which they receive the seed from the sericulture department, some claimed that they do not receive the seed when needed and this cause a problem
- Yet another problem faced by some is in the weighing of the product when purchased by the buyers.

**VIII. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION:**

Given the problems faced by the women farmers, the following suggestions are given below:

- Providing proper irrigation
- Proper weighing system must be put in place
- Providing seed when and as required

The study shows that sericulture practices indeed provides for sustainable livelihood among the women farmers. The IBSDP undertaken by the sericulture department has proved to be especially beneficial among the women beneficiaries. All the women beneficiaries are of the opinion that taking up sericulture practices have substantially improved their income and they will continue this activity since it can be a source of sustainable livelihood.

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Dr. K. Angela Lalmingsangi" Sustainable Livelihood for Women through Sericulture: A study of IBSDP beneficiaries, Aizawl District, India." International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI), vol. 08, no. 4, 2019, pp.43-47