

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING OF TRIBAL PRODUCTS (TRIFED ETC.)

Dr. Anupam Sarkar

Dr. Amit Kumar Singh

Institutional Support for development and Marketing of Tribal Products/ Produce was introduced in 2014-15. Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation is the nodal agency for implementing the scheme. Objectives of the scheme (are) socio-economic development of tribal artisans, livelihood generation for tribal artisans in a sustainable, systematic and scientific way, and empowerment of tribals through capacity building training, group/ SHG formation, and imparting necessary knowledge, tools and information. There are four major activities under the scheme- retail development where TRIFED acts as a facilitator and service provider to the tribal artisans to market their products. The second important activity is skill training for skill up-gradation of the artisans, design development and value addition of the tribal products. The Third is the Minor Forest Produce (MFP) development activity where MFP gatherers are given training on value addition of MFP and Minimum Support Price of MFP. Fourth is the research and development (R&D) activities.

The scheme serves Sustainable Development Goal 8 of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which aims to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. The scheme also serves the objectives of livelihood promotion among weaker and vulnerable sections of the society including the Scheduled Tribe population as enshrined in successive Five Year Plans.

Tribal artisans are the main targeted beneficiaries of this scheme. These artisans can be individual suppliers of TRIFED or work in SHGs or work under NGOs/ Trust/other organizations who empanelled themselves as suppliers of TRIFED. The scheme aims to promote livelihood and improve the economic conditions of these artisans. Retail marketing activities of TRIFED through which it purchases tribal products from the suppliers and sales through its outlets or e-commerce, aims to ensure a remunerative price and a secured market for the producers of these products. TRIFED also works for capacity building and training of artisans. The training programmes are implemented through reputed and experienced NGOs. There are four types of handicraft

trainings- Comprehensive Training Programme (CTP), Primary Level Training (PLT), Advanced Level Training (ALT), and Design Workshop Training (DWT).

Secondary data and official information has been collected from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, registered office of TRIFED at New Delhi, and different regional offices of TRIFED. The study used a multistage purposive sampling method to select the sample units whose primary stage units are districts, intermediate units are suppliers and training agencies, and final stage units are beneficiary tribal artisans. Primary data has been collected through a structured questionnaire from different stakeholders- suppliers, artisans, training agencies, handicraft trainees, MFP trainees, trainers, customers, scientists. This survey used SurveyCTO (Open Data Kit) software for real-time data collection. We have also documented best practices from the field, success stories and not so successful experiments. The survey collected both quantitative and qualitative data. A total of 215 Supplier, 850 tribal artisans, 151 handicraft trainees, 347 MFP gatherers, and 180 customers of TRIBES INDIA were included in the sample. The study covered 18 States and 72 districts of India.

The present study is descriptive in nature. The study has provided a critical analysis of the impact of the scheme on intended beneficiaries- the tribal artisans. A crucial part of the analysis was devoted to understanding the extent to which the scheme has been successful in livelihood promotion and empowerment of tribal artisans- the stated objectives of the scheme. We have used statistical analysis of the quantitative data collected from the field using techniques such as the tabular and graphical representation of the data, hypothesis testing and correlations among variables. We have also done case studies, and focus group discussions which helped us immensely in understanding the experiences of tribal artisans, specific challenges and bottlenecks, and necessary course corrections. The field observations, description of cases, best practices and experimentation with new ideas are also documented in this report along with statistical data analysis.

The greatest utility of the scheme lies in providing an alternative source of employment and livelihood to tribal artisans. It helps to smooth out the seasonality in income flow. It also works as a medium for preservation of rich tribal cultural heritage. Empowerment and economic security of female artisans is another positive aspect of the scheme. Our analysis shows income from artisanship contributes a significant part of their family income. Daily-earnings from artisanship are also higher than wages in public works programmes like MGNREG and in many States daily earnings of the artisans are higher than daily earnings from casual labour work. The artisans also feel the workload is properly balanced, very fewer instances of pending wages of artisans and fewer

instances of verbal or physical abuse. However, daily earnings of male artisans are higher than earnings of female artisans. Also, male artisans work for higher number of days than female artisans.

TRIFED has made a significant contribution in conservation and promotion of tribal art and culture especially Gond, Bhil, Saura, and Warli paintings which are the rich inheritance that India is rightly proud of. For the tribal artists the scheme has meant not just an opportunity for career growth, but a way to preserve their art and cultural heritage. TRIFED gives encouragement to the painters through organizing regular craft demonstrations, fairs, exhibitions where they can showcase their aesthetic brilliance, rich traditions, and skills. Periodic purchase of paintings from the artisans and sale through its outlets gives a window to artists to reach art lovers and connoisseurs. Sometimes it is also the only opportunity for them to sustain in this field.

The suppliers of TRIFED have highly appreciated the timely payment for the orders supplied and increased opportunity for participation in fairs and exhibitions. However, they feel that the prices offered by TRIFED have been fixed for a long period and no longer profitable to them (TRIFED has recently increased the price of all items by 10-15 percent). They also feel that TRIFED should help them in the design development of their products which is so vital to remain relevant in the market. Suppliers who operate on small scale do not have the capacity to hire designers for them. TRIFED can make institutional arrangements with reputed institutes for sourcing of new designs.

The scheme need to focus more on entrepreneurship development among tribal artisans. At present there is not much progress in credit linkage which is essential for setting up small business enterprises. Another area which needs attention is promotion of group based activities among individual artisans and strengthening of these groups through continuous handholding. There are limitations to tribal development if the artisans from this community are engaged only in wage employment in low paid and low skilled jobs. Hence, all efforts should be made to encourage entrepreneurship and business development by tribals.

The scheme has been successful in reaching out to vulnerable sections of tribal society (illiterate, marginal or landless farmers, elderly artisans). Providing support for design and skill development is the other important functional part of the scheme. One of the outcomes of this training is to help the trainees in harnessing collective capability by forming self-help groups etc. Through these training programmes TRIFED is helping to shift to more sustainable, environment-friendly and less menial form of production. However, we found that the incomes of trained artisans are not significantly higher than the income of untrained artisans. There are also instances where the

trained artisans discontinued artisanship and shifted to other occupations or migrated to other regions due to various reasons such as a drop in market demand, lack of working capital, etc.

TRIFED gives training to MFP gatherers under MFP development activities. These MFP gatherers come from poorest and most vulnerable sections of tribal society. Majority of these trainees are women and their villages are located in remote areas near the forest. There are two types of training programmes- value addition to MFP and Minimum Support Price to MFP. The training programmes are successful in promoting eco-friendly, non-destructive, and environmentally sustainable way of harvesting. The training programmes are also successful in improving the post-harvest processing and value addition, less wastage and better storage of the produce. However, there exists lots of scope for improvement in the marketing, group formation and credit linkage of these groups. In other words, the post-training handholding part is neglected. Also important to mention here that many of the training agencies have not received the full amount sanctioned in the budget of the training programmes and this includes even the daily allowance of the trainees for which there is a great amount of resentment among the trainees who have to forgo a day's earning to attend these training programmes.

The scheme works as a bridge between the artisans and art/ craft lovers. The fairs such as adimahotsavs, mini-adimahotsavs has been successful in generating good sales for the suppliers, attracting new customers and creating interest among them about tribal arts and crafts. There has been a significant increase over the year in the number of fairs organized by TRIFED in different locations. Participants value these fairs due to the high volume of sales which is attributable to their locational advantages, publicity, arrangements at fairgrounds etc.

TRIFED having the mandate of marketing development of MFPs considers that it is essential to improve per unit realization from MFPs to provide better earnings to tribals. The research on value addition of MFPs through developing technologies, tools, products, process, etc., and their optimum utilization provides the tribal people entrepreneurship opportunities and thus empowerment. TRIFED sponsors such as Research and Development (R&D) projects to reputed institutes /universities like IITs, CFTRI, IICT, BIT, etc. on value addition of MFPs.

All the research projects aimed to bring substantial benefits to the local tribal communities. If successfully implemented it will create value addition to the locally available MFP, create opportunities for employment in the small-scale food processing industry and also develop entrepreneurship. The machines will reduce the drudgery of MFP collectors substantially. Quite a few good international publications in international journals have come out of these research

projects. But the projects have not yet been commercially launched. The real evaluation of the success of these projects can take place only when they will be launched in the market and the feedback of the industry and users will be received. Income from royalty should also be taken as a parameter for judging the success of the programme. Many researched have demanded more funds for scaling up the results and for pilot testing.