

CHAPTER-V

5. CONCLUSION

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The main objective of the study was to find out methods for improving SES of women by involving them in TRA. For this a study on existing skills of the women in the study area, their perceptions on tourism and the demand scenario of tourists has been carried out and results thereof have been discussed in the previous chapter.

The following discussion is on developing a mechanism for organised synthesis of the three core areas i.e. existing skills, willingness of women in the study area and tourists requirements.

Involvement of women in TRA can be enhanced by forming Self Help Groups (SHGs). SHGs can facilitate the members for effective coping and handling of the problem through group activities (Mok, Cheung and Cheung, 100). SHG activities can empower members to cope with problems and stress, and to establish stronger relations with the organizations that serve them and with the community where they live (Chesler 764; Mok and Leung 13-4). Receiving finance is also easy for SHGs as the mechanism of lending through SHGs has gained wide popularity during the last few years and has been adopted as an important strategy by banks for lending to the poor (Bhatia 130). In Assam, SHGs run by women are found to be of high grade in comparison to the groups run by men (Rao 13).

From the above discussion, it is evident that SHGs can be a proper media for women in the study area to get involved in TRA. SHGs should get necessary training, finance and infrastructure so that they can take up appropriate activities to get involved in TRA.

Providing necessary training depending on the prominent skill of the villagers by identifying clusters of villages having unique craft, ethnic art form for development as Tourism Products in the study area is necessary. Selecting most prevalent skill of the village women and providing training on that skill will be beneficial in this regards. This method is termed as one village one product policy (OTOP in Thailand). The Planning Commission also suggested this strategy for the 12th plan period. Different Government Organizations, Departments and Non Governmental Organizations can help women SHGs in this regard. Indian Institute of

Entrepreneurship (IIE), North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. (NEDFi), Department of Forest and Department of Tourism can provide training for skill development. Besides product development training in respective areas of tourism, other special kind of trainings are also required for sustainability. There should be training for entrepreneurship development and managerial (including home management) skill advancement, soft skill development, training of English and other foreign languages, personality development etc. This kind of skill development trainings will be beneficial for women to work successfully in TRA. Managerial skill advancement training will help women to maintain balance between home and the workplace.

Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG), "*Sabala*", is being implemented with assistance of the Central Government in 8 selected districts of Assam. Karbi Anglong is also included in the list. This scheme provides vocational training for girls of 16 years and above under National Skill Development Programme (NSDP). Therefore, this scheme may be useful for adolescent girls of Karbi Anglong district for their skill development and work in tourism sector for their economic empowerment.

Social Welfare department of Assam has introduced a new scheme namely *Mukhya Mantrir Mahila Samridhi Achari* (Chief Minister Women's Welfare Scheme). This scheme is for economic upliftment of women through capacity building of women weavers of the state of Assam. Vocational Training cum Rehabilitation Centre (VTRC) concept was adopted by Government of Assam for making women skilful and eligible for job. These schemes can be implemented in the study area for empowerment of women through TRA.

For manufacturing and marketing of products, infrastructural facilities are of utmost importance. Infrastructure includes water, electricity, sewage disposal, gas, land, taxation policies and other social facilities and institutions that improve the quality of life like construction, transport, networks, communication facilities, judicial facilities and public security, law and order, education and training (Chauhan 22). As already discussed in Chapter-IV, various infrastructure facilities have to be established in the fringe area of KNP for development of tourism and marketing of tourism products.

Beside infrastructure required for tourism, some women specific infrastructures and some basic facilities are required for woman to be a successful entrepreneur. Planning Commission of India considered lack of sufficient and safe drinking water, women-friendly toilets, child care support services and safe shelters, enforcement, protection and legal services, an agency to enable them to reach out to all basic services, and transportation as infrastructural barriers of women empowerment (Hameed, 31). Therefore, safe drinking water, women friendly toilets, crèche for young children and transportation facilities should be provided in KNP for encouraging women to join the tourism workforce.

Department of Forest and Department of Tourism can take initiative in providing infrastructural facilities to the SHGs. For infrastructure development, various Government schemes can be utilized by local women. Rural Tourism Schemes for Infrastructure Development, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (revised on 2011) can be useful for women in the study area. The Ministry of Tourism extends Central Financial Assistance to the State Governments/ Union Territory Administrations for tourism projects identified in consultation with them for the improvement of existing tourism products and also for developing new ones. Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Product / Infrastructure Development for Destinations and Circuits, 100% Central Assistance is given for development of destinations/ circuits including International standard mega projects and also for rural tourism infrastructure development. The Ministry of Tourism provides financial assistance up to Rs. 5.00 crore (50 Million) for the development of Destinations and Rs. 8.00 crore (80 Million) for Circuits. The upper limit of financial assistance has been increased to Rs. 25 crore (250 Million) and Rs. 50 crore (500 Million) for development of identified mega destinations and circuits respectively. Under the schemes to promote rural tourism in the country, the thrust is for development of tourism infrastructure at the identified rural tourism sites so that socio-economic benefits percolate down to the rural community. A maximum of Rs. 50.00 lakh (5 Million) is sanctioned for each project under this scheme for development of tourism related infrastructure. Ministry of Tourism also provides financial assistance to State Governments and Union Territory Administration for organising Fair and Festivals in tourism related events.

NABARD's (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) scheme for Development/Strengthening of Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure, Grading and Standardization, 2008 encourages rapid development of infrastructure projects in agriculture and allied sectors including dairy, meat, fisheries and minor forest produce. In case of NE States investment subsidy is 33.33% of the capital cost up to Rs. 60 lakhs (6 Millions). This scheme provides financial assistance for infrastructure for marketing and processing units, mobile infrastructure for post harvest operations i.e. grading, packaging and quality testing. Reefer vans, or any other vans used for transporting agricultural produce which are essential for maintaining cold supply chain gets financial aid through this scheme.

Department of Women & Child Development has introduced 'Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers'. This scheme will be beneficial to the women of study area. This scheme provides assistance to NGOs for running crèche for babies (0-6years). It provides assistance for sleeping facilities, health care, supplementary nutrition and immunisation of children of working mothers.

Department of Tourism, Government of Assam planned a framework for Public Private Partnership (PPP) for public capabilities and private enterprise to join hands for maximizing tourism development in Assam (Tourism Policy of Assam). The framework can be implemented successfully in the study area to facilitate private participation in the tourism development activities.

The results of the study showed that, local women have positive perceptions about tourism and women empowerment. But unfortunately involvement of women in tourism in the study area is low. Those scant numbers of women, who are working in TRA in study area, are also poorly paid. Thus, at present impact of tourism on economic empowerment of women in the study is negligible.

Interactions with local women during PRA showed that many of them are also not aware of the fact that tourism can act as potential catalyst for their economic empowerment. During the PRA workshops it was found that women from Baghjan, Baghmari, Kuthori, Holiram Terang, Englepathar, Bohikhuwa were ignorant about their potential role in tourism industry. Women from Kohora No 1, Chandrasing Rongpi, Bosagaon and Chepenakubua have a little awareness about it and showed higher rate of involvement in TRA too. Thus, it calls for special efforts for creating

greater involvement of women in TRA. There should be effort as sensitizing women about their role in TRA and TRA as a catalyst for their economic empowerment.

For economic empowerment of women through TRA, tangible inputs are not sufficient, some intangible inputs in the form of sensitivity awareness and motivation are essential to bring women to the forefront of tourism industry. To begin the process of empowerment, proper motivation among the target group is required. To generate motivation among the rural women, Government, Non Government Organizations and local people can take up various activities for sensitization, creation of awareness and motivation regarding TRA.

Women who are successfully involved in TRA in the study area can act as 'role models'. Taking into consideration the findings that women involvement in tourism related activities is more among Assamese (Non-tribal) Hindu women of Other Backward Castes from villages of Golaghat districts situated in the periphery of Kohora Range of KNP, the other women groups should also be encouraged to participate in TRA. Sensitization programs can be undertaken for creating awareness among women belonging to other groups. For this purpose Assamese (Non-tribal) Hindu, OBC women belonging to the villages of Golaghat district situated in the periphery of Kohora Range can act as role models. They can be encouraged to take initiative for sensitizing the of other women groups.

Depending on the response during the sensitization programmes and feedback, training programs on various activities related to tourism can be organized in the next stage with the help of Government and Non-government organizations.

Diagram-5.1 represents the model of economic empowerment of women through TRA. Diagram shows how tangible inputs such as training, infrastructure, finance, facilities and formation of self help groups can add strength to identified skilled women of the locality. On the other hand, intangible inputs in the form of sensitivity, awareness about tourism activities and finally motivation will lead them to join TRA.

The requirements of tourists are placed at higher level while selecting touristic activities for economic empowerment of women. Depending on the interests of tourists, skills of local women, and stakeholder's suggestions, five areas of tourism were planned for women to join in TRA. They are gastronomy, cultural programs,

souvenirs, rural tourism and providing local produce to tourists in the study area (Annexure-Twelve shows some possible tourism products of Assam). Other three basic areas such as accommodation, transportation and basic amenities are also considered as suitable for local women to join tourism in KNP.

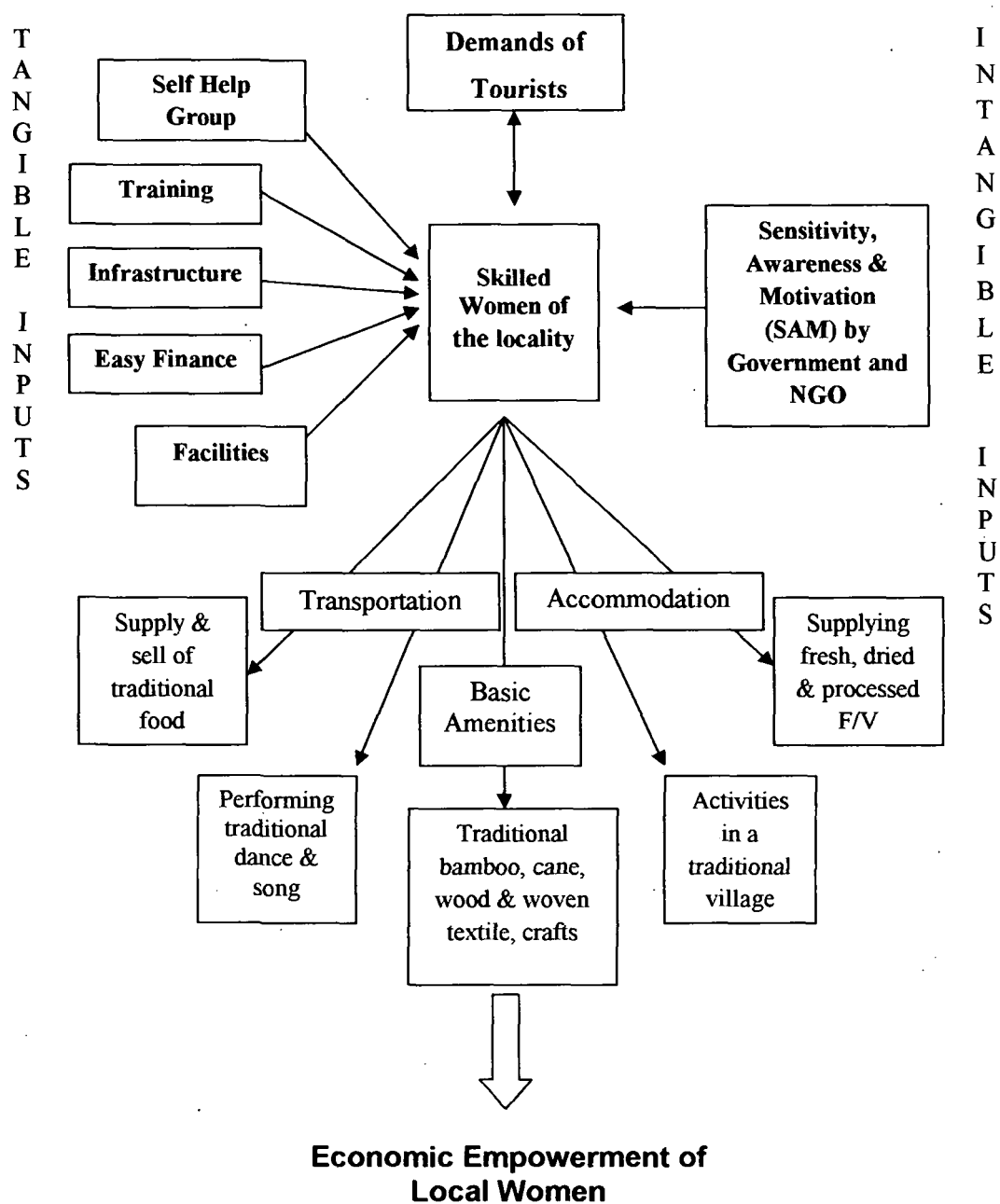


Fig-5.1: Economic Empowerment of Women through TRA

To make avenues of TRA sustainable, women should follow certain norms. They must realize the importance of tourists' satisfaction rather than their own economic gain. They must always try to reflect local tradition and culture in tourism products. At the same time, there is a need for fictionalization and modernization of the products for acceptability of tourists.

An integrated approach is required for increasing the number of women in higher levels of TRA in the study area. For involvement in higher level of tourism activities specific training is important for local women. Women should be motivated and provided scholarship for attaining qualifications in institutions like Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM), Tezpur University etc. Government, NGOs, academic institutions, different organizations and the local bodies and local women should unite to work towards successful achievement of the goal. Their effort should not only be for economic empowerment of women and the community but also for development of tourism in the study area.

Government and NGOs should provide tangible inputs in the form of training, infrastructure and finance to the local women for involvement in tourism industry. However, without the intangible inputs such as sensitization, awareness and motivation the process will not be successful. Therefore, both tangible and intangible inputs together will make tourism a catalyst for economic empowerment of local women.

Contributions of the study to the body of knowledge can be considered as follows: The study showed the present socioeconomic status of women in the fringe villages of Kaziranga National Park. Study revealed the perception scenario of local women regarding tourism and also regarding women empowerment. Formulation of 'Skill maps' showing different skills of rural women through Participatory Rural Appraisal method is the most useful contribution of the study. Identifying each woman with specific skill and enhancing these skills by proper training will be beneficial for the women. They can work as independent entrepreneur or can take up employment in Tourism Related Activities (TRA) in the study area.

The study finally formulated various practical strategies for local women to enter into tourism sector for their economic empowerment. The essence of the study was

that, it synthesized the demand of tourists with possible supply of tourism product by skilled women of the locality while formulating the strategies.

Policy makers can utilize the findings of the study for tourism development in the area. Local entrepreneurs can take initiative for establishing and upgrading their business ventures by using the sustainable strategies formulated in the study. Skill maps of the villages will be useful for entrepreneurs for selecting their employees and for government agencies and NGOs for providing higher level of training in the area. As a final point, the findings will be mostly beneficial to the local women as well as the local people residing in the periphery of KNP.

The present study tried to sensitize local women through PRA about avenues for women to join tourism work. The study also attempted to find out their potentiality to take up career in TRA for achieving economic empowerment. Various strategies formulated by the study if implemented properly women of the study area will be benefited and tourism development is also obvious. For increasing involvement of women in tourism further studies can be taken up on motivating factors for women to enter in tourism industry. Study on analysis of Government schemes for rural development, entrepreneurship development, women empowerment etc. and readdressing them for expansion of tourism in the study area can be beneficial to local women. To advance the understanding of tourists' requirements studies on tourists' preferences about type and pattern of specific tourism products also can be taken up. It was felt during the study that, there is a need of researching the souvenir market of KNP. There can be functional or aesthetic value addition to the traditional products to make them acceptable to tourists. Over and above, in Assam the area of 'women and tourism' is under researched. Systematic research is required in understanding the possibilities and also the complexities of women empowerment through tourism related activities in other tourism destinations of Assam.