

Financial Independence of Rural Youth through Skill Development – A Case of STRY

Shalendra¹, Sangamesh Angadi² and Mehrunissa Begum³

ABSTRACT

Skill development of rural youth has been the focus of Government for creating productive workforce. The Government has introduced various programs to improve skills of rural youth. Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY) implemented under Sub-Mission on Agricultural Extension (SMAE) is one such program with focus of providing skill based trainings to rural youth in agri-based vocational areas. The present paper analyses the component STRY for its potential to generate income and reach out to other rural youth. The compilation of information on different aspects of implementation of STRY suggests that the strength of the program lies in following an integrated implementation structure involving different agencies operating at national, state and district level. A comprehensive mechanism is followed under the component to identify potential skilling areas by involving district level agencies. The paper also reveals the potential of skill based training programs to generate additional income and ability to reach out to large number of rural youth through youth already trained under the program.

Keywords: Rural Youth, Skill development, Agricultural Skills, STRY, India.

Introduction

Changing demographic profile of the world has thrown a window of opportunities in favour of India. Presently, India has the largest share of youth population in the world and will continue to hold so for next 20 years. The population of youth in India has increased from 16.8 crores in 1971 to 42.2 crores in 2011. The number is estimated to reach 47.94 crore by 2021 (GoI, 2017). Majority of them are coming from rural India as the proportion of rural youth population in India is about 67– 68 per cent of total population of the country (Rajendran and Paul, 2020).

1. Deputy Director (Behavioural Science), MANAGE, Hyderabad

2. Consultant, MANAGE, Hyderabad

3. Consultant, MANAGE, Hyderabad

Corresponding Author E-mail: shalendra@manage.gov.in

Article Received Date: 20.12.2022

Article Accepted Date: 14.03.2023

The challenge, however, is to increase human resource potential and to utilise the same optimally as a driving force for economic development. Understanding the importance of empowering youth of India, the National Youth Policy (NYP – 2014) was launched by the Government in 2014. The NYP has defined the youth as a person in the age group of 15 to 29 years and aims mainly at enabling them to achieve their full potential, and through them enable India to find its rightful place in the community of nations.

NYP-2014 has identified 11 priority areas for development of youth under five categories namely creating a productive workforce, developing a strong and healthy generation, instilling social values and promoting community service, facilitating participation and civic engagement and, supporting youth at risk and create equitable opportunity for all. In order to create a productive workforce, the policy document has laid emphasis on education, entrepreneurship and skill development (NYP, 2014).

Skill development has otherwise also been a focus area of the Government for its ability to improve productivity, better living standard, employability and inclusive growth (NITI, 2015 & ILO, 2008). Accordingly, the Government has introduced a National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship – 2015. The policy aims at providing the overall framework to all skill related activities carried out within the country in alignment with common standards and link them with demand centres. The national policy speaks about the objectives and expected outcomes along with identifying the institutional framework to facilitate achieving the expected outcomes. The national policy aims to train about 104.62 million people afresh and additional 460 million to be reskilled, up-skilled and skilled by 2022 (NITI, 2015). Skilling become even more vital in agriculture for the development of rural areas as 65 percent of the total population of India live in rural areas (World Bank, 2021). Report on the Taskforce on Elimination of Poverty in India suggests that 80 percent of the Indian poor are in rural areas and their livelihood directly or indirectly depends on the performance of agriculture (GoI, 2016). This further emphasises on the importance of skilling in agriculture for the development of rural areas.

The efforts of the Government to impart right kind of skill and training are also visible from the presence of capacity building component invariably in all the schemes and programs introduced by the different Ministries with focus on production and efficient marketing of output. In compliance with National Policy on Skill Development & Entrepreneurship – 2015, the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India has also taken the initiative to provide skill based trainings to rural youth on agri-based vocational areas under the skill

development component of Sub-Mission on Agricultural Extension (SAME) of National Mission on Agricultural Extension & Technology (NMAET) namely Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY).

With this background, the present paper attempts to understand the different aspects of Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY) covering its implementation structure, skilling areas covered, effectiveness of short duration program in agriculture and its ability to provide financial independence to the rural youth. The paper also throws light on its potential to reach out to large number of rural youth though the youth trained under the skill based training programs organised under the component.

Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY)

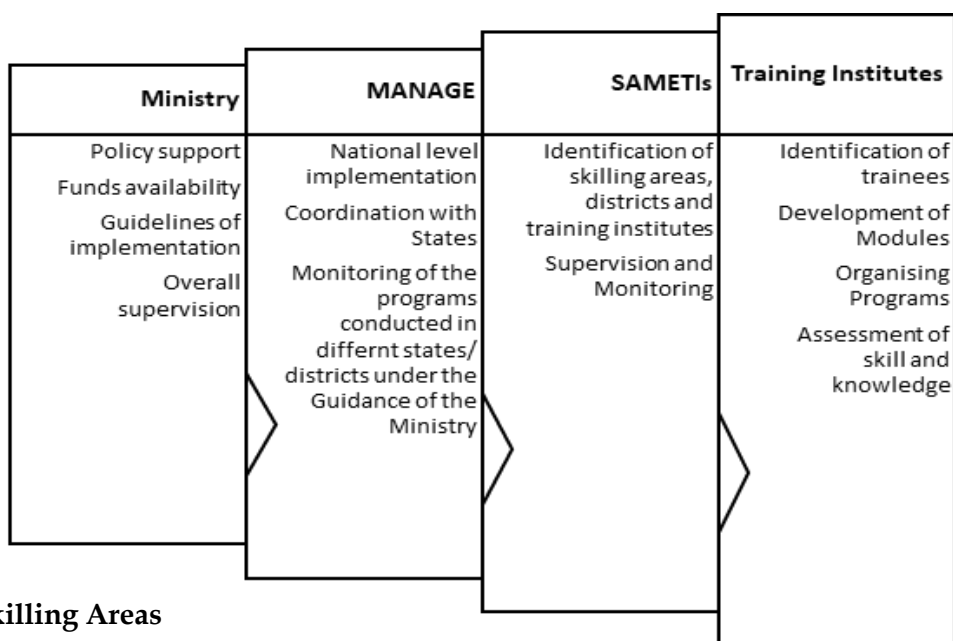
Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY) is a component implemented under Sub-Mission on Agricultural Extension (SMAE) of National Mission on Agriculture Extension and Technology (NMAET). The component was launched by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare during 2015-16 with the objective to impart skill based training to rural youth on agri-based vocational areas. The National Mission on Agricultural Extension and Technology (NMAET) aims at restructuring and strengthening of agricultural extension through amalgamation of 17 different schemes of the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare implemented to facilitate dissemination of agricultural technology and improved agronomic practices. The National Mission (NMAET), though, consists of 4 Sub Missions namely, (i) Sub Mission on Agricultural Extension (SMAE) (ii) Sub-Mission on Seed and Planting Material (SMSP) (iii) Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) (iv) Sub Mission on Plant Protection and Plant Quarantine (SMPP), the common threads running across all four Sub-Missions are Extension and Technology. The Sub-Mission on Agricultural Extension mainly focuses on creating awareness and enhancing the use of appropriate technologies in the agricultural sector and all the allied industries.

Structure of Implementation

The short duration skill based trainings on agricultural vocational areas under Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY) are implemented at district level following a tree tier structure (Figure-1). The component is implemented in different states by MANAGE in association with State Agricultural Management and Extension Training Institutes (SAMETIs). SAMETIs identify different institutes based on the suitability as training institutes in association with ATMAs for organising the programs for rural youth at district level. The different categories

of institutes responsible for implementation of programs at national, state and district level will operate in overall supervision and guidance of the Ministry. The comprehensive structure having involvement of SAMETIs, ATMAAs and training institutes facilitate not only the smooth implementation but also help in identifying the potential skilling area suitable for a particular district.

Figure 1. The three tier structure for implementation of STRY Programs



Skilling Areas

Skill development can help in making agriculture profitable, attractive and enterprising. In the process, the migration to urban centres will be curtailed by enabling rural youth to choose self-employment in their own village (Bhattacharyya & Mukherjee, 2019). However, it is important to identify the proper skilling area taking into consideration the local needs and potential of the districts. The STRY relies on a robust structure to identify the skilling areas so that rural youth can be trained to perform various farm and non-farm operations more efficiently and to promote employment of rural areas. In order to identify the local need based training areas appropriately the structure suggested under STRY have involvement of SAMETI and ATMA having a better understanding of local needs and potential of different enterprises. However, in order to facilitate the process of identification of skilling area, an indicative list of wide range of areas spanning agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry, dairying & fisheries has been compiled under the Component (Table-1).

Table 1. An indicative list of skilling areas covered under Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY) component

Agriculture	Horticulture	Animal Husbandry, Dairy- ing & Fisheries
▪ Agriculture Mechanisation ▪ Soil conservation ▪ Training on oilseed, maize & oil palm development ▪ Soil testing ▪ Organic farming ▪ Seed production ▪ Repair and maintenance of tractors and farm equipment ▪ Setting up of custom hiring agro service centres ▪ Installation and maintenance of food processing machinery ▪ Selection, operation and maintenance of plant protection machinery ▪ Storage and maintenance of foodgrains ▪ Grading of agricultural produce ▪ Management of rural godowns ▪ Integrated pest management in crops ▪ Production of bio-control agents, bio-pesticides and vermicomposting	▪ Mushroom production techniques ▪ Bee-keeping ▪ High-value floriculture ▪ Protected cultivation ▪ Installation and maintenance of micro-irrigation system ▪ Post-harvest processing and packaging of fruits and vegetables ▪ Harvesting, cleaning and grading of fruits and vegetables ▪ Organic production of fruits and vegetables ▪ Transportation and marketing of fruits and vegetables ▪ Nursery management ▪ Orchard management and maintenance ▪ Production of quality planting material through tissue-culture ▪ Production and processing of medicinal and aromatic plants ▪ Planting, execution and maintenance of landscapes ▪ Production and marketing of planting material ▪ Cold chain management ▪ IPM in vegetables and fruit crops	▪ Post-harvest activities on fish handling and processing of fishes ▪ Clean milk production (CMP) ▪ Integrated dairy development ▪ development ▪ Integrated development of small ruminants and rabbits ▪ Feed and fodder management ▪ Rearing of improved breed and rearing of cattle and management ▪ Goat rearing and management ▪ Ornamental fish farming ▪ Duck farming ▪ Piggery rearing and management ▪ Poultry rearing and management ▪ Fish rearing and management

Duration of the Programs

The programs conducted under STRY are of short duration with focus on a

specific agri-based vocational area to be completed in seven days including one day for travel. A total of 24 sessions are to be completed per program each of 90 minutes covering at least 36 hours. The programs are divided into modules of similar nature and relevant to each other to maintain continuity of the subject matter in terms of theory and practical sessions (in the ratio of 30:70). Different skilling areas are demonstrated to the trainees by using different models, audio visual aids and equipment followed by skill based exercises through active participation and involvement of participants. Different skilling areas may require different duration for the coverage of entire relevant content. Accordingly, training institutes have to design the content so that all relevant issues related to the subject can be covered in the time stipulated under the Component. An attempt was also made to record the opinion of the nodal officers and program coordinators associated with the implementation of the programs on suitability of the duration for organising various agriculture related skill based training program for rural youth (Table-2). In most the cases time has been expressed to be sufficient to cover the relevant content except practice oriented skilling areas like rabbit farming and quail rearing. However, in such cases also time was suggested to be sufficient by about two-third of the respondent.

Table 2. Response of nodal officers and program coordinators on suitability of the duration (expressed in percent)

Sr No	Skilling Area	Even Less time would be sufficient	Sufficient to Cover the Content	More time would have been better
1	Beekeeping	13	81	6
2	Fish Rearing	12	76	12
3	Value Addition/Processing	15	74	10
4	Piggery Rearing	11	74	15
5	Nursery Management	23	71	6
6	Mushroom Cultivation	18	71	11
7	Poultry Rearing	25	69	6
8	Livestock Production	17	69	14
9	Seed Production	17	66	17
10	Vermicomposting	31	64	5
11	Quail Rearing	23	63	13
12	Rabbit Farming	27	62	12

13	Mechanization	19	61	19
14	Average across skilling areas	19	69	11

Note – The average of the response received from 44 Nodal Officers and Program Coordinators association with the implementation of programs under STRY

Impact of the programs

Rural youth and farmers practicing agriculture have to operate in a very complex and uncertain environment as has been depicted by Kahan David (2012) through an ecosystem covering technology support, finance, commercial services, markets, agents, extension works, competition, government and input suppliers. Practicing agriculture or related enterprise with focus on income enhancement in such an environment will require optimum utilisation of input and technology, understanding of trade dynamics and understanding consumer preferences. In this changed environment, it is important to inculcate business perspective among farmers and rural youth and equip them with requisite skill to facilitate optimum utilisation of the available resources. The same has been reflected by the financial independence as captured through selected success stories experienced under STRY Component. A total of 75 success stories experienced under STRY have been compiled by MANAGE with the help of SAMETIs and training institutes under the guidance of the Ministry as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav Celebration. An elementary examination of these success stories suggests that nursery management and vermicomposting are some of the most popular skilling areas accounting for 40 percent of the total cases covered in the compilation (Table-3). Other popular areas are poultry rearing, processing and value addition, mushroom production and livestock production in the same order.

Income Generating Potential

The information compiled from success stories experienced under STRY also reveals the income generating potential of the skill based programs. Various enterprises covered under the document are having different income generation ability which ranges from a lowest of Rs 2000 per month in mushroom production to a highest of Rs 62500 per month in nursery management (Table-3). Most rewarding enterprises in terms of income generation have been nursery management, poultry rearing and beekeeping.

Table 3. Income generation potential of skill based training programs

Sr. No	Sectors	No. of Success Stories	Monthly Income		No. of Persons motivated
			Lowest (Rs)	Highest (Rs)	
1	Nursery Management	15	6500	62500	27
2	Vermicomposting	15	2800	5000	329
3	Poultry Rearing	8	7917	58400	56
4	Value Addition/ Processing	7	4167	20000	235
5	Mushroom Production	7	2000	30000	361
6	Livestock Production	6	6000	25000	260
7	Fishery Rearing	4	4833	30000	12
8	Beekeeping	4	3700	50000	120
9	Piggery Rearing	2	29167	31250	--
10	Others	7	8000	45000	20
	Total	75	2000	62500	1420

Note – Others include soil testing, sericulture, mechanisation, rabbit farming, seed production and quail production, the lowest income of Rs 8000 has been reported in case of soil testing whereas highest income of Rs 45000 has been reported in case of quail rearing. Only a limited number of 20 farmers have been outreached by the youth practicing quail rearing.

Farmer-to-Farmer Extension

The information compiled in Table-3 reveal that a total of 1420 rural youth have been trained or oriented on the respective subjects by the rural youth trained under STRY and thus encouraging farmer-to-farmer extension. In the present time when farmers are relying on various ICT enabled mobile phone based services for their information need, fellow-farmers are still a major source of information for them. About one-fourth of the farmers rely on other farmers for their information need (Mittal et al., 2010). It further emphasises the importance of such programs in reaching out to large number of rural youth and helping them diversify towards new enterprises based on skill improvement.

Conclusion

Changing demographic profile has made it important for the government to focus on development of youth mainly engaged in agricultural sector in rural areas. Skill development has been identified as one of the areas for creating productive workforce. Government has introduced various programs with focus on skill development to improve skills of youth. One such program is Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY) implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare under Sub-Mission on Agricultural Extension. STRY focuses on imparting skill based trainings to rural youth in agri-based vocational areas. The comprehensive structure followed under STRY to operate at national, state and district level by involving MANAGE, SAMETIs, ATMA and training institutes under the supervision of the Ministry ensures not only the smooth implementation of the programs but also facilitate in identification of need based skilling areas which is vital for creating desired impact. These are short duration programs but the duration is opined broadly sufficient by the nodal officers and program coordinators associated with the implementation of the programs. The programs have also been able to create financial impact as expressed by the income realised by rural youth through different enterprises based on the skill acquired through the programs organised under STRY. The income realisation has been observed to be as high as Rs 62500 per month in case of nursery management. Nursery management and vermicompost production are some of the popular skilling areas. The programs have also emerged as an effective tools to reach out to large number of rural youth though the youth trained under the programs. The short duration skill based programs if implemented appropriately by involving all relevant agencies operating at different level have the potential to improve financial independence of rural youth engaged in agriculture.

References

- Bhattacharyya Sangeeta and Mukherjee Anirban (2019) Importance of Skill Development in Indian Agriculture. In book: ICT and Social Media for Skill Development in Agriculture (pp.47-62). Editors - Om Prakash, Anirban Mukherjee and Pratibha. Joshi Today & Tomorrow's Printers and Publishers, New Delhi - 110 002, India
- GoI (2017) Youth in India. Central Statistics Office, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, New Delhi
- GoI (xxxx) Task Force on Elimination of Poverty in India. The unpublished presentation of regional consultative meeting, NITI Aayog, New Delhi

ILO (2008) Skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development. Report – V on International Labour Conference, 97th Session, 2008. International Labour Office, Geneva

Kahan David (2012) Entrepreneurship in farming. Farm management extension Guide – 5. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome 2012

Mittal, Surabhi, Sanjay Gandhi and Gaurav Tripathi (2010), Socio-Economic Impact of Mobile Phones on Indian Agriculture, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, Working Paper No. 246, February 2010

NITI (2015) Skill Development and Productivity of the Workforce, Focus of the Month paper prepared by Sunita Sanghi and A Srija, Nov-Dec, 2015, NITI Aayog, New Delhi

NYP (2014) National Youth Policy, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, New Delhi

Rajendran Vasanthi and Paul David (2020) Skilling the Rural Youth of the Northeast of India through Rural Technologies. Asia-Pacific Journal of Rural Development. 30(1-2): 195–202

World Bank (2021) The World Bank Data, accessed on 15th December 2021

Website visited

<https://agricoop.gov.in>

<https://www.manage.gov.in>

<https://www.mospi.gov.in>

<https://www.niti.gov.in> To Study the Awareness and Adoption level amoTo