

## **INITIATIVES OF CENTRAL SILK BOARD, MINISTRY OF TEXTILES FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCLUSION**

Sericulture industry in India is known to be inherently inclusive in nature. Being a rural agro based industry, this sector has played a critical role in rural development, women empowerment and employment generation. Like any other agriculture allied sector, although production costs have increased in recent times an increased productivity and enhanced quality witnessed through technology intervention have proved that this sector is a commercially viable and an inclusive enterprise.

The Central Silk Board (CSB), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India has taken up initiatives for sericulture development on cluster mode with participatory approaches and active participation of people in planning and implementation, through its flagship Catalytic Development Programme (CDP).

Focused initiatives in sericulture have ensured inclusiveness. The Central Silk Board has been conducting skill seeding and skill enhancement through its language-neutral training material, ICT based training programmes and an extensive use of audio-visual presentation which has helped in effective technology absorption. The tasar silk sector has been no exception. Various segments of the tasar value chain including land preparation in degraded waste-land and systematic plantation have been the key interventions for people's participation. Degraded waste-lands have been prepared with proper land husbandry measures to result in large tree plantations of tasar host plants. Chawki gardens have been started along with Nursery raising, basic and commercial seed production, reeling and spinning through people's participation. Social mobilization has helped to protect 10,000 hectares of natural host flora in fringe forest areas for silkworm rearing. This people's initiatives facilitated by Central Silk Board, has added up to the green cover, otherwise, deforested. Demystification of technology with people's participation has removed supply constraints and in selected clusters created Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Mutual Benefit Trusts (MBT). These models have helped in promotion of equity and active beneficiaries who have mobilized credit for critical activities like

silkworm rearing and cocoon to yarn conversion. CSB helped in provision of robust Raw Material Bank (RMB) and also established Common Facility Centers (CFCs) to facilitate functional market linkages. This initiative of the Central Silk Board has recently won accolades and the organization has been awarded the Times of India Social Impact Award in the 'livelihood' category.

CSB, through its premier research & development organizations in the mulberry and vanya sector, has evolved R&D technologies which are user and women-friendly. In the pre-cocoon sector, focus has been given on people's involvement; especially small and marginal farmers in chawki rearing, cocoon harvesting and post cocoon technologies like Ushnakoti, hot-air dryer, cocoon deflossers, multi-end reeling machines etc. in the mulberry sector. CSB has been engaging in dissemination of technologies with active involvement of local youth and women in various income generating activities eg., Sericulture Resource Centers (SRCs), Grainages and mobile disinfectant units. In the Vanya Sector, special initiatives have been taken on introducing solar operated spinning machines and motorised-cum-peddle operated spinning machines. All these technologies have been user friendly, environment-conscious and cost effective, thereby contributing to a large number of small and marginal rearers-cum-reelers taking assistance from the Schemes. The technologies evolved by the R&D Institutes have been simple, yet innovative and deliberately kept at a low cost, so as to include the small and the marginal.

The country is now focused on bivoltine silk and rolled out a comprehensive programme across the States in 174 clusters. Farmers in these clusters are being federated into community based organizations with significant women participation. Chawki rearing Centers, Seri-Polyclinics, Kisan Nurseries are being encouraged through people's participation. These activities have been identified as People Based Activities run through federation of farmers' groups specially women Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

The focused approach of the Catalytic Development Programme (CDP) has been not merely one of "adding on" women to various processes in the silk value

chain, but also of reshaping these processes to create space for women's involvement not only in implementing the development agenda but also in agenda setting. It is in this back-drop that gender based budgeting has been done in order to conduct capacity building of the marginalized groups in significant numbers. In this context, the social mobilization in pre and post cocoon is cocoon handicrafts, better design development and product diversification has been brought in. The premier Institutes of CSB have helped in conducting meaningful research with Indian Institutes of Technologies (IITs) and reputed scientific institutions in partnership with the industry. The use of silk in health and medical application has been pioneered through effective MoUs by engagement with MNCs.

The CSB through its Silk Mark Organisation of India (SMOI) has been catering to the needs of the mass clientele by bringing the Silk Mark Fusion Label and SMS authentication to enable the silk consumers to ascertain the authenticity and to trace the source of silk. It has also been helping in design development and product diversification with the help of P3D Unit at CSB.

IT initiatives of CSB have brought in inclusion of large numbers of farmers and reelers to enable to access information and obtain assistance of Government Schemes. The Silk Flash has been flashing real-time cocoon and raw-silk prices, while the SMS services have gone a long way in keeping the far-flung farmers in other marginalized sector updated on price movements of silk and cocoon prices.

**Conclusion:**

The above mentioned initiatives of CSB have ensured socio-economic inclusion of the practitioners in sericulture. Independent studies have revealed decrease in migration to urban areas, enhanced income levels leading to food and nutritional security, release of lands from debts, saving income for children's education and health, asset creation, besides women's participation. The sericulture story has effectively unfolded itself in achieving people's participation with inclusive growth.