

# Role of Government Schemes in Women's Agricultural and Sericulture Skills Development: A Study in Jorhat District of Assam

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**Abstract:** *The government has introduced many plans and programmes in the various departments. Agriculture and sericulture are two of them. Therefore, it is important to study. The study revealed that both state and central government schemes are there for agriculture and sericulture skills development such as MKSP, Kisan Credit Card, ASRLM, Samarth, Capacity Building Training, Silk Samagra, etc. The study is conducted in the Balijania village of Jorhat district, Assam. The sample size for this study is 148. The samples are collected using purposive sampling methods. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods are used. The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. For collecting primary data, interview schedules and observation methods are used. The secondary data are collected from books, journal articles, government reports, web portals, etc.*

**Keywords:** Role, Government schemes, Women, Agricultural, Sericulture and Skill development

## 1. Introduction

Women's participation in agriculture and sericulture is visible in the country. Data shows that about 80% of rural Indian women are engaged in agriculture.<sup>1</sup> Women play various roles in agriculture and each role can be termed a skill for them. They learn agricultural skills from family members and formal sources like training, institutions, etc. The skills learned by the women are good quality seed selection, nursery preparation, irrigation, transplanting, use of fertilizers, harvesting, and skills after harvesting, etc. In addition, they are involved in various livestock activities like the rearing of cows, rearing of pigs, hens, ducks, goats, poultry, etc. To develop women in their agricultural fields, the government has implemented many plans and policies. The government always tries to give recognition to female farmers. In the same way, to encourage women in the sericulture field, the government has implemented many schemes. Because many studies revealed that the participation of women in sericulture is increasing in society. Women constitute more than 60% of the sericulture workforce.<sup>2</sup> The skills developed by the women are adult moth copulation management skills, selection of quality eggs, egg incubation management skills, brushing, feeding, bed cleaning, disease management, spacing, cocoon harvesting, boiling, de-flossing, dyeing, spinning, weaving, and marketing. Both state government and the central government take the necessary steps to improve women's agricultural and sericulture skills. In this study, the role of some selected central government (Indian Government) and state government (Assam Government) schemes for agriculture and sericulture are discussed.

**a) Agriculture Scheme:** Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), Kisan Credit Card Scheme (KCC),

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PMKSN), Mukhya Mantri Krishi Sa Sajuli Yojana (MMKSSY), Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission (ASRLM).

**b) Sericulture Scheme:** Samarth, Capacity Building Training, Silk Samagra.

## Objectives of the study

The study is followed by the following two objectives:

- 1) To study the government's agriculture and sericulture scheme.
- 2) To study the benefits of schemes in women's agriculture and sericulture skills development.

## 2. Research Methodology

Research methodology is a systematic plan for using methods, tools, techniques, sample size selection, sampling methods, and procedures. In this study, one village named Balijania is selected as a field. The village of Balijania is situated in the Kaliapani Development Block of Jorhat District, Assam. Jorhat District is known for agriculture and sericulture production. Agriculture and sericulture are the main sources of income for the majority of rural people in Jorhat District. Jorhat District is known for agriculture and sericulture production. Agriculture and sericulture are the main sources of income for the maximum number of rural people in Jorhat District. A total of 98,667 cultivators are dependent on agriculture farming, out of which 73,535 are cultivated by men and 25,132 are by women.<sup>3</sup> The Jorhat district is well known for its sericulture output. The Jorhat district is where all varieties of Assam silk, including Muga, Eri, and Mulberry, are produced. The village of Balijania is also well known for the production of multiple varieties of Assam silk. Mostly, women's participation is more in this village.

<sup>1</sup> NITI Ayog, <https://www.niti.gov.in/rural-women-key-new-indias-agrarian-revolution>, Accessed on October 7, 11:10 AM.

<sup>2</sup> Role of women in sericulture, <https://www.thenorthlines.com/role-of-women-in-sericulture>, Accessed on October 7, 11:54 AM.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.indiagrowing.com/Assam/Jorhat\\_District](https://www.indiagrowing.com/Assam/Jorhat_District), Jorhat District Population.

The total sample size for this study is 148. The sample size was collected using the purposive sampling method. Both structured and unstructured questions were asked using an interview schedule. In this study, both the observation method and the interview method were used for data collection. Both primary and secondary data were used in this study. The primary data were collected from the field and secondary data were collected from books, journal articles, government and non-government reports, and offices of the agriculture and sericulture department.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The government is formed for the development and welfare of society. To fulfil the demand's of society's people, the government has implemented many plans and policies. Hence, it is important to study the role of the government's plans in women's agricultural and sericulture skills development.

#### Plans for women's agriculture skills development:

##### a) Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP):

MKSP is a national-level programme that was established in 2011. The fundamental objective of this programme is to improve the status of women in agriculture. Mahila is given the title of "Kisan" in this programme, and as a result, they take the lead in the agricultural industry.<sup>4</sup> This programme is created to help agricultural women become more skilled so they may build sustainable livelihoods. The MKSP is focused on enhancing the abilities of female smallholder farmers in sustainable agricultural methods. The agendas of MKSP are sustainable agriculture, non-timber forest produce, livestock, and fisheries.

The impact of MKSP in the study area:

- It boosts respondents' levels of confidence and helps in the development of personality. They are given a platform for self-improvement through this plan. Training, seminars, conferences, and workshops are organized under this training.
- It establishes a connection between the employees of the organization and other enterprises.
- The MKSP scheme provides the opportunity to learn advanced and innovative methods of raising domesticated animals and poultry. They are earning a decent income by selling these household animals.
- Female farmers are now capable of ensuring the food security of their families due to the training they received via the MKSP programme. They can sell extra grains even after they have been stored for them. Hence, it also provides financial security.
- Female farmers are trained in agricultural technological knowledge. So that, they can improve their technical skills.
- This programme benefits the maximum number of respondents because the programme is membership-based. It applies to women who are SRLM-affiliated Self Help Group (SHG) members. It is found from the study

that the largest number of respondents are members of SHGs.

##### b) Kisan Credit Card Scheme

In 1998, the Kisan Credit Card programme was introduced. This plan aims to provide farmers with Kisan Credit Cards. The bank authority grants the KCC. The KCC was initially made available to farmers to assist in the purchase of seeds, herbicides, fertilisers, etc. In 2004, the program's scope was increased to include credit support for both agricultural and nonagricultural industries. The KCC scheme was introduced with various objectives: provide credit facilities, create working capital, provide loans and provide a flexible bank facility.

The impact of the Kisan Credit Scheme in the study area:

Earlier, only male farmers were known to utilise Kisan Credit Cards. Women were not aware of the Kisan Credit Card until about 7 or 8 years ago. There are at least a few women who are aware of it but did not apply. The fact that all respondents cannot obtain a Kisan Credit Card. The percentage of responders with or without the KCC is shown in the table below.

**Table 1: Percentage of KCC owners and non-owners**

Responses of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage
KCC owners	65	43.92%
KCC non-owners	83	56.08%
Total	148	100%

Source: Field study

According to **Table-0.1**, the majority of respondents (56.08%) have no Kisan Credit Card. The respondents who have no Kisan Credit Card said that they have applied for one. But, they also claimed that, till now, they had not received it. It might be the reason for technological difficulties, bank officials' ignorance, and a lack of proper channels. However, the percentage of KCC holders increased compared to the previous years, as stated by the respondents.

##### c) Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission (ASRLM):

The goal of the Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission is to carry out the National Rural Livelihoods Mission's vision in Assam. The National Rural Livelihood Mission's vision is to empower people socially and economically. On November 11, 2011, the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development launched the Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission.<sup>5</sup> As per the ASRLM report (2018-19), total 33 districts and 2435199 lakh homes are covered till 2018-2019.<sup>6</sup> There are numerous success tales of women who joined self-help groups and resolved their issues and obstacles. They are now making contributions to society.

ASRLM's effect on the study area:

<sup>5</sup> Government of Assam, <https://asrlms.assam.gov.in/about-us/history-3>, Accessed on 31 October, 2022, 9:45 A.M

<sup>6</sup> Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission. Annual Report 2018-19. Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Govt. of Assam. Guwahati, Assam, pp: 1-100.

<sup>4</sup> <http://mksp.gov.in/>. Accessed on 31 October, 2022, 8:16 A.M.

Self Help Groups are formed under the supervision of ASRLM. Each SHG has to be 10-20 members. There are five SHGs in the village Balijania. ASRLM selects one *Krishi Sakhi* from those Self Help Groups and trained her in the development of agricultural skills. *Krishi Sakhi* is created to achieve the goal of sustainable development. They are termed as a service provider. The researcher tries to know her role in women's agriculture skills development. Her first duty is to empower and train rural people, particularly women, in her areas. She visits crop fields to investigate the status of crops from the nursery preparation to the harvesting of crops. She guides crop disease control, land selection, use of chemical fertilizers, and use of technical knowledge. Another responsibility is to perform by the *Krishi Sakhi* in making an annual calendar to track farm and non-farm operations including agriculture, animal husbandry, sericulture, apiculture, horticulture, floriculture, etc. She advises on crop insurance.

In addition to encouraging female farmers to develop agricultural products, ASRLM works to promote commodities made locally. ASRLM introduces the trade mark brand name "ASOMI". They can sell their products using this brand name. *Saras Mela* is another contribution of ASRLM. The SARAS Mela is a marketplace that only sells goods made by SHGs. The concept of SARAS Mela came into being in 2018. The respondents earned money selling their products in the SARAS Mela.

#### Plans for women's sericulture skills development:

##### a) Samarth

Samarth is a programme for developing skills in the textile sector. The scheme works under the Ministry of Textiles. The program's initial goal was to train 10 lakh people between 2017 and 20<sup>7</sup>. Women, people from minority groups, differently abled persons, BPL members, and members of the SC/ST category, as well as residents of the 115 NITI Aayog-notified districts, are among those who qualify for the Samarth programme. The objectives of the Samarth scheme are:

- To develop new skills and improve those already present in traditional industries including handicrafts, jute, sericulture, and the handloom sector.
- To support self-employment for sustainable development.
- To create a programme for skill development in the textile sector.

Benefits of Samarth Scheme in women's sericulture skill development:

The Samarth scheme makes a woman able to improve her sericulture skills. Through this scheme, the respondents improved their latest technological knowledge and got admission to the training programme. The scheme has allowed connections with the Aadhaar-based biometric attendance system (AEBAS), online monitoring, CCTV cameras, etc. The scheme provides a helpline number for the beneficiaries to discuss any queries.

##### b) Silk Samagra:

It was started between 2017 and 2020 to increase sericulture output and empower underprivileged sericulture families. It is a central government scheme. To fill up the gaps left by the first Silk Samagra, the second Silk Samagra was introduced. Silk Samagra 2 is implemented to provide contemporary reeling technological knowledge. The objectives of the scheme are:

- a) Seed arrangement.
- b) Market expansion and cooperation.
- c) The advancement of information technology.

The Silk Samagra 2 Scheme's benefits, particularly for women:

- Women who have trained in Silk Samagra 2 gain empowerment.
- They gain knowledge of how to employ cutting-edge technology at the various stages of silk production.
- After training, women obtain economic independence.
- Women in sericulture develop expertise and the capacity to mentor other women in their village.
- After training, their intention to produce silk changes from a traditional one to a commercial one.
- They have an opportunity to establish effective communication with the sericulture professionals.

##### c) Capacity Building Training:

In very simple words, CBT aims to build the capacity of the beneficiaries. The government has implemented capacity development training for silk weavers and farmers in the sector of sericulture. The majority of the beneficiaries of this programme are women. Because women make up a larger percentage of the sericulture workforce than males do. Under the Intensive Bivoltine Sericulture Development Project, the Central Muga Eri Research and Training Institute held capacity-building training for the self-help groups (IBSDP). The institute has also covered the expense of the trainees' transportation. They receive diplomas once their training is complete. Various training programmes for CBT are:

- a) **Farmers Skill Training (FST):** This training aims to educate sericulture farmers regarding the technological innovation of sericulture.
- b) **Post-cocoon Technology (PCT):** Under this programme, training is given on the harvesting of cocoons, boiling of cocoons, de-flossing, dyeing, reeling, spinning, weaving, etc.
- c) **Technology Orientation Programme (TOP):** Beneficiaries are trained on the use of technology-based resources related to silk production.

The above training is need-based. The timing of the above three trainings is 5 to 10 days. Farmers can take this training at any time, whenever they need it. In addition to the above training, other trainings are given, including the Trainers Training Programme (TTP), Support to Training Employment Programme for Women (STEP), and Sericulture Resource Centre (SRC).

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Textile, Government of India, [https://samarth-textiles.gov.in/about\\_us](https://samarth-textiles.gov.in/about_us), Accessed on August 22, 2022, 7:29 AM.

#### 4. Conclusion and Suggestions

It can be concluded that the government of India and the state government have been implementing many schemes for women's agricultural and sericulture skills development. Each plan has started with special objectives and aims. The impact of government schemes on women is appreciable. Because, their livelihoods, skills, and abilities are improved after getting training through the above schemes. But, it is important to mention that not all respondents are benefiting from these training programmes. In this case, the government and the woman have faults. Women are not aware of schemes and other innovations. They have no complaints about it. On the other hand, the government does not observe the matter at the grass-roots level. It demands conducting an inquiry into why plans are not working at the village level. The state government and the central government should collect feedback from the beneficiaries.

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