

Skill Upgradation and Quality Improvement Scheme

Introduction

The decentralised operations in the coir industry without adequate training has been posing problems particularly for ensuring the desired level of quality to the ultimate product. In most cases, a coir worker experienced in the manufacture of one item or some items may not be conversant with the technology involved in the manufacture of other items. Streamlining of production programmes in line with the trend in demand is therefore rendered difficult and sometimes this resulted in affecting the quality standards. Inferior quality may ultimately turnout to be detrimental to the survival of the industry, particularly it being a traditional product, in the present context of unprecedented competition on account of globalisation and liberalisation. Skill development is, therefore, the most essential pre-requisite for the overall development of the industry and to accelerate the proliferation of the industry into non-traditional areas. For newly developing brown coir sector in coconut producing regions, the demand for training facilities for imparting skills of artisans is substantial, particularly in the context of developing post fibre activities. In this area a large number of trainers are required to conduct the training for artisans at the field level to develop the production base. Taking note of the need for training managerial/ supervisory personnel, trainers/ instructors and skilled artisans in adequate numbers, a three tier training system has been envisaged.

- 1) Training for managerial/ supervisory personnel
- 2) Trainers Training Programme
- 3) Training for artisans and orientation programmes for skill upgradation

The Coir Board was running four Regional Coir Training and Development Centers at Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, Arsikere in Karnataka, Rajamundry in Andhra Pradesh and Bhubaneswar in Orissa and a Demonstration cum Extension Centre, at Nalbari in Assam and a Demonstration cum Production Centre at Narasapuram in Andhra Pradesh. These centers were entrusted with the task of the development of coir industry in the brown coir sector, identifying the growth centers for organization of coir extraction and processing units, entrepreneur motivation, technical consultancy in project formulation and implementation in setting up coir units, development of skills for artisans, coordination of the activities at different levels with appropriate linkages. The activities of the above centers had to be discontinued with effect from 31-12-2000 as per the directions of the Ministry of SSI & ARI, Government of India.

80% of the workers employed in coir industry are women, particularly in the pre-product sectors. Mahila Coir Yojana is the first women oriented self employment scheme implemented by the Coir Board since 1994. Mahila Coir Yojana aims not only at the improvement of productivity and quality through adoption of refined method of spinning on motorised/ motorised traditional rats but also contribute to gender empowerment. Training in spinning coir yarn under Mahila Coir Yojana is usually organised through NGOs/ Co-operative Societies/ PSUs/ Coir Co-operative Marketing Federations, Coir Workers Welfare Fund Board, local bodies or field training centres set up by the Board in coir producing regions. This scheme has been successfully implemented in all coir producing States like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal and Lakshadweep. The training is also imparted through the National Coir Training and Design Centre at Alappuzha in Kerala and field training units established by the Regional Offices in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Sub Regional Offices at Guwahati and Kolkata.

Coir, being a natural fibre, coir products are environment friendly and bio-degradable. However, the demand for coir products in India and abroad to a large extent depend on quality of the product. The continuous improvement in the quality of coir products is, therefore, essential to sustain the demand for coir products and to achieve better market acceptance in a world turning more and more quality conscious. Quality upgradation would, therefore, be a major task for the manufacturers to achieve a favourable edge in the domestic as well as export market. Coir Board is entrusted with the crucial role of creating quality consciousness among all concerned in the industry through appropriate programmes - quality awareness camps, quality improvement programmes etc.

Objective

Objective of the scheme is to train personnel for the cadres of supervisors/ instructors/ artisans to meet the requirement of skilled man power for the development of coir industry. Transfer of technology to non-traditional areas through development of skill of coir workers is another important objective of the scheme. Mahila Coir Yojana, in particular, aims at women empowerment through provision of spinning equipment at subsidised rate after appropriate skill development programmes. The main objective of the scheme is to provide self employment to rural artisans in regions producing coir fibre and enabling them to get better returns through improvement of productivity and quality simultaneously providing them a better working environment through elimination of drudgery involved in the traditional method of spinning. Entrepreneurship Development Programmes are organised with a view to encourage new

entrepreneurs both in traditional and non- traditional areas to venture into coir industry and trade thereby accelerating the development of the industry in the existing and new areas.

The Quality Improvement Programmes aims at inculcating quality consciousness among the workers at grass root level and to educate them on proper methods of producing standard quality fibre, yarn and products.

Training

Various steps envisaged under this programme are: -

- i. Conduct regular training programs for supervisory cadre, artisans at the National Coir Training and Design Centre, Kalavoor, Alappuzha in Kerala.
- ii. Conduct training programmes in spinning/weaving in rural areas by organising Field Training Units in the potential areas in all coir producing States in association with PSUs/Co-operative Societies/NGOs.
- iii. Conduct short-term training in the manufacture of Coir Pith Organic Manure at the National Coir Training & Design Centre.
- iv. Conduct short-term training on the application of Coirret for retting coconut husk/ fibre and treatment of ret liquor at National Coir Training & Design Centre.
- v. Organise special training to State Govt. officials/craft teachers/functionaries of coir co-operative Societies.
- vi. Organise need based training programme for prisoners in jails and tribals in tribal areas.
- vii. Conduct trainers training programmes for supply of trainers to the field training units.
- viii. Conduct training in repair and maintenance of coir processing machineries to the mechanics
- ix. Organise training programmes in the preparation of new designs, pattern and diversified use of coir in association with National Institute of Design.
- x. Conduct special training for workers of the newly set up manufacturing co-operative societies with the funding support of NCDC.
- xi. Conduct training to the existing spinners in spinning coir yarn on motorised traditional ratts in all coir producing States.

Coconut producing States like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Tripura, Goa, A&N and Lakshadweep Islands etc. would get adequate opportunities to start manufacture of value added products utilising the coir fibre produced by them and the unemployed youth in rural areas can be provided employment by setting up of new processing units. The coir manufacturing units and coir cooperative societies will get the service of technically qualified personnel to produce better quality products and timely repair and maintenance of equipments to improve the production. The women in rural areas could improve their technical skill for increasing the productivity and income earning capacity. The entrepreneurs can be self employed by starting own coir units. Production of coir and employment opportunities in coir sector will increase.

Mahila Coir Yojana

With more than 80% workforce engaged in coir industry being women, the industry is a women oriented traditional industry. It is rural based and the workers engaged in the industry are mostly below the poverty level. Spinning sector is one of the vulnerable sectors of the industry employing predominantly women who derive their primary income from spinning coir yarn. The traditional method of spinning using ratt involves drudgery, strain and low returns because of low productivity.

Mahila Coir Yojana is the first women oriented self employment scheme being implemented by the Coir Board for the empowerment of women artisans in the coir sector. The scheme facilitates proliferation of the industry into new regions where raw material potential exists. The scheme was first introduced in 1994 during the IXth Five Year Plan. It is well accepted not only in traditional coir producing States but elsewhere even. The scheme has been in operation during the Xth Five Year Plan also. For the successful implementation of the scheme and to encourage more women artisans to coir spinning activity, Coir Board under its training programme provides training to women artisans in spinning on motorised/ motorised traditional ratts. The scheme envisages providing motorised ratts/ motorised traditional ratts to women artisans at 75% subsidised rate after providing them the necessary skill in its operation through field level training.

Review of the Scheme

Coir Board provides 75% cost of the motorised/ motorised traditional ratts as one time subsidy subject to a ceiling of Rs.7,500/- in the case of motorised ratt and Rs.2,925/- for motorised traditional ratts. During Xth plan period, 31,270 numbers of motorised ratts/ motorised traditional ratts have been distributed by expending a total amount of Rs.9.52 crores towards Board's subsidy in the States of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Karnataka, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Goa. The working and living conditions of the beneficiaries have improved to a marked extent as a result of the implementation of the programme.

This scheme could be successfully implemented in all coir producing States like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Pondicherry, West Bengal and Lakshadweep. During the training programme, which is normally of two months duration, a monthly stipend of Rs.500/- is provided to the women artisans. In the case of traditional areas where workers are already in spinning sector, a tailor made programme of short duration is on implementation. The training is imparted through the National Coir Training and Design Centre and the Field Training Units established by the Regional Offices in various coir producing States. In most cases, training in spinning coir yarn is organised with the active involvement of the concerned State Govts. through their sponsored field training units with the active co-operation of NGOs, SHGs, Co-operatives and other Voluntary Organisations.

Proposals for 11th Five Year Plan

Although Mahila Coir Yojana Scheme has been in operation since 1994, because of the widely dispersed nature of the industry through the length and breadth of coastal regions of the country, there are still regions of coir concentration where the benefits of Mahila Coir Yojana have not been reached. Similarly, in coir clusters where the scheme had been partly implemented, there are women artisans who had not availed of the benefits of Mahila Coir Yojana to get themselves self employed. Therefore, continuation of the scheme during XIth plan in the same manner as of Xth plan is proposed.

Further, men dominate the post yarn sector, particularly weaving and product manufacturing sectors. The strenuous work involved in weaving of mats and matting on traditional wooden handlooms has, however, kept away the woman artisans from the manufacturing sector. The compact metallic loom "Anugraha" developed by the Central Coir Research Institute of the Coir Board can easily be operated by women for weaving coir geotextiles/ coir matting. As a modification to the Mahila Coir Yojana Scheme for implementation during the XIth Five Year Plan, it was proposed to bring Anugraha loom under the purview of the scheme. It is recommended to provide Anugraha loom at 75% subsidised rate after giving training in weaving and wet processing to women artisans. It would be possible to implement the scheme successfully through sponsoring agencies like Co-operatives, Coir Workers Welfare Fund Board, NGOs, SHGs coming forward to bear 25% of the beneficiary contribution. The cost of Anugraha loom is roughly estimated at Rs.25,000/-.

Anupam Loom is another versatile loom developed by the Central Coir Research Institute for weaving mats and matting. As a means of empowerment of women in coir sector, it would be possible to provide Anupam loom to coir clusters catering to gender development. This could also be implemented under the Mahila Coir Yojana at 75% subsidised rate from the second year of XIth Five Year Plan (2008-2009). Anupam loom is capable of producing different types of two shaft, three shaft matting, carpets and geotextiles besides enabling stenciling/ printing on coir door mats, with the help of exhaust air from the compressor. In view of the cost of the loom at Rs.1.65 lakhs, even if individual artisans is not coming forward to utilise the opportunity for want of 25% beneficiary contribution, there would be clusters or organisations in private/ public/ co-operative sector upholding the cause of women empowerment for availing of the benefits under the scheme. In case of SC/ST beneficiaries, the percentage of subsidy may be fixed at 80% in respect of spinning ratts and Anugraha Loom and in the case of Anupam Loom when the beneficiary organisation availing the subsidy is an exclusive one of SC/ ST.

Financial Outlay (Rs. crores)

Sl. No.	Programmes	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	Total
1	Training	2.00	2.00	2.50	2.00	2.00	10.50
2	Infrastructure for Training	1.50	2.00	2.00	1.50	1.00	8.00
3	Mahila Coir Yojana	2.30	2.60	2.60	3.00	3.00	13.50
4	EDP	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	2.00
5	QIP	0.10	0.25	0.25	0.20	0.20	1.00

	All	6.30	7.25	7.75	7.10	6.60	35.00
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Year-wise Physical Targets

Sl. No.	Programmes	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	Total
1	Training	15000	16000	16600	17260	17990	82850
2	EDP	20	25	28	32	35	140
3	QIP	20	30	33	36	40	159
4	Anugraha Loom/ Anupam Loom	0	20	25	15	10	70
	Total	15040	16075	16686	17343	18075	83219

Distribution of Ratts

Year	No. of ratts
2007-2008	5225
2008-2009	5000
2009-2010	4600
2010-2011	3680
2011-2012	2945
Total	21450

Proposal for effective implementation of the scheme

The training programme is for two months duration and a monthly stipend of Rs.500/- is now provided to the trainees. This may have to be suitably enhanced to attract more women workers for the training. Sufficient number of field units under the Regional Offices have to be started for imparting the training with the assistance of SHGs, NGOs and Co-operatives. The scheme will be introduced as part of cluster development activities. The trainers training programme will be strengthened for providing sufficient number of trainers to the field training centres. Orientation training in repairing of machineries also has to be imparted for attending the breakdowns.

Justification for continuation of the scheme

In order to develop coir industry in coir producing States, particularly in the non-traditional coir producing States like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal and Tripura where there is substantial potential for development of coir industry and generation of rural employment on account of raw material availability, the training programme for the development of skills of artisans have to be continued vigorously with greater participation of co-operatives, NGOs and other recognised training institutions. There is no agency other than Coir Board having the expertise to conduct skill development training in coir sector.

A well structured Entrepreneurship Development Programme with the involvement of professional agencies has to be continued to attract new entrepreneur to coir based industries. Organising exposure tour to successful units/ cluster in coir producing regions will not only provide exposure to the production and processing techniques, but also provide the much needed motivation.

Women coir workers are under privileged and exploited lot. They typify women workers in under developed rural areas where primitive and unorganised sector of the industry dominate. The introduction of motorised ratt and motorised traditional ratt for spinning coir yarn improved the productivity and income earning capacity of rural women coir spinners. This would, in turn, improve their working condition, working environment and lift them above poverty line. Therefore, the development of coir industry has a pronounced aspect of empowering rural women and enlisting their participation in the development of the nation. Therefore, Mahila Coir Yojana has to be continued in XIth Five Year Plan as well.

As minimum wages have not been enforced in coir industry, the workers are provided with agreed wages. The women artisans engaged in coir industry are low paid workers as compared to the wage level existing in other similar small scale industries, agricultural sector labour and casual labour. The proposal to include Anugraha and Anupam looms by giving a forward linkage to Mahila Coir Yojana Scheme would definitely result in more and more rural women seeking not only self employment in post yarn stage in coir industry and earning more through their engagement in

weaving in coir clusters. This will usher in a positive socio economic impact on the society, particularly in rural sector as envisaged broadly under the National Common Minimum Programme.

The workers engaged in the spinning and product sectors have to be provided adequate training and quality awareness to produce better quality coir yarn and products to maintain the quality of the coir products to compete in the domestic and export markets. The spinning of coir yarn is a cottage industry and is widely spread through out the coastal belt of Kerala and other coir producing states with low infrastructural facilities. Different processes in manufacturing is handled by thousands of skilled and semi skilled workers and production and processing lack any homogeneity as such. In view of the wide spread nature of the industry in process quality control to enforce any uniform standard in quality standard cannot be achieved easily. Therefore the scheme envisaging quality improvement programmes through quality camps etc. needs to be continued

The evaluation study done by the Centre for Management Development, Trivandrum observed that mostly younger generation in the age group of less than forty years are actively engaged in coir spinning. This indicates the future prospects of the industry. The women workers are not involved in any other income generating activities and derive their primary income from coir spinning. Mahila Coir Yojana has contributed to enhance the earning and creation of new employment and to enable an improved economic and social status for women. The Centre for Management Development also recommended to increase the stipend/ honorarium from the present level of Rs.500/- and Rs.3,000/- respectively to Rs.1,000/- and Rs.5,000/- respectively in order to attract more women coir artisans for training.

Expenditure during Xth Plan

During the Xth plan period an amount of Rs.18.86 crores was incurred towards implementation of various programmes under this scheme. The year wise break up of expenditure is indicated below.

Year	Expenditure in Rs. crores
2002-2003	1.20
2003-2004	1.71
2004-2005	2.58
2005-2006	10.70
2006-2007	2.67
Total	18.86

Approval of SFC/ EFC required

Approval of the SFC/ EFC is solicited for continuing the "Skill Upgradation and Quality Improvement" Scheme during the XIth plan with all components including the modifications proposed like bringing Anugraha/ Anupam Loom under the purview of the Mahila Coir Yojana Scheme with the overall outlay of Rs.35.00 crores.