Report

Assessment of Working Women Society and the Producers Groups

Oddusuddan DS Division

Prepared by

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Assessment Report of Building sustainable business enterprises for the working women groups in Katchilaimadu, Oddusuddan

ASSESSMENT REPORT

Submitted to

RAHAMA
Vavuniya.

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I. Introduction

01. Organization

Recovery and Humanitarian Action Management Agency (RAHAMA) organized The Recovery and Humanitarian Action Management Agency possessed its formal registration in 2012. RAHAMA initially concentrated on the essential services of recovery and development in the Northern Province. The FORUT Organization endures the needed sources of funding via NORAD considering RAHAMA as one of the partner institutions in Sri Lanka. RAHAMA was established as an agency to follow a changed approach in the provision of assistance for families returning to be resettled in war affected districts in the North. Capability and capacity both to monitor and operate are essential features instead of continuing the attitudes of dependency accommodated in the welfare camps. Thus securing livelihood and to prepare the communities for a durable change in a capacitated transitional process is the focus of RAHAMA.

Recovery and Humanitarian Action Management Agency (RAHAMA) and its constituent communities have endeavored action in consultation with Government on the progression of post conflict development efforts in the North of Sri Lanka. In this context, RAHAMA has developed its Policies on Socio-economic advancement of communities, Human Resource Management, Financial and Resource Management, Housing Policies, Environment policy, Microfinance policy and the policies on partnership on Sustainable Development.

02. Working women society

The working women society (WWS) is a welfare organization was founded by the women groups of the villages. This society is working with a several group of members for business development and earn income through small business holders. It has some branches by the linked groups. The branches work the following activities of the groups.

In these activities and groups working with the women working society at Kachilamadu village and nearby areas.

1. Palmyra fiber products

Sri Lanka is one of the countries that exports palmyra fiber, and brush manufacturers in Sri Lanka use palmyra fiber to make brushes for cleaning and sweeping. Palmyra fiber is a natural fiber that can be used for a variety of applications, including: Non-woven materials, Home textiles, Decorative items, Disposable bags, and Fancy items.

2. Palmyra -pulp, juice and sugar

Palmyrah tree is immensely useful to people and society. People have benefitted from this tree since very ancient days. Palmyrah is mostly grown in the tropical part of Sri Lanka.

The tree yields many types of food. The young plants are cooked as a vegetable or roasted and pounded to make meal. The fruits are eaten roasted or raw, as are the young, jelly-like seeds. A sugary sap, called toddy, can be obtained from the young inflorescence, both male and female, and this is fermented to make a beverage called arrack, or concentrated to produce a crude sugar called jaggery/palm sugar. It is called gula Jawa (Javanese sugar) in Indonesia and is widely used in Javanese cuisine. The roots can be dried to form odiyal, a hard, chewable snack. In addition, the tree sap is taken as a laxative, and medicinal value has been ascribed to other parts of the plant.

3. Handicraft

Collaboration is critical at multiple levels to preserve and sustain traditional arts and crafts. At the individual level, one can learn about cultural heritage, support local artisans by purchasing and encouraging their artworks, and actively engage in cultural workshops and performances.

4. Sales Outlet

Business development officers are employed by companies to develop and execute strategies to increase company sales and profits. Truly effective sales & marketing teams will not only communicate and sell the value of the firm's products to target customers, specifically for the outlet to be sold at lower prices.

5. Agriculture and crop production

Agriculture and crop production are dynamic fields that continually evolve in response to technological advancements, environmental changes, and societal needs. Sustainable practices and innovative solutions are crucial for addressing the challenges faced by the agriculture sector.

6. Hand bag production

The process starts with designing the bag and selecting the appropriate leather for it. The leather is then cut and shaped according to the design using specialized tools and machinery. After the leather is cut, it is stitched together using various stitching techniques to create the bag's structure. Most of Sri Lankan handlooms are made of cotton and silk threads and many are presented as sarees, shawls, sarongs as well as household linen, upholstery, tapestry, and curtain fabrics.

7. NVQ Trainees

NVQ stands for National Vocational Qualification, and is a work-based learning method that takes place at a college, school, or workplace. NVQs are based on national occupational standards, and each level involves a series of on-the-job tasks and activities that assess a learner's ability to perform a job effectively.

8. Garments

Garments refers to ready-made clothing, and is often used interchangeably with the words apparel and clothing. A garment is a piece of clothing, and is a generic term used when the specific type of clothing is not important. Synonyms of garment include clothes, wear, dress, and apparel. Examples of garments include t-shirts, shirts, pants, jackets, boxer pants, and ladies' blouses

II. Purpose of the Assessment Background

Field visits can provide necessary evidence to confirm results reported by Working women society (WWS). They involve an assessment of progress and problems. In this assessment visit is helping for developing the Working Women Society business activity and innovative work.

Doing field trips is the fastest way to understand a working women society company. I would prefer to do it as early as possible in the investment evaluation life cycle, depending on the feasibility to arrange the trip logistic, and how attractive is the company for investment. After making the field trips, my interactions with the management are usually more engaging, my questions are more specific and to the point. In this assessment field visit is need for all the business development society. During the assessment visit helping for that confirming the status of these society and evaluate their activities. The crucial part of the visit is communicated with the beneficiary and observe their interest. And the pre-visit was to be helped for deciding a suitable communication method and also planning the assessment activity for upcoming days.

The assessment work made a task based on strengthen the women producer groups under one umbrella, to revitalizes the company, Create opportunities for young women to undertake small school production and marketing to create surplus income, Capacity development for the women entrepreneurs and Reduction mental health issues.

III. Activities and Observations

Palmyra Fiber production

- ✓ For the separation of palm sheath fiber; machines were used to prevent stinging from the plant while harvesting and collecting the palm sheathes, a sickle was used to cut palm tree stems and to debark the palm sheathes, vat for degumming and to immerse decorticated fiber, weighing machines.

Handicraft

- ✓ It is a traditional main sector of craft making and applies to a wide range of creative and design activities that are related to making things with one's hands and skill.
- ✓ A craft is an activity such as weaving, carving, or pottery that involves making things skillfully with your hands.

Sales outlet

- ✓ It is working under a group formation depending the orders. There is no special team for sales outlet.
- ✓ Due to their production and continues order is affected the sales outlet team.
- ✓ If developed the production and marketing will be forming the sales outlet team.

Farmers

- ✓ This farmer groups are the source of the all the production of palmyra plants. These group of farmers working under the committee of the villages.
- ✓ They collected the palm water and preparing the form of collected water of pathaneer and kallu. During the preparation of collected water of kallu is very easy and effortless process. But, the pathaneer formation is effort process and risk process also affecting the contamination.
- ✓ And also, these farmers collected the leaves of the palm trees for produced the handicrafts. And they collected stem part of the plant was using for the fibre production.

To collect Palm water in the palmyra tree

To preepare Palm water in the collected water

Produce the palmyra fiber in the machinary process

Discussion with the Palm water collecting farmers

Discussion with the grafting workers survey

Palmyra Grafting work products

Discussion with NVQ trainers
Present batch

NVQ training completed -
Garments production - Hanbag production

Discussion with Grafting workers in household visit

Hand bag production

- ✓ The process starts with designing the bag and selecting the appropriate leather for it.
- ✓ The leather is then cut and shaped according to the design using specialized tools and machinery.
- ✓ After the leather is cut, it is stitched together using various stitching techniques to create the bag's structure. Sew the handles to the tote.

Garments

- ✓ The NVQ completed trainee is formed the garments unit in small level. They working the form of groups of completed trainees.
- ✓ They tailoring the dress like a women blouse, skirts and shirts.
- ✓ And also they doing the hand bag production through NVQ training procedure.

NVQ Trainees

- ✓ The selected trainee students for attend the class at Karuppaddamurippu.
- ✓ Totally 23 students selected for these NVQ training and the teacher will organize all the plans.
- ✓ They studying 13 different courses like graft designing, food preparation and decoration.
- ✓ The DS office helping the minimal fund for each selected students for supporting allowance.
- ✓ The students using this amount for transport and purchasing materials for tailoring and grafting.

IV. Findings & SWOT Analysis

For me, field visits are the highlights of my career as an impact investor. Not only that I can learn about the enterprises and their actual challenges on the ground, but more importantly, I can understand the actual perspectives of the people from the communities that the enterprises are engaging with.

a. Strengths

Teamwork in a palmyra business can help improve communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. It can also help build stronger relationships in the business environment.

Group link - A group link or net working is a tool that businesses can use to send information to customers in a WhatsApp group. This can be a useful way to connect with customers and build a loyal customer base.

Palm sources

Palmyra trees abundantly in Northern Sri Lanka, Palmyra based products, are a common site in the Northern region of Sri Lanka. With striking and vivid colors each piece is intricately designed to suit any audience.

Demand high

Sri Lanka's palmyrah industry has seen high demand for its products, including toddy, jaggery, and liquor, both domestically and internationally. In 2021, Sri Lanka exported $0.3 million of palmyrah products, mainly to Canada, France, and the UK. In January 2024, the Minister of Agriculture and Plantation Industries said that palmyrah toddy has seen high demand from Canada, France, and Dubai, and that the industry could provide foreign exchange if developed properly.

Sources

The palmyra palm is a multipurpose tree that can be used to produce a variety of products for consumption and commercial purposes.

All the part of palm tree is using the most of the products preparation.

Motivation

Family support can increase motivation and help entrepreneurs stay focused on their goals. Family and friends can provide encouragement, understanding, and honest opinions. Today's prevalent difficulties include fuel shortages, and services are too expensive. A focus on improving the quality of public and active transport is needed to address difficulties experienced by commuters using these modes of transport.

Craftsmanship

Inherited skills that are passed down through generations.

Raw materials

A variety of raw materials are available, including FSC-certified seasoned rubber wood

Customization

The ability to produce unique, customized products &Talented designers are available

Government support

Government support agencies and lobbying bodies support the sector.

Employment

Traditional crafts villages create employment opportunities, especially in rural areas

Regional specialization

Many products have a regional specialization.

Flexibility

Family members are often willing to take on diverse roles and bigger workloads to help the company succeed.

Strengths of the agriculture market include: Strong government links that provide subsidies, Nationwide presence, and High control over all production process operations.

Physical help

Family members can offer physical help, such as volunteering to help run an event or setting up office space. & Family members can provide business referrals.

Flexible learning

NVQs are flexible, allowing people to learn at their own pace while working.

Practical skills

NVQs are competence-based qualifications that teach practical, work-related skills.

Transferable skills

NVQs can help people develop transferable skills like problem-solving, communication, and teamwork.

Career advancement

NVQs can help people advance their careers.

Access to higher education

After completing a Level 3 NVQ, students can pursue higher education in a related field.

Access to other qualifications

NVQs can be used as a way to access other recognized qualifications.

Training on the job

NVQs are trained and assessed at the employee's normal place of work.

Employment

The industry provides jobs for millions of people worldwide, including designers, artisans, retail workers, and logistics experts

Global supply chain

The fashion industry has a strong influence on the global supply chain because it relies on international trade and raw materials

b. Weakness

The major investment is the weakness of the small group society. And they are difficult to involve the marketing itself due the poverty.

Transport issue - carried from a set of sources to a set of destinations while taking into account the supply and demand of the sources and destinations, respectively, in order to reduce the total cost of transportation.

All are facing gender-based discrimination as a global issue, they need special attention in terms of women's empowerment.

The gender disparity highlighted by these measures can be clearly observed through the evidence at hand.

Concomitantly, low educational opportunities and poor educational achievement lead to low empowerment among women, particularly those who live in remote areas of the country.

Distracted employees

Employees can become distracted by technology, especially personal devices, which can lead to decreased productivity and focus & Businesses that rely heavily on technology may become overly dependent on it, making it difficult to operate without it.

Moreover, women constitute almost half the world's population; hence, women's empowerment is the key factor in achieving the highest levels of desirable development.

c. Opportunities

The grate opportunities for the palmyra graft workers which is the sources are available everywhere and everytime. So, they can do all the time and flexible the timings.

And the palmyra water collected people using the sources of not investment of the trees. More of the trees available in the areas and also plants were viable in that season.

Demand high

The palmyra palm is a multipurpose tree that can be used to produce a variety of products for consumption and commercial purposes.

Sri Lanka's palmyrah industry has seen high demand for its products, including toddy, jaggery, and liquor, both domestically and internationally. In 2021, Sri Lanka exported $0.3 million of palmyrah products, mainly to Canada, France, and the UK. In January 2024, the Minister of Agriculture and Plantation Industries said that palmyrah toddy has seen high demand from Canada, France, and Dubai, and that the industry could provide foreign exchange if developed properly.

NVQ Students have Practical skills

NVQs are competence-based qualifications that teach practical, work-related skills. These skills NVQs can help people develop transferable skills like problem-solving, communication, and teamwork.

NVQs can help people advance their careers. That helps to Access their higher education: After completing a Level 3 NVQ, students can pursue higher education in a related field.

Flexible learning

NVQs are flexible, allowing people to learn at their own pace while working.

Open to all ages: NVQs are open to people of all ages.

Training on the job

NVQs are trained and assessed at the employee's normal place of work.

d. Challenges

Transport issue - carried from a set of sources to a set of destinations while taking into account the supply and demand of the sources and destinations, respectively, in order to reduce the total cost of transportation.

Today's prevalent difficulties include fuel shortages, and services are too expensive. A focus on improving the quality of public and active transport is needed to address difficulties experienced by commuters using these modes of transport.

Marketing

Palmyrah products including beverages in regional markets is low as the supermarkets do not supply those products everywhere in Sri Lanka.

Raw material

The collected raw material would contaminate within the hour without further process. So, the timing and duration was mostly affecting the sugar production.

Finance

Poor income, low profit margins, and limited access to credit

Technology

Lack of adaptation to new technology, and inability to afford it

Competition and marketing

Imported substitutes, and counterfeit industries selling substandard products

High production costs, and use of ancient production technologies

Lack of awareness of export markets that value ethnic products

Craft skills

Discontinuity of craft skills, and low literacy rates among artisans

Climate change

Changes in temperature, rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events can negatively impact crop production.

There's More Financial Commitment. As mentioned, you may have to use your life savings to set up your business or even take on more debt.

There is a lack of employment opportunities and recognition for technical students and lack of money, capital and equipment for self-employment. There is a lack of job opportunities and recognition for technical students and lack of money, capital and equipment for self-employment.

There is an environment that cannot be done continuously while doing small business and doing jobs.

- Difficulty in procreating locally produced products.
- Uneven economic environment and price volatility in the country.
- Not knowing how to balance work and home environment.
- Lack of education
- This can limit women's access to information, knowledge, and decision-making abilities.
- Lack of an entrepreneurial environment

V. Recommendation

Possibilities of re-establishing the Palmyra fiber products

Palmyra which is referred to as tree of life with lots of benefits including food, fiber, beverage, medicinal and timber is a blessing to mankind. Since the beneficial aspects expand from the top (leaves) to bottom (root).

Marketing strategy is considered very important in view of reducing the constraints prevailed at present and increase the quality and competitiveness of the products to attract the customers from local and foreign to ensure the profitability and market expansion in the long run. There can be some targets that can be achieved through implementing a proper marketing strategy.

Promoting and expanding the market for Palmyra based product specifically, jaggery, fiber, pulp, odiyal flour, fruit drink and handicraft items etc. Achieve a production chain with scientific background Obtain maximum profit in Palmyra industries and maintain a stable market.

Increase number of customers for Palmyra products by creating specific products designs for each market segment.

Palmirah food production

Sri Lanka produces many foods from the palmyrah palm tree, including: Panaattu: A treat made from dried and preserved toddy palm fruit pulp

- **Paani panaattu:** A dry preserve made from dried toddy palm fruit pulp and spiced palm jaggery molasses
- **Neera:** A sweet, clear sap extracted from the palmyrah tree's inflorescence
- **Jaggery:** A secondary product of the sap industry
- **Odiyal flour:** A dried tuber flour used in traditional food preparations
- **Pukodiyal flour:** A boiled and dried tuber flour used in traditional food preparations
- **Palmyrah fruit pulp:** Used in many food preparations, including yogurt pacchadis, ice cream toppings, and soda sweeteners.

Possibilities of re-establishing the Handicraft

- Build your own website.
- Explore new and unique selling avenues.
- Use a sales pipeline.
- Don't imitate the marketing of mass-produced products.
- Develop a proper marketing plan.
- Create the brand identity.
- Plan the business finances.
- Purchase supplies and make products.
- Strengthening partnerships

Sales outlet

Social media

A cheap and effective communication channel, especially for fashion businesses. Facebook and Instagram are usually the most efficient platforms. When marketing online, make sure to include attractive titles, descriptions, and high-quality photos of your products.

Email marketing

Send personalized emails to subscribers who have shown interest in your brand. You can use email marketing to share company updates, promotional offers, and valuable content.

Influencer marketing

A popular way to reach a wider audience, influencer marketing involves using endorsements and product mentions from influencers.

Product placement

Can help increase your brand's visibility by placing your products in advertisement and sharing the product description.

Possibilities of re-establishing Agriculture and crop production

Farming and rural communities can form partnerships and mentorship programs to gain agricultural expertise and make informed decisions.

Empowering women and youth - Women and youth can be supported in agriculture through mechanization, access to modern technologies, and incentive systems based on productivity.

Promoting climate resilience - Agriculture systems can become more climate resilient by adopting adaptation and mitigation measures.

Hand bag production

To plan export the product. Need the storage racks for marketing purpose.

Improved the quality of the materials.

Branded products preparation training will be improving the skills.

Content marketing

Create the A strong Instagram presence & Make Facebook Ads Line layout means placing of machines and center table (trolley with wheel) as per style requirement.

The main purpose of choosing a better layout is to reduce transportation time in the line as much as possible.

When a style includes a lot of preparatory work (for garment parts), it is better to make garment parts in sections and assemble them later. If possible, use overhead transportation system.

Established NVQ trainees

NVQs are a 'competence-based' qualification, which means you learn practical, work-related tasks designed to help you develop the skills and knowledge to do a job effectively.

Provide loan and capital assistance to students pursuing technical education to create employment opportunities and encourage self-employment.

General recommendation

Create a Supportive Work Culture

A key step towards cultivating a work culture that values and supports all employees, regardless of gender. This means promoting open communication, collaboration, and empathy, and breaking down traditional barriers that can prevent women from succeeding. Companies can encourage mentorship programs and employee resource groups specifically aimed at women, to create and foster a supportive environment where women can share experiences, seek advice, and develop professionally.

Offer Flexible Work Arrangements

Recognizing the multiple roles many women play – from professionals to caregivers – offering flexible work arrangements can be a game-changer. This could include remote work options, flexible hours, and job-sharing arrangements, which can help women balance their personal and professional responsibilities, enhancing job satisfaction and overall productivity.

Invest in Skill Development Programs

Tailoring leadership development programs for women can help them build the necessary skills and confidence to assume higher roles within the organization. Such programs can include workshops on negotiation, public speaking, and strategic thinking. By nurturing a pipeline of strong female leaders, companies can ensure a more balanced representation at the top.

Encourage Skill Development

Empowering women involves investing in their skill development. Offering access to training and educational opportunities can help women acquire new skills and stay relevant in a constantly evolving job market.

Online courses, workshops, and certifications can contribute to their professional growth and confidence.

Business ideas

Develop a business idea - Make sure your business solves a real problem validate your idea, observe the market, and ensure you are passionate about it

Conduct market research - Understand your target market's needs and wants so you can create a product or service that meets them

Use marketing

Promote your business and reach your target audience through marketing. Social media marketing can help you build relationships, increase brand awareness, and generate leads. Content marketing can help you position your business as an industry leader by creating shareable content

Online business

Can be profitable because it doesn't require the same startup funds as a physical store

Social media management, Online courses, Podcasts, Restaurants, Boutiques, Interior redesigning, Drop-shipping, and Event planning.

Social media management

Managing social media postings across several channels can be a large undertaking. Many businesses don't have a large enough budget to hire someone in-house, so they may hire an outside social media manager to oversee their social profiles for them.

Skill development training

To supporting the skill developed and smart idea sharing training for farmers, graft workers and NVQ trainees. To developed the smart ideas through exposure visits and idea sharing programs.

Supporting the payments for improve the financial development and produced the marketing products.

Mental Health

The mental health related support is based on the affect for the reason in the issue. It is based on the physical and mentally by previous history.

Most of the mental health related to disease was affected in childhood. But, some of the cases of the mental health on recently by the war and physical violence. It is happened on accident or physical changes. So, all the affected persons need a counselling by experience psychiatrist of physician.

VI. Conclusion

- Women's empowerment and the promotion of gender equality are essential for the development of a just and equitable society.
- It ensures gender equality, fosters economic growth, promotes education, safeguards health, and enhances political participation. Achieving this empowerment requires strategies like education, economic opportunities, legal reforms, healthcare access, and gender sensitization.
- Empowering women is essential to the health and social development of families, communities and countries. When women are living safe, fulfilled and productive lives, they can reach their full potential. contributing their skills to the workforce and can raise happier and healthier children.
- Better society -Women's empowerment helps to make the society and world a better place to live in and march forward on way to inclusive participation.
- Gender equality - Women's empowerment ensures gender equality, fosters economic growth, promotes education, safeguards health, and enhances political participation.
- Improved outcomes - Women's empowerment leads to improved health outcomes, increased economic growth, and poverty reduction.
- Self-reliance - The women empowerment mission encourages women to be self-reliant.
- Life-determining decisions - Women's empowerment equips and allows women to make life-determining decisions through the different societal problems.