

Potential of Organising Self-reliant Siali leaf Cooperatives in Ranpur area of Nayagarh District, Orissa

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This paper is based on the experiences of Vasundhara gained from its field area Ranpur in the process of promoting Siali leaf enterprising activity with Siali leaf pluckers. The numerical figures provided in the paper are based on the information collected from five villages of Ranpur. The paper basically focuses on the cost and viability analysis of leaf plate making and at the end of the paper we have made suggestions relating to alternative collectivisation process of trading i.e. Co-operative.

About the area

Ranpur is a block under Nayagarh district of Orissa located 75 kms from the State's capital Bhubaneswar. The block constitutes 8.66% of the geographical area of the district and 17.39% of the total population of the district. The total geographical area of the block is 367.60 sq. kms out of which 131.23 Sq Km is forestland and 153.7 sq. Kms is agricultural land. According to the 1991 census survey the total population of the block was 1,34,141, out of which Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe population were 11,792 and 7,764 respectively.

Ranpur block comprises of 30-Gram Panchayats, which increased from 26 after the reconstitution of Gram Panchayats held recently before the three-tier Panchayat election in the month of February 2002.

Livelihood options

In Ranpur block about 40% of the total households belong to the landless class and a major chunk of the cultivatable lands is possessed by a small percentage (only 23%) of well-off people. In case of SC and ST communities more than 70% are landless and the rest 30% belongs to marginal & small farmer categories. The average land holding range between 0.5 -1 acre.

Agriculture in the area is subsistence and rain fed. Since a last couple of years there has been high fluctuation in the agricultural output due to frequent droughts. In addition inadequate irrigation facilities, low market price of paddy etc, these factors together have a bearing on the poor marginal farmers increasing their vulnerability. Migration in search of employment is on an increasing trend affecting the women, the children and the aged the most particularly from the marginalized sections. In such situations Forest Produce and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) in particular has all along been a vital source of subsistence and livelihood for them. It may further be noted that the collection of NTFPs acquires special importance as most of them generate income and food for the poor households in the leanest season.

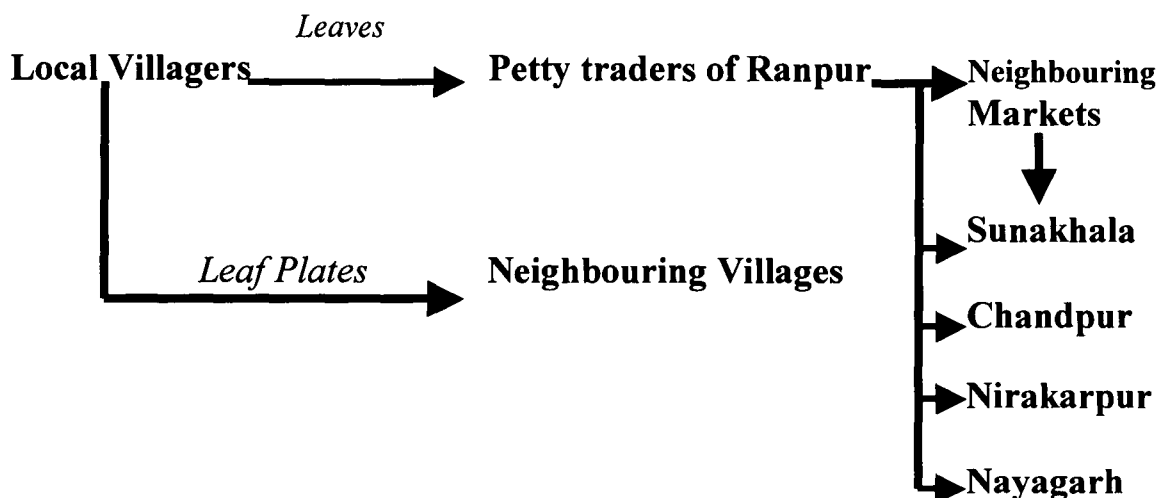
Siali leaves an important source of livelihood: Collection and Marketing

The forests in Ranpur area have abundance of Bamboo, Kendu leaves and Siali leaves. Out of these three forest products dependence of marginalized sections on Siali leaves is comparatively

higher than the other two forest products. Generally women of ST and SC communities are involved in the collection of leaves. The collection period stretches for a period of nine months in a year and during the remaining three months no collection takes place. Again, variation can be observed in the quantity of collection by the pluckers with seasonal variation. Like the collection period can broadly be divided into two phases that are, (i) peak period i.e. during July – January(mid) when leaves are available in good quantity as well as of good quality and (ii) lean period i.e. during January (mid) - March (mid) when the availability of leaves decreases by more than half. On an average during the peak period collection per day (spending about 5.5 hrs) per person is 1000 leaves, during lean period the collection reduces to only 400 leaves putting in the same amount of labour in a day.

A common practice is that leaves are sold in unprocessed form by the primary collectors to the petty traders of Ranpur. These traders engage their family members for making leafplates. In some villages people make leaf plates during religious functions and marriages. However, their numbers are very few and plates are made only when there is demand from the outside villages.

Existing trade practices



Problems/Constraints faced by the collectors

Siali leaves is an important livelihood source for the people particularly the women from marginalized sections and economically backward households in the area. This activity involves tremendous strain on the part of women but unfortunately the return is very low. The collectors are often underpaid. Due to lack of an assured market for leaf plates the collectors are compelled to sell unprocessed leaves at low price. Even the local traders force the collectors to sell unprocessed leaves to them so that they can take up the processing and prepare leaf plates by engaging their family members to make profit.

2. Possible Business Activities with potential of Co-operativisation

Area of Operation	5 Villages Total no. of Collectors - 81
Items of production/collection and sale	Siali Leaves
Present volume of business	<i>In 5 villages per year</i> Peak Period: 11340000 leaves Lean period: 777600 leaves Total: 12117600 leaves <i>Per women per year</i> 149600 leaves
Seasonality of Production and Trade	<i>Peak Period: July – Mid of Jan</i> <i>(20 days of involvement in a month)</i> Avg. collection is 1000 leaves/person/day <i>Lean Period: Mid of Jan – Mid of March</i> (12 days of involvement in a month) Avg. collection is 400 leaves/person/day <i>Mid of March– Mid of June</i> No collection
Present trade practices	(i) Primarily collection and sale of unprocessed leaves (ii) Processing and stitching of leaf plates manually only during local festivals and marriages (2 villages)
Important traders/business people in the area	(i) Petty traders of Ranpur purchase unprocessed leaves (ii) Leaf plates are purchased by the local people of the surrounding villages
Price received during the last trading season	(i) Rs. 4.00 per 320 leaves (ii) Rs. 12.00 per 100 leaf plates
Average Income of a Collector	<i>Process 1: Sale of unprocessed leaves</i> Rs. 1870.00/women/year <i>Process 2: Assuming that 60% of total collection of leaves is sold unprocessed and 40% is sold by making leaf plates</i> <u>Leaves</u> – Rs. 1122/collector/year <u>Leaf plates</u> (hand-stitched) – Rs. 1306 / collector / year Total – Rs. 2428.00/women/year
Average Income of the Villages	Rs. 168768.00/year

Table 1: Enhancement in Income by Value addition (Manually)

Period	Avg. Collection/day (Leaves)	Unprocessed Leaves		Leaf Plates (Hand stitched)		Additional Income (in Rs.)	Extra time (in hrs)
		Avg. Income/day	Time (in hrs)	Avg. Income/day	Time (in hrs)		
July – Mid of Jan	1000	Rs. 12.50	6.5	Rs. 21.74	11	9.24	4.5
Mid of Jan – Mid of March	400	Rs. 5.00	6	Rs. 8.73	8	3.73	2

Table 2: Cost analysis of Hand-stitched leaf plate

Materials	Cost per plate (in paise)
Leaves	7
Labour	19
Total	26
<i>Selling price per plate: 12 paise</i>	

Table 3: Cost analysis of Machine stitched leaf plates (18" size)

Materials	Cost per plate (in paise)
Leaves	6
Thread	3.5
Labour	10
Total	19.5
<i>Selling price per plate: 20 paise</i>	

Table 4: Cost analysis of Ordinary Pressed leaf plates (14" size)

Materials	Cost per plate (in paise)
Machine stitched-plate	20
Paper	10
Polythene	2
Labour	10
Electricity	05
Total	47
<i>Selling price per plate: 55 paise</i>	

Table 5: Cost analysis of Special Pressed leaf plates (11.5" size)

Materials	Cost per plate (in paise)
Machine stitched-plate	18
Paper (mill-board)	95
Polythene	2
Labour	10
Electricity	05
Total	130
<i>Selling price per plate: 145 paise</i>	

Table 6: Enhancement in Income of a Collector at different levels of Processing

Period	Avg. Collection/ day	Unprocessed		Hand stitched leaf plates		Machine stitched leaf plates		Ordinary pressed leaf plates		Special pressed leaf plates	
		Avg. Gross Income/ day	Time	Avg. Gross Income/ day	Time	*Avg. Gross Income/ day	Time	*Avg. Gross Income/ day	Time	*Avg. Gross Income/ day	Time
	(Leaves)	(in Rs.)	(in hrs)	(in Rs.)	(in hrs)	(in Rs.)	(in hrs)	(in Rs.)	(in hrs)	(in Rs.)	(in hrs)
July – Mid of Jan	1000	12.50	6.5	21.74	11	44.40	9	61.05	11	207.35	12.5
Mid of Jan – Mid of March	400	5.00	6	8.74	8	17.76	7	24.42	8	82.94	8.5

* Includes the cost of raw materials such as leaves, thread, electricity, polythene, labour etc.

3. Formation of Primary Cooperatives

Our present activities relating to collectivization of trade is in an incipient stage. However, we are working towards formation of cooperative by taking into account the scope existing at Ranpur. In the same place opportunity exists for promoting cooperatives on other NTFPs like Bamboo and Kendu leaves.

4. Co-operative Leadership

In the process we have succeeded in identifying natural leaders who are able to articulate the need of the community and convince others the benefit of collectivization process. However, it requires more efforts to create better understanding of the concept of cooperative, business principles and related things.

5. Involvement of Members

The members of this collectivisation process are women from marginalized sections of the society and are involved in collection and sale of Siali leaves. They are basically forest dependent group. The future cooperatives will have members with common interest and common socio-economic background.

6. Need of Co-operativisation

- Value addition through processing
- Collective trading
- Employment generation
- Enhancement in their income and higher gain.