

Skill Development for Sustainable Livelihoods: Examining DAY-NRLM's Contributions to Rural India

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Abstract: Skill development is a cornerstone of rural development, enabling sustainable livelihoods and poverty alleviation (Matiwane & Matiwane, 2023). The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana—National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) is a flagship initiative by the Government of India that aims to empower rural communities, especially women, through skill enhancement and self-employment opportunities. (Rana & Bhardwaj, 2020). This study examines DAY-NRLM's contributions to skill development and its impact on fostering sustainable livelihoods in rural India. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research evaluates how DAY-NRLM facilitates capacity-building through self-help groups (SHGs), vocational training, and financial literacy programs. Empirical evidence from field studies in the Sagar District highlights income levels, employment, and socio-economic mobility improvements among rural households. The research establishes that the DAY-NRLM has greatly empowered women and other members of rural communities through skills development and the formation of SHGs. These findings support the integration of DAY-NRLM interventions in the development of Sagar District, as they greatly increase the socioeconomic well-being of rural households through the promotion of sustainable livelihoods, increased household economic mobilization, and gender equity.

Keywords: DAY-NRLM, Rural Development, Skill Development, Sustainable Livelihoods, Women Empowerment.

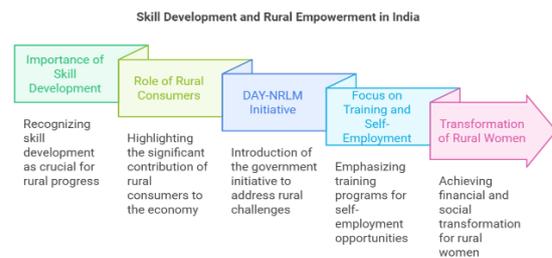
INTRODUCTION

Skill development is one of the most important agendas in initiating rural development since it increases the chances of poverty eradication and sustainable livelihood. (Ramya et al., 2023). When a country like India is being considered where rural consumers contribute significantly to the overall consumers, equipping people with the skills helpful in the development process becomes vital for economic and socio-economic development. (Soti, 2023) The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana—National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) appears to

be the Government of India's flagship initiative to respond to these challenges. (Chatterjee, 2016). Hence, considering the training for skill development and self-employment, this mission helps the backward rural women to come out of their state, and transform their lives financially as well as socially. (Tiwari, 2022).

The following Figure 1 shows the Skill Development and Rural Empowerment in India:

Figure 1



The present paper focuses on skill development supported by the DAY-NRLM and potential advancements that can be made to promote sustainable livelihoods in rural India. Thus, through applying the micro-finance model of using SHGs, vocational training, and financial education, the mission aims to empower rural communities to be productive under conditions of changing economic environments. Using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods, the study evaluates the impact of these interventions, especially in the Sagar District of Madhya Pradesh. The mission therefore provides a synthesis of field research findings that show how it impacts on income generation, entrepreneurship, and the socioeconomic status of rural households. Moreover, the study establishes the relationship between DAY-NRLM projects and SDGs in terms of issues such as gender, markets, and infrastructure.

Through revealing the possible impact-transforming' capacity of skill development intervention endorsed by DAY-NRLM, this paper has attempted to

illuminate the broader significance of the program in terms of rural resilience and poverty eradication. Moreover, it reveals the main directions for enhancement and suggests the policy recommendations on how to expand the program and embrace the novel technologies. Lastly, the study reminds us of the use of integrated and people-centred approaches toward realizing sustainable income and improving the quality of life among rural inhabitants of India.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana—National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) is a historic program in the strategic endeavor of mainstreaming sustainable rural livelihoods with a focus on rural women (Tiwari, 2022). The mission focuses on human resources, financial services and market access, innovation, and institution-building for poverty reduction (Chatterjee, 2016). A literature review showed that many scholars have studied DAY-NRLM and its effect on different aspects of rural development, skill development, and socio-economic mobility. The following section outlines a literature review of prior research articles relating to the identified key themes corresponding to the mission's objectives and impacts.

Enculturation supports skill development which remains an essential key to the attainment of sustainable livelihoods for people in rural settings (Hadi Kurniyawan et al., 2023). Promoting vocational training education, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship development (Cossa et al., 2018), Sinha and Sriram (2019) argue that, and skill development programs under DAY-NRLM empower rural individuals to generate multiple streams of income and be protected from bouts of economic vulnerabilities (Nichols, 2021). These programs generally employ an intervention technique to develop and implement Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for relevancy in each context (Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022).

Chatterjee et al. (2020) stress the importance of the skill development initiative to improve employment and economic returns of rural women. The programs under DAY-NRLM promoted vocational training on which they observed that women's self-employment and decision-making abilities influenced their strategies (R & Shankar, 2024). However, the researchers observed differences in access to the

training facilities indicating that there is needed enhance infrastructural development in the training sectors in remote areas. Sharma & Gupta (2021) described how does capacity building interventions enhance the performance of SHGs. According to them, their studies showed that practical training in leadership, book keeping and financial management increases SHG efficacy and profitability. They also added that, in order to maintain these gains, there is need for constant supervision and evaluation and feedback processes.

Gender equality is at the core of DAY-NRLM's interventions, and women's self-help groups are also core of DAY-NRLM efforts. According to Kabeer (2016), SHGs empower women because they offer women an opportunity to cultivate leadership, be involved in decision-making processes, and be economically empowered. These outcomes are relevant to sociocultural transformation, where gender inequality norms are shifted and women are empowered.

In the case of West Bengal, Das and Bhowmik (2020) examined the effect of the DAY-NRLM on women's empowerment. Their experience thus showed that credit from SHGs enhanced women's assertiveness, mobility, and decision-making power on financial matters in those households. The researchers also stressed the mission in which women form supportive networks to tackle social issues together.

Similarly, Panda et al. (2018) assessed the mission's outputs in terms of social inclusion especially for disadvantaged groups like the Scheduled Castes & Tribes. From their study, they were able to conclude that the participatory approach adopted by DAY-NRLM leads to increased participation by the targeted vulnerable groups in the SHG activities. Yet, the authors also discovered a status quo in the distribution of resources and decision-making power which requires equalization.

DAY-NRLM primarily seeks to ensure a living through micro-enterprise trade, traditional and new handicrafts, and agricultural practices. The singular focus of the mission is on livelihood diversification which has helped rural households to mitigate the effects of shock as far as the economy is concerned as asserted by Singh et al. (2019). Their research for example observed that respondents who reported being involved in more than one form of income-

generating activities included in the SHGs were more financially secure and less vulnerable during shocks.

Bose and Roy (2020) analyzed to what extent the mission helps to protect traditional crafts and specific artisans' skills. They found out that the capacity-building programmes and market linkages supported by DAY-NRLM restored traditional crafts and created long-term income earning opportunities among the artisans. But the researchers called for more funding to be devoted to marketing and branding in order to increase the competitiveness of these products in the national and global markets. According to Mehta and Sharma (2021), the study analyzed the potential of DAY-NRLM in the elimination of rural poverty. These experts revealed that by the mission's impact, there was a decrease in poverty levels among the participating households by 25 percent within five years of the study period. The authors gave this credit to rise in income, effective utilization of social services available, and increased the both end, cumulatively due to SHGs.

DAY-NRLM's goals are highly related to several of the sustainable development goals such as; gender equality (target 5), decent work and economic growth (target 8), and zero hunger (target 1). Kumar and Verma (2020) identified that the mission works on the multidimensional strategic framework of sustainable development covering economic, social, and environmental. In their paper, Coombe et al. identified the mission's benefits in areas of improving rural physical facilities, encouraging use of clean power, and supporting a top-down approach to development. Jha et al. (2019) focused on the mission's contribution to the tenets of SDG 8, which concerns decent work and entrepreneurship. As a result, the authors noted that through the Vocational Training and Financial Literacy components of DAY-NRLM, the participants were empowered to start micro-enterprises that in turn employed within the villages. But the researchers found some drawbacks in the assessed issue such as the issues of market access and enterprise growth which made it difficult for the enterprise to expand.

Singh and Rathore (2021) assessed the mission's impact on the environment. Under DAY-NRLM, their work focused on the sensitization of sustainable agriculture and renewable energy practices. The researchers further posited that such efforts not only focused on environmental stability but also reinvented efficiency in minimizing the expenses

incurred by most rural households, thus restoring their quality lives.

However, some difficulties negatively affect the functioning of DAY-NRLM and does not let it become even better: The authors Rao and Iyer stress that there are various challenges that hinder their mission: lack of infrastructures, few linkages with the markets, and too many bureaucratic barriers. To overcome these challenges, the researchers recommended a decentralization of control, so that local communities will be more involved in decision-making processes and in the use of the resources.

Nair and Thomas (2020) noted that DAY-NRLM has to ensure the use of technologies in the implementation of the programs. Their study suggested the key areas to be digital skills for training and for conducting and accessing financial markets for efficiency and coverage. Further, to the current study, the researchers also stressed the importance of the interventions that focused on the enhancement of ICT literacy in rural communities. Agarwal and Mishra (2019) examined the critical area of involvement of public-private partnerships (PPP) in expanding the outreach of DAY-NRLM. For this, they claimed that partnership with private sector organizations would enable one to get technical assistance, funds, and market connections. The researchers also advised the adoption of incentives based on achieved performance to monitor and keep the initiatives sustainable.

The extant research highlights the capability of DAY-NRLM to change the scenario in terms of skills, money, and livelihood in rural sectors of India. As with any feat, there are still issues that clients face concerning infrastructure and access to markets, as well as the scalability of the technology. It is prudent that future researchers should endeavor to fill such gaps by adopting new strategies and adopting inclusive policies on them. There is a great potential for DAY-NRLM to build upon its achievements and increase its impact, especially in the areas of rural development and poverty reduction through greater application of technologies, development of public-private partnerships, and through promotion of effective and efficient use of resources.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the position of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and their contribution to women's rights and economic uplift through DAY-NRLM.

2. To assess the effect of skill development programs under DAY-NRLM on sustainable livelihood in rural India.

employing a stratified random sampling technique, from the SHG Members, spread across the Sagar District of MP.

The hypothesis of the Study:

H₀₁: There is no significant role of SHGs under DAY-NRLM in the promotion of women's rights and economic uplifts.

H₀₂: There is no significant effect of skill development programs under DAY-NRLM in improving sustainable livelihoods in India.

The survey data are augmented with published data available from the government NRLM website. The quantitative part is analyzed using inferential procedures including a Paired T-test to test the hypotheses while the qualitative part analyzed by thematic analysis to complement quantitative results. Issues of sample selection and administration of informed consent, data privacy, and voluntary sampling are principles that are respected at all times.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study is a systematic research method aimed at realizing the research objectives and testing the hypothesis. Hence, the study employs a descriptive and analytical research design to demonstrate the roles of SHGs in women's empowerment and the effects of skill development programs on rural livelihoods under DAY-NRLM. Based on a 400-respondent sample, selected by

Empirical findings:

Objective-wise Explanation of the findings:

Objective 1

To study the position of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and their contribution to women's rights and economic uplift through DAY-NRLM.

Table 1: Role of SHG in women's rights and economic uplift through DAY-NRLM

Indicators	Percentage of Respondents	Interpretation
Increase in self-confidence	76%	The majority of women feel that their self-confidence increased after joining SHG under DAY-NRLM
Improve decision-making ability	71%	The power to make decision improved in most of the women's
Contribution to households' income	68%	More than two-thirds of respondent's women gained financial independence
Awareness of rights	54%	Over half of the respondents become more aware of their rights.

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 above shows the respondent's results. The evidence iterates exactly how these SHGs enhance woman's power in each nook and corner of their lives especially concerning self-confidence and financial

calories. The indicators together disclose changes in social and economic status. The test of significance is shown in following table 2.

Table 2: Paired t-test

Indicators	Mean (Pre SHG)	Mean (Post SHG)	Mean Difference	T Value	P Vslue	Significance
Increase in self-confidence	3.21	3.72	0.52	-6.243	0.00	Significant
Improve decision-making ability	3.15	3.76	0.61	-7.521	0.00	Significant
Contribution to households' income	2.89	3.68	0.79	-10.170	0.00	Significant
Awareness of rights	3.02	4.0	0.98	-1.917	0.056	Not Significant

Sources: SPSS Output

Indicators: Increase in self-confidence, improved decision-making ability, Contribution to households' income, and Awareness of rights were selected to capture empowerment.

Mean Scores: For ratings, pre-and post-SHG participation questionnaires were developed on a Likert scale (1 being Very low and 5 being Very high). For instance, the self-confidence mean score increased to 3.21 pre-SHG and 3.72 post-SHG. Same for the other indicators as shown in the above table except for the Awareness of rights, which is not significantly positive.

t-value and p-value:

The t-test analysis shows that all the figures except for the "awareness of right" are statistically significant as the p-values, < 0.05, and the null hypothesis H01 is rejected.

H₁₁: There is a significant role of SHGs under DAY-NRLM in the promotion of women's rights and economic uplifts.

Mean differences highlight that all the empowerment indicators have improved post-SHG participation, at least as measured on intervals. The t-test consequently shows that the establishment of DAY-NRLM has facilitated the enhancement of improved SHG participation in empowering women in the way of increased self-confidence, decision-making capacity, and financial contribution to family but for the "Awareness rights" not significantly empowered.

Applying the hypothesis testing about the impact of skill development programmes under DAY-NRLM it was found that there is a Positive impact in terms of sustainable livelihood outcomes in India in terms of Employability, Income Diversification and Income Level. Such results point towards the utility of skill development interventions in promoting economic self-employability among the participants.

Objective 2

To assess the effect of skill development programs under DAY-NRLM on sustainable livelihood in rural India.

Table 3: Impact of Skill Development Programmes under DAY- NRLM on Sustainable Livelihoods

Indicators	Percentages of respondents	Interpretation
Enhanced Employability	72%	The majority of the respondents gained skills that increase job opportunities
Income diversification	63%	A significant number of respondents diversified their incomes
Increase households' income	67%	Over two-thirds of respondents contributes to their family income

Source: Primary Data

Indicators: Enhanced Employability, Income diversification, and Increased household income are the indicators selected to assess the effect of skill development programs under DAY-NRLM on sustainable livelihood in rural India.

Mean Scores (Table 4): The mean income diversification with the program was higher than the pre-program level of 3.69 as against the initial level of 3.00 depicting positive change.

Table 4: Paired T-test

Indicators	Mean (Pre SHG)	Mean (Post SHG)	Mean Difference	T Value	P Value	Significance
Enhanced Employability	3.12	3.76	0.64	-7.684	0.00	Significant
Income diversification	3.00	3.69	0.69	-8.694	0.00	Significant
Increase household income	3.07	3.72	0.65	-7.705	0.00	Significant

Source: SPSS Output

In terms of other indicators of income, employment status, and productivity also received a boost after having participated in one or the other skill development programs offered in India.

t-test analysis reveals statistically significant P < 0.05 levels for all indicators under study.

Based on the results achieved, it is possible to reject the H02 null hypothesis, which would show that skill

development programs have beneficial effects on the livelihoods of people in rural areas.

H₁₂: There is a significant effect of skill development programs under DAY-NRLM in improving sustainable livelihoods in India.

The outcomes of the t-test test produced considerable evidence that demonstrates the improvement of rural livelihoods due to skill development programs under DAY-NRLM. As for income diversification, employability enhancement, and increase in household income improvement show that the program enhances the economic and social status of rural people. These research results are consistent with the objectives of the program as it aims to foster the promotion of sustainable income generation operations within the rural regions of India.

CONCLUSION

The paper indicates that Self Help Groups (SHGs) affiliated with the DAY-NRLM allow significant advancement of women's rights and their economic status. It, therefore, emerges that self-confidence, decision-making capacity and household income improved after exposure to SHG. Knowledge of rights also saw a slight increase from pre-SHG to post-SHG. The gain in employability also improved considerably revealing the importance of skills in the SHG interventions. Income diversification also appeared less specialized, with mean scores increasing from pre to post-SHG. Finally, a rise in household income was observed for the three groups whereby the mean scores changed from pre-SHG to post-SHG. These findings are an implication of SHGs to the economic empowerment of women as well as the strengthening of women's rights.

The research outcomes also show that the DAY-NRLM promotes a capacity-building approach through SHGs strengthens women's self-confidence, and decision-making potency and improves household earnings. These outcomes are very similar to sustainable development goals (SDGs), which focus on important aspects like poverty, gender, and the economy.

Skill development interventions introduced through vocational training and financial literacy under DAY-NRLM have beneficial ties, particularly forming small income-generating activities and encouraging self-employment in rural women. But constraints like infrastructure, poor market access, and technology were also pegged as elements that inhibited the

scalability of the program and overall efficiency. Improving these through public-private partnerships, usage of modern technology to help the missions, and better policies that can support this mission will further make it stronger.

Hence this research calls for the adoption of a paradigm that seeks to address economic, social, and environmental aspects of rural development. The implications of this study are as follows: There is a constant need for the evaluation of the mission strategies, and modification in their implementation practices to achieve sustainable inclusiveness in rural India. Considering such programmatic interventions and partnerships, DAY-NRLM holds the prospect of modelling change as well as making a tangible powerful contribution to the formation of rural India.

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