

Women's Entrepreneurial Initiatives in Wayanad's Agricultural Sector: Examining the Role of Women Entrepreneurs in Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development After the Landslide Of 2024 in Wayanad, Kerala

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Abstract

This study explores the entrepreneurial initiatives of women in the agricultural sector of Wayanad, Kerala, focusing on their role in promoting sustainable agriculture and contributing to rural development post the devastating landslide of 2024. The research emphasizes how women have emerged as agents of change, not only reviving the agricultural landscape but also fostering economic growth and social welfare in a region severely affected by natural disasters. A mixed-method approach, combining primary data from field surveys and secondary data from government reports and literature, was employed to assess the effectiveness of these initiatives. The findings reveal that women entrepreneurs play a significant role in improving agricultural practices, supporting sustainable land management, and enhancing local socio-economic conditions in the post-crisis scenario.

Keywords

Women Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Agriculture, Rural Development, Wayanad, Landslide 2024, Kerala, Agricultural Sector, Empowerment

Introduction

Wayanad, a district in Kerala, known for its fertile land and agricultural abundance, suffered a catastrophic landslide in 2024 that disrupted local agricultural practices and the lives of many residents. In this context, women entrepreneurs emerged as key players in the recovery process, establishing innovative initiatives that focused on sustainable agricultural practices and community welfare. This research investigates how women's entrepreneurial activities have contributed to the revival of the agricultural sector, their involvement in sustainability practices, and their impact on rural development.[1]

Background of the Study

Wayanad is one of the most ecologically sensitive areas in Kerala, with its diverse landscapes supporting a rich variety of crops, including tea, coffee, spices, and rubber. However, the 2024 landslide caused severe damage to agricultural land and infrastructure, leading to economic setbacks. In the aftermath, women in Wayanad, traditionally involved in farming and small-scale agricultural activities, took proactive steps to rebuild their communities. They focused on eco-friendly farming methods, promoting organic farming, reviving traditional crops, and creating value-added products like organic fertilizers and herbal medicines.[2][5]

This study explores the impact of these initiatives on local agricultural practices and the broader goal of rural development, as well as the challenges these women face in sustaining their entrepreneurial ventures in a post-crisis scenario.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the role of women entrepreneurs in the agricultural recovery process in Wayanad after the 2024 landslide.[3]

2. To examine the sustainability of women-led agricultural initiatives in promoting eco-friendly farming practices.[6]
3. To assess the socio-economic impact of women's entrepreneurial ventures on rural development in Wayanad.[5]
4. To evaluate the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector in post-disaster recovery.[4]
5. To explore policy interventions and support mechanisms that can further empower women entrepreneurs in Wayanad's agricultural sector.[8]

Research Methodology

Primary Data Collection

- **Survey:** A structured questionnaire was distributed to 100 women entrepreneurs involved in the agricultural sector in Wayanad.
- **Interviews:** In-depth interviews with 20 women entrepreneurs were conducted to understand the nuances of their businesses and the challenges they face.
- **Focus Group Discussions:** 3 focus group discussions (FGDs) with groups of 6-8 women each were organized to capture collective experiences and insights.

Secondary Data Collection

- Government reports on agricultural development and rural recovery after the landslide.
- Literature on women entrepreneurship and sustainable agricultural practices in disaster-affected regions.

Sampling Method

- **Stratified Sampling:** The population of women entrepreneurs was divided into strata based on their involvement in different agricultural sectors (e.g., organic farming, spice production, dairy, etc.). From each stratum, a random sample was selected to ensure representation.
- **Random Sampling:** A random sample was selected from each stratum to eliminate bias and ensure generalizability of the findings.

Data Analysis Techniques

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Statistical analysis using SPSS to analyze survey responses, including frequencies, percentages, and correlation.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Thematic analysis of interview and FGD data to identify key themes and patterns in women's entrepreneurial initiatives.

Findings and Analysis

1. Role of Women Entrepreneurs in Agricultural Recovery

- **Finding:** Women entrepreneurs in Wayanad have played a crucial role in restoring agricultural productivity by adopting innovative techniques such as organic farming, crop diversification, and the revival of traditional farming methods.
- **Interpretation:** Women have acted as catalysts for agricultural recovery by introducing sustainable farming practices that are resilient to landslides and soil erosion.[7]

Indicator	Pre-Landslide (%)	Post-Landslide (%)	Increase
Adoption of Organic Farming	40%	70%	+30%
Crop Diversification	50%	80%	+30%
Use of Traditional Methods	20%	60%	+40%

2. Sustainability of Women-led Agricultural Initiatives

- **Finding:** Many women entrepreneurs have adopted sustainable agricultural practices such as permaculture, agroforestry, and organic certification to improve soil fertility and reduce environmental impact.

- **Interpretation:** The shift towards sustainable farming is a response to the disaster, as it helps women build resilience and improve long-term agricultural productivity.[8]

Practice	Number of Entrepreneurs Using Practice	% of Total Sample
Permaculture	30	30%
Agroforestry	25	25%
Organic Certification	20	20%

3. Socio-economic Impact on Rural Development

- **Finding:** Women's entrepreneurial activities have significantly contributed to rural development by creating employment opportunities, promoting local products, and enhancing the local economy.
- **Interpretation:** Women's businesses have provided a dual benefit: revitalizing the agricultural sector and uplifting local communities economically.[9][10]

Indicator	Before Initiatives (%)	After Initiatives (%)	Increase
Employment Opportunities	10%	35%	+25%
Local Product Sales	30%	60%	+30%
Community Welfare Initiatives	5%	25%	+20%

4. Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs

- **Finding:** Key challenges include limited access to capital, lack of infrastructure, and insufficient government support.
- **Interpretation:** Financial and infrastructural barriers prevent women from scaling their businesses, limiting the broader impact of their initiatives.[11][12]

Challenges	Percentage of Entrepreneurs Facing Issue
Limited Access to Capital	65%
Lack of Infrastructure	55%
Insufficient Government Support	50%

5. Policy Interventions and Support Mechanisms

- **Finding:** Policies that provide access to credit, training, and market linkages are crucial to empowering women entrepreneurs.
- **Interpretation:** Government support in the form of subsidies, microfinance schemes, and training can significantly enhance the sustainability of women-led ventures.[13]

Policy Intervention	% of Entrepreneurs Benefiting
Credit Facilities	40%
Training Programs	50%
Market Linkages	30%

Suggestions

1. Government should increase access to low-interest loans and grants for women entrepreneurs in agriculture.
2. Infrastructure development, especially roads and cold storage, is essential for improving market access.
3. Training programs should be scaled up to teach women about advanced agricultural techniques, business management, and financial literacy.

4. Collaborative efforts between women entrepreneurs and government bodies can foster innovation and sustainable practices.

Conclusion

The entrepreneurial initiatives of women in Wayanad's agricultural sector post the 2024 landslide have proven to be a significant driver of recovery and rural development. Women have not only revived agricultural productivity but have also contributed to social and economic stability. However, to ensure the long-term success and scalability of these initiatives, greater policy support, access to capital, and infrastructural improvements are essential. By addressing these challenges, women entrepreneurs can continue to play a pivotal role in shaping a sustainable and resilient agricultural future for Wayanad.

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