GENDER SENSITISATION IN COOPERATIVES
(A case of a Cooperative Dairy)

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History of the Organisation

Kolhapur Zilla Sahakari Dudh Utpadak Sangh Ltd.(Gokul Dairy), is a cooperative dairy set up on 16th March, 1963. Fifteen years later in 1978, the National Dairy Development Board included "Gokul" under its food programme operations. This triggered the commissioning of a full fledged dairy plant at Gokul Shirgaon, Kolhapur in 1985 and subsequently four chilling centres at Tawarewadi, Gogave, Gadhinglaj and Bidri. The installed capacity of the main dairy plant and the chilling centers is given in the box below

Milk Handling Capacities:

	Lakh Liters.
Main Dairy Plant at Kolhapur	7.00
Chilling Center at Linganur	1.25
Chilling Center at Boravade	1.00
Chilling Center at Tavarewadi	1.00
Chilling Center at Gogave	0.50

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At present, Gokul is procuring about 6 lakh litres of milk per day, from about 5 lakh 40 thousand men and women milk producers in the district.

Area of operation	Kolhapur District
No. of Societies Supplying Milk	3,452
No. of Member Societies	3,011
No. of Villages in the District	1,230
No. of Villages Covered	1190
No. of Farmer Members	5.40 lakhs.

Objectives

1. Its primary objective is development of infrastructure for the **procurement of milk** in rural areas, to ensure an assured **market** for milk producers at the best **remunerative prices** throughout the year.
2. To provide **quality milk and milk products** to fulfill the growing needs the consumers in Maharashtra at affordable prices.
3. To **organize the co-operative dairy societies** of milk producers at the village level.
4. To supplement the **programme extension** and inputs, with particular reference to feed and fodder production and implement an intensive breeding programme for milch animals whereby milk production can be increased.

5. Imparting training for developing human resource at rural level for effective leadership, management skills and improvement of services to rural milk producers.

Gokul's Key Strength –

a) Milk Procurement

Gokul has always set a landmark and exemplary standards for milk procurement for Quality.

Consider the year 1985, when the average milk procurement was 1.15 lac ltrs. per day with 676 village level societies affiliated to the Dudhsangh. Since then, the figure has shot up year after year. In 2000, the average and peak procurement was 4.50 and 5.27 lac ltrs. per day respectively. Presently it is 5.40 lac ltrs. per day. Figures show an astonishing 3% raise in milk procurement as compared to last year.

It is really commendable as the rated capacity of the dairy is only 7.0 lakh ltrs. per day. All this milk is collected from about 3450 village level dairy co-operatives on 197 milk routes.

MILK PROCUREMENT:- (2005-06)

Annual Milk Procurements (Liters)	19.09 Crores.
Total Milk Handling (Own+Outside) (Liters.)	20.50 Crores
Total Milk Collection Routes.	197 Nos.
Average Milk Procurement (LPD)	5,23,000
Average Buffalo Milk Procurement (LPD)	3,50,000
Average Cow Milk Procurement (LPD)	1,73,000
Peal Procurement (LPD)	6,38,000
Lean Procurement (LPD)	4,12,000
Total Sourage of Milk (%)	0.13 %

b) Developing a Global Market

The Dudhsangh's products are very popular in the market. Marketed under the brand name "Gokul", they include White Butter, Table Butter, Shrikhand, Mango Shrikhand and Ghee. Lassi & Paneer are two more delights which have been launched recently. Dahi, Butter Milk & Sterilized Flavoured Milk are in the pipeline. Taking a Step in international marketing. Gokul has started exporting to Sri Lanka Skimmed Milk Powder. This shows the Sangh's presence in the global market.

c) Environmental challenges and Innovations

Gokul Dairy is always looking for employing new methods that are efficient as well as cost-effective. In order to minimize the consumption of water, recycling the treated water obtained from Effluent Treatment Plant has been planned. Even the lush green gardens and landscapes developed at Gokul's Head Quarters have been maintained on drip irrigation system, where again recycled water is used. Talking more about energy conservation, Gokul Dairy processes 160-170 ltrs. of milk, as against the industrial average of 115 ltrs. Similarly, to process 32 ltrs. of milk 1 unit of electricity is consumed, whereas the industrial average figure is 28 litrs.

d) Spreading Out

Beginning 1988, liquid milk marketing was launched in Mumbai by the Dudhsangh. Sales initially were 16,000 LPD. Today to meet the requirements of different customers four different varieties of milk, viz. Classic (Buffalo) milk, Cow Milk, Tonned Milk and Double Tonned Milk are marketed in Mumbai which account for more than 3,50,000 LPD. The same has also its strong market presence in Pune, Kolhapur and other parts of Western/Southern Maharashtra with a total consumption of 1,10,000 LPD. These varieties meet the different fat requirements of the customer and at the same time they are effectively priced to suit each one's pocket. In addition, to fulfill the constitutional obligation, milk through tankers is supplied to the State Federation as per their requirement.

Cattle Feed Plant

In the year 1982, Dudhsangh started the production of 100 MT cattle feed to meet nutritional requirement of the animals. This has now been expanded to 200 MT per day. The production, later switched to by-pass feed to meet more demand. The Cattle Feed is marketed under the brand 'Mahalaxmi'.

Dudhsangh will soon have a new by-pass protein feed and mineral mixture plant to meet the demand of Milk producers. Looking at the growing demand of Cattle Feed, construction of new Cattle Feed Plant with 300 MT per day capacity is under planning.

Technical Input Activities

A team of 45 trained veterinary graduates operating from 33 different locations in the district are catering to the preventive and clinical veterinary needs of the dairy farmers. Each veterinarian looks after about 15-20 villages and provides these services round the clock at the farmers doorsteps.

Breeding Services

In its operational area 240 artificial Insemination centers have been established by the union. All the necessary inputs to these centers such as liquid nitrogen, semen, sheath, and even cryogenic containers are made available by the union.

Dudhsangh has entered into an agreement with National Dairy Development Board and is implementing "Dairy Herd Improvement Programme Action" (DIPA) in order to improve the genetic material of the female animals to improve their productivity.

Fodder Development

Availability of sufficient quantity of good and nutritious fodder is an essential prerequisite for sustained milk production. In view of this a team of 4 agricultural graduates with the assistance of 5 supervisors are working under fodder development section of the union. Under this program seeds of improved fodder varieties are distributed at 25% subsidized cost. Besides manual chaff cutters and power driven chaff cutters are distributed at 25% & 30% subsidy respectively. About 100 tones of fodder seed are distributed annually.

Benefit to the Members

Milk Producers are the pillars of the Dudh Sangh. Hence the Sangh has planned its activities which are 'Milk Producer Oriented'. The milk producers enjoy the following benefits.

- Year round market for the surplus milk is available.
- Remunerative milk price based on its quality.
- Technical input program for increasing milk production.
- Loan and advance guarantee for purchase of dairy equipments, implements and dairy animals.
- Employment opportunities for urban and rural population.

Organizational Reward System

This is the only "One of its Kind" Scheme introduced by the Dudhsangh in the entire country. In order to take care of the milk producers in their old age, Dudhsangh has introduced a Novel Provident Fund Scheme. Under the Scheme, for every litre of milk collected by the Dudhsangh, 10 paise per litre would be contributed by the Milk Producer, 10 paise per litre by village level Dairy Co-operative and 10 paise per litre by Dudhsangh, making a total contribution of 30 paise per litre. The money would be kept in separate account by the Dudhsangh. The Milk Producer, after attaining the age of 60 years, can withdraw the amount accumulated in her/his account. The scheme would give financial security to the Milk Producers and would come handy at the old age.

Quality Management & ISO 9001:9002

In order to improve the quality of the plant and its output Gokul implemented a quality management system. Gokul has to it's credit certification of being an IS/ISO: 9001:2000 & IS: 15000:1998, Quality Management, Food Safety System & HACCP Certified dairy. The unit is also accredited by Export inspection council. These quality standards will help Gokul in competing at international levels.

Human Resources

Gokul has a dedicated staff of human resources comprising of almost 1939 people spread across its Headquarter, chilling centers and Mumbai Office. Among them are 5 ladies who are spearheading the women Dairy Co-operatives and Gokul Gram Vikas Yojana activities.

Gokul Gram Vikas Yojana

Women are the mainstay of the dairy industry. It is important that women who take care of the cattle and milk the cow, get remunerative prices, for the milk and are actively involved in decision making

With this in mind in 1990, the Gokul Gram Vikas Yojana and Women's Leadership Development Program was started.

In 1995, Women SHGs were formed for the economic development. At present there are 750 SHGs, having a savings corpus of 90 lakhs, and loaning of Rs.1 crore 50 lakh (Annexure-1). The groups are functioning smoothly with a recovery of 100%. There have been no instances where the loans have not been repaid. Moreover, it has strengthened the social ties in villages. They have been able to curb anti social behavior such as drinking, settling family disputes, health awareness, cultural programs.

INSIGHTS FROM SHG MEMBERS

The "intangible" benefits that were achieved were visible during the experiences shared by SHG representatives. The following cases highlights the benefits.

1. Social mobilization of women in villages. It is an opportunity for women to come together and interact amongst themselves irrespective of age, or education. It was observed that in the SHGs there are both elderly women along with the younger. The younger women are educated upto 10^{th} Std. In such groups, it is these women who keep the accounts and look for growth and further prospects of SHGs.

2. Another quality of SHG is that it has given the women in the village "a face" and an identity of her own. As one of the members narrated that women in the village hardly came out of her house; but now she is able to go to the Bank, the collector's office and stand for election. She has become a "visible" face in the village.

3. On the other hand the male dominance is no longer restricting women. There is a gradual change in the attitudes of men; as they realize that women in a group can be heard more loudly than than a single women. It was refreshing to hear that women of some groups left their domestic care for a while and undertook a sight seeing trip to near by pilgrim centers.

4. The SHG process has emboldened the women to take decisions. For example a woman member shared her feelings of how in the face of resistance from her mother-in –law and husband ; she decided to grow some vegetables in the garden to supplement the family income. She narrated how she dug the soil, went to the market to get quality seeds and was ultimately successful in growing vegetables.

5. The internal loaning has equipped her with skills of accounting and book keeping, opening savings account, depositing and withdrawing money from bank, utilizing money for business. The Group Secretary is taught to keep the ledger and note down the monthly deposits, and loans advanced to women. Women generally borrow for medical or educational needs of their children, or to buy income producing assets like sewing machines. One of the group members has a cable business helping her to earn commission of 2%.

6. Women are economically empowered. A woman member proudly said that she no longer has to spread her hands in front of her husband for money; in fact now it is the husband who ask them for money!

7. Women are enthusiastic to take part in cultural programme on occasions such as independence day and festival occasions such as Ganeshotsav, Dussera, Diwali , rangoli competitions.

8. Some members of SHGs, have taken to income generating activities. They are preparing traditional Maharashtrian food items like Nachani Papad, Kurdai, Sandge. This group members took training conducted by Swayam Siddh Yojana and have been able to make quality products that have demand in cities. They sell these items under the Gokul" brand name. They were ready to train other group members also. Other business activities taken up were bakery, tailoring, Nirma, patrawali.

9. The SHGs have generated social awareness as some have been actively able to settle domestic problems faced by women, anti-liquour, cleanliness.

10. The SHGs took active part in helping the flood affected victims by distributing food items, clothes etc.,

11. An amazing quality of women were their creative ability to sing and make couplets on SHGs.

12. As SHGs become successful existing SHGs members help women from near by village to form SHGs in their own areas. It thus has a multiplier effect.

Gender Sensitization

Gokul is committed to spreading rural progress and prosperity. Although the women take care of cattle and milk the cow, her work remains "invisible". Through it's Gokul Gram Vikas Yojana, women's education and training, leadership development, SHG and micro enterprise development and Women Dairy Cooperatives (WDCs) are being promoted. However, this program can be successful only if there is a proactive role of men. The management of Gokul felt that there was a strong need for Gender Sensitization among the Gokul Union Staff supervisors, field officers, training officers women mobilizes and and the Chairman of Cooperative Dairy. They took the decision to approach the Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Cooperative Management, an apex Institute based in Pune to conduct these workshops[3].

[3] The author conducted a "Gender Sensitization Workshop" (20th to 24th February, 2006) for Gokul Union Staff, Supervisors, field officers, training officers, women mobilizers as well as Chairman/Chairperson, Directors.

PERCEPTIONS FROM THE GENDER SENSITIZATION WORKSHOP

1. Formation & Membership of Dairy Cooperative Societies (DCS)

The byelaws of the dairy society allow women to become members, nevertheless male membership is more. To encourage women to be members, the mobilizers of Gokul hold discussions with Management Committees members or leaders. However, it was felt that when women become members, they should be made aware of their duties under the byelaws. In forming cooperatives, women take the help and advice of men. Gokul has organized 681 Women Dairy Cooperatives (WDCS) in the district.

DETAILS OF WOMEN DAIRY PROJECT (As on 31.03.2006) :-

The Programme Started from	1995
No. of Villages Covered	276
No. of DCS Covered	681
No. of Programmes Organized	4185
No. of Participants	1,51,203

2 Representation of Board of Management

The legislation of $33^{1/3}$ representation of women on the Board has opened the doors in a big way for women participation as Directors on the Board. The Government of Maharashtra , was one of the first states in India which amended the Cooperatives Societies Act by introducing a compulsory provision of 30 % representation of women on

the Board of Directors. This will enable women to be a part of the decision making process.

The 1992 amendment of the Maharashtra Cooperatives Societies Act introduced reservation of seats on committees of societies for women members. Under section 73B, committee of each society will have representation of women members as follows:

a. One seat on the committee consisting of not more than 9 committee members.
b. Two seats on the committee consisting of 10 or more, but not exceeding 19 committee members.
c. Three seats on the committee of 20 or more committee members

Accordingly, as per the directives Gokul has 2 women Directors on the Board of 16 committee members

3. Jobs held by Female Employees in Dairy Cooperatives

Women are found in the lower levels of the job hierarchy. These include Typing, clerical, computer, telephone operator, laboratory technician, peon, extension activity. It appears there is much scope for women in middle and senior level management.

4. Society Meetings

It was observed that meetings are held at times which are not convenient to women. As also there are no facilities like crèche available. Hence it is very necessary that the meetings are held as per the convenient time for women. It must also take into consideration her personal convenience. Similarly, in some cases the notice for the

meeting is not given to women. However men are informed of it. It was felt that women need to be more alert about the meeting schedules.

5. Election and Voting

Although women have the right to vote, she does not exercise her independent thinking. The men in the house determine whom to give vote. This appeared to be very challenging for women who, now had the opportunity to think on their own.

6. Participation of Women in Decision Making Process

Very few women are present in the Management Committee Meetings. In the absence of the women, her male representative takes part in the decision making. Thus the participation of women in the decision making process is less. At the time of voting, women toe the lines of their husband. Women do not decide for themselves. This may have to do with years of social conditioning of being subservient to men. It was strongly felt that women should gain confidence and be emboldened to take decisions and protect her interests.

So also in economic matters, women are not informed. Hence there is much need for training and personality development excercises.

7.Position of Women in Dairy Cooperative Societies (DCS)

The participation of women in mainstream or marginal activities were identified as follows:

Mainstream Activities	Female	Male	Marginal Activities	Female	Male
▪ Formation of Dairy Cooperatives	N	Y	▪ Milk collection	Y	Y
▪ Membership in Primary Societies	Y	Y	▪ Festive Programmes (Haldikumkum Program etc.)	Y	N
▪ Participation in General Meeting	N	Y	▪ Bill payment		Y
▪ Extraordinary Meeting	N	Y	▪ Training		Y
▪ Monthly Meetings	N	Y			
▪ Participation in election process	N	Y			
▪ Voting rights		Y			
▪ Training		Y			
▪ Distribution		Y			

8. Access to Resources

a) Training & Education

Women cannot assume leadership role unless they have had an access to education and training programs. On a positive note, it was found that 75% women do participate in these programs. In designing training programs women's needs and potentials were considered . These programs were also easily accessible to women as they were fixed only after taking into consideration the place , day and time which were suitable to women. Care was also taken that there were no festivals during the time , which would make it difficult for women to attend the programs

b) **Extension Services, Technical Expertise Production Inputs**

Women are in equal proportion to men as milk producers. Women have access to modern methods, clean milk production etc. These services are also available to female headed households.

c) **Credit and Loan Facilities**

Women experience problems in acquiring bank loans and credit because:

i) No land is in her name

ii) Women lack education and training

iii) Patriarcial society or male dominance.

Hence it is very necessary to give equal rights to women; provide her education and training, and she must inculcate the saving habit. Gokul is actively promoting women's thrift societies to encourage women to save.

DETAILS ON WOMEN THRIFT COOPERATIVES (As on 31.03.2006):-

No. of Thrift Cooperatives	900
No. of Villages Covered	276
No. of Participating Members	17,368
Total Funds Collected (Lakh Rs.)	142
Loans Advanced (Lakh Rs.)	165
Loans Outstanding (Lakh Rs.)	70

d) Market Outlets and Transport Facilities Marketing. Opportunities should be made available to women. For this "Gokul" has already initiated action for providing marketing outlets, stalls, etc for the purpose.

Problems

The following obstacles were perceived in women's participation

- There is no proper evaluation of the capability of a woman. Hence it is important to make the women aware of their own potential and her talent. For this to happen she may have to be freed from some of her household duties and be given freedom.
- To some extent men give less recognition or value to women's work.
- Hindrances created by Cooperative. Act of the State:-

  Unlike other States of the country, the Cooperative . Act of Maharashtra has a provision for formation of more than one Milk Cooperative at the Village level. Because of this, in almost all the villages in the area of a Milk Union, more than one milk Cooperative is in operation. Many of the villages have 4, 5, even up to 10 Milk Cooperatives!

  The Maharashtra State Cooperative. Act has a provision under which, for registering a Milk Society under general category, minimum 250 Liters of milk is to be collected daily. However, to register a Women Cooperative., the quantity of milk needs to be only 50 Liters a day. But since, most of the villages have more

than one Milk Cooperative., the quantity of milk gets divided and as such many times, it becomes rather difficult to register exclusive Women Cooperatives. in a village.

- Political intrigues:

  As mentioned above, because of lacuna in the Cooperatives Act, various politically interested Milk Producers try to organize a separate Milk Cooperatives. While enacting the law, the whole idea was that the village, where milk is available in large quantity, or if it is difficult for the producers to travel a long distance to supply the milk, Dairy Cooperatives. were formed at the village level.. However, in order to get more members and in turn get more voters, it is observed that decision to form more Milk Cooperatives. are taken to benefit the interest of political parties rather than benefit the Milk producers. Because of this, the Milk Unions also has to incur additional expenditure on monitoring and coordinating various technical inputs activities.

- Low educational or technical levels of women hinders their growth and progress.

Economic Empowerment, Equality and Gender Awareness

For the economic empowerment of women Gokul has made special efforts to

- Give the milk bill to women only
- Personality development programs are conducted
- Formation of Self Help Groups
- Gokul management gives help to women societies
- Rs.15/- per head for visit to Dairy

Measures taken to support Gender Equality and Gender Awareness are as follows:

- Training and exposure visits to other successful dairy, for example Anand, Gujarat
- Training programs in dairy business and personality development
- Women leadership programs

Impact of Gender Sensitization Training

The participants were able to share their experiences and express their views and attitude on gender issues. Most of the trainees had put in 25-30 years of service with Gokul, but were attending a Gender Sensitization programme for the first time.

The training was able to bring about an awareness of gender issues. An understanding of these issues helped in preparing an Action Plan as follows:

1. The Chairman of Kolindre, Pernoli decided to increase women members in their dairies by 10% and 100% respectively. Similarly, the Chairman from Mahagond said he would endeavour to associate 10 women as members.
2. They also agreed to motivate women to actively participate in meetings and decision making. Smt. Mali from Pimple said she would personally attend the meetings of DCS, so that other women also in her village could follow her.
3. The Chairman of Dairy Society (DCS) from Ingle said he would recruit women as employees and staff.
4. Almost all were unanimous that women will be taken on the committee and as employees.

5. All Women Directors reached a consensus that they will actively participate in meetings.

6. The Chairperson from Bhadgaon, Hasoor Compu said that their DCS will participate in forming SHGs with active involvement of women.

7. All the trainees were unanimous that they wanted to spread awareness on Gender Sensitization through training.

Learning Lessons

1.Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, based on the principle of equality, open and democratic membership. Nevertheless, it is observed that all though cooperatives laws and bye-laws do not discriminate; gender inequity in cooperatives does exit. For example, male heads of households become cooperative members even if it is the women who provide a major part of the labor input in dairy. **Women should be actively involved as members of the cooperatives** If the participation of women is increased in this way, such an approach would lead to a sustainable cooperative development.

2 As compared to the total number of cooperatives, the number of women cooperatives is still small, Exclusive women cooperative constitute only 2.1% of the total number of cooperatives. The Cooperatives Act can be amended to encourage formation of **Women Cooperatives.** .

3.A few successful dairy cooperatives like Gokul, have created a revolution of sorts by forming exclusive Women Dairy Cooperative Societies (WDCS). They have **economically empowered** women by making the bill in her name and giving payment to women. **Women Dairy Societies (WDCs) can be replicated on the lines of the success of Gokul.**

3 It is critically important to conduct **gender sensitization** workshops to all personnel in Cooperatives ;including members, employees, leaders and Cooperators

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