

6. Chandraprabha Saikiani Centre for Women's Studies, Tezpur University organized webinar on "Entrepreneurship: A Way Ahead,(Interrogating questions of Women's work and livelihood)" 21st July 2020.

Speakers:

1. Manoj k Das

Managing Director, North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Ltd (NERAMAC)

2. Shyamkanu Mahanta

Entrepreneur, Proprietor of MMS Pvt. Ltd, Assam

3. Shubhra Devi

Managing Director, Meira Foods, Manipur.

Dr Mousumi Mahanta gave an overview on Entrepreneurship and said that 70% of its work had to be stopped during the covid- 19 and the pandemic affected globally. Dr Mahanta stated the topic the speakers were going to speak i.e. on entrepreneurship and women.

The first speaker, Manoj K Das, talked about the disruptive situation during pandemic. Mr Das said that the needs have to be limited due to the situation. Shopping malls, restaurants etc. everything is disrupted. Economy is shrinking. Slowly all industries are coping up. Telephone, internet industries are growing. But lots of jobs are in loss affecting the family lives. Women those who work as bread winner and homemaker are in bad situation. Mr Das mentioned about Shubhra Devi as a successful woman entrepreneur. Mr Das said that Women in North East are empowered such as for example Meghalaya and there is no discrimination. He emphasized that North East should think for farming, multi farming, fish farming during this situation. He highlights the rate of different imported products from outside states. The speaker said that our economy is mostly from outside, most items come from outside like wheat based products, clothes etc. He said that Assam has future in handlooms, backyard farming, and poultry. Japan and other countries are looking from Assam in agricultural products. He encouraged the people to plant medicinal and other valuable plants. He talked about the metal industry in Assam which is about more than 2000 years old. Local raw materials like eri, bamboo are of great use and handicrafts, bamboo products, piggy have high entrepreneur potential. There are government schemes for women who want to start up as entrepreneurs. The speaker gave some ideas on how women can engage in banana products, Jackfruit food items. Age old silk and mulberry plantation in Assam, muga silk worm, cattle industry, Asiatic buffalo milk products which is rich should be brought in and revived.

The speaker encouraged that education should be linked with entrepreneurship as skill development programmes have been neglected. They have education but no skill. The speaker at last ended with a message that children should be taught how to face failure.

Shyamkanu Mahanta

Mr Mahanta talked about the future of Assam in entrepreneurship. He passed out in engineering and later did management course. The speaker discussed about many projects he worked and gave an insight in starting as an entrepreneur. Mr Mahanta shared his work experience in different parts of India but as he always wanted to do something in Assam as entrepreneur he quit his job and started to work as project management in different projects. According to him we must start something we have already experienced. He is into project management, designed small hydropower project and some more projects. Mr Mahanta started to work on culture in North east festival. He started this North east festival and slowly included handicrafts in North east festival. Highlighting tourism industry, handloom, textile entrepreneurs, cuisine, naga kitchen etc. all started from North east festival. All the artist works, music and fashion became a part of entrepreneurs. Exploring investment in north east they went to Bangkok and realized about the future of North east culture into entrepreneurs. Lots of programs on development came up in TV. shows. The speaker said that passion is important but there are failures but yes failure gives an opportunity. In women and entrepreneurship we can look into tourism. What we have is tourism, wildlife sanctuaries, Arunachal lakes, mountains, food, fashion, crafts in assam. Earlier all flood, insurgency was overflowing in North east. After North east festival it changed the view of North east. There is a potential in tourism in northeast. At present there are no amenities in highways, no convenient stores. Project like eco resorts project post corona, can be taken up by women entrepreneurs.

Handicrafts is another entrepreneurs for women. In North east festival handicrafts are getting big and and have huge potential. Good quality of muga items like mask are in great demands.

Agro, organic products as our products can be sold in Myanmar. Pine apple and other fruits in silchar can be a huge selling hub. Rice mill is great demand in Assam. Pork is a big market. A project idea is needed; land funding, lots of schemes for women entrepreneurs. Women are running entrepreneurs. These were some of the points discussed by mr Mahanta which can be great market target for women entrepreneurs.

Questions were raised on how remote women can succeed in this feild. Mr Mahanta gave many ideas on this field.

Subhra devi

The speaker introduced herself and her working with various organizations. Women empowerment was her main concern. Women in poverty, without economic independent, started to work with her .Women are masters in handloom, handicrafts, and women mostly cook food in kitchen. But they are not involved in industry. Banks are not keen on supporting but she used her kitchen and whatever resources she had, started with very small. According to her as women have less capital so start up in a small way. She started her meira food. Meira is a strong symbol of women in Manipur. We are in a time where women are in poverty. Women also have to work. When women have own earning women have a say in family and society. Economic independence is important for women as family nutrition improves . The speaker was comfortable with food processing and started with it. She said that there are so

many things that can be started in our own kitchen. All dried items come from Myanmar. Preserved with sugar and salt items are easily marketed which can be replaced that is coming from outside. With less money she started her work. And sold her products in Rs.1 per packet. Response was very good so she started spreading her products across india. She bought local fruits and produced other items. She did not have skilled worker at the beginning. Later on they themselves become trainer after being trained.Lots of women got involved. School dropouts and less educated women got engaged in her meira food company. They want to work in safe environment. when she registered as food processor there were not many but now there are many food processor registered . They are trying more new items. The speaker encouraged the women entrepreneurs to try many more new products. She herself is going to start her pine apple products export to other countries. Food will always be in demand. Seasonal fruits will have to be processed. Her speech was a kind of encouragement to those who have thought to start up as entrepreneurs. She has also started in handicrafts which she has started exporting to other countries.

Questions were raised regarding some marketing tacts for local processed food which the speaker answered and gave some important advices.

At last Dr.mousumi mahanta gave the vote of thanks thanking all the speakers, Tezpur university administration and participants.