

SKILLING - COMMUNITY OWNED PROMOTION AND ENHANCEMENT(SCOPE)

A concept note

PREAMBLE

Skilling – Community Owned Promotion and Enhancement (SCOPE), is an innovative model of FVTRS that facilitates improved scope for sustainable livelihood to the youth. With informal sector and rural areas as its key domain, this model seeks to stimulate community ownership and participation in skills promotion so that rural youth are gainfully employed in the primary sector and contribute to regenerative rural economy.

INTRODUCTION

FVTRS was instituted in 1993 with the aim of promoting vocational skills for school dropout youth in the country. Since most of the youth dropping out of school hail from marginalized and excluded communities in rural areas or urban slums, FVTRS mainly concentrated on this section of the youth population. Thus far more than 1 lakh youth have been trained in various employable skills across the country. Parallely, FVTRS was also engaged with other stakeholders in skills promotion. It played a major role in advocating government to promote vocational training for the school dropout youth and also sensitized other skill providers on the importance of including the un-organised sector in skills training. Technical knowledge and financial support were offered to partner for the success of this programme.

Many successes were seen and lessons learnt over the last 2 decades. There are number of good examples of community participation in skill development, quality skill training, mainstreaming EDP, life skills during and after skill training, improvement of educational status, gainful employment and enhancement of skills as well as livelihood. It is right time for FVTRS to consolidate these successes and learning by putting them into a perspective so that the process initiated could be sustained and progressed systematically.

Considering way forward, a couple of points surface regarding future scope of FVTRS based on previous experience.

- Given the large size of the reference community with which FVTRS works, the existing resources at hand are limited. So with limited resource we need to explore an appropriate strategy to reach out to more youth. .
- Though the Government, civil society organisations and CSR units are aggressively engaged in skill promotion, their focus is largely on secondary and tertiary sectors with urban centric approach. In this process, the primary sector (un-organised sector/informal sector which provides more than 55 percent of GDP) which is the majority population in the country gets neglected.

- Most of the courses promoted by Government and private institutions are situated in the urban areas which are not accessible to the rural mass and people in the primary sector.

Affordability, geographical distance, low educational standard etc are some of the reasons why the poor and rural population cannot have access to Government and private institutions. However, the culture of dropping out from studies and not interested in further studies is common in rural areas and more among the poor. Therefore it is important that this section of the population is not neglected and excluded in the process of skills promotion. This demands an innovative strategy to assess, understand and appropriately reach out to these communities with suitable skill requirement. FVTRS believes that engaging communities effectively in skill training will be a good strategy along with skilling the youth to be good entrepreneurs and persons.

Keeping the above context in mind, FVTRS has evolved the following model which is a consolidation of its successful experiences during the interventions in skill development across the country and the lessons gained over the years.

1. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

It is widely accepted in human development work that people's participation is a prerequisite for community mobilization. This has the potential to increase community ownership. Likewise, in developing appropriate skills within the community, their participation is very important for the success of programme. The focus is on community settings facilities rather than institution-based centers. In this model, community identifies the skills-need which supplements their development-need which can be further marketed by them. Community counseling by the leaders for the youth is another aspect as most of the youth today are not ready to take skill training due to stigma and related reasons. This will be helpful in motivating them to take up skill training.

Training programme should focus on skills which can be applied at the household level or used to produce something marketable and in demand, first of all within the environment of the trainees, but not necessarily restricted to local use or consumption. Hence the decision on the types of skills to be imparted must be based on the demands of the surrounding markets and considering the enhancement. Of course, taking into account economic and organizational considerations, as well as ecological integrity.

Participatory approaches like Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), can be applied to involve the community in identifying skills and planning skills training programme. Thus the training becomes demand oriented and a good platform is created for the community to follow-up trainees during the training as well as after the training programme.

Community participation shall be designed in such a way that the community develops a sense of ownership of the process and its follow-up. Community also will be able to facilitate employment to the trainees either within the community or outside the

community as they have done the study while selecting the trade. The potentials of the community based structures promoted by the partners can be used to ensure financial support through internal resources or through outside resources as well as linking them to other useful service providers. Thus it will become an activity of the community based groups managed by them which will intern help to work as a sustainable follow-up mechanism and support system.

2. SKILL TRAINING

Once the trade is identified and training is organised, the youth shall be engaged in skill training. Quality of the training and skills acquired by the person is very crucial. Therefore it is important to ensure a quality module for the training as well as engaging competent trainers with appropriate experience and qualification. The quality of training also depends on the sufficiency of the infrastructure and appropriate use of the same. Further, periodic assessments of the skill, final test conducted by a reputed agency and certification will enhance the quality standards.

The training can be structured in such a way that linkages are established to potential employers. In this case skill training becomes a viable means of enhancing development of work related skills. Hands on experience in a real work environment is the most successful means of teaching technical skills in a specific field and better acquaint the youth to more realistic understanding of necessary work habits and behaviors. Youth working at the job sites will be given the opportunity to learn and participate in jobs. This allows partners and communities to focus efforts on preparing future workers who have more choices and marketable skills. Here the trainees are assigned to the job sites based on their levels of skill and interest.

Skill training can also be conducted in a work cum production centre. Training cum working centers are a vital link to improve their confidence level and to know the skill expectations in a particular job. They interact with the employees at the site and learn the protocols of various employment settings. This will also help them to earn something while on training itself.

Concepts like mobile training centre can be explored in the context of community managed skill training, as requirement of a specific skill can get saturated at one location after a certain period of time. In such cases the trainings are organized in a community building or a small place and once the training is completed the center will be moved to next village or town. This model helps to reach more youth with less investment and only the trainer has to travel to the training centre instead of trainees.

3. SUPPLEMENTARY SERVICES.

Along with skill training, this model also envisages providing other extended services essential to support their personality development, business growth and enhancement of social status, that will be continued after the training period.

3.1. Entrepreneurial Development Programme (EDP)

FVTRS believes that entrepreneurial skill is coupled with skill training as a necessity to make the trainee a good entrepreneur. Therefore EDP takes the priority in the extended services as most of the trainees come from the primary sector which has a different orientation. The EDP will not be a one-time training but an ongoing process of growth.

Syllabus in EDP include studying business opportunities, starting enterprises, knowledge about supporting organization & including financial institutions and their schemes, conducting market surveys, preparation of project report, management of resources, information on raw materials and tools, basic knowledge on business laws, marketing skills, costing and pricing of products, etc.

3.2. Life Skills Development

Life skills are a comprehensive set of universal cognitive and non-cognitive skills and abilities, connecting behavior, attitudes, and knowledge, which youth can develop and retain throughout their lives. Life skills increase young people's well-being and help them to develop into active and productive members of their communities.

Syllabus in life skills include skills like listening, understanding, persuading, negotiating, sharing information, being assertive and empathizing, team work, working with different types of people (Different ages, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, culture), problem solving, decision making skills, organizing skills, managing time and priorities, being resourceful, establishing goals, planning the use of resources, developing practical solutions etc. This makes them capable to adapt to new situations, being innovative and creative, identifying opportunities and translating ideas into action.

Through a good life skills training, FVTRS attempts to refine the innate dormant faculties of a human person and make use of it for a good future.

3.3. Legal awareness and social security

To avoid exploitation and to get decent employment, wages and work atmosphere the model envisages generating awareness on labour laws to trainees during the training itself. The main components may be laws related to child labour, minimum wages, working condition and working hours, working condition for women and night shifts, medical and other health related benefits such as maternity and paternity and other leave, special benefits for the disabled, dependency benefits etc.

Apart from labour laws the experts will provide awareness on social security measures and schemes. They will be updated on social security measures such as health and life insurance, provident fund, gratuity, pension and death benefit, safety of the citizen etc. This will make them informed employees.

3.4. Education Enhancement

FVTRS is working with the youth who have not completed 10th standard. This model encourages youth to pass minimum 10th standard and to continue their study along with skill training. The State and Central Open schooling programme will be used to enroll trainees for completing their minimum education. FVTRS already has a MoU with National Institute of Open Schooling to enable school dropout youth to pass class 10.

While working as a skilled labour, they can also enroll in the open schooling to continue their education. This programme is a proven platform that assists those who are working in communities to build the additional skills and abilities for employment and income generation. This will further help them to escape the vicious circle of inadequate education, poor training, low productivity and poor quality jobs with low wages and dignity.

3.5. Awareness programmes

Youth acquiring and engaging with skills for better livelihood need also to grow as responsible citizens. Therefore they need to acquire awareness on general aspects of life and become empowered/informed individuals with potentials to contribute effectively to the progress of the community at large. The training opportunity shall also be used for imparting such awareness for the youth on various socially relevant subjects like HIV/AIDS, health, citizen education etc.

4. FORMATION OF COLLECTIVES

Almost all our partners have the capacity of community mobilization for strengthening community leadership. This has been widely accepted as a development option so that development becomes people oriented, people driven and people owned. This model also looks at making into groups that are responsible for their own development. Thus trainees will be organised into sustainable collectives that will be managed by themselves in association with promoting community based organisation. This will function based on self-help principles which has been promoted and practiced in other community based organisations. Whatever be the nature of the employment, they will be encouraged to be part of the collective.

5. EMPLOYMENT

On completion of training the following employment possibility or option will be offered to the trainees to be gainfully employed. The choice will be made based on the interest of trainees and present viability as well as future scope of the stream of employment.

5.1. Placement

Starting with institutional arrangements during the training programme the model will try to place them at the location or the institute of the training itself. This can be done through local public and private job providers. One can also look for outside job providers provided the trained youths are getting just wages and other benefits. For this the strategies will be context specific and viable like job fairs, starting a career portal etc.

There is also danger of exposing them to exploitation by the employers. Therefore the individuals, their groups, the community based organisations or the partner organisation shall have continuous communication and effective dialogue with the employers.

5.2. Self-employment

The model will encourage and promote self-employment by the trainees. This will be done by organizing necessary services for them to start, maintain and enhance the enterprise by the promoting partners and communities. Self-styled freelance service providing entrepreneurs will also be included. In this case youth will be able to take entire benefit of their labour. They are also independent in their functioning and not attached to systems controlled by others.

5.3. Collective enterprises

Another nature of employment is that the interested youth are brought together to start an enterprise with a collective ownership. Collective enterprises normally helps trained youth to divide the work based on their personal capacities such as finding business, mobilizing funds, market for the goods and services etc. and synergizing them. The basic idea is to take large-scale work order within the community and share the job and income among them as wages and profit, so that the resource will not go out of the community. Primary products like agriculture products may be processed and marketed. This will facilitate collective growth of all individuals together who are part of the enterprise.

5.3.1 Linkage to credit and enterprise supporting institutions:

In order to make use of the newly acquired skills gainfully in their village or community, trainees need access to credit to buy working tools and raw materials or to set up a small enterprise. It is important to involve the relevant institutions, banks, NGOs and micro or small credit institutions while planning and implementing training programme right from the beginning.

6. ENHANCEMENT

Once the youth engage in employment, there is scope for enhancing their skills as well as employment/enterprise. This can be done by individual youth or can be facilitated by the collective of youth as well as community based organisations who has promoted this model. Skill enhancement and entrepreneurship has been a continued agenda because it

gives sustainable growth for the people engaged and motivation for doing more and better for the youth as well as others.

This can again be facilitated by their groups, the community based organisations or the partner organisation

7. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

This model will be increasingly implemented through NGOs by converting the 'skill needs' of a community into a skill training programme. The role of a service provider is in identifying skill needs of a community and organizing skill training in the community, providing recognized certificate, supporting them for placement in the community or encouraging them to start entrepreneurship and follow-up. Community participation has been ensured end-to-end.

Initially FVTRS will organize one orientation programme for the FVTRS linked and other interested partners. The heads of the organisations will be the participants for this programme. FVTRS will explain and clarify the envisaged programme to the participants.

7.1 PARTNER LEVEL ORIENTATION

Among the interested organisation who wants to be part of this movement there will be a second level orientation at the organisational level. FVTRS along with the head of the organisation who attended the state level meeting will conduct an orientation about the programme at their geographical location. This orientation will be for the board members and staff of the organisation. Thus programme will be launched.

FVTRS will also provide regular accompaniment support and monitoring of the process and facilitate corrections, refining and scaling up.

The entire process of implementation according the elements of the model shall be studied closely and documented and will be put into in depth analysis.

8. RESULTS

The aim of community based skill training is to ensure school dropout youth are skilled and employ within the community and by the community. Some of the expected results are as follows;

- The skilled youth will be available in the community to provide need based service by establishing their own enterprises.
- Migration will be reduced by engaging the youth with gainful employment within the community.
- Youth will complete 10th grade and expand their scope for higher education along with job

- Community participation and systematic follow up inbuilt for sustainable use of skills
- Trained youth will form as organised labour, increase their bargaining power, affirm their labour rights
- Trained youth will mobilise resources, start micro enterprises and develop better business models.

9. CONCLUSION

Community Based Skill Training is a multi-sectoral approach to meet the vocational skills, education, and livelihood needs of school dropout youth. It is a fully comprehensive approach covering all aspects of youth's life and involving many different stakeholders to implement the programme. It emerges from the belief that community is capable of assessing its own needs, deciding its own priorities, identifying its own resources, and achieving its own goals provided opportunities are created and identified.