

Empowering Women through Rural Bio-Fabrication Labs: Sen's Capability Approach

Shivangi Agrawal and Sanjukta Ghosh*

*Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design and Technology
Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Bengaluru*

Abstract: SHGs (Self Help Groups) in India are typically perceived as Microfinance groups whose primary concern is savings and access to credit. This study is based on the theoretical foundations of the Capability Approach to the development of capabilities proposed by Amartya Sen and aims at suggesting that in rural areas such as the ones in Palghar and Dahanu, SHGs should be reconsidered as structures that can advance capabilities by becoming connected to the ecosystem of grassroot innovation and institutions. The paper focuses on Vigyan Ashram model that subscribes to the philosophy of learning by doing. The paper suggests establishing a similar laboratory to grow mycelium bio fabrication using the local agricultural waste in order to produce biodegradable mycelium-based composite and products. When SHGs are involved in such labs the women have a chance to acquire technical knowledge, working in groups and getting access to the market. The paper develops a straightforward framework to demonstrate the potential of a way out from the orthodox and competency based rural development through connecting SHGs with local innovation laboratories.

Keywords: Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Capability Approach, Women's Empowerment, Rural Innovation, Bio fabrication

JEL Classification Number: Q1, Q2, Q5

*Corresponding author. Email: sanjukta.ghosh@manipal.edu