

Rural Dalit Women Entrepreneurs and Development Scenario: A Study

Amaldass M.*, Neema Gnanadev**

Abstract

Pandit Nehru affirmed that women development/empowerment is the basis for the substantial growth of a family, a village, or a nation. Development/upliftment of women is an essential ingredient of human development. Entrepreneurship development among the rural women folk would strengthen the village economy and promote regional development. The women entrepreneurs have proved that there is a source of immense untapped power in the womanhood of India (Margaret, 1992). Women undoubtedly are the backbone of the socio-economic-cultural aspects in the hill scenario. The subsistence agriculture which leads to low and unstable incomes, which in turn lead to a sizeable out-migration of male members that leads to only women headed families behind, and the role of women in the household economy becomes more important (Rawat, 2004). In the midst of limited opportunities, tough terrains and lack of resources, the contribution of women entrepreneurs to the society is enormous.

An attempt was made to highlight the strategies and development aspects of rural women entrepreneurs in Almora district. Entrepreneurs who are engaged in self-employment and innovative entrepreneurial activities were selected for the study. A total of 50 samples were selected and the data were collected through interviews and focus groups. The study reveals various aspects related to rural women entrepreneurship and constraints that need attention so to empower women in their efforts toward integral development.

Keyword: Dalit Women, Self-Employment, Women Entrepreneurship, Women Empowerment

Introduction

Economically empowered women contribute to the wealth and well-being of not only their families, but also of the nation (Blumberg, 1995). The opportunities and privileges provided to the women especially in the rural areas are growing so rapidly that the job seekers are turning into job creators. Women contribution to the social and economic development of societies is more than half as compared to that of men by virtue of their double roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. They are flourishing as trend setters plunging into skill exploring new avenues of development and economic participation. Their contribution to the all round development of the family, society and their involvement in the national development cannot be undermined. According to a recent study, improvement in women's economic position may not only increase their happiness, but also alone enhance their status (Sharma, 2000).

Women entrepreneurs have grown in large number over the last decade and increasingly the entrepreneurial potentials of women have changed the rural economies in many parts of India. Women entrepreneurs have been making a significant impact in all segments of the economy in India. Not only are few women involved in running non-agricultural enterprises of any kind, the scale of operation of women operated units is distinctly very tiny, particularly in rural areas.

* Research Scholar, Department of Rural Development, Gandhigram Rural Institute- Deemed University, Gandhigram, Tamil Nadu, India. Email: framalsj@gmail.com

** Assistant Professor, Department of Rural Development, Gandhigram Rural University, Gandhigram, Tamil Nadu, India. Email: neemabr@gmail.com

Review of Literature

The word 'entrepreneur' as a concept has evolved specifically in the 17th century by the definition from Richard Cantillon. He defined entrepreneur as a person who buys factor services at 'certain' prices with a view to selling its product at an uncertain price in the future. According to J.B. Say, an entrepreneur is a representative who unifies the requisite factors into an organised body of production. Adam Smith the economist is of the view that an entrepreneur is a furnisher of capital operating as a manager between labour and consumer. Prof. Knight adds 'risk' and 'uncertainty' that can't be calculated in advance. The entrepreneurs deal with uncertainty and risk in their responsibility as economic functionaries.

'Innovation' is an essential function of entrepreneurship as affirmed by Schumpeter. He views that both interest and profit will arise from progress (change), and innovation is a creative response to a situation. Accordingly an entrepreneur is a dynamic agent of change or a catalyst who transforms physical, natural and human resources into correspondingly production possibilities. Thus an entrepreneur is one who takes initiative to decide, start and manage an enterprise. The features of initiation, development and support are complementary to each other and work in an entwined manner. Development of entrepreneurship depends on factors pertaining to individual, socio-cultural traditions, support systems and environment. These factors interact and influence each other. Hence training becomes a significant input in coordinating the above factors for the development of entrepreneurship.

The study on women entrepreneurship is a recent phenomenon. Studies on women entrepreneurship explain that a great number of women enter into self-employment on part-time basis often as a means to supplement household income. Women entrepreneurs are confined to small business. Besides they face structural, social and cultural barriers that make it difficult, if not possible to develop their business.

Kaliyamurthy (2009) in his study 'Emerging issues of Entrepreneurship Development' stressed on the importance of entrepreneurship for the socio-economic development of any nation and exhorted the Government machinery to take concrete efforts to encourage more young and dynamic people to go for entrepreneurship.

Latha and Murthy (2009) in their study examined the motives of entrepreneurs in starting a small scale enterprise in the socio-economic milieu of Nellore districts. The study concluded that the direct support from their family members encouraged them to start their new ventures, which was healthy signal for economic development of the country.

Chiranjeevulu (2003) in his study on the micro enterprises started by self-help groups in Warangal district, Andhra Pradesh, is of the opinion that conversion of consumption based self-help groups into entrepreneurship oriented self-help groups led to employment generation and empowerment of women.

Ritu, Kushwaha and Srivastava (2003) had examined the functioning of self-help groups in Kanpur district, UttarPradesh. The study revealed that the impact of self-help groups on socio-economic status of women was found to be significant in education, housing facilities, exposure of mass media, occupation, size of landholding, and material possessions.

Women as Entrepreneur

The meaning and definition of an entrepreneur is common to all irrespective of the sex, caste, religion, and race. The wisdom of entrepreneurship is not gender specific. In general, those who are playing the entrepreneurial role can be called as entrepreneurs, irrespective of their sex. Hence, there is no need to define the woman entrepreneurs separately. However, in the practical sense, the woman entrepreneur is regarded as a woman who accepts or takes a challenging role in any business venture to become economically strong by making suitable adjustments in both family and social life (Balamurugan, 2008).

The number of women owned businesses is rapidly increasing in the economies of almost all countries. The hidden entrepreneurial potentials of women have gradually been changing with the growing sensitivity to the role and economic status in the society. Skill, knowledge and adaptability in business are the main reasons for women to emerge into business ventures. "Women Entrepreneur" is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. A strong desire to do something positive is an inbuilt quality of entrepreneurial women, who is capable of contributing values in both family and social life. With the advent of

media, women are aware of their own traits, rights and also the work situations.

In former days, for women there were 3 Ks- kitchen, kids, knitting, then came 3 Ps- powder, papad, pickles and now at present there are 4 Es- electricity, electronics, energy, engineering. Indian women had undergone a long way and are becoming increasingly visible and successful in all spheres and have shifted from kitchen to higher level of professional activities. Women entrepreneurs are fast becoming a force to reckon with in the business world and are not only involved in business for survival but to satisfy their inner urge of creativity and to prove their capabilities. Educated Women is contributing to a great extent to the social transformation and in the future, will be seen that more women venturing into areas traditionally dominated by men.

Today, many women have established their own economy i.e., entrepreneurial empire and are now ruling their world as they wished to. The hidden entrepreneurial potentials of women have gradually been changing with the growing sensitivity to the role and economic status in the society. Skill, knowledge and adaptability in business are the main reasons for women to emerge into business ventures.

Women Development and Entrepreneurship

Women represent half of the resources and half of the potential in all the societies. Efforts to promote greater equality between women and men can also contribute to the overall development of human societies. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of sustainable development in all areas of life (Anita, 1999).

When a woman moves forward the family moves and the village moves and the nation moves, asserted Pandit Nehru. Upliftment of women is an essential ingredient of human development. Entrepreneurship development among the rural women force would strengthen the village economy and promote regional development. Earlier, involvement of rural women in entrepreneurship was limited. In most cases especially in developing countries like India women are victims of social prejudice and discrimination. In the past two decades, rural women have made their mark in different walks of life, thanks to

the growing level of education, social reforms, political awaking, legal framework, and safeguards.

The SHG movement has given an impetus in enhancing the equality status of women as participants, decision makers, and beneficiaries in the democratic, economic, social and cultural spheres of life. Being assisted by SHGs and loans from banks, rural women have taken up income generating activities and small scale entrepreneurial programs to increase their economic base. Given to the various dimensions of hill situations, this initiative becomes one of the viable strategies for the development of the hill economy. Further this would pave the way toward their self sustenance and sustainable development to a large extent.

NABARD as Promoter of Entrepreneurship

NABARD initiated the Self-Help Groups (SHG) – Bank Linkage Programme in 1992 to encourage thrift and savings amongst the rural poor and to supplement their credit needs through banking systems. It envisaged that Voluntary Organisations (VA), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO), and Self-Help Promotional Institutions (SHPI) can play the role of facilitating the rural poor into SHG process. NABARDs SHG-Bank linkage programme vouchsafes the group approach as an effective mediation for promoting rural entrepreneurs. Group approach facilitates larger outreach, reduction in bank transaction costs, group savings as collateral and peer pressure ensures timely repayment.

Rural women need credit and credit related services to adopt entrepreneurial activities. With the availability of a good framework, entrepreneurs could create new jobs for themselves and others and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities in the society. Although the framework is quite good to meet credit needs, the problem of getting financed by the banks and availing Institutional finance is still very difficult for rural entrepreneurs.

Uttarakhand: Some Features

Uttaranchal, the northern sub-region of Uttar Pradesh came into existence as 27th state of Indian Republic on 9th November 2000. The name got changed from Uttaranchal to Uttarakhand in 2007. The state is situated in Central Himalaya of Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) and mostly

comprises the hills of Central Himalaya. The state has a population of 10,086,292 (51,37,773 males and 43,25,924 females), and the sex ratio is 1000:963 (Census-2011).

Kumaon is one of the two divisions of Uttarakhand state. Its headquarters is located at beautiful lake city Nainital. Kumaon division consists of six districts- Almora, Bageshwar, Champawat, Nainital, Pithoragarh, and Udham Singh Nagar. As per the 2011 census, the total population is 622506, and 259898 respectively.

Life for most people is one of hand to mouth struggle and misery. Neither there are industries nor large flat land for cultivation in the hills. As a result, it is well evident that the demand for both food and non-food products of people living in rural areas of Uttarakhand is largely met through remittances which are sent by migrant family members of different households. In this sense a study postulates that is good that a workable population are benefitted through the money order economy (Mehta, 1999).

Significance of the Study

In Uttarakhand, the main thrust of the women’s empowerment and entrepreneurship programme is on setting up SHGs and in making credit facilities available to them so that they can engage in economic activities. Nautiyal’s study (2003) raises the issue that the fact that micro-credit is focused almost exclusively on women highlights that women are targeted because they are the best repayers of loans and are thus viewed as the most efficient means of making an impact on families and households. The needs of women are therefore not the central concern of micro-credit. By targeting women, it is the institutions, the family, and the economy that benefit from the poor women’s own savings and resources.

Hence the study is undertaken to find out the multiple constraints that are faced by small scale rural entrepreneurs in entrepreneurship management.

Methodology of the Study

A total of 50 women small scale entrepreneurs were selected from the universe of 102 women entrepreneurs who are doing good in Baisyachana block of Almora district. The data were collected through primary and secondary sources. The main source of primary data was interview and focus groups. The secondary sources include the reports of NGOs, District Rural Development Authority, NABARD, and data from banks.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To know the growth of rural small scale entrepreneurs
- ii. To analyse the aspects involved in entrepreneurship management in the background of hill scenario.
- iii. To find out the constraints faced by women entrepreneurs and to give suggestions

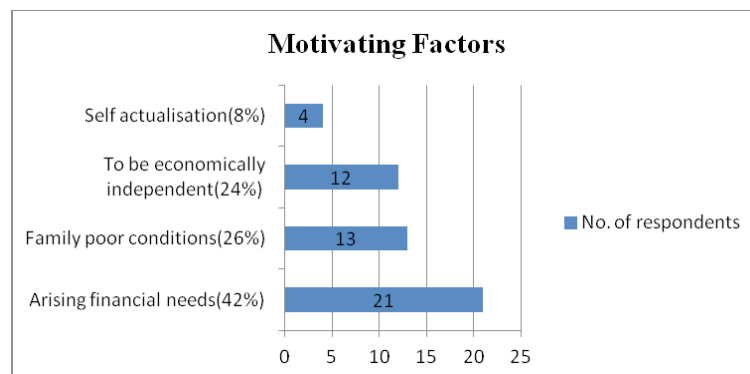
Analysis

The following aspects are covered in the analysis.

Motivating Factors

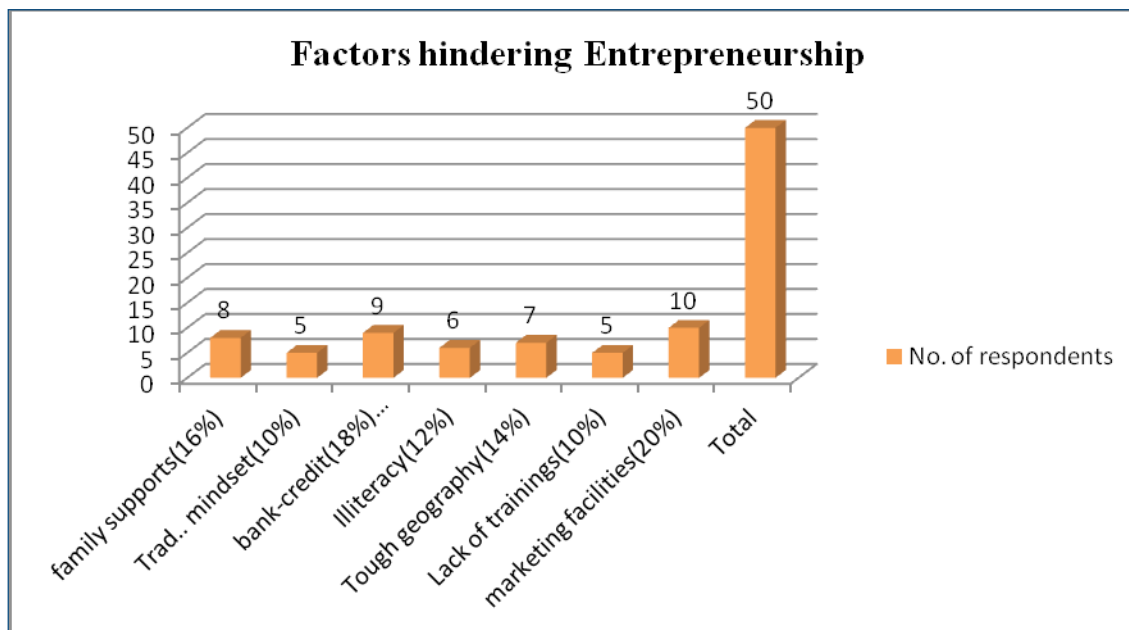
Fig. 1 highlights that 21 respondents had started the entrepreneurial activities due to arising financial needs, 13 respondents due to family poor conditions, 12 to become economically independent and 04 respondents for self-actualisation.

Fig. 1: Motivating factors for Entrepreneurship



Source: Primary data

Fig. 2: Factors Hindering Entrepreneurship



Source: Primary data

Factors Hindering Entrepreneurship

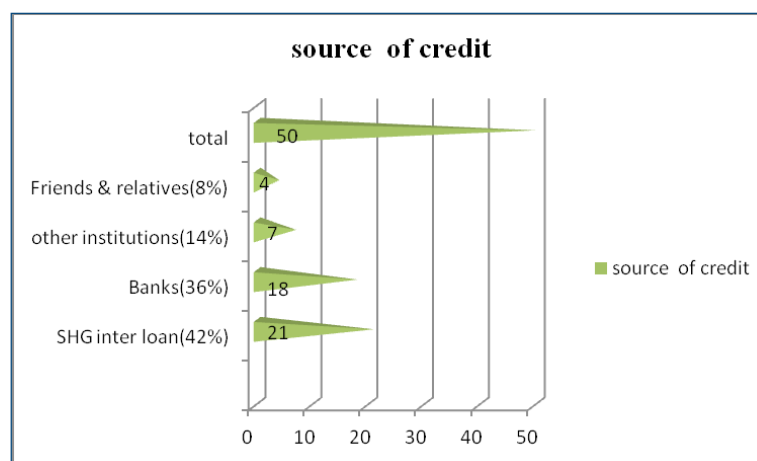
Fig. 2 shows that 20% of the respondents voiced that availability of marketing facilities is a major hindrance followed by lack of well-knit, bank-credit linkage and lack of family supports, 18 and 16 percentage respectively.

A total of 10 respondents agreed that traditional mindset and lack of professional trainings are hindrances. According to 14% of the respondents the tough geographical conditions are unfavourable for entrepreneurship. 12% of the respondents opined that illiteracy and lack of education is the hindrance.

Sources of Credit

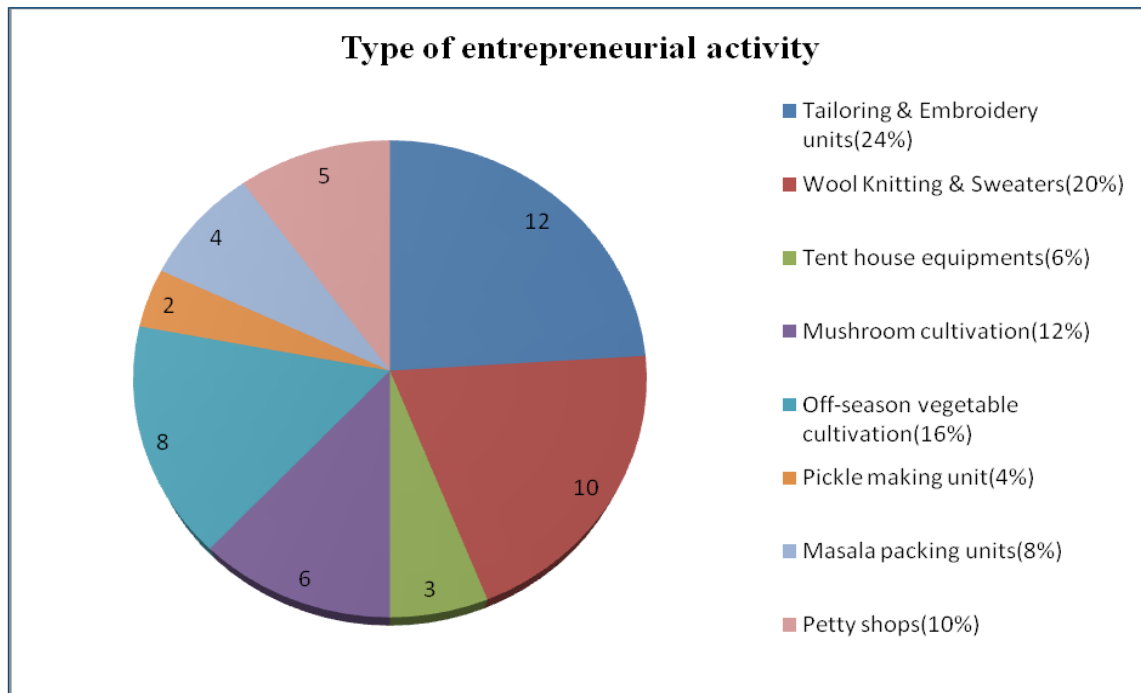
As shown in Fig. 3, 21 respondents amounting to 42% of the total respondents relied on SHG inter loan for credit purposes. This is due to easy access and saving capacity of the members. But the good trend ought to be accessing banks for the inter loan must be limited to consumption purposes. A total 18 respondents opined that they accessed banks for credit needs. A total of 14 respondents from other institutions such as NABARD programs, and 4 respondents received financial assistance from relatives and friends.

Fig. 3: Source of Credit



Source: Primary data

Fig. 4: Type of Entrepreneurial Activities



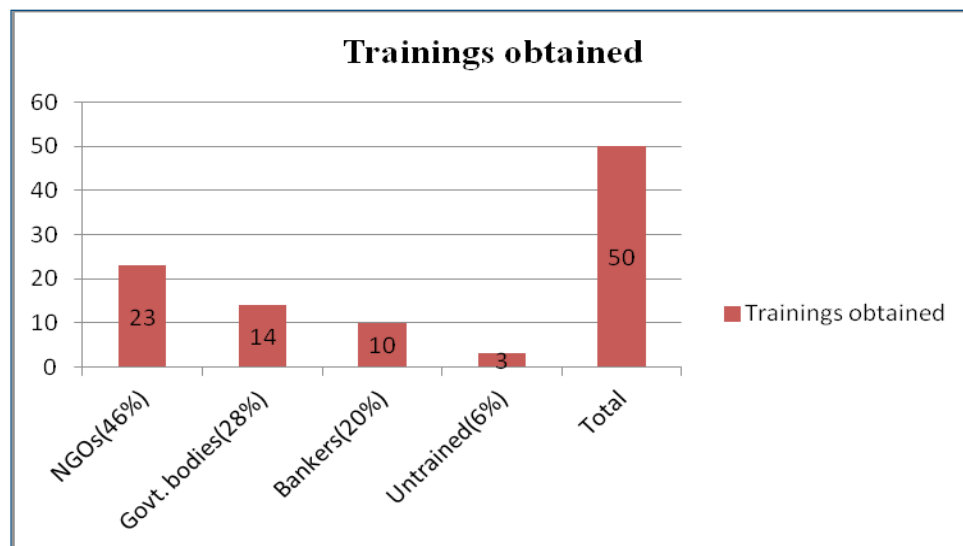
Source: Primary data

Type of Entrepreneurial Activities

In Fig.4 it could be noted that 12 respondents amounting to 24% of the total respondents and 10 respondents amounting to 20% of the total respondents are involved in tailoring & embroidery and wool knitting & warm cloths respectively. This is due to the cold climatic conditions as

well as the demand from tourists for hand-knit woollen warm cloths. A total of 8 and 6 respondents are involved in off-season vegetables and mushroom cultivation respectively. A total of 5 respondents are involved in petty shop business. 4 respondents are involved in masala packing units. A total of 2 respondents are involved in pickle making units.

Fig. 5: Sources from Trainings Obtained



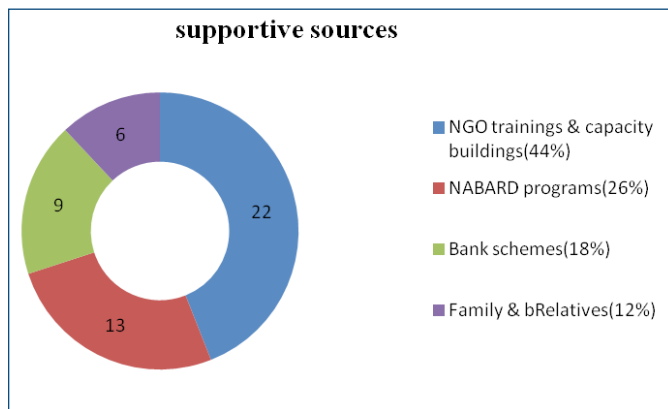
Source: Primary data

Sources for Trainings

Training is an important component that leads to the success of the entrepreneurial activity. As shown in Fig. 5, 46% of the respondents obtained trainings from non-governmental organisations, followed by 28% from government bodies such as NABARD, 20% from bankers and 6% of the respondents did not undergo any training. Capacity building trainings given by NGOs goes a long way in enabling the rural women entrepreneurs to plunge boldly into entrepreneurial activities.

Supportive Sources of Entrepreneurship

Fig. 6: Supportive Sources of Entrepreneurship



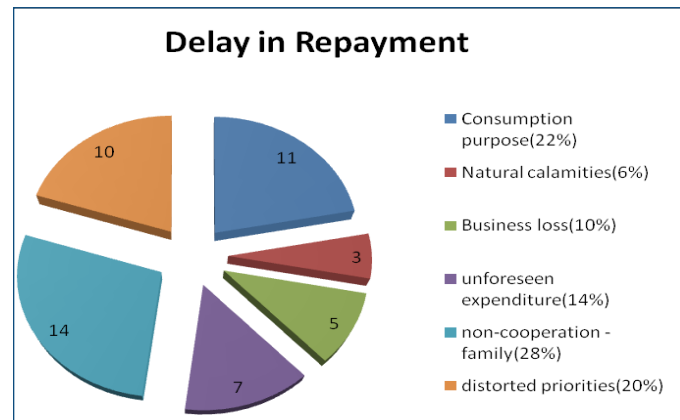
Source: Primary data

Fig. 6 shows that 22 respondents rely on NGOs for ongoing trainings and capacity building programs, 13 respondents opined that they benefit from NABARD schemes and trainings, 9 respondents rely on bank schemes and programs and 6 respondents depend on family and friends for supports.

Difficulties in Repayment

As shown in Fig. 7, the respondents expressed various reasons for delay in repayments. A total of 14 respondents due to non-cooperation from husbands and family members, 11 respondents due to consumption purposes; 10 respondents revealed that due to thin layer between business and consumption priorities, 7 respondents due to unforeseen expenditure, 5 respondents because of business loss, and 3 respondents due to natural calamities.

Fig. 7: Delay in Repayment



Source: Primary data

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship plays an eminent function in creating an avenue for employability for rural communities, providing self-employment for those who have started-up a business of their own and enhancing the economic status of the rural sector as well. It has transformed many entrepreneurs into successful business persons and generated income for rural communities. Entrepreneurs in rural area have transformed their vicinity into trading hubs thus enabling them to become urbanised areas.

Entrepreneurship especially in the hill society largely depends upon to a great extent on the economic, social, religious, cultural and psychological factors. Hence developing a proper environment through provision of sufficient information and needed skills will pave the way for many women to undertake entrepreneurial activities. A well-developed infrastructure is very essential for hill development. Upgradation of skills and market exposures to these artisans would open new avenues for creative entrepreneurial activities

Procedural delays, tedious formalities and maximisation of documents on the part of banking institutions and Government departments could be minimised. Special schemes for unemployed women and youth with an incentive to take up self employment in forest and agriculture based allied activities would enable easy access to financial availability and to undertake entrepreneurial activities.

References

- Anita, H. (1999). Women entrepreneurship in India. *Southern Economist*, 11-13.
- Balamurugan, P. (2008). Women entrepreneurship in India-A gender perspective. In Rathakrishnan. L, *Empowerment of women through entrepreneurship* (pp. 53-60). New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.
- Blunberg. (1995). Empowerment for global change. In R. Lesser, *Engendering wealth and well-being*. Boulder: Westview Press, Inc.
- Cathelina. (2014). *Impact of business on social trends and movements*. Chennai: Anuragham Publications.
- Chiranjeevulu, T. (2003). Empowering women through self-help groups. *Kurukshetra*, 51(5), 16-19.
- Kalyanamurthy, K. (2009). Emerging issues of entrepreneurship development with reference to BHEL. *Journal of Asian Business Management*, 1(2), 237-244.
- Latha, K. L. & Murthy, B. E. (2009). The motives of small scale entrepreneurs: An explorative study. *South Asian Journal of Management*, 16(2), 91-107.
- Margaret Hall, C. (1992). *Women and empowerment*. Washington: Hemisphere Publishers.
- Mehta, G. S. (1999). *Development of Uttarakhand: Issues and perspectives*. New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation.
- Nautiyal, A. (2003). Women and Development in the Garhwal Himalayas. *AJWS*, 9(4), 93-113.
- Rajiv, R. (2004). *Chipko's Quiet legacy: Forest rights, women's empowerment, people's institutions, and new urban struggles in Uttarakhand, India*. Canada (Mimeo): York University, Ontario.
- Rathakrishnan, L. (2008). *Empowerment of women through entrepreneurship*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.
- Report, A. (2010). *Annual Report*. Almora, Uttarakhand: SEVA NGO.
- Jain, R., Kushawaha, R. K., & Srivastava, A. K. (2003). Socio-Economic- Impact of Through Self Help Groups. *Yojana*, 47(7), 11-12.
- Sharma, S. L. (2000). Empowerment without antagonism: A case for reformulation of women's empowerment approach. *Sociological Bulletin*, 49(1), 19-39.

Web References

- www.planningcommission.nic.in
- www.worldbank.org
- <http://indiavidya.com>
- www.articlebase.org
- www.uttarakhand.ac.org