

Agarbattis: A Sustainable Bamboo Cluster based Rural Enterprise Development in Northeast Region of India through P4 Approach

V.G.Jenner *
I.F.S.
&
Md. Selim Reza **

Abstract

The Northeastern States have ample capacity to set-up agarbattis enterprises at the community level in rural pockets through utilization of bamboo resources. It will create rural employment and sustainable livelihood opportunity among the community people.

As per the market survey conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (1990), the total quantity of agarbattis produced in the country in 1990 was, 147 billion, valued at around Rs.7 billion. The production and market size of the sector is increasing tremendously in India and abroad. The consumers are highly concentrated among the rural pockets (61%) in India (INBAR-1992).

The present paper is an attempt to highlight the several dimensions to scale-up the community-led agarbattis enterprises in the region. Developing Bamboo cluster based agarbatti enterprises, it needs investment, logistic arrangement for the entrepreneurs and a suitable model namely P4 approach, so that all the partners comprising the enterprise may actively involve themselves for the development of the sector and in turn increase income for themselves.

*The author is the **Director of Industry & Commerce and Additional Secretary cum State Bamboo Mission Coordinator** Government of Tripura, Gurkhabasti, Agartala Tripura, India.

** The author is a Specialist on Community based Bamboo SMEs Development and working as Project Coordinator in **Gandhigram Crafts Processing Cluster –TRIBAC** in Tripura a livelihood development project of CIBART & INBAR.

Introduction:

Agarbattis (Incense sticks or scented battis) are commonly known as “doopbattis”. Agarbattis have been used long since religious prayer and at the household level, as a room freshener.

The journey of agarbatti manufacture begins from Thanjavur region of Tamil Nadu in South India and gradually spreads to other parts of the neighboring states. Wide spread utilization of herbal –based agarbattis for their pleasing fragrances have also been found in the Middle East, European countries and other parts of the world.

As far as agarbatti manufacture in India is concerned, the rural small and medium enterprise (SMEs) experts have identified agarbattis as a consumable good whose demand is increasing constantly. This sector has tremendous potential and capable of creating livelihood opportunities in the rural pockets, especially for the women. It is a cottage industry, as a result of which large-scale rural employment can be created to generate self employment and increase standard of living among the rural communities

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The Northeastern States have ample capacity to set-up agarbattis enterprises at the community level in rural pockets. This enterprise is capable of creating It will create rural employment and sustainable livelihood opportunity among the community people.

The present paper is an attempt to highlight the several dimensions to scale-up the community-led agarbattis enterprises in the region .Such community-led agarbattis enterprises create rural employment and livelihood generation in a sustainable manner with the active participation of people both at the public and private level. This approach is known as the Peoples, Private and Public Partnership (P4) approach

Raw Materials & Process:

In the agarbattis sector, three sub-sectors have been found and linked with each other with a scientific supply chain delivery mechanism. In each sub-sector or division of production system, the rural community is being involved. The sub-sectors are enlisted below:

a. Production of Bamboo Sticks:

The Northeastern States have pioneered in the production of raw bamboo sticks due to the abundance of bamboos in these areas. The State of Tripura is contributing 80% of total requirement of raw bamboo sticks for hand rolled agarbattis. The assorted agarbattis are made in rural pockets of Tripura as a house hold activity. Four grades of bamboo sticks are made as per the market demand with different rates, lengths and thicknesses. The required raw materials (bamboos) are collected from the adjoining forest or local market. The raw sticks come to the local hat (Market) on a weekly basis. The agents collect the sticks as per rates and specifications. The collective bargaining is very poor among the rural artisans, due to the lack of federation or unity among them. After collecting the sticks, the individual agents supply them to the dealer. The dealers grade the sticks and finally dispatch them to their respective destinations i.e Bangalore, Gaya, Hyderabad, Kolkata, etc.

b. Hand Rolling of Battis or Masala Sticks :

Handrolling battis is the second stage of agarbatti manufacture. Producing hand rolled non-scented battis bamboo sticks, charcoal (wood /bamboo), jiggat and narua powder are required. The "jiggat" acts as an adhesive to bend the charcoal with the sticks. Jiggat is obtained from the bark of a tree, **Maclilus makarantha** commonly known as **chang peechala, mandai awaal, jeelseem and basra bukhui**.

These trees are found in the Northeastern region. The community SHG members and JFMCs trained people on scientific extraction of bark and processing for dust, in order to increase additional income for the groups and individuals. The 'jiggat' and charcoal dust are mixed with water and rolled it onto The rolled sticks which are called "non-scented battis or masala battis" are then sun dried and sent to the market.

c. Scenting , Packaging & Marketing:

The masala battis or non-scented battis are dipped in a variety of perfumes and then packed with the respective brand names for sale in the market. Some times, the marketing is being done by a separate agency as per their market reach in each specific region or country.

The value chain of raw bamboo sticks, masala battis, scented battis , packaging and marketing have been projected as below:

Sl. No	Particulars	% of the total
01.	Raw Bamboo Sticks	2%
02.	Masala battis/ Non-scented battis	8%
03.	Perfumes	30%
04.	Packaging Materials	30%
05.	Marketing	20%
06.	Miscellaneous	10%
	Total	100

P4 Approach:

Presently the potential for developing the agarbattis sector in the Northeastern region is not well focused. Therefore importance has given on setting-up large scale industries and Common Facility Centre (CFC) based on the procurement of machines and tools.

India is country of villages, such rural based economic activities through the utilization of local resources, skill, and knowledge can be used to create ample employment and livelihood opportunities for the rural communities.

The agarbattis sector is one of the rural based cottage industries wherein the community people can get part-time or fulltime employment throughout the year. The village artisans can work within a cluster through a strong supply chain management of raw materials and forward linkages with the market. So far the supply based rural development program has not been able to achieve the objectives of the community dream. The problems have been located as:

- Improper scientific delivery mechanism system.
- Lack of a proper design for the program to inturn promotes ownership development of the local community.

A proper study of demand thereby a demand –based production system can help to set-up the agarbatti industry as a community enterprise on a sustainable basis. The need of the hour is a proper design in order to implement the program in a sustainable way. Such a design has been developed and is referred to as the “People, Private, and Public Partnership approach” or the P4 approach. By adopted the P4 approach, the agarbatti enterprise development activities can be implemented in the planned manner, on a sustainable basis with the active community participation.

The P4 approach aims at achieving its goals through :

- a. Intensive Motivation Campaign (IMC)
- b. Capacity Building
- c. Resource Development
- d. IEC Plan
- e. Financial Opportunities
- f. Community Business Development Plan
- g. Monitoring & Evaluation

The forward and backward linkages could be done through different partners at the community level. The role of different partners under P4 approach has been defined below:

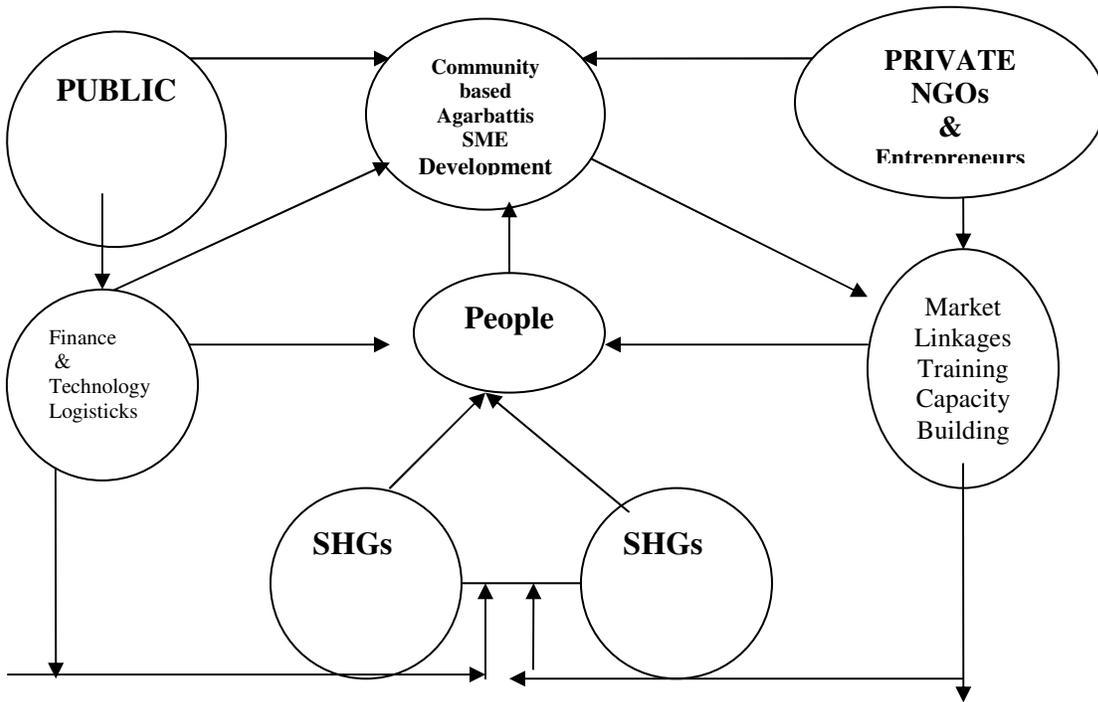
P-1: **People** mean the rural community in an identified cluster. The demand should come from the community themselves for setting-up the agarbatti enterprises. Packages of capacity building plan will help to facilitate the community.

P-2: **Public**, the government agency will play an active role in the program by providing logistic, financial and infrastructural aid to the entrepreneurs in order to maintain of rules and regulations in turn creating a stable environment.

P-3: **Private** Entrepreneurs or any similar agency like CBOs or NGOs may also be a partner in the sector. These agencies will facilitate marketing and capacity building. They can also provide services to the community enterprise of the sector.

P-4: **Partnership** may be directly or indirectly under the approach. All the partners finally end up in a common platform for the development of the agarbatti sector, each partners provide their support in their area of specialization.

P4 Approach



Conclusion:

In birds eye view, the agarbatti enterprise development in rural areas will definitely create a large scale employment and livelihood opportunities. In order to scale-up the sector, it needs investment, logistic arrangement for the entrepreneurs and a suitable model namely P4 approach, so that all the partners comprising the enterprise may actively involve themselves for the development of the sector and in turn increase income for themselves.

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