



Empowerment of Self-Help Group Women through Gulkand Preparation: A Community-Based Floricultural Value Addition Programme

***Deepika Sahu¹, Gagendra Singh Rajput² and Subuhi Nishad³**

¹NSS Volunteer, Department of Floriculture and Landscaping, College of Horticulture and Research Station, MGUVV, Durg, C.G.-491111, India

²NSS Programme Officer, Department of Plant Physiology, College of Horticulture and Research Station, MGUVV, Durg, C.G.-491111, India

³NSS Programme Co-Ordinator, IGKV, Raipur, C.G., India

***Corresponding Author's email: dpkasahu887@gmail.com**

Value addition of perishable floricultural produce can provide rural women with opportunities for income generation and entrepreneurship. A community-based programme involved 25 SHG women and focused on scientific gulkand preparation, hygienic processing, packaging, labelling, storage, marketing and entrepreneurship. Before training, 84% of participants had heard about gulkand, but only 20% knew its preparation method and 8% had prepared it earlier. The training combined theoretical information with practical demonstrations. Participants gained knowledge and skills related to rose petal selection, processing, preservation, packaging and value addition. The programme also created awareness about SHG-based micro-enterprises and supplementary livelihood opportunities. Limited packaging facilities, seasonal availability of quality rose flowers, inadequate market exposure and limited knowledge of branding and pricing were identified as major constraints. The programme demonstrated the potential of gulkand preparation as a simple value-addition activity for rural women.

Keywords: Gulkand, SHG women, women empowerment, rose, value addition, entrepreneurship, livelihood

Introduction

Floricultural crops provide opportunities not only through the sale of fresh flowers but also through processing and value addition. Rose is an important flower crop that can be utilized for several value-added products. Gulkand, prepared primarily from fresh rose petals and sugar, is a traditional value-added product that can be prepared using relatively simple technology. Self-Help Groups provide an effective platform for collective learning, entrepreneurship and income generation among rural women. However, limited technical knowledge, inadequate processing facilities and poor market exposure often restrict their participation in value-added enterprises. Therefore, the present programme was undertaken to provide practical training to SHG women on gulkand preparation and to create awareness regarding its entrepreneurial and livelihood potential.

Materials and Methods

The programme was organized at Jamgaon (M), Durg district, Chhattisgarh, by CHRS, Sankara, MGUVV, during the academic session 2025–26. A total of 25 SHG women participated in the programme.

Training was conducted through theoretical orientation and practical demonstration. Major components included:

- Selection and collection of suitable fresh rose petals
- Cleaning, washing and draining of petals
- Mixing of rose petals with sugar
- Hygienic processing and sterilization of containers
- Solar curing and periodic mixing
- Packaging, labelling and storage
- Cost estimation, pricing and marketing
- Entrepreneurship and collective SHG-based business opportunities

For preparation, cleaned rose petals and sugar were used approximately in a 1:1 ratio (w/w). The material was placed in sterilized glass containers and subjected to solar curing for approximately 15–21 days, with periodic stirring, followed by maturation and airtight storage.

Results and Discussion

Profile of Participants

The participating women represented different age groups, educational backgrounds and occupations. The largest age group was 26–35 years (36%), followed by 36–45 years (32%). Women above 45 years constituted 20%, while 12% were below 25 years. Educationally, 28% had middle-school education, 24% had primary education and 20% had high-school education. Twelve per cent were illiterate, 12% had higher-secondary education and 4% were graduates or above. Agriculture was the major occupation (32%), followed by homemakers (24%) and agricultural labourers (20%). Dairy/poultry activities accounted for 12%, while 8% were engaged in small businesses.

Existing Knowledge about Gulkand

Knowledge component	Participants (%)
Had heard about gulkand	84
Knew the preparation method	20
Had prepared gulkand earlier	8
Knew about commercial marketing	12
Aware of value addition in rose	28

The baseline information indicated that although most women had heard about gulkand, only a small proportion had practical knowledge of its preparation or commercial potential. This highlighted the need for hands-on training and entrepreneurship-oriented extension activities.

Skill Development and Women Empowerment

The practical demonstrations improved participants' understanding of scientific gulkand preparation. Women became familiar with important steps such as petal selection, cleaning, sugar mixing, hygienic handling, curing, packaging and storage. The programme also created awareness about quality maintenance and the importance of proper packaging and labelling. Participation in practical activities helped develop confidence among SHG members and encouraged them to consider value addition as a possible income-generating activity. Collective processing through SHGs can facilitate sharing of labour, resources and marketing responsibilities.

Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Opportunities

Gulkand preparation has potential as a small-scale household or SHG enterprise because it can utilize locally available rose flowers and requires comparatively simple processing technology. Value addition can increase the economic utility of flowers that otherwise have limited post-harvest life. The programme created awareness regarding possible marketing avenues such as local markets, exhibitions, gift outlets, Ayurvedic stores and other organized or digital marketing channels. Collective branding and marketing through SHGs may further improve the visibility of the product. The activity also demonstrated the possibility of reducing post-harvest losses by converting fresh rose petals into a storable value-added product. Such activities can contribute to supplementary income and strengthen rural women's participation in entrepreneurial activities.

Constraints

Despite the positive response, several constraints were identified. These included limited previous technical knowledge, inadequate packaging and labelling facilities, limited exposure to branding and organized marketing, seasonal availability of quality rose flowers and limited financial resources for purchasing containers and packaging materials. The relatively short training period also limited detailed exposure to business planning, finance and food-safety regulations.

Recommendations

For sustainable development of gulkand-based enterprises among SHG women, the following measures are suggested:

1. Conduct regular refresher and advanced skill-development programmes.
2. Provide training on attractive packaging, labelling and branding.
3. Develop market linkages with local retailers, exhibitions and organized markets.
4. Create awareness regarding relevant government schemes and financial support.
5. Organize exposure visits to successful food-processing and SHG enterprises.
6. Provide periodic mentoring and follow-up support.
7. Promote collective production and marketing through SHGs.
8. Strengthen collaboration between agricultural/horticultural institutions and rural communities.

Conclusion

The community-based gulkand preparation programme demonstrated that value addition of rose flowers can be used as a practical skill-development and entrepreneurship activity for SHG women. The training addressed important gaps in technical knowledge, processing, packaging, storage and marketing. It also generated awareness about the potential of gulkand preparation for supplementary livelihood and reduction of post-harvest losses. Continued technical guidance, market linkage, packaging support and institutional mentoring would be important for converting the acquired skills into sustainable SHG-based enterprises.