

RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER ISSUES

P.K. Dashora¹ & Meena Sanadhya²

After 56 years of independence India is still a developing country. With 1/6 of world population India is struggling hard to improve its rank position among the list of developing nations of the world. The developmental strategies for India should necessarily consider its history, culture, traditions, social norms, natural resource, economic and educational level of its people needs and future aspirations etc. A number of development models have been tried out but holistic development of our nation can take place only with the Gandhian model of development where centre of all activities is village, poor person and women. Adjustment with nature and sense of trustship should be the life value. Opportunities for everyone and work as per the best ability should be the target this requires a system that every individual of our nation given enough opportunities to grow and let others grow. The development models tried so far had largely ignored the rural people constituting about 70% of India's population.

In order to ensure the development of nation we have to sort out strategies for rural development. For this, we have to make special strategies for different sections of societies in view of their needs. Women in India is one such group where they contribute much in the rural socio-economic and cultural domain but socially construct role positions put women in subordinate position affecting the development, which in turn also effects the development task.

Therefore, it is very necessary to empower Indian women specially the rural women who are largely engaged in agricultural and allied activities. Some of the major handicaps in

overall development of women and the suggestions to overcome with special reference to agriculture are as follows:

1. Limited Access to Resource (land)–

Access to assets is the single most urgent need for the upliftment of women in general and farm women in particular. Though the Indian legislation permits equal right of man and woman in property yet the conditions in actual sense is not so. Rural women still do not have ownership on land and the pattas are allotted in the name of their husband. Due to this they can not take independent decision on various agricultural aspects. Therefore, concerted efforts are needed to promote women access to resources. For this, following measures are suggested :

- (i) In the distribution of land to the landless, women should also be included in the existing Government policies on distribution of joint pattas to husband and wife.
- (ii) Short term operational ownership of land to female farmers while giving land on leasing may be arranged.

2. Limited Access to Input and Credit–

Though women make substantial contributions to agriculture development, their access to the most crucial input "credit" is limited. Since they are not land owners, the credit flow generally goes in the name of male members (i.e. owners). For promoting women's access to farm input and credit, following measures may be taken.

- (i) Credit flow to rural women could be channeled through credit and thrift societies.
- (ii) Voluntary agencies in each district may

^{1&2}. Associate Profesor, (Ext. Edu.) Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology, Udaipur (Raj.)

be identified which could help in developing women organizations.

- (iii) Credit organizations should simplify the procedures and modalities to suit the educational level of rural women and also organize credit camps in village exclusively for women.
- (iv) Farm women should also be recipient of credit for which possession of assets may not be insisted upon.
- (v) Existing loaning policies of NABARD need orientation towards women credit eligibility by granting them the status of a producer.

3. Inadequate Technical Competency–

Though women are involved in almost all agricultural operations, yet, they have inadequate technical competency due to their limited exposure to outside world. This has compelled them to follow the age old practices which in turn result in poor work efficiency and drudgery.

Training is an important component of HRD which enhances knowledge, skill and attitude. For building technical competency among farm women, specialized need based and skill oriented training should be organized preferably at village level. Some of the priority areas in which women need training are :

- Conservation and management of natural resources.
- IPM and INM.
- Renewable energy sources.
- Seed production technology.
- Use of fertilizer.
- Post -harvest management.

Looking to the importance of conservation and management of natural resources for sustainable development, due emphasis should be given on this aspect and it should be included as an essential feature in all the training programmes organized for farm women. For effective training programme, following points should be considered :

- (i) Extension agencies should pursue the family approach to training.
- (ii) Training should be organized at appropriate time specially the pre-seasonal training.
- (iii) There should be proper follow-up of the programmes and there should be synchronization in time between knowledge and skill transfer and the supply credit and other inputs needed to apply the knowledge.
- (iv) During training, the training institute should identify the active participants and intensive training should be imparted to them so that they can be used as a “Para extension workers” for dissemination of technical information.

4. Poor Participation in Decision Mak-

ing–Generally, decision regarding the activities requiring technical competency and money related matters were taken by male members. Since knowledge and economic independence are the parameters of women empowerment enhancing the technical knowledge, skills, and building greater access to the various resources will develop self-confidence among them and would automatically lead to their greater involvement in various farm activities.

5. Poor Existing Research and Extension Systems–

Though several technological breakthrough have been observed in the recent past the technologies by the researchers are not tailored to the specific needs of the farm women. With the result, most of the agricultural operations are performed manually and in an unskilled manner which results into greater drudgery on the part of farm women. In order to cater to the technological needs of the farm women, there is need to reorient the entire research system for which following measures may be taken :

- (i) In order to make scientific information in agriculture, it should be tested and refined keeping in view the different farming situations in socio-cultural milieu. It would lead to women specific technologies.

- (ii) Some of the talks and operations in which women are specifically involved and which are drudgery prone include transplanting, weeding, harvesting, threshing, winnowing etc. Therefore, these require special attention of the farm scientist for evolving relevant technologies or modifying the existing ones.
- (iii) The design, development and testing of agricultural implements and machinery should be undertaken with the active participation of rural women. In this regards with local artisans will be helpful. In essence, machinery should be a blessing rather than become a curse.
- (iv) While evolving agricultural technologies, indigenous practices used by women should be paid due attention for blending with the frontier ones for greater adoption.
- (iii) Under T and V system like Kisan Mandal, Mahila Kisan Mandals should be constituted or at least 50% of the women participation in such groups should be assured.
- (iv) In order to provide effective base for access to services and facilities. Women agriculturist should be organized into autonomous groups.
- (v) With a view to abreast women with latest agricultural innovations state Govt. should initiate: "Advance Information Centre for Women" at village level.
- (vi) In order to develop and disseminate appropriate technologies for farm women, there is need to strengthen linkage between various research and extension organizations engaged in transfer of technology.

Like research, extension systems are also not much oriented towards women folk as reflected by the fact that out of the total 88,000 VEWs only about 10% (9000) are female. This has adversely affected the transfer of technology. Most of the extension programmes are "target oriented" rather than "need based" which are formulated without analyzing and documenting needs of the farm women. Farm women in India have to be tackled with different kind of extension models because of the fact that they differ with men on various counts, viz. innovativeness, educational level, intellectual ability, flexibility, decision making etc. With this assumption, a separate extension strategy needs to be developed for all programmes intended to benefit farm women. Some of the suggestions in this regard are :

- (i) Women farmers should be included as the direct clientele in the existing extension system.
- (ii) Women development projects should use participatory approach at all stages. I.e. in identification of needs, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

- (vii) Female extension personnel should be recruited at various hierarchical levels.

6. Limited Exposure to Mass Media-

The transfer of technology approach which mainly includes mass media are also not paying due attention towards dissemination of adequate and timely agricultural information to the farm women. Some of the important points in this regard are :

- (i) At present coverage of agricultural programmes on Doordarshan is only 12% of the total telecast time (in Hindi), out of which, the programmes related to women are negligible. Therefore, there is utmost need to provide adequate coverage to the programmes related to women. The authorities of mass media may apportion at least 25-30% time to farm technologies/information pin pointed to farm women.
- (ii) A few programmes which are meant for women are telecast at a time, which is not suitable for them. Therefore, the media personnel are required to pay due attention towards timings of the programmes.
- (iii) Though the broadcast of agricultural programmes on AIR is a regular feature,

the programmes are monotonous in nature and stereotype. Therefore authorities of AIR should have effective linkage with communication personnel for bringing about the programmes in a variety of way viz. use of success stories, experience features etc. that would be more interesting to the listeners.

- (iv) Looking at the low literacy rate of rural women, technical literature developed for them should be in a simple language (preferably in local dialect) with due emphasis on illustrations so that even the neo literates can make use of it.
- (v) There should be state level coordination committee in order to review, monitor and evaluate various programmes being telecast, broadcast and published by the

different print media. Feed-back and suggestions of the audience/listeners/readers would improve the quality of programmes.

Looking to the present status of women in agriculture and their limited access to research and extension services, it is utmost needed to revamp the entire approach towards women farmers to cater to their existing needs emphasizing the future challenges which the country has to face in the coming years. For this, there is no way but to develop the human resources. Hence, empowerment of women is the need of the day, as it is only the surest way of making women as "Partners in development" and bringing them in the mainstream of development, not only as mere "Beneficiaries" but also "Contributors."

REFERENCES

1. Agendas Notes, western Regional workshop of "Media Support to Agriculture", September 9-11, 1998. Organized by Directorate of Extension Education . Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of India, New Delhi in Collaboration with Directorate of Extension Education, RAU, Campus - Udaipur, PP 11-13.
2. Anonymous (1997). "Involving women in Agriculture- A study across three states" Special studies in Agricultural Extension (Vol-I) compiled and Edited by Sadamate, V.V. Kukreti, P.D. Sabharwal, A.K. Singh, Suraj. Monitoring and Evaluation Cell, Directorate of Extension, Ministry Govt. of India, Krishi Vistar Bhawan, Pusa, New Delhi. PP. 12-19.
3. Gupta, P and Sanadhya, M (1993). "Female role in agriculture". RAJAD Project Deptt. of H. Sc. Ext. Edu. College of H. Sc., RAU, Campus - Udaipur.
4. Grover. I and Kapoor. A.C. (1988). "Technology by passes the specific needs of farm women". Indian Farming Vol. XXXVIII, No, 8 PP.48-50.
5. Sanadhya, M (1997). "Adoption Assessment and Refinement of post harvest technology of major cereal crops in humid southern and south eastern plains of Rajasthan". Ph. D. Thesis, College of Home Science, RAU Campus Udaipur.
6. Proceedings and Recommendations of International Conference on "Appropriate Agricultural Technologies for Farm Women-Future research strategy and linkage with development systems". Nov. 30 - Dec, 6, 1988. ICAR Krishi Bhawan New Dehli in collaboration with International Rice Research Institute, Manila.
7. Paroda R.S. (1997) "Sustainable Development- options and priority areas". The Hindu Survey of Indiar Agriculture, Chennai- 660002 PP. 13-17.
8. Perspective Plan 1995-2020. National Research Centre for Women in Agriculture, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, 93 Dharmvihar, P.O. Khandagire, Bhubaneswar- 751030. 11-16.
9. Proceedings and Recommendation of National Workshop on "Women in Agriculture", September 23-24 1987 Govt. of India, Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture and Co-operation, Directorate of Extension, New Delhi.