

GENDER DISPARITIES UNDER RURAL ANIMAL HUSBANDRY SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Livestock sector provides gainful employment and supplementary income to the vast majority of the rural population. Woman has been playing an equally important role as man in animal husbandry activities. In view of the extensive roles being played by rural women in animal husbandry activities and roles being governed by predominant joint partnership with men, to reduce drudgery, to increase efficiency, to generate employment and income through augmented productivity of livestock, there is a need to clearly understand the extent to which rural women are involved, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in rural livestock production system for developing appropriate technologies. Appropriate and women specific technologies in animal husbandry sector are required to be developed to help the rural women to improve their efficiency. Apart from these they need to be reoriented in terms of knowledge about and skills involved in adopting available animal husbandry technologies. It is imperative that we must check discrimination on the basis of gender and sex and provide the necessary educational, infrastructure, financial and moral support to enable women to participate and perform various productive, employment and income generating roles in the field of animal husbandry, efficiently.

Key Words: Livestock, Employment, Animal Husbandry.

INTRODUCTION

Livestock sector provides high quality human food (milk, meat and egg) wool, fiber and manure, in addition to gainful employment and supplementary income to the vast majority of the rural population. The livestock sector currently employs about 8% of total India's work force and has been growing at the rate of 4% per annum during last decade compared to 1% per annum in agriculture. Since ages, woman has been playing an equally important role as man in a rural family. Their contribution can be gauged from the findings in a study that in Himalayan region, a pair of bullock works 1064 hours, a man 212 hours a woman works 3485 hours a years on one hac. Farm. Traditionally, rural women display a picture of conservative, family bound, illiterate, orthodox person, who is less fed, overworked and has to go through the taxing ordeal of repetitive pregnancies. Besides she occupies a low position in the socio-economic ladder in India. It is all due to the explicit division of labor based on gender and sex. Indian women as a whole suffer a lot due to social and economic injustice meted out to them. It is obvious that she has deprived of qualitative as well as quantitative opportunities of developmental processes and their consequential social and economical impacts. In spite of sitting on the periphery of the developmental process she has continued to contribute in her own right, her might quietly but positively and hence finally the

recognition as an invisible worker (Verma and Roy, 2003).

Division of Labour

Historically, men go to the field for agricultural operations while women stay at home for domestic chores. This includes cooking meals, cleaning of house, washing of dishes and clothes, care and feeding of children, care of elderly people at home, taking meals to the field for husband as well as care and rearing of productive, non-productive or sub-productive domestic animals. Normally, women never complain about critical circumstances and the environment in which they actually work in spite of devoting more than 14 hours per day on various activities (Tripathi, 1991; Rangnekar, 1992; Ray & Kishore, 1991; Tripathi, & Kunzru, 1992; Singh & Tripathi, 2001; Gupta & Tripathi, 2002). Research studies highlighted that women in India are major producers of food in terms of value, volume and no. of hours worked. Nearly 63% of all economically active men are engaged in agriculture as compared to 78% of women. Thus rural women are more involved in animal husbandry sector than men. Studies indicate that women spend 1460 hours per year in animal husbandry which is 16.66 percent of their life time as compared to men, who work for only about 500 hours per year which is only 6 percent of their life time. Even the tribal women and women from hilly regions are employed in animal

husbandry at a level much higher than their men. Although, Varna system and social stratification is diluting day-by-day, still lower caste, lower class and illiterate women are more actively working in this sector.

Domestic Front

Like an urban woman, home is the forte of rural women also. Management of livestock is one of the allied agricultural activity in which Indian women contributes a lot. A rural woman's day starts early in the morning with providing feed and water to the animal and ends late in the evening. Her responsibilities include chaffing, milking, cleaning of animals and cattle sheds, taking care of pregnant and sick animals, caring of newly born calves, making cow dung cake and processing of milk and milk products. Irrespective of the inclement weather she has to walk for miles to bring fodder/grass and crop residues for the animal, for delivering food to her husband and other members of the family in the field even during advanced pregnancy and other critical stages of life. This is a favour of neither her health nor the welfare of her family especially where children are very young.

Working Limitations

Rural women equally participates and play important role in running successfully enterprises like; dairing, poultry, piggery, goatry, sheep farming; quail rearing rabbit farming etc. She bears the dual responsibility of home and of outside work at the cost of the required maternal responsibilities to her small children. Sometimes women workers are forced to work till the last day of pregnancy and their job is terminated if they proceeds on leave. She is fully bound with the caste customs, religion, traditions and taboos, social norms that in fact have been responsible for lowering her status in the society.

Discrimination

Female children are more involved in taking animals for grazing, cleaning and animal related activities as helpers to their mothers (Agarwal, 1987; Agarwal, 1988; Tripathi, 1991). They are often not well fed and their diets are less nutritious than male children of the family. They are deliberately not sent school on the plea that girls eventually have to do the household chores when they will be 7-8 years of age and also after marriage. They should, therefore, learn to perform the household chores

instead of going. Girl children are often denied their rightful place in the family where a son is already available. Experience shows that male child has the first priority over the girl child in all spheres of life, including attending school. It is more a question of missed opportunity through a motivated and perpetuated discrimination than that of lack of potential or ability. They thus grow up in palpably enveloping environment of conservatives and orthodoxy resulting in an inbuilt feeling of inferiority, neglects and forced habit of self-restraint.

To understand the gender discrimination in animal husbandry activities, the author has collected data through personal interview schedule from 120 rural women of few villages of central zone of UP. It clearly indicates that extent of participation of rural women in various animal husbandry activities is far greater than their male counterparts.

Table clearly indicates participation of rural women was higher in the areas of feeding, management and preparation of livestock products. The participation was medium in the areas of health and hygiene and low in breeding, fodder cultivation and marketing activities. Individual participation was found higher in the activities of observing animal at heat, providing water, mixing ration, care of sick animals, cleaning of cattle shed and making cow dung cakes. The male dominated activities were mostly of outdoor nature, wherein male members, children both male and females were involved. It shows that most of the activities were being done by women either individually or jointly in varying share with varying family positions like spouse/sons/daughters/daughters-in-law/sisters-in-law etc. It appears that tradition has put women as permanent workers in those animal husbandry activities that are regarded as of low status, low paid, low skilled, low prestige and dead end jobs. In spite of performing various tasks simultaneously, such as paid or unpaid labor, household, procreation and child rearing, her contribution in terms of decision making in animal husbandry sector remains shamefully low, men being the sole decision makers in the family. Improving the efficiency of rural women in the animal husbandry sector is, therefore, a challenging task, which needs to be taken up with courage, commitment and conviction, on the basic principles of equity and justice in a democratic, civilized society.

Table : Participation Profile of Rural Women in Various Animal Husbandry Tasks

Sl. No.	Activities/Tasks	Typology of participation % of respondents				Not Involved
		Participation status %	Rank	Independently	Jointly with male/female	
A	Breeding Activities					
a	Taking the animal for AI	56.0	II	16.7	39.3	
b	Taking the animal for natural service	36.7	III	11.7	25.0	44.0
c	Take the animal for PD	72.4	I	26.7	45.7	63.3
d	Observing animal at heat	72.5	I	60.0	12.6	26.6
B.	Feeding activities					
a	Taking animal for grazing	38.3	VI	15.5	22.8	27.5
b	Providing feed to animals	93.3	I	35.8	57.5	61.7
c	Providing water to animals	92.4	II	54.8	37.6	6.7
d	Cutting of grass / fodder	55.8	V	32.5	23.3	7.6
e	Transporting of grass/ fodder	55.8	V	32.5	23.5	44.2
f	Mixing ration	87.4	III	53.3	34.1	44.2
g	Chaffing fodder	69.1	IV	37.5	31.6	12.6
C.	Fodder cultivation					
a	Preparation of land and fodder seeds	25.0	IV	-	25.0	30.9
b	Intercultural operations	30.0	III	-	30.0	75.0
c	Harvesting of fodder crops	56.5	II	-	56.5	70.0
d	Storage of fodder seeds	79.2	I	11.6	67.6	43.5
D.	Health Care					
a	Taking the animal for treatment	33.2	V	4.1	29.1	12.8
b	Taking the animal for vaccination	34.2	V	4.1	30.1	66.8
c	Giving/Applying medicine to animal at home	89.2	II	35.8	53.4	65.8
d	Care of sick animal	98.4	I	54.0	44.4	10.8
e	Care of animal during Pregnancy	72.5	III	39.9	32.6	1.6
f	Care of newly born calf	70.7	IV	44.0	26.7	27.5
E.	Management Activities					
a	Attending animal at the time of Parturition	56.7	V	30.0	26.7	29.3
b	Disinfecting the naal	44.9	VI	28.3	16.6	43.3
c	Milking	76.4	III	43.0	33.4	55.1
d	Cleaning and bathing of animal	69.9	IV	45.8	24.1	23.6
e	Cleaning of cattle shed	92.4	II	68.3	24.1	30.1
f	Making of cow dung cakes	93.4	I	83.4	10.0	7.6
F.	Processing and Marketing					
a	Purchase and sale of animals	41.7	IV	-	41.7	6.6
b	Purchase of feed for animals	20.0	VII	-	20.0	58.3
c	Preparation and processing of livestock products	100.0	I	-	100	80.0
d	Selling of livestock products at home	80.9	II	20.0	60.9	-
e	Selling of livestock products at collection center	56.6	III	6.6	50.0	19.1
f	Selling of livestock products at village market	17.5	VI	-	17.5	43.4
g	Keeping accounts for animal products sold	15.8	V	-	15.8	82.5

CHALLENGES

In order to reduce drudgery, to increase efficiency, to generate employment and income through augmented productivity of livestock, we need to understand clearly the extent to which rural women are involved, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in rural livestock production system for developing appropriate technologies.

* Appropriate and women specific technologies in animal husbandry sector are required to be developed to help the rural women to improve their efficiency and they need to be reoriented in terms of knowledge about and skills involved in adopting available animal husbandry technologies.

- * It is general observation that traditionally, rural women feel uncomfortable with the male scientists in unveiling their problems. Under such circumstances, female extension workers need to be involved in the technology transfer processes.
- * Effective communication system which would make rural women aware of the existence of opportunities and their access procedures, programs, training and other benefits available to them for their optimum contribution in the developmental process will not only be helpful but will act as a motivating force for participation in the national reconstruction.
- * Various literacy campaigns and functional literacy

programs have raised the hopes for socioeconomic development even at grassroot levels. Vocational education and training for women in animal husbandry sector is thus another dimension requiring attention for their development.

- * Existing avenues of employment of rural women in animal husbandry sector should be opened up through educational and training programs for them. Women should be trained not only with respect to technology itself but should be given training in related fields as well. On-farm training and participatory research will be fruitful for effective transfer of technology.
- * There is also an urgent need to establish technology-blending centers in each district in order to improve and develop simple, low cost and easily manageable livestock technologies.
- * Efforts are needed to evolve the alternative and innovative credit dispensation system to cover the vast masses of women beneficiaries.
- * It is imperative that we must check discrimination on the basis of gender and sex and provide the necessary educational, infrastructure, financial and moral support to enable women to participate and perform various productive, employment and income generating roles in the field of animal husbandry, efficiently. Some positive steps in this direction have been initiated both by the Government and NGOs in the form of legislations, program etc.
- * There is a need to redesign the extension services to focus on women through appropriate training /

sensitization of extension personnel's towards the role and contribution of women in total animal husbandry sector. There is, however a need for creating a common forum at micro level, to coordinate the activities of various programs.

- * There is a need to establish head of farming family for extension service and assuming that information will automatically trickle down to women livestock farmers.
- * Experts in agricultural extension work have found women to be better communicator and feel that one to one oral communication through women had a greater diffusion value. It is also felt that international approach should be supplemented by group contact approach.
- * There is, however, an urgent need for an all rounds intensification of our efforts through research and extension systems at grassroots, societal and National levels. It is required to equip and exploit, to their advantage, the full potentials of this potent work force for the challenges, we would like them to shoulder today and tomorrow, with pride, dignity and honor.

CONCLUSION

In view of the extensive roles being played by rural women in animal husbandry activities and roles being governed by predominant joint partnership with men, there is a need to develop interventional strategies for knowledge and skill empowerment of rural women to promote, protect and preserve their visible and productive roles in livestock farming and allied activities.

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