

Exploring the Socio-cultural Challenges of Women Entrepreneurs and Mitigation Aspects

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Abstract – A study was conducted in two villages namely Parichanrapada and Badala villages of Nimapada block and Balipatana block under Puri district in January and February months of 2017. Data were collected from potential farm women for entrepreneurship development in those areas to identify the obstacles for them and their preference level in need for training and appropriate agri-educational modules regarding climate resilient crop varieties, farming practices and seed, water and post-harvest management techniques. Around fifteen variables were taken into account as hurdles for growing as entrepreneurs. Those are broadly classified into availability of resources (fund, time, space etc.) socio-personal / gender influence (gendered seclusion, household responsibilities etc.) and access to facilities and infrastructure related to entrepreneurship. It was found that amongst the three, the socio-personal / gender influence (gendered seclusion, household responsibilities etc.) factor is affecting most negatively whereas other two variables are not of lesser importance. Post-harvest management has emerged as the most interesting and convenient area where they would welcome training and educational modules to their profit.

Keywords – Entrepreneurship, Nascent, Post-harvest management, Dairy, Obstacle.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women play a major role in the world's agricultural production systems. Despite rural women's major role in agriculture and other rural activities, higher barriers in education and training limit their participation in more productive and remunerative work, perform managerial and leadership roles and participate fully in the development of their communities. In recent years, there is widespread recognition of the vital roles played by women in all areas of agriculture and the need for women to have access, through formal and non-formal training, to the knowledge and skills needed for improved agricultural production, processing and marketing. Extension agents, researchers, teachers and students all need to be educated and informed about rural women's problems, potentials and aspirations.

Improving the quality of agricultural education holds the key to propel not only agricultural growth but also developing technologies for sustainable agriculture leading to livelihood and nutritional security. Small and marginal farmers, landless labourers, farm women and school drop outs in villages constitute bulk of the 40 million unemployed or semi employed work force of the country. Under the project, enhancing the reach and effectiveness

of agricultural education to farmers, rural women and other stakeholders through non-formal education has been identified as one of the activities.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To ascertain the existing profile and factors influencing agri-entrepreneurship development by rural women (age, education).
2. To identify the gaps in the potential areas for development of agri- entrepreneurship.
3. To assess the areas of need of training and need for agri-educational modules for promoting agri-entrepreneurship development among rural women.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Locale

The project has been implemented in Balipatna and Nimapada block of Puri district of Odisha where the institute already has had the experience of working with farm women. With the kind of resource availability, agro-diversity, accessibility and the extent of women working in agriculture, these two blocks were therefore identified as most appropriate for the study. In these two blocks, one GP per block (cluster of 2-3 revenue villages) were identified based on factors such as motivation for enterprise, farm based livelihood options as well as readiness for adopting new farm technologies. The Gram Panchayats that were selected are namely Kurunjipur and Chanharapada-villages therein were Badala and Parichnharapada respectively.

Sample

A sample of 60 women was identified using random sampling method. The sample was drawn from villages primarily having Dalit habitation. The different categories taken into consideration were farm women who are either small or marginal farmers – members of households that own farm land of very low configuration i.e. 2 acres or less. These women cultivated either as owners, tenants or share croppers or were one or more than one all at the same time. The method of data collection was through interview schedules. The respondents were asked questions in order to assess their potentiality for entrepreneurship through which factors that influence entrepreneurship among farm women were identified.

IV. RESULT & DISCUSSION

1. Existing Social Profile of Respondents

- The highest percent of the respondents are in 'very young' category of 25-29 years age group i.e. 30%. The second highest are 27% respondents in the 'young' category 30-34 years age group. The third category is 'older' in the 50-54 years age group is 17% of the sample. Only about 3% respondents are in the 'very old' category of 60-64 years age group.
- Education level is quite low amongst the respondents 67% being illiterate and none possessing a college-level degree where being a matriculate or a high-school dropout denotes their highest level education and their representation in the sample also negligible (20%).
- So this data assumes financial empowerment of these women can only be through options like need based location specific entrepreneurships.

2. Obstacles for new female Entrepreneurs as Perceived by them

- Here in the table though the most disturbing element for nascent entrepreneurs or highest occurring obstacle has given the first ranks but these are negative influence for them. For example they are not having examples of much successful women entrepreneurs from their fellow people which can motivate them for taking risk, its frequency being 91.66% and it is ranked as first (1) or highest whereas **Farm Inputs** availability (HYV & stress resilient varieties) has been securing least frequency and percentage has been ranked as 13 or lowest. Perhaps due to the selected villages being situated in peri-urban areas (rural—urban transition zone where urban and rural uses mix and often clash) from where Bhubaneswar, Puri, and Cuttack towns are not distant affairs, they can get some quality inputs from there. Here it means that highest ranking obstacles from 1 to 13) need more emphasis for mitigation.
- Being loaded with house-hold work they don't like to be over-burdened by extra responsibilities like entrepreneurship though have some interest in it. So this variable is next most important with 88.33% frequency. Again wholly or partially being devoid of Formal school education (a -confidence boosting factor), Accessing existing extension machinery, Gendered seclusion (Demotivation from close relatives to start something new being a woman), Easiness towards Credit schemes in nearest banks (due to almost nil assets to their credit) etc are other maximum pronounced factors which come as hurdles for any start-up.
- Though less pronounced in frequency still subsidized and well - timed dissemination/access of farm inputs customized to the agro-climatic zone are critical needs required to be met. Presently, farm labour component is addressed by informally agreed upon exchange of own or family labour in one another's farms. But, access to irrigation facilities adequately as also fertilizer availability **is also a huge** need in the area. The farm households to which the women belong own very small farm holdings. Availability of space also is a very important factor that discourages an entrepreneurial climate in the community.

Finance or funds support also emerges as important factor that encourages entrepreneurship. As per the study as many as of the farm women in the sample agree to this. Definitely finance is impacting their desire for entrepreneurship as also their achievement motivation and self – efficacy that they can run an enterprise successfully.

- First among these are identified as the denial of inheritance of land rights especially in a patriarchal social system has further contributed to the subordinate status of farm women out here. **At present** there is no system of joint Patta (land is registered in the name of both the husband and the wife) being followed. Secondly, connected organically to the first one is the strict adherence to leasing regulations in the state. Even if the farm households included in the sample have small agricultural land holdings, it can be compensated with a regulated leasing system that is beneficial to the actual cultivators. Presently, regulated leasing system is not in place. The leasing practiced is favorable more to the land owners. The sharecroppers have to give away half of the net production to the land owners.
- In a scenario of globalized market, there has to be a continuous building up of skills and information based on agri-entrepreneurship to keep pace with the dynamic market demands as well as scientific research. That is why it is of immense importance to keep the linkage with experts and scientists. The present agri-extension machinery in the state still addresses farmers rather than farm women. Because of this, women are bereft of essential information and extension support in order to meet the present challenges that they face.
- If the agri-extension machinery is made more dynamic with smooth and easy transfer of technology in the state **and the farm women can access it easily**, then they can be benefited.
- Time management next stands out as a major constraint for women to take time out from their home chores to invest their time and energy for entrepreneurship.
- Education is a very important precursor of successfully starting and running an entrepreneurial venture. It is integrated with other related aspects such as an enlarged network of relations both formal and informal as well as accessing information through one's network and also taking initiative to access information by oneself.
- If we look at the table below we see that almost 67% of the farm women are completely unschooled, only 3% of women have passed lower primary level school education and 3% of women have passed class 5, 7% of the farm women have passed secondary level education (class 7th) and about 20% of the women have secondary level education out of which only 1 women is matriculate and the other woman is 10th fail. As per the study findings, women's social capital in the study region is limited.
- All the respondents respond in the negative regarding the question "do you think other women associated with you would join in the enterprise?"
- There are various positive aspects of the concept of social capital are interpersonal trust, satisfaction with life, optimism which creates social support, integration and social cohesion. All these are of tremendous benefit for

societal well being. It also has positive points that enhance individual well being. There are no women entrepreneurs in the area that can serve as role models for the farm women. When we say role model it means a person from the same socio-economic background with similar social status undertaking an entrepreneurial venture successfully. We did not find any such farm women in the location of the study.

- Panchayati Raj System has tremendous potential in the state for giving land to women on lease basis and being cultivated in a cooperative manner.
- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Generation (MNREGA) scheme can provide help such as creating irrigation facilities and reclamation of degraded land through use of water shed system. Women are important beneficiaries in the scheme, however they do not have direct participation or cannot stake a claim for themselves from the PRI system. This is directly related to their social capital by way of SHG membership. Merely membership is not enough the SHG has to come to a level of credit worthiness in order to establish its status in the community which too hasn't happened. Last but not the least, is the factor of lack of access to credit facilities- this is connected to the SHG being credit worthy so that any bank can vouch for them.

3. Areas of need for Training and Development of Agri-Educational Modules

- Here it should be noted that none of the variables we have taken are mutually exclusive. So they don't make it to 100% if added in whole. As shown in the above table it is evident that the farm-women feel the need for training in mostly post- harvest management practices (around 75%) as they are mostly engaged in these practices with wholesome responsibilities like winnowing, grading, sorting, storing and processing for food stuffs for making pickles, jams, papads, puffed rice and flaked rice etc for daily consumption. Through training and educational modules as their guides afterwards they can prepare some improved products with same time utilisation of household work and commercialise it. They face irrigation and water stress conditions in dry season. Uncertainty rainfall is a common phenomenon here. So water management is also very important for their livelihood maintenance. Seed management, Farming practices and Climate resilient crop varieties are also perceived as important with more than 50% frequencies for each.
- Lack of technical knowledge is a key constraint that farm women face in this area. Most **farm women** are adept at **traditional agriculture practice**. However, though the production continues to be high yet the worth of the production assessed in terms of value realization is low. This is due to lack of technical knowledge regarding climate resilient crop varieties, farming practices and seed management and water management. The latest know-how such as integrated farming, mixed cropping is also not known to them. Since most do not have large farmlands available for cultivation, it is important to introduce new technologies that have shorter harvest as also soil management **technologies** in order to **increase crop yield**. Women **do not have** knowledge about the new varieties

with traits such as drought resistance, shorter growth span or those that can be grown with less input of water. Needless to say, farm women belong to socially and economically backward strata in the area. Lack of knowledge of **scientific know-how and do-how and lack of training inputs have greatly affected practice of agriculture to be more lucrative in this area for farm women who undertake most of the farm activities in the fields**. Women in the sample **perceived that training is the key requirement for starting an enterprise**.

V. CONCLUSION

Access to agricultural education can promote adoption of science and knowledge-based practices for sustainable growth, entrepreneurship skills and self reliance. In the medium and long term, access of rural women to agricultural education would bridge the persisting gender gap in access to agricultural knowledge, which in turn will create conditions for accelerated dissemination and application of knowledge and technology in agriculture and home management. The process would create new avenues of income and employment for rural women and youth, particularly those who are not even considered as workers in strict economic sense, and help in tackling many problems that agriculture and rural India are facing, thereby contributing to sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas. The module has to be interactive wherein the women 'learn by doing' rather than by 'rote'. It must be such that it can be easily administered to women who have not had access to education. It must have an integrated adult education course connected to it, so that the literacy aspect of 3 R s' (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) can be adequately addressed.

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TABLE-1 Existing social profile of respondents

Existing social profile of respondents							
Age category of respondents(n=60)					Education level of respondents(n=60)		
Sl no.	Age	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage	Educational level	Frequency (f)	%age
1	21-24	Too Young	0	0	Illiterate	40	67%
2	25-29	Very Young	18	30	Lower primary (upto class 3)	02	3%
3	30-34	Young	16	27	Upper primary (classes 4 & 5)	02	3%
4	35-39	Young middle	6	10	Lower secondary (uptil class 7)	04	7%
5	40-44	Middle aged	8	13	Secondary (Class 8 to matriculation)	12	20%
6	50-54	Older	10	17	Higher Secondary (+2)	0	0
7	60-64	Very Old	2	3	University (+3 onwards)	0	0

TABLE-2 Ranking of obstacles faced by farm women for entrepreneurship development

Obstacles for new female entrepreneurs as perceived by them		Frequency(n=60)	Percentage	Rank
1. Availability of resources	1. Farm Inputs (HYV & stress resilient)	23	38.33	13
	2. Finance/Funds	25	55	12
	3. Time Management	41	68.33	8
	4. Availability of Space	39	65	9
2. Influence of socio-personal factors (gender influence)	5. Women agri entrepreneurs as role models	55	91.66	1
	6. formal school education	46	76.66	5
	7. Gendered seclusion	51		3
	8. Household responsibilities	53	88.33	2
3. Access to facilities & infrastructure	9. Owning land individually or jointly	47	78.33	4
	10. Accessing existing extension machinery	43	71.66	7
	11. SHG membership	38	63.33	10
	12. Easeness towards Credit schemes in nearest banks	45	75	6
	13. Regulated leasing practice	39	65	9
	14. Participation in PRI system	29	48.33	12
	15. Information in agri-entrepreneurship	33	57	11

TABLE-3 Areas of need of Training and agri-educational modules

Areas of need of Training and agri-educational modules										
Factors	Climate resilient crop varieties		Farming practices		Seed management		Water management		Post-harvest management	
	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
Score	34	56.66	39	65	41	68.33	36	60	45	75
Rank	5 (Important)		4 (More important)		3 (More important)		2 (More important)		1 (Most important)	