

COMMUNICATING GENDER IN AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Abstract

A gender aware project brings transformation in the society and recognizes the contribution of both men and women in the development process. Empowerment indicates a situation whereby both men and women take control of their life, gain skill, build up confidence and march together towards a self-reliant society. Hence, to make the agriculture development projects, gender sensitive, a proper communication strategy on the understanding of the different roles and responsibilities, needs and concerns of both, needs to be developed. All the development projects should aim for gender integration in its project areas for better project output. Women's involvement in agriculture and allied activities along with socio-political participation catalyses the empowerment process. Hence, a concerted and coordinated approach is necessary to bring a change in the society related to gender. Women's equality and empowerment should be taken on board as an important aspect of agriculture management. Adoption of appropriate gender friendly technologies, capacity building training, awareness along with proper communication strategy would certainly pave a new path towards agriculture development.

Keywords: Communication, Gender Integration, Agriculture Development, Empowerment, Equality, Gender Friendly Technology.

Authors

Dr. Kabita Kumari Dash

Department of Humanities & Social Sciences
Faculty of Engg.& Technology
Siksha 'O' Anusandhan
Deemed to be University
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.

Dr. Chitrita Prusty

Department of English
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences
Siksha 'O' Anusandhan
Deemed to be University
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.

I. INTRODUCTION

The performance of India as well as of Odisha on women empowerment and gender equality is still worrisome. In spite of different development interventions by many international and National funding agencies like World Bank, DFID, UNDP, OXFAM, Care-India and various schemes of Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare, the achievement is not eye catchy. However, it's a matter of consolation that as per the Annual Gender Gap Report, 2023 of World Economic Forum (WEF), India is ranked at 127 out of 146 countries in terms of gender equality which is an improvement of eight places from last year. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) where development is not "engendered" it is "en-dangered". Further, across the levels of governance, there are still concerns about socio-political participation of women due to deep rooted inequalities, stigma, discrimination, patriarchal social system, male dominancy and very limited scope for women to venture out from the boundary of four walls.

The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) of Odisha is 65 while that of all India is 50. The Female Infant Mortality Rate (FIMR) in Odisha remains one of the highest in the country being 66 females per 1,000 live births, with the national figure (India) standing at 52 Rural Female Infant Mortality Rate is 68 in comparison to 55 of India.(Source: Online Data)

With advancement of years in political and economic front also there has been disparity. Even now in this 21st century women earn 20% less than men in the global labour market and in India there are now only 25 % of all national Parliamentarians are female as per 2021 data which is a slow rise from 11.3% in 1995.

From the above data, it is pertinent that the current situation of Odisha is alarming which is worse than the national situation. Further the gender inequality in employment is more than 50 % and the gap in city areas is more than 60 %. Hence, now it's high time to realize the problem and address those different barriers related to women's involvement in socio-political sphere including agriculture and allied activities and find out different strategies to overcome them along with policy implications.

A gender aware project brings transformation and recognizes the contribution of both men and women in development. Empowerment indicates a situation whereby both men and women take control of their life, gain skills, build up confidence and march together towards a self reliant society. Hence, to make the agriculture development projects, gender sensitive, a proper communication on the understanding of the different roles and responsibilities, needs and concerns of both men and women need to be taken care of. All the development projects should aim for gender integration in its project areas for better project output. Gender is a social construct, which assigns to both males and females certain attitudes, roles and responsibilities resulting in different opportunities and behavior. It varies from place to place over time and is perpetuated through the process of socialization. It shapes and determines the behavior, roles, expectations and entitlements of women and men in a particular society. Gender talks about not only "Women"but both men and women.

II. GENDER IN RURAL CONTEXT

The situation in project villages is such that, the women lack control and access over income, very little participation in the village meetings called Palli Sabha, not involved in the household decision making process, receive unequal wage, and have lesser access to information in comparison with men. Other dimensions of gender inequalities include early marriage, dowry, female foeticide, child trafficking, lack of access to formal education, high levels of drudgery (physical burden). Most interestingly, developmental efforts in the areas have not been able to break the iron grip of gender discrimination since the approach has been focusing only on women without changing the mindset and attitude of men. Women are yet to be brought to the mainstream process and be considered as equal partners. Their participation remains confined within the mandatory provisions of representation only. The triple burden of women means their role in productive, reproductive and community works goes largely unaddressed and unacknowledged. Lacking access to information and knowledge on women specific schemes and programmes has doubled their misery. Absence of skill development training deters the women to get involved in Non- Farm activities. Women's involvement in planning, monitoring and decision making in different community level forums is not visible. Women's participation is very less and minimal even during conduct of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Micro-level Planning Process (MLP) at the community level. Though some of the economic issues of women are addressed through their involvement in self help groups still other issues like health, sanitation, education, information, domestic violence, wage and entitlement etc. need to be properly addressed.

Hence, all the agriculture development projects need to enable the beneficiaries on concepts and issues related to gender in development, so that, they can analyse, understand, and utilise gender dimensions in development process for their socio-economic upliftment. They should be made aware of the different communications strategies for increasing gender sensitivity. As we all are aware, better access to information, education and communication (IEC) will reduce the wide gap between men and women. In addition to it, proper and effective communication on gender equality along with promoting gender friendly technologies for drudgery reduction can lead to success of the development project. Moreover, during Focussed Group Discussions (FGD), Semi-Structured interviews (SSI), Personal Interviews, Field Visits and Case Analysis Exercises, more number of participation of women need to be ensured for better results.

III. STRATEGIES AND EXPERIENCES

After reviewing various agricultural developmental schemes implemented by Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's welfare in various States namely Neeranchal, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY), Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP), Paramparagat Krishi Vikash Yojana (PKVY), etc. it was learnt that, to address various problems related to gender, women's empowerment and community participation, different strategies are being adopted or need to be adopted for effective gender integration in project villages. Some of the interventions are mentioned below for gender mainstreaming in development projects.

- 1. Gender Sensitization Trainings :** Training on Gender Sensitization should be organized both for the primary and secondary stake holders of the project. Training of Trainers

(ToT) also need to be organized at Block/District and State level to create pool of Resource Persons on gender. These trainings would help in changing attitude and mindset of both men and women in project villages.

- 2. Gender Balance during Recruitment Process:** For promoting gender balance in staffing, more girls and women with requisite qualification and experience need to be appointed at different levels of hierarchy under various streams such as Agri-Marketing, Social Development, Micro-Enterprise, livelihoods Promotion, and Natural Resource Management. The experts will give valuable suggestion, guidance and lead the project effectively with a gender perspective. Being woman they can better understand the problems and take initiatives to address issues pertaining to gender. A Gender Equity Specialist need to be appointed in the State Management Unit to provide strategic input on Gender and Human Rights, organise capacity building trainings and formulate gender friendly policies for the larger interest of community members.
- 3. Development of Women Leadership in Project Villages:** There is 33% mandatory reservation for women in all village level watershed committees, which provide a good platform for women to be a part of village developmental planning process. In some exemplar intervention areas, women representation is seen even beyond 33%. Due to such project interventions, women's participation in the decision-making process is more not only at the household level but also at the community level. They have become a part and parcel of village developmental planning process. Participation in village level meetings has been also increased. To corroborate this, the women in watersheds and other agriculture development projects are able to share the different project activities undertaken in the area, have ample information on the funds received and their utilization, know contribution of community members and their ownership in various developmental activities, actively take part in all the village developmental activities like construction of roads, management of MDM in schools, forest protection etc. Further, these sensitization trainings have opened their outlook and they have started to work with lots of energy and enthusiasm. They have been able to create their own identity through their involvement in thrift and credit through self help groups.
- 4. Recognizing Gender Issues during the Micro Level Planning Process (MLP):** Before implementation of any development project, micro level planning is done with participation of all the community members. During this planning process, various gender related issues, concerns and priorities should be included for better outcome out of the project intervention. To know the current gender status in the project villages different tools such as Access and Control Matrix, division of labor, Practical Gender Needs (PGN) and Strategic Gender Needs (SGN) may be used to identify the gender gaps in the community and how to overcome them. Further during preparation of Detailed Project Report also women's participation need to be ensured for better role clarity and solution to the age old problem.
- 5. Role of Women Self Help Groups in Social Development Activities:** Self Help Groups are encouraged and involved in activities beyond saving and credit in watersheds. They are uniting and organizing themselves into women federations and actively taking up social issues like anti-tobacco campaign, anti-liquor campaign, construction of village roads, total sanitation campaign, cleanliness drive, forest protection, women and child

rights protection, eradication of social evils like child labor, early marriage and dowry, donating land for construction of schools, literacy campaigns, sensitizing other women on Reproductive & Child Health, HIV/AIDS/Family planning methods/institutional delivery, etc. Thus, they have proved themselves as catalysts of social transformation. These women leaders' act as change agents or role models in the project villages.

- 6. Impact of Information, Education & Communication on Gender:** Information dissemination, awareness and sensitization programmes on gender would help in reducing gender disparity in project villages. Proper documentation, research, collection of sex-disaggregated data, production of useful resources, materials on gender, need to be done in project villages for increasing gender sensitivity. Continuous Learning, sharing best practices, discussions and dialogues, Learning Consultation and Briefing (LCB) workshops need to be organised at regular intervals. Strategic networking on gender need to be developed with various Government and Non-Government organisations engaged in gender for more visibility of project activities on gender.

Suggestions for increasing gender sensitivity in agriculture development projects

- Training to primary and secondary stakeholders on gender sensitivity for attitudinal change among both men and women
- Specific need based training to women for developing their leadership.
- Promotion of Self Help Groups and inclusion of more women in the forum
- Preparation and circulation of Information, Education & Communication (IEC) materials in local language for better understanding and awareness on gender. (Leaflets, brochures, wall paintings, street plays on gender issues)
- Celebration of important days like Women Empowerment Day on 8th March every year.
- Exposure to other projects to see successful women entrepreneurship models.
- Ensure participation of women during micro-level planning process.
- Specific activities need to be taken up to address practical gender needs of women like drinking water facility, sanitation, health and strategic gender needs like involvement in decision making, developing leadership quality, awareness on legal rights and entitlements, access and control over resources.
- Preparation of case studies related to success and failure of the gender intervention would help in chalk out future course of action
- Women's voice need to be heard in the planning process and sincere efforts need to be taken up for enabling women to actively participate in all meetings and trainings held at community level.
- Adoption of gender friendly technologies for drudgery reduction

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

While working in development projects, we must include gender perspectives in the decision-making processes starting from policy advocacy, programme planning, budgeting to implementation and ensure that gender equality concept and consideration is taken into consideration. We need to promote and facilitate more skill based trainings for women along with inter-agency dialogue, workshops, seminars on gender mainstreaming. Process need to be followed for analysis and collection of sex-disaggregated data in the project villages.

Extensive network need to be developed with State Government Departments (Women & Child Development, Panchayati Raj, Central Institute for Women in Agriculture (CIWA), various national and international organizations such as UNFPA, UNDP and DFID working on gender. We also need to record and find mechanisms for addressing equity issues of both men and women for learning from programmatic and organizational good practices .More effort need to be put for ensuring land rights of women in project villages which has become a burning issue in all the tribal landscapes across India.

V. LIMITATION AND SCOPE

For effectively addressing gender equity in development projects , more communication output activities need to be organised to make everyone gender sensitive. But, it all depends on the mindset of people and organisations working in development projects, who should have a keen interest and a gender balance outlook while preparing the project proposal otherwise all attempt will go in vain.

VI. CONCLUSION

Systematic and continuous effort as well as approach is necessary to bring a change in the society related to gender .As mostly women are involved in the agricultural activities, they need to be made aware on the practices and advance agricultural techniques. Simultaneously gender friendly technologies need to be adopted in the community for their drudgery reduction. Though the major focus of agriculture projects are always on agriculture development, soil and water conservation ,sustainable livelihoods promotion and climate change but ,without participation of women ,the projects cannot be so successful. So women's equality and empowerment should be taken on board as an important aspect of agriculture management. Further, creation of an enabling environment with a gender sensitive communication strategy is very much essential for increased status of women in the family as well as society. Summing up, "achieving gender equality among both men and women requires changes at both personal and institutional level and making it happen is the duty of every conscious citizen".

REFERENCES

- [1] <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr14-report-en-1.pdf>
- [2] <http://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/ourwork/womenempowerment/overvie w.html>
- [3] UNDP Gender Action Plan developed in 2005 & The Millennium Development Goals.
- [4] COMMUNICATING GENDER FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FAO Dimitra Project, August 2010
- [5] GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING, an Analysis in Odisha by CYSD
- [6] Gender Mainstreaming and Critical Concepts for Interventions, Dr.Rukmini Rao,2010
- [7] Training Module on GENDER ISSUES IN DEVELOPMENT, Department of Personnel and Training, Government of India
- [8] Poonacha, Veena, 'Women Empowerment And Political Participation', Research, Center For Women's Studies, SNTD University, Mumbai.
- [9] For Women ' Reservation For Women In The Parliament & State Legislatures, National Commission For Women, New Delhi.
- [10] Promoting gender-sensitive entrepreneurship via microfinance institutions, Una Murray FAO, March 8th 2005
- [11] Gender Stereotypes, Communication Styles, and Effective Managerial Communication, Michelle Howe &Warren Weber, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
- [12] Sharma, Kumud, 'Power vs. Representation', Centre For Women's Development Studies, New Delhi

- [13] Occasional Paper No. 28, 'Feminist Dilemmas, Ambivalent State And The Debate on Reservation For Women In India ', Centre For Development Studies, New Delhi
- [14] https://www.vasculitisfoundation.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/11/development_studies_network_intro_to_gender_analysis.pdf
- [15] [http://www.focusintl.com/GD027- %20Gender%20Awareness%20and%20Development%20Manual%20-%20UNDP.pdf](http://www.focusintl.com/GD027-%20Gender%20Awareness%20and%20Development%20Manual%20-%20UNDP.pdf)
- [16] <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/e65237.pdf>
- [17] www.worlp.com and its working papers
- [18] www.orissawatershed.org and its publications
- [19] www.dfid.org and its publications .
- [20] http://orissa.oriyaonline.com/orissa_mla.html?page=show
<http://www.loksatta.org/cms/documents/advocacy/womens.pdf>
- [21] List of Abbreviations

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
DFID	Department For International Development
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
RCH	Reproductive & Child Health
IEC	Information Education & Communication
PRI	Panchayyati Raj Institution
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief