

Strategies to Bridge Gender Issues in Agriculture

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ABSTRACT

The farm women are cultured in Indian agriculture. Their participation begins from seeding to harvesting and post harvest activities. Simultaneously, women also contribute in home front. ILO data estimates that 16.4 billion hours are spent on unpaid care work every day globally. This is the equivalent of 2 billion people (1 in 4 people worldwide) working 8 hours per day with no remuneration (Ward, 2022a). In spite of that, women's contribution is out of recognition and the issues they face are ignored. To identify the grass root level challenges of farm women, this particular study was made in Kanas block of Puri district in Odisha. Some of the major challenges were: less participation in extension programmes, low wage rate, lack of land ownership, over burden of work, limited access to resources and services, less participation in decision making, drudgery, less contact with change agents, lack of mobility and violence. Accordingly, strategies have been developed to overcome those challenges.

INTRODUCTION

The farm women in India devote much of their time in farm and in home towards unpaid activities such as family food preparation, child and elderly care, collection of water and fuel, etc. According to

Oxfam (2019), women spend 291 min/day and men 32 min/day towards unpaid activities in rural areas whereas women spend 312 min/day and men 29 min/day towards unpaid activities in urban areas. They contribute in crop

science, horticulture, livestock, fishery, forestry, sericulture, etc. but, face various challenges in the areas of nutritious food, year-round employment, health care, hardship, access to resources, decision making, drudgery, work place insecurity, extension information, wage rate, etc. Although women had initiated the art and science of farming still, they are not recognized as 'farmers'. They face more gender based socio-cultural constraints in our society. Gender disparities start early in life: girls spend 40% more time on UCDW than boys, amounting to 160 million more hours per day, with implications for girls' educational opportunities (UNICEF, 2022). As per the view of Ambler, K, *et. al.* (2021), women are disadvantaged and this impedes their opportunities for empowerment and material well-being, although empowerment of women has been recognized as a critical driver of economic development in developing countries. Therefore, to know the grass root level real issues of farm women, this particular study was carried out in Jahuleipadar under Kanas block of Puri district in Odisha.

Methodology: Identifying women issues being very crucial for developing strategies to overcome them, data was collected from 80 farm women by using mixed methods like: semi structured interview schedule followed by Focused Group Discussion and Gender Analysis through SEAGA Tools. All these methodologies helped to know the gender issues in agriculture in the particular area and accordingly developed strategies as reflected in the subsequent table.

Identified Gender Issues and Strategies for Mainstreaming

1. Less participation in extension programmes: According to Belay and Oljira (2016), livestock extension systems are generally biased in favour

of men and exclude women from accessing livestock information.

Strategy: Gender sensitive extension approaches: For equal participation of men and women, the time, place, duration, extension personnel, preferred message should be gender sensitive.

2. Low wage rate: According to Onaran & Oyvat (2023), the work, though important is often undervalued and so wages are often low. In addition to demonstrating the importance and extent of unpaid care, the ITUC and trade unions argue for more paid jobs in care and better conditions for paid care workers (Onaran & Oyvat, 2023).

Strategy: Equal pay for equal work: Policy should be made for equal wage rate for similar work performed by both men and women.

3. Men dominance in ownership of resources and assets: Globally land ownership by women is up to 15% only which affect their decision making for livelihood improvement.

Strategy: Promotion of joint ownership of assets and resources: Policy interventions should be made for equal ownership of assets and resources at the time of registration.

4. Over burden of work: Most of the time, women are over burden with household care works. COVID period was a burning example of it. According to Grantham et al. (2021), during the COVID-19 pandemic, almost 90% of countries globally closed their schools, affecting 1.5 billion children and increasing the volume and intensity of childcare needed within households. The impact of ageing populations and climate change will increase the time spent on UCDW (Coffey *et al.*, 2020).

Strategy: Division of labour: Daily activity should be analysed and equally divided between both the gender to avail equal leisure time and rest for productive use of resources. It requires redistributing the disproportionate share of care responsibilities shouldered by women, more equitably between women and men, girls and boys, in households, communities; and shifting the costs and responsibilities of providing care from families towards the state and employers. (Coffey et al., 2020b; Devercelli & Beaton-Day, 2020; UN Women, 2022a).

5. **Limited access to resources and services:** Compared to men, women lack access to productive resources like land, water, credit, technology, advisory services, etc.

Strategy: Gender equitable access to resources and services: Gender sensitive extension system should facilitate and provide affordable, tailor made, timely quality access to both men and women. Voluntary community work that supports personal or household care, such as community kitchens or childcare, are also forms of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work (UCDW) (UN Women, 2022). Reducing and supporting the redistribution of UCDW not only supports women's well-being and household incomes but also supports productivity and economic growth (Ward, 2022a).

6. **Less participation in decision making:** As per Ambler, Doss, Kieran, & Passarelli, (2020), little attention is given to household structure which influences decision outcomes.

Strategy: Gender sensitization: Gender sensitization should be made to realize the biasness of gender participation in decision making, division of labour, access to and control over resources, etc.

7. **Drudgery: Women generally perform traditional, manual works where they face drudgery.**

Strategy: Women friendly technological interventions: To reduce drudgery and increase efficiency, women friendly technologies should be designed and popularised amongst women farmers. Study by ARUP et al. (2022) indicates that, women who conduct UCDW are best placed to suggest ways that infrastructure, services, and technology can reduce UCDW.

8. **Less contact with change agents:** Recent research from Africa shows that the gender of extension agents matters, and female extension agents are more effective in changing behavior of female and male farmers (Kondylis et al., 2016).

Strategy: Linkage development with extension functionaries: Extension functionaries should be sensitized to include women during various programmes and women should be linked with them for solution of their problems.

9. **No land ownership:** it is critical to strengthen women's access and ability to systematically harmonize the interaction among the important assets and, manage the trade-offs of empowerment (Mulema et al. 2020).

Strategy: Lease plot as ownership: The family male members should be sensitized and motivated to provide land on lease basis to recognize women as owners for getting bank loan.

10. **Lack of mobility:** Due to socio-cultural norms, generally women are restricted in the society to go outside home and allowed only for inside household works.

Strategy: Exposure visits: Number of exposure visits should be organized for

women to expose them with different organizations and stakeholders.

- 11. Violence:** Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is endemic, affecting on average, one-third of all women within their lifetime (World Health Organization, 2021). Women face domestic violence which may be due to drug addiction and other reasons.

Strategy: Awareness: Awareness should be created among male members in the family, community and society to value women like men.

- 12. Group conflict:** Renu Pathak et al. (2019) in their study identified that group conflict, lack of interest in taking responsibility among SHG members and lack of motivation are the serious problems exist.

Strategy: Awareness about group cohesiveness: All the Self Help Group members should be aware of advantages of group approach while to avail benefits under various schemes.

- 13. Seasonal employment:** The year-round employment is a great challenge for women. Step by step the days of employment for women wage earners has been reduced due to import-oriented production, mechanization, shifting cropping pattern, etc.

Strategy: Entrepreneurship development: Capacity building with skill-based training and hand holding support from production to marketing should be provided to farm women for development of women-led entrepreneurship in non-farm sectors so that women will get sufficient employment opportunities in own their localities.

CONCLUSION:

Unpaid care work should be recognized as work, and as skilled, and care provision recognised as a public (as opposed to a private) issue (UN Women, 2022). Gender sensitive workshops, seminars, trainings and other programmes should be organized to sensitize all the stakeholders for gender mainstreaming in agriculture. Special attention is required to create Gender Disaggregated Database (GDD) to formulate gender friendly policies/ programmes. The competency of extension workers should be developed in the field of gender analysis to identify the gender issues in agriculture and develop effective action plan to overcome those issues to enhance farm production and productivity.

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