

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN AGRICULTURE

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ABSTRACT

The gender equality on field is vital to enhance production and withstand emerging agrarian crisis. This paper highlights strategic steps that can help in achieving the gender equality on and off farm among farm families of India. The present study is based on ex-post-facto research design and multistage random sampling technique was used for this study. Twenty-eight villages were finalized for the study, covering all seven districts of South Gujarat and from them ten women farmers from each village were selected. Thus 280 farm women formed the sample of our study. Study revealed that the limited right over land and resources, non-availability of credit to women in agriculture and physical drudgery were the most common gender related issues experienced by farm women. They further suggested that equal sharing of work and family between men and women, improving women's ownership rights through the mechanism of joint pattas, registration of all new assets in the name of both husband and wife and easy access to loans through women's SHGs can help in reducing gender gap. Thus, considering these results strategic framework at different level is prepared to achieve gender equality in Indian agriculture.

Keywords: gender equality, farm families, women farmers, south gujarat, gender issues

INTRODUCTION

Women farmers play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields. It is impossible to explain the sustainability of any community without considering the role of rural women in progress of society. But, usually in India, there is statistical bias in estimating the position of rural women in development. Their massive contribution goes unrecognized, both at the hands of families and the government. In India, one of the main reasons for this gender-based bias is the lack of official recognition of women engaged in agriculture work, and transpires into their exclusion from rights and benefits provided by the government to the women farmers. As a result, they are not entitled to benefits like rural credit, assets, technological upgrades and scientific inputs.

In order to combat these gender related issues of the farm women, it is crucial to develop strategies at different levels starting from household level to policy changes (Chauhan and Vinaya, 2016). Thus, the present study was formulated to form strategic solutions considering the key stakeholder position of farm women. Their essential voice was documented to identify gender related issues and suggestions to gender equality. The acceptance and practicing of gender equality is essential to utilize the full potential of farm women

to increase agricultural production and achieving sustainable development.

OBJECTIVES

- (1) To identify gender related issues experienced by farm women
- (2) To study the suggestions offered by farm women for achieving gender equality
- (3) To prepare strategic framework at different levels for achieving gender equality in agriculture

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on ex-post-facto research design. The multistage random sampling technique was used for this study. The population for study constitutes the women farmers from small and marginal farm families of South Gujarat, who are performing active part in their farms. In first stage, out of each district of South Gujarat, two talukas were randomly selected and two villages were selected respectively from each selected taluka. Thus twenty-eight villages were finalized for the present study and from them by using simple random sampling method ten women farmers from each village were selected. Thus 280 farm

women formed the sample of our study.

The selected farm women respondents were requested to identify the gender related issues experienced by them in and off farm. The Garrett's ranking technique was used for analysis of issues. The ranks given by each respondent were converted into per cent position by using formula:

$$\text{PercentPosition} = \frac{100 \times (R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}$$

Where,

R_{ij} = Rank given to i th suggestion by the j th individual and

N_j = Number of constraints ranked by the j th individual.

The estimated per cent positions were converted into scores using Garrett's table.

Further their valuable suggestions to combat these issues were also denoted, documented and ranked based on the frequency and percentage. Later along with these suggestions, views of experts were combined with literature reviewed to form a strategic framework for achieving gender equality in agriculture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evidently there are serious constraints which militate against the promotion of an effective role for women in development in societies. Resulting from these situations, women's contribution to agriculture remains concealed and unaccounted for in monitoring economic performance measurement. Therefore before framing strategies to achieve gender equality in agriculture, it is essential to identify the issues faced by them.

Table 1: Gender related issues experienced by women farmers in and off farm

(n=280)

Sr. No.	Issues	Total Garrett Score	Mean Score	Garrett Rank
1	Lesser access to health services	10172	36.32	XV
2	Physical drudgery	19746	70.52	III
3	Lower wages rate than male	17619	62.92	VI
4	Lack of education	12829	45.81	XII
5	Limited right over land and resources	21672	77.40	I
6	House hold responsibilities	10783	38.51	XIV
7	Travel distant place for work	13829	49.38	X
8	Safety issues at work place	16027	57.23	VIII
9	Lack of women extension functionaries	14690	52.46	IX
10	Restricted mobility for farm women and less exposure	12481	44.57	XIII
11	Lack of recognition of farm women as farmers	18840	67.28	IV
12	Non-availability of credit to women in agriculture	20411	72.89	II
13	Lack of identification of extension needs and preference of women	13427	47.95	XI
14	Lack of upgrading skills of women in agriculture	18460	65.92	V
15	Socio-cultural barriers	17009	60.74	VII
	Other issues*			
16	Lack of suitable mechanism for gender based assessment of extension program			
17	Lack of gender sensitive extension models/approaches			
18	Malnutrition or under nutrition			
19	Dominance of male members in family			

*These issues were not considered for Garrett Ranking due to lack of homogeneity.

Table 1 shows the important issues experienced by women farmers. Mostly women farmers were discontent with limited right over land and resources (77.40) followed by non-availability of credit to women in agriculture (72.89)

and physical drudgery (70.52). They prioritized economic issues over social and institutional issues, revealing economic independence of farm women to be more focused to achieve gender equality. The results were similar to that of Behera

Table 2: Suggestions offered by women farmers for achieving gender equality in agriculture

(n=280)

Sr. No.	Suggestions	Frequency (Percentage)	Rank
1	Capacity development programmes for women based farmers to understand markets financial literacy.	182 (65.00)	VII
2	Improving women's ownership rights through the mechanism of <i>joint pattas</i>	243 (86.78)	II
3	All new assets should be registered in the name of both husband and wife	236 (84.28)	III
4	Designing women friendly agricultural technology.	176 (62.85)	VIII
5	Vocational trainings in non-agricultural sectors in order to provide gainful employment to women workforce	142 (50.71)	XI
6	Training in improved farm practices and technology	163 (58.21)	IX
7	Banks should be asked to accept spousal ownership/membership as collateral for loans to women	133 (47.50)	XII
8	Promoting agro-based industries owned and managed by women on cooperative basis.	148 (52.85)	X
9	Provide easy access to loans through women's SHGs.	219 (78.21)	IV
10	Ensuring access to food, health and improved health care for women farmers	117 (41.78)	XIV
11	Sensitized efforts are required at village level to make change in attitude of male members for accepting women's equal rights in decision making,	92 (32.85)	XVI
12	Law, policy and programme should recognize women as owners/joint owners/farmers/cultivators/tenants.	68 (24.28)	XIX
13	Gender budgeting	86 (30.71)	XVII
14	Enhance active participation of women in policy making	124 (44.28)	XIII
15	Recruitment or mobilization of more female extension personnel to identify the needs of women farmers better	197 (70.35)	VI
16	Integrates gender dimensions in results measurement framework	75 (26.78)	XVIII
17	Equal sharing of work and family between men and women.	256 (91.43)	I
18	Recognition of the worth of women's knowledge, skills and practices and contribution in different socio-economic groups.	204 (72.85)	V
19	Strict regulations to ensure security at workplace	102 (36.42)	XV

It can be observed from table 2 that farm women suggested equal sharing of work and family between men and women(91.43) followed by improving women's ownership rights through the mechanism of *joint pattas*(86.78), all new assets should be registered in the name of both husband and wife (84.28) and easy access to loans through women's SHGs(78.21) as most accepted strategies. Similar results were supported by Bariya *et al.* (2022), Bhati *et al.* (2022) and Chaudhari *et al.* (2022).

Strategic framework at different levels for achieving gender equality in agriculture

The constraints and opportunities faced by women in agriculture tend to vary across the regions/villages depending on the socio-cultural and agroecological contexts. With changes sweeping agriculture and other sectors of Indian economy, gender issues are emerging as more important

and dynamic which needs to be given adequate attention for enhancing and harnessing the capability of women in agriculture. By combining the suggestions offered by women farmers of South Gujarat and discussions with experts the following strategies are proposed at different levels for bringing out overall improvement in quality of life and further harnessing the full potential of women in agriculture.

Micro (individual, households)

- ♦ Improve women's ownership rights and management of productive assets including land, through the mechanism of *joint pattas*.
- ♦ All new assets which have accrued to the household by any means should be registered in the name of both husband and wife

- ◆ Improving women's access to agricultural technology through attending technical training.
- ◆ Awareness need to be generated on legal rights and land ownership titles.
- ◆ On farm and off farm responsibilities should be equally shared between men and women of family.
- ◆ Encourage and inculcate attitude of gender equality among the next generation.
- ◆ Promoting agro-based industries owned and managed by women on cooperative basis can achieve this.
- ◆ Women have enormous traditional agriculture knowledge which needs to find appropriate place in the change process under the fluctuating biophysical environment.
- ◆ Ensuring access to food, health and improved health care is a basis requirement for creating a well nourished healthy people who form the human capital in agriculture.
- ◆ Efforts should be made to make women's work visible, freeing time and energy from women's schedule for resting and learning and investing in social dialogue which can further facilitate women empowerment.

Meso (organizations, communities)

- ◆ Specialized training in nursery raising, horticulture crop cultivation, new techniques in coarse cereals production, seed support program, post harvest services, storage techniques, manure preparation, bio diversity conservation, etc for farm women.
- ◆ Capacities building of women farmers to understand markets financial literacy, negotiation skills, explore greater choice and new opportunities and collectives for ensuring benefits to them.
- ◆ Promoting equal wages for men and women agricultural laborers.
- ◆ Banks should be asked to accept spousal ownership/ membership as collateral for loans to women.
- ◆ Establishment of gender cells/units at different organizations for handling gender issues
- ◆ Publicize gender equality among rural and farming communities.
- ◆ Recruitment or mobilization of more female extension personnel to identify the needs of women farmers better.
- ◆ Gender budgeting.
- ◆ Lands, particularly wastelands, vested with government, should be transferred to women's groups (including SHGs) for productive use and appropriate economic activity.
- ◆ Provide support for value addition and market linkages for the traditional crafts in which farming women are involved, either full time or as supplementary activities.
- ◆ Women farmers must be trained in various fields, including dry land farming technologies, animal husbandry, forestry, sustainable natural resource management, enterprise development, financial management, and leadership development.
- ◆ Creation of gender sensitive rural society.
- ◆ Provide easy access to loans to lease land through SHG's especially women's SHGs.
- ◆ The farm women commodity groups need to be channelized to better access training, extension, information, credit inputs, marketing and other services at all levels.
- ◆ Sensitization efforts are required at village level to make women's equal rights in decision making a social norm and this requires a change in attitude of male members.
- ◆ Extension programs should identify women as an integral part of their target audience and focus should be on promotion supply of women friendly tools and implements at village level.
- ◆ Establishing technology resource centers in village's clusters are required for making technologies available to women on a custom hiring basis.
- ◆ Market development should be followed by institutional changes to aggregate smallscale production and increase access of women farmers to the markets.

Macro (institutions, policy frameworks)

- ◆ Planning Commission should ensure the enforcement of minimum wage and equal wage legislation to all the agricultural workers.
- ◆ For all asset distribution purposes taken up by the state, women should have rights
- ◆ Kisan Credit Cards should be issued to women farmers, with joint pattas as collateral. Till these are available,
- ◆ Indemnity bonds from husband or other male relative or guarantee from independent local persons of standing should be acceptable as collateral for women farmers.
- ◆ Statistical invisibility of women's work must be corrected

by including in detail the work that women undertake.

- ♦ Law, policy and programme should recognize women as owners/joint owners/farmers/cultivators/tenants.
- ♦ Officials of governments, NGOs and other agencies connected with agricultural developmental need to be sensitized and trained on the role and place of women in agricultural development. Governmental programmes should be so designed so that local women's groups, NGOs have maximum autonomy of decision-making in general and over the use of resources in particular within a broad framework for women farmers.
- ♦ Specially focused capacity building programmes for women farmers need to be formulated to promote skills with appropriate technologies.
- ♦ Ergonomically designed farm tools and machines should be developed and popularized which can reduce drudgery of farm women from production to post production stages.
- ♦ Well articulated gender policy is vital to empower women farmers in for improving their livelihoods, removing the barriers of opportunities and minimizing the intensity of hunger and poverty.
- ♦ Specialized fund should be separately created at the national level to address gender specific issues in agriculture.
- ♦ Development of an institutional framework to accommodate voice of women in policy and decision making is an effective option for participatory action.
- ♦ Integrates gender dimensions in the results measurement framework and systematically plans and measures gender-related results at all levels
- ♦ Participatory gender sensitive policy formulation, review of existing policy and planning documents, development of gender checklists and guidelines.
- ♦ Documentation of gender disaggregated data to support the policy makers for formulation of women-pro policies.

CONCLUSION

The documented strategies presented in this paper can be replicated for agriculture based developing and under developed nations to utilize full potential women farmers. Given equal access to assets and opportunities, women farmers are capable of bringing significant economic and social development community. The recommendations made at micro (individual, households), meso (organizations, communities) and macro (institutions, policy frameworks) need a collaborative approach from individual farmers to policy makers.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- ♦ Authenticating farm women as farmers and assuring fair access to credit and assets to them especially land rights.
- ♦ Farming community should be motivated to promote gender equality on and off farm through community programme.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest among researchers.

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Received : October 2022 : Accepted : December 2022