

EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN OF SOUTH GUJARAT THROUGH AGRICULTURAL BY-PRODUCTS

Khyati M. Patel¹, Mukesh Chaudhary² and Mahendra Chaudhary³

Department of Floriculture and Landscape Architecture
Navsari Agricultural University, Navsari - 396 450
Email : patelkhyati1712@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Women play a critical and potentially transformative role in agricultural growth. Women participation in agriculture sector is very crucial because women's are major player in production, processing and distribution of forest products across the globe. In south Gujarat region, Tribal peoples living in forests and depending on forests for livelihood. In the subsistence sector women spend the greatest time in collecting fuel, fodder water, looking after livestock and kitchen gardening. Poverty deprives women of the opportunities to have equal access to participation in development programs, mobility and decision making. The major areas of women participation including crop production, fisheries farming, value addition, agro-processing, agro-forestry products, marketing of poultry, dairy and other agricultural products in local and informal. Women of South Gujarat region generated income from value added bamboo products and finger millet products. They have little access to education, health and nutrition, opportunities. Major constrains are lack of credit, technical skills, specialized training, less access of productive resources etc. social empowerment creates a favorable environment for women take part in development programs. The government should provide credit facility, subsidies, incentives, specialized training and capacity building training to women for livelihood development

Keywords: *women participation, tribal women empowerment, agricultural by products*

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is a process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. The Government of India had ushered in the new millennium by declaring the year 2001 as 'Women's Empowerment Year' to focus on a vision where women are equal partners to men. The most common explanation of 'women's empowerment' is the ability to exercise full control over one's actions. Rural women form the most productive work force in the economy of majority of the developing nations including India. Agriculture, the single largest production Endeavour in India, contributing to 17.32% of the GDP is increasingly becoming a female activity. Agriculture sector employs 80% of all economically active women; they comprise 33% of the agricultural labour force and 48% of self-employed farmers. About 18% of the farm families in India, according to NSSO Reports are reported to be headed by women. Beyond the conventional market – oriented, narrower definition of 'productive workers', almost all women in rural India can be considered as 'farmers' in some sense, working as

agricultural labourers, unpaid workers in the family farm enterprises or combination of the two. Women play a critical role in agricultural production. The major areas of women participation including crop production, fisheries farming, value addition, agro-processing, agro-forestry products, marketing of poultry, dairy and other agricultural products in local and informal. Gujarat has achieved rapid growth especially in manufacturing and service sectors, but even though agriculture sector has an important role, because it is the main sources of income of majority of the population. In addition, 63% of the population of Gujarat lives in rural areas and relies on agriculture and agro related rural non farming sector for their livelihood. Women constitute a substantial majority of the agricultural workforce and produce most of the food that is consumed locally, which makes them the principal agents of food security and household welfare in rural areas.

OBJECTIVE

To know the empowerment of tribal women of south Gujarat through agricultural by-products

AGRICULTURE BY-PRODUCTS

(1) Bamboo craft

The community is excellent in bamboo based craftsmanship. The community is expert in weaving attractive patterns of bamboo mats, baskets and winnowers of different shapes and designs for household use and Agri-operations. They also work special type of fishing baskets and traps. Though, the number of people mastering the weaving is decreasing with each passing day as younger generation is not interested to learn the art because returns are low. With changing times new avenues have opened for the growth of the art to which the community does not have access. There is good demand of naturally degradable, environment friendly ethnic craft based lifestyle products. There is need to adopt the skill and modify the products according to the present day demand of urban market. These products can be anything from show pieces, gift articles & gift packaging, mats & blinds, dining table accessories to light and heavy furniture items. Potential buyers for these articles can be upper and upper middle class in urban areas who are looking for innovative products for houses and farm houses and people living in multistory flats. Big hotels and resorts who sell on rural themes are also an assured market. Bamboo products are cheaper than cane and wooden items. The profit margin for community on these products is as high as 40%. This is higher than any traditional source of livelihood. Different government and non government agencies can play important roles in the processes. At present, the Product Development and Designing Institutes, Agriculture Universities, Research Institutes are working independently in different directions focusing on different aspects of bamboo development. The need of the hour is to interlink the effort of all such institutes and bring the knowledge in simplified form for the use of the community. To promote the community oriented work on bamboo there is need of improvement on all the three levels of backwards linkages, production and forward linkages.

Work Process

Before making a bamboo article from a raw bamboo, they break the bamboo on the top and make small four-fold opening. This is done by a specialised knife. The broader chip of bamboo is called *Pat*, the thin chip is called, *Silly* and the coarse/rough chip is known as, *Kanado*. After unfolding the upper portion of the bamboo in four-fold parts, they finish the chip for its deployment in making a bamboo article. In a day, the finished chips can be prepared from about two bamboos. After breaking the top of the bamboo in four fold parts, it is placed in the sun for softening, for making the process of bamboo *Patties* making easier. Though the soft *Patties* do not break easily pouring water on them further softens

them. Usually the entire work of cutting and finishing of the chips is done by males; the knitting is done by women folk. Thus, there is a good division of labour. Another important tribes known as *Dhor Koli*, *Kolacha*, *Kolgha* or *Tokre Koli* are also engaged in preparing *Tokra* from Bamboos. The *Kathodi* tribe also prepares *Tokra* and the fishing equipments from the bamboos and sells the same in the weekly market, *Hat Bajar*. Other tribals such as *Konkana*, *Varli*, *Nayaka*, *Bhil*, *Gamit*, *Ghodia*, *Chaudhari*, etc. prepare useful household items from bamboos.

Bamboo craft industry

In the district of Dangs at Vaghai, Ahwa, Saputara and some other villages, several bamboo-based cottage industries, co-operative societies, and bamboo products' selling co-operative societies exist. The Forest Department provides the Bamboos to these units. The members/artisans of bamboo working in these units prepare and sell various bamboo items which helps to women for income generation.

(2) Finger millet and its value added products

Finger millet also known as ragi (*Nagli*) in South Gujarat is one of the important cereals occupies highest area under cultivation among the small millets. Finger millet is comparable to rice with regard to protein (6-8%) and fat (1-2%) and is superior to rice and wheat with respect to mineral and micronutrient contents. It is a major source of dietary carbohydrates for a large section of society. Additionally ragi has enormous health benefits and also a good source of valuable micro-nutrients along with the major food components. In order to develop the value added food products based on ragi, that can able to enrich the nutritional value and also beneficial for good health is the current need for the wellbeing of the society. The modern trend for development of new food products aspires for complementary foods in order to fulfill the widening gap of food availability and nutritional security. *Nagli* Products such as *Biscuits*, *Papad*, *Papadi*, *Laddu*, *Nankhatai*, *Makhaniya*, *Sev*, *Sakkarpara*, Multi-grain flour /Composite flour, Puffing or popping *Papad*, Puffed finger millet mix and other Extruded products prepare by women in Dang area.

Farm forestry programme

The farm forestry programmer is helps in empowerment of women; they are benefited by the easy availability of employment during the dry season. As a result migration of women to nearby industrial towns has come down to some extent. Nurseries for supplying seedlings to farm forestry and wasteland development programmers are managed and run by villagers under the guidance of village institutions (both men's and women's village institutions)

are allotted to poor women of the villages. Women have gained tremendously from this mini-enterprise in the form of economic as well as social gains. It helps build their confidence and instill the spirit of entrepreneurial capacity in them. Two women nursery raisers from a remote tribal village participated actively and earned a lot of appreciation at a workshop held in this connection at Ahmadabad. Their knowledge of the problems and prospects of nursery rising as a profitable venture for tribal women was quite a revelation to the experts present in the workshop. Its aim was that women should involve actively in each and every stage of the farm forestry programmers.

STRATEGIES

The women in the community share a disproportionately higher ratio of the work burden (reproductive and care work in family, community work and unpaid labour in productive work as well). They also limited in their mobility and suffer from discrimination in access to education and work outside. In regard to access to various entitlements, women are usually discriminated – more so in health and education. Their decision making role in the family and community is also minimal, although women do take part in joint meetings. Men and women equally engage themselves in the primary and secondary agricultural work with women doing more than 80% of the labour work like sowing, weeding, watering, harvesting, threshing (manual) and storage of grains. But the gender based discrimination exist here, as well, like the larger society and women are largely excluded from any ownership and control over productive resources and decision making in agriculture. Their discriminated and dispossessed status can be understood by the following facts in regard to control over inputs and productive resources as follows:

- ◆ Access to land and water
- ◆ Access to credit and inputs
- ◆ Access to market

CONCLUSION

Any developmental process is the expansion of assets and capabilities of rural women to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold the institution accountable that affect their lives. More importantly the developmental process in India should give priority to welfare schemes and programmers meant for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes including women. These are the people who are economically

backward; therefore, there is a need for sincere efforts on the part of the government to help improve the quality of their life. The Social Assessment for the training and skill development clearly reflected that rural landless form an integral part of poverty-ridden and marginalized groups. By empowering rural woman through education can thus enable them to live with dignity and self reliance cutting across the barriers of customary biases and prejudices, social barrier of caste, class, gender, occupation and institutional barriers that prevent them from taking actions to improve their state both at the individual and collective level. Training camps were organized for capacity-building and awareness generation. For leadership development camps were organized to make women aware of their rights and familiarize them with various aspects of gender issues. Focused on government schemes for tribals in general and tribal women.

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