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RAPPORTEURS' REPORTS

Rapporteur's Report on Economic Contribution of Women in Agriculture

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If the discourse of economics is accused of being 'gender-blind', then this accusation is much more true of agricultural economics. Women have always played a pivotal role in agriculture, however, their role has generally been under-estimated. The said theme for discussion in the conference was expected to begin to rectify this imbalance. There were twenty seven papers that were received for consideration, out of which three were accepted for full length publication.

The paper by Gunjan Bhandari and B.V. Chinnappa Reddy tries to examine the impact of out-migration of men on agriculture and its impact on the work load of women. On one hand male out-migration leads to remittances, but on the other hand, it could lead to more work for women. The authors have collected primary data from 90 migrant and 60 non-migrant households in Pithoragarh district, Uttarakhand. The authors found that none of the migrant households made any attempts to create productive assets on the farm through remittances. In such households larger per cent of land was kept fallow, but the magnitude of workload on women was more than in case of non-migrant households. The migrant households who were close to the district head quarter were spending more on education than the migrant households who were away from the district head quarter. Interestingly, the author finds that the younger women were not involved in much work—a finding that needs to be explored in detail. Another paper on the same issue by Usha Rani Ahuja *et al*. which has been included in the summary form, finds that though the work load of women increases due to male migration, their participation in decision making and access to resources also gets enhanced.

Empowerment of women is crucial, but empowerment itself is a somewhat hazy concept which is difficult to measure. There have been many government schemes to improve the situation of women in agriculture/rural areas. One such important scheme is the "Kudumbashree" scheme initiated by the Kerala government to eradicate poverty in 1998. The paper by Praveen K.V. and A Suresh have used the data from field survey done in Palakkad district and secondary sources to examine this scheme. The scheme has a three tier structure and all these have been covered. It has been found that almost 23 per cent of the total female population in Kerala is covered by this scheme. As it emerges, micro-finance is one of the greatest areas of

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focus under this scheme. A large number of members fall below poverty line. A logit analysis has been done to determine the factors affecting the sustainability of the 'neighbourhood groups'. It was found that percentage of members who are below poverty line, percentage of members availing loans; and outstanding loan per member are the major factors affecting the sustainability positively and significantly. The author also found that the spread of Kudumbashree helps women in making prompt socio-economic decisions and infuses self-belief in them.

A paper on SHGs by Deepak Shah and Sangram Panigrahi focuses on women below poverty line. A detailed analyses of 40 SHGs from two blocks of Ganjam district in Odisha has been done. The authors have focused on the factors affecting the participation of women in SHGs and the credit delivery from formal and informal sources to the BPL households. The study has used the logistic model to determine the factors affecting women's participation in SHGs to borrow credit. The relative importance of age, education, number of children of the respondents, sources of income, caste, informal debt, distance from the bank have been clearly reported. It was found that the households borrowed from the formal and informal sources both. The reasons for borrowing from informal sources included lack of collateral, faster delivery of credit etc. The micro-finance organizations have been providing small credit through group approach, which has helped the people to a large extent. The authors argue that micro-finance needs to be complemented by supply-side and demand-side factors.

Out of the papers recommended for publication in an abstract form, the following themes emerge.

Women - Agricultural Work and Income

The drudgery that the women have to face and the discrimination that they have to undergo in the agricultural sector is well known. Expectedly, some of the papers look into this issue. What is the exact nature of work that women do and how are they paid, are the two questions asked? A paper by Sharad Kumar looking at the wage differentials in Mirzapur district in Eastern Uttar Pradesh finds that there is a substantial difference between the wages paid to men and women for the same work. Similar study by Babu Singh *et al*. done for Farrukhabad, Uttar Pradesh finds that women work for long hours in the farms and the paper also gives the manner in which the time is used.

A study in Andhra Pradesh by Narendra Kumar Illuru and Suneetha Kondeti has selected Godavari and Kurnool districts for survey. The authors have compared the women's work in these two areas, by considering 12 agricultural operations. The differences in wages for various operations between two districts have also been found out. A similar study done by R.P.Singh and Jai Prakash in the Kanke block of Ranchi district gives the exact percentages of the work done by women like husking

of rice etc. This paper also looks at the role played by women in marketing. However it would have been better if some comparison with male gender had been done.

A research question that can be asked is if working in a co-operative leads to better outcomes with respect to work and wages. A paper by Ashok Kumar *et al*. dealing with Bhutti Weavers Co-operative Society in Himachal Pradesh focuses on the income generated through this activity. The study finds that since 1944 when the co-operative society was established, the weaving activity has expanded a lot. Currently, the co-operative provides direct and indirect employment to more than 1,000 families and the membership is growing at a healthy rate of 3.53 per cent. The co-operative is exporting its product to many developed nations. However, the above-mentioned question is not answered.

Moving on to production and marketing, a paper by Khriemenuo Pusa and M. Giribabu looks at the impact of Horticulture Mission for North-Eastern and Himalayan states in two districts of Nagaland namely Dimapur and Kohima. After analysing the area and production of cut- flowers in India, the paper situates the share of Nagaland state. The paper then concentrates on the employment generation due to cultivation of Gerbera and Rose. The cost of production and profit margin for these two crops are also reported. However, a comparative analysis with another state would have given better insights.

A study of tribal women in Maharashtra by M.N. Waghmare *et al*. found that the farm management was dominated by the husband, but animal husbandry management was dominated by the women. One could hypothesise that an increase in animal husbandry activities could by themselves lead to higher management by women and, hence needs to be encouraged. Another paper on agriculture and animal husbandry by Kavita Baliyan based on primary data collected in Western Uttar Pradesh finds that the contribution of women in animal husbandry income is three times that in agricultural income. A paper by Nisha Verma *et al*. interestingly, found that in terms of value the female family worker works almost four times that of female hired worker.

Women- Empowerment, Role of SHGs

The ultimate aim of any governmental policy is to empower women. A paper by Shalini Sharma *et al*. examines the empowerment of women through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). DBT is an important scheme implemented by the government to terminate pilferages etc., but it also has special significance for women in particular. A survey in Hosiarpur district in Punjab found that the Scheduled Caste women below the age of 35 years had benefitted substantially from MGNREGA as compared to other welfare schemes. The use of DBT had streamlined the financial transactions and improved the socio-economic circumstances of the women.

A paper by Seedari Ujawala Rani *et al*. on TRIPTI - a poverty eradication, infrastructure-employment development programme by the Odisha government has

examined its impact on women empowerment and rural livelihoods in Odisha. This programme commenced in 2009. The study finds that a large population is still excluded from the reach of this scheme. Especially, the market, credit linkages need to be improved a lot.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are of course one of the important ways in which the role of women in economic activities including agriculture is sought to be enhanced. A case study of Bajrang Bali Self Help Group in Lucknow by K.C. Sharma has come up with some interesting observations. It finds that the SHGs have succeeded but the SHG credit linkage with the bank has not succeeded. In view of this, two policy implications are made. First is a need for perpetual institutional link between SHGs and the bank. Second is the better sensitisation of bank staff in this matter.

RESEARCHABLE ISSUES

There is a need for more research work and research inputs for the policy-maker in this area. The issue of contribution of women in agriculture is inter-twined with the issue of their economic status and social standing.

Some of the issues that need to be discussed are

1. Replicability of some of the more successful schemes (like Kudumbashree).
2. Aspects of out-migration of men and their various impacts on women.
3. Ways to augment women's entrepreneurship.
4. Strategies to bridge the gender gap in the agricultural wage rate.
5. Property Rights in land, and women.
6. While some gender- disaggregated data are available, where are the gaps?
7. Linking women and food security.
8. Women's work and their political participation in the gram panchayats.
9. Globalisation and women in agriculture.