

# A case study on women reducing drudgery through empowerment in agriculture in Dangs of Gujarat

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Despite rapid urbanization and improvements in social life, large numbers of poor women live in rural areas where modern technology is unavailable or unaffordable. Although technical innovation and adaptation are important, very many factors affect women's ability to benefit from technological change and these are often very location specific. Women will not benefit from hardware development unless this nexus of technical, institutional and socio-economic issues is addressed. With the help of Government Agencies, NGOs, Krishi Vigyan Kendra the women of the Dang are started various activities like small scale processing or small scale industries, group level farming to increase production. In the Dang's there are large number of SHGs exists and carried out activity to improve socio-economical status of society. Gujarat tourism department facilitates readily available market by increasing numbers of tourists who never come across such kind of things will buy producers price. The Dang's is emerging as a role model for women empowerment through agriculture and also drudgery reducer for society hence called Leader.

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The Dang's district is a tribal district in Gujarat in India. Ahwa, Girmal, Waghai, Saputara and Mahal are the major towns of the district. The reserved forest in Dang is amongst the richest forest of the state. The Dang district is gradually emerging into an agro processing and tourism hub. Rich wildlife, gardens, ropeway, sunrise point and echo point are some of the main tourist attractions in the district Dang.

Total population of the Dang is 226,769 compared to 186,729 of 2001. Male and female were 112,976 and 113,793, respectively. Population growth for the Dang's district recorded in 2011 for the decade has remained 21.44 per cent. Same figure for 1991-2001 decade was

29.59 per cent. The Dang's population constituted 0.38 per cent of total Gujarat population. sex ratio of the Dang's district is now 1007 female against 987 male. The Dang's is a only district of Gujarat, which have higher sex ratio of female: male. Women of Dang's play an important role in agriculture development of the district.

Women are a vital part of their family, district as well as Indian economy. Over the years, there is a gradual realization of the key role of women in agricultural development and their vital contribution in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, dairy and other allied sectors. Women form the backbone of agriculture in

India, comprising the majority of agricultural labours; women have been putting in labour not only in terms of physical output but also in terms of quality and efficiency. Women are critical to the well-being of farm households. Aside from raising children, women are expected to work in kitchen, maintain the homestead and assist in crop and animal production, all the while tending to the general health of their families. Perhaps, ironically, it is because women have so many responsibilities that they have been over-looked by agriculturalists and policy makers – it has been more convenient to label men as farmers and women as home makers. In truth, women are involved in all aspects of agriculture *viz.*, land preparation, seed selection, planting, weeding, pest control, harvesting, crop storage, handling, marketing, and processing. Whatever the reason for this ignore the importance of developing farming technologies relevant to women has only recently been recognized.

Rural women form the most important productive work force in the economy of majority of the developing nations including India. Agriculture the single largest production endeavor in India, contributing about 18 per cent of GDP is increasingly becoming a female oriented activity. Agriculture sector employs 4/5<sup>th</sup> of all economically active women in the country. 48 per cent of India's self-employed farmers are women. There are 75 million women engaged in dairying as against 15 million men and 20 million in animal husbandry as compared to 1.5 million men. Even though their magnify work is being ignored by people.

Beyond the conventional market-oriented narrower definition of productive workers, almost all women in rural India today can be considered as farmers in some sense, working as agricultural labour, unpaid workers in the family farm enterprise, or combination of the two. Moreover, several farm activities traditionally carried out by men are also being undertaken by women as men are pulled away into higher paying employment. Thus, rural India is witnessing a process which could be described as feminization of agriculture.

Traditional, manual food processing and preparation activities are widespread in developing countries. These tasks often fall to women, sometimes with the assistance of children. Many rural women work a 16-hour day, trying to balance competing demands in agricultural production, household chores and income generation. It is also observed that in The Dang's district women are

more active than men. They are active in the term of work efficiency, interest, planning, future strategies and adoption of any new technologies. Women of Dang's take special interest in the extension activities, which directly or indirectly higher the socio-economical status of their families. They are looking forward to reduce the drudgery of families. Mrunalini and Maheshwari (2000) in a study conducted on silk worm rearing activities revealed that preparation of leaf for feeding the worms was the most drudgery prone as per drudgery index calculated on linear combination method considering time, difficulty perception and frequency of performance as variables.

### **Defining drudgery :**

Drudgery can be defined by its time-consuming, repetitive and arduous nature. For rural women an additional dimension is multitasking, where other activities create constant interruptions. Many traditional post-harvest activities can be described as drudgery: threshing and winnowing, de-hulling, grinding and pounding, preparation of food and processed products, marketing and load-carrying. If these provide income, the work is invariably poorly paid. The development of concepts, capacities and behaviour patterns required to bring people out of the circles of poverty in which they live is part of process of technical innovation (Appleton, 1993).

### **Trends in manual post-harvest activities :**

Throughout the developing world, manual processing of starchy staples, beans and oilseeds is widespread and especially in the Dang's it is generally practiced by the women of the family. With compared to other district, Dang's still following their traditional value by applying such manual processing methods or by any traditional method of cropping or religious. These crops include rice, *Ragi*, vari, maize, sorghum, millet, wheat, roots and tubers, groundnuts - and other crops that are locally important. Although manual processing declines with urbanization and income growth, millions of people in rural areas are still depend on these traditional processes.

These manual activities use human energy in two ways: they are arduous and time-consuming. Reducing difficult activities is sometimes more important than saving time. For instance, women often prefer custom milling despite the walking and waiting time. Walking and waiting

may even be welcomed if they give an opportunity for social interaction.

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Waghai also engages in such activity of women empowerment in agriculture and reduction of drudgery through agricultural inventions. Women are given training on value addition through agricultural products like *Ragi*, sorghum, fruits and vegetables. They are also given training on marketing strategies and planning for higher economic standard of society. Vocational training was given to women seeking for employment opportunity for making them self employ. We are also not avoiding food security and nutrition management for healthy atmosphere to them. Women of the Dang's were also given training on the cutting and tailoring, housekeeping, handicrafts, vermi composting etc. Krishi Vigyan Kendra was also organizing programme on child health care and development. Therefore, by all means Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Waghai promoting women empowerment in agriculture and allied sector as well as to promote women as drudgery reducer for society. Empowerment is how much influence people have over external actions that matter to their welfare (Batliwala, 1994).

All over the India, the only place where you can find successful Self Help Groups (SHG) is at Gujarat with maximum number of active SHG in The Dang's district. All the SHG with the support of Government agencies, Krishi Vigyan Kendra or NGOs, are today self dependant. Majority of groups form by women and are active. They have their own brand name and Marko to sell produce. All the SHGs select an appropriate product or service by which they never face competition in market. By all the means we can says that women of the Dang's are leader of their society.

### **Cafeteria for women in agriculture :**

Mainstreaming gender is an important component of the Policy Framework for Agricultural extension (PFAE) developed by the Ministry of Agriculture (Government of India). The Centre developed a cafeteria for the Ministry of Agriculture for offering it to states to guide the development of new programmes for women in agriculture. New programmes for women in agriculture should be developed based on the following key principles identified in the cafeteria.

- New programmes that are proposed should expand their definition of agriculture beyond crop

production and should be based on site specific need assessments.

- New projects that are proposed should build on groups, networks, organizational capacity and resources already in place and functioning from existing project initiatives and should take on and build on lessons from existing projects.
- Apart from extending agricultural technologies on production and post harvest to women farmers, new programmes should concentrate their efforts in providing crucial back-up services and support (backward and forward linkages) to help women groups to successfully adopt new techniques, crops and enterprises to increase their incomes and employment opportunities.
- New programmes should be planned with adequate resources for mobilizing women, forming groups, improving capacity and capability in technical, organizational and commercial (business/micro-enterprises) sectors and support systems (credit, raw material and markets).
- These should be prepared jointly in consultations with other organizations (public, private and voluntary) that can potentially complement and supplement the efforts of the state Department of Agriculture.
- The most widespread arduous post-harvest activities are:
  - Milling and de-hulling
  - Threshing
  - Weaving
  - Walking with loads, especially in up-hill
  - Some oilseed processing activities, such as groundnut oil processing
  - Small scale food processing like Ragi, Papad, Biscuit etc.

Common time consuming activities include walking; waiting (at mills, markets and pumps), manual milling and pounding, and selected income generating activities (e.g. oil processing).

In rural areas, affordability is a key constraint to the use of mechanized processes: many women lack cash to pay for processing; mechanical processing in rural areas is often relatively expensive. Also, although manual processes take up valuable time, some (such as groundnut or cashew shelling) can be fitted in around

other chores or carried out by older women or children. Moreover, some informal group processing activities may provide a welcome opportunity for discussion and information exchange amongst women.

In urban areas, custom mills are more widely used because: mains electricity reduces processing costs; higher population density increases mill utilization levels, hence reducing the cost per client; and additional marketing and employment opportunities influence women's capacity and willingness to replace manual processes with custom-milling. In rural areas, the reverse is true and it may also be difficult or costly to obtain spare parts or fuel.

However, traditional products are not necessarily regarded as inferior in urban areas, and there is often increased demand for convenience products and street foods.

The Dang is now a day emerging as a tourist hub of India. Day by day numbers of tourists are increasing by speed of light. Well connected frame works of the Dang's with nearest states and develop cities like Surat, Ahmadabad etc. increase business opportunities for the Tribal women. All the small scale industries will now have ready market at home. They don't have to go anywhere to sell their produce like handicrafts, *Ragi* based food products, fruit and vegetables process products, honey or any traditional items which is only available in the Dang's because of preservation of traditional ideas. Women are still taking role as gender division in crop production activities. Crop activities prioritized on drudgery by men are distinctly different (Mrunalini and Snehalatha, 2010).

### **Reducing the drudgery: lessons from experience:**

A number of key issues and lessons have been highlighted through the considerable experience of Krishi Vigyan Kendra and development agencies in developing appropriate technology:

- Reducing drudgery is not necessarily what women want - increasing their productivity may be a higher priority
- Genuinely participatory technology development is needed to identify needs and design innovations that are affordable, socially acceptable, suited to their skills and within their sphere of control/influence.
- Ill-considered labour-saving interventions may

deprive women of an important income source

- Release from certain chores may offer women little benefit if they are consequently obliged to spend more time on say, their husbands' plots.
- Saving energy is often considered by women to be more important than saving time -but in busy months, time may also be at a premium.
- Seasonal analysis is very important because of the sharp seasonal differences in labour demands.

A review of experience in technology development reveals six recurrent themes, whose lessons merit consideration in any new interventions.

### *Affordability :*

Realistic estimates of running costs as well as careful analysis of willingness and ability to pay are needed. Sharply defined seasons and dispersed production contribute to low utilization and high costs of mechanized technology.

### *Group enterprise :*

This may seem to offer a solution to the twin problems of achieving economies of scale and the absence of a commercial custom operation. However, jointly operated processing operations are often problematic because groups may lack sufficient cohesion, management experience and marketing skills - resulting in high running costs and losses. Capacity-building needs are often under-estimated.

### *Commercial involvement :*

Co-operation between development agencies and the private sector can reap important rewards in terms of technology promotion and uptake and long-term sustainability. However, misunderstandings and the time-consuming nature of such collaboration means it is often a low priority.

### *Participatory technology development :*

Where women are involved in trials, their feedback may not provide accurate data on time or energy savings, but it will probably provide a better indicator of eventual uptake. This is illustrated by the sorghum de-hulling case study. In contrast to this, a mechanical expeller was introduced, with minimal consultation, for groundnut processing in Burkina Faso. Oil yields were higher but the residue could not be used to make the traditional by-

product cookies - so the income generated was less.

*Reduced drudgery or depriving the poorest women of work :*

A drudgery-reducing technology may eliminate an important source of income for poor women. For example, in Mali, poor women earn income by manually de-hulling coarse grains. The introduction of mechanical de-hullers would deprive them of income, whilst benefits would accrue to higher income groups able to pay for de-hulling.

*Access to credit, training and markets :*

Consideration of how these soft technologies determine who benefits from new hardware is often at least as important as hardware development itself. Bennett (2002) defines empowerment as the enhancement of assets and capabilities of diverse individuals and group to engage influence and hold accountable the institutions which affect them.

**The needs of the poorest women :**

Where interventions are intended to benefit the poorest women, attention should be focused on particular issues :

- The needs of female-headed households, which feature disproportionately amongst the poor
- Crops and processes used in marginal areas
- Carrying fuel and water, because so many women are affected
- How poor women earn income - so that new technology really does benefit them
- Understanding the broader processes which determine how benefits are distributed
- Household level and informal sector activities, where the poorest people earn their living.

**Conclusion :**

Despite rapid urbanization and improvements in transport, large numbers of poor women live in rural areas where modern technology is unavailable or unaffordable. Although technical innovation and adaptation are important, very many factors affect women's ability to benefit from technological change and these are often very location specific. Women will not benefit from hardware development unless this nexus of technical, institutional and socio-economic issues is addressed. The Dang's is emerging as role model for women empowerment through agriculture and also drudgery reducer for society hence, called leader.

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