

Socio-economic profile and contribution of women in social forestry

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ABSTRACT

It is well known that women play a significant and crucial role in social forestry. The present study was conducted to analyse the socio-economic profile and contribution of women in social forestry. The socio-economic profile was studied under two heads; personal and family characteristics. S.E.S. of Trivedi (1963) was used with slight modification. Primary data regarding contribution of women in social forestry were collected through interview schedule in two nursery namely; Double Phatak Nursery, Agra, and Budhiya ka Tal Nursery, Etmadpur of Agra district during 2000-2001 and percentage was used as statistical measure. The study showed that majority of women engaged in social forestry were illiterate, married, landless, belonged to nuclear family system and were in the age-group of 44-51 years and were from schedule caste and backward. Their family income was in between 6501-11000, and they were having low medium contribution. Therefore, Government should plan and execute programme in considering women and their socio-economic status and should give more chances to contribute at every level of social forestry activities.

INTRODUCTION

The militant role played by women in fighting a last ditch battle for safeguarding the forest has compelled as to help women play a signal role in social forestry. We now find that women can raise seedlings individually or in co-operatives. It has been observed that women do excellent planting *i.e.* where survival role is very good. The service of women can be utilized for making pits, planting, grafting, budding, weeding, manuring, and guarding the plantation. Social forestry includes trees, shrubs and grasses for food, fuel, fodder, household timber and vocations like sericulture, cane or bamboo growing for handicrafts, bee-keeping, use of medicinal herbs and minor forest produce. The unique feature of social forestry efforts is the involvement of women as "van sevika" for protection and preservation of forest products as also for motivation of rural women. A major reason of failure of social forestry programme is the male bias, that is, lack of intentions to involve women, particularly poor women, though they should be the primary beneficiaries since it is the women, not men, who collect fuel and fodder for the family. If women can be motivated, there will be no doubt that the survival rate of

seedlings will shoot up.

Therefore, for the success of the social forestry programme it is utmost important that forests are created and cared by the women in surrounding area and the official department extends their back up facilities for augmenting women's efforts. As a concomitant to the women's role in social forestry and as guardian angels of the existing forests, women of India are also expected to play a greater role in the reclamation of the vast tracts of our wastelands. So, keeping in view the above facts, this study was carried out to find out the socio-economic characteristics and contribution of women working in social forestry.

METHODS

Exploratory type of research design was used in the present study. Agra division of the Uttar Pradesh was selected as the locale by using purposive sampling. Agra division comprises of seven districts. Out of which, Agra district was selected purposively because the divisional forest range is located in Agra district. Agra district was divided into two areas; Agra urban and Agra rural. Agra rural was selected

purposively. Agra rural comprises 15 blocks. Out of these blocks, Bichpuri block and Etmadpur block were selected randomly. There are 13 nurseries under the social forest department but women involvement was confinement into 5 nurseries. Out of 5 nurseries, two nurseries namely; Double Phatak Nursery, Agra and Budhiya ka Tal Nursery, Etmadpur were selected. All 25 women working in these two nurseries were selected purposively. S.E.S. scale of Trivedi (1963) was used with slight modification and primary data regarding contribution of women in social forestry were collected through interview schedule during 2000-2001. Socio-economic profile was studied under two heads; personal and family characteristics. Percentage was used as statistical measure.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The results obtained from the present study are summarized below according to objectives of the study:

Socio-economic profile:

Socio-economic profile was studied under two heads such

as; personal characteristics and family characteristics of the respondents.

Age:

Data of Table 1 clearly indicate that sixty four per cent sampled women were engaged in social forestry belonging to the age group of 44-51 years, while twenty per cent women belonged to the age group of 35-43 years, and 16 per cent women engaged in social forestry of the age group of 52 and above.

Caste:

Seventy two per cent women engaged in social forestry operations were of schedule caste or schedule tribe and remaining 28 per cent sampled women were of O.B.C., No woman of upper caste was engaged in social forestry operations in social forestry.

Similar results have also been reported by Brinda (1991), who concluded that about 90 per cent of women agricultural labourers covered by the study belonged to schedule caste and backward caste.

| Sr. No. | Variables | Classification | Respondents | |
|---------|-------------------|----------------|-------------|------------|
| | | | Frequency | Percentage |
| 1. | Age | 35-43 | 5 | 20 |
| | | 44-51 | 16 | 64 |
| | | 52 and above | 4 | 16 |
| 2. | Caste | O.B.C. | 7 | 28 |
| | | SC/ST | 18 | 72 |
| 3. | Marital status | Married | 14 | 56 |
| | | Widow | 11 | 44 |
| 4. | Educational level | Illiterate | 24 | 96 |
| | | Primary level | 1 | 4 |

| Sr. No. | Variables | Classification | Respondents | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|------------|
| | | | Frequency | Percentage |
| 1 | Type of family | Joint | 12 | 48 |
| | | Nuclear | 13 | 52 |
| 2 | Family size | Upto 5 members | 20 | 80 |
| | | More than 5 members | 5 | 20 |
| 3 | Type of house | Kachcha | 13 | 52 |
| | | Mixed | 7 | 28 |
| | | Pucca | 5 | 20 |
| 4 | Land holding (Yards) | Landless | 17 | 68 |
| | | Upto 50 sq. yards | 6 | 24 |
| | | 50 to 100 sq. yards | 2 | 8 |
| 5 | Income group (per capita per annum) | 6500 | 5 | 20 |
| | | 6501-1100 | 11 | 44 |
| | | Above 1100 | 9 | 36 |

Marital status:

Fifty six per cent sampled women were married and remaining 44 per cent were widow. No unmarried woman was engaged in social forestry. It is perhaps because of social customs of this locality where unmarried women were not allowed to go for outside work.

Educational level:

Ninety six per cent women were found illiterate and remaining 4 per cent were educated up to primary level.

Type of family:

Fifty two per cent sampled women belonged to the nuclear families and remaining 48 per cent to joint families. As such the study indicated that the nuclear family structure is more than the joint family structure in society.

Family size:

Eighty per cent sampled women were having upto 5 members in their families, while remaining only 20 per cent sampled women were having more than 5 members.

Type of house:

Majority of women (52 %) were having kachcha house. Twenty eight per cent were having mixed house, and only 20 per cent women were living in pucca house.

Land holding (Yards):

Majority of sampled women (68 %) were having no land. Further, 24 per cent sampled women were having upto 50 sq.yards land, while only 8 per cent sampled women were having land 50-100 sq.yards. The results are in conformity that of Bhatia (1990) who concluded that the women from landless category worked on the fields owned by other farmers.

Income group:

Maximum 44 per cent families of sampled women were having per capita annual income Rs.6501 – 11000/- and 36 per cent families of sampled women were having per capita annual income more than Rs. 11000, and only 20 per cent families of sampled women were having per capita annual income upto 6500/-. It is important to note that all the sampled women were below the poverty line.

Contribution of women in social forestry:

The contributions of sampled women engaged in social

forestry were measured on the basis of 22 questions and single score was provided to each work or each question. Therefore, minimum contribution score was 0 and maximum contribution score was 22. It was observed that all the sampled women were having their contribution score in social forestry activity in between 8 to 13, which was in the medium contribution. Now this contribution was further sub-divided into three categories of low, medium, and high contribution.

The data presented in Table 3 reveal that majority of sampled women (72 %) were having medium contribution in social forestry activities. Sixteen per cent of women were having high medium contribution, and only 12 per cent women were having low medium contribution.

| Sr. No. | Contribution | Respondents | |
|---------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| | | Frequency | Percentage |
| 1. | Low medium | 3 | 12 |
| 2. | Medium | 18 | 72 |
| 3. | High medium | 4 | 16 |
| Total | | 25 | 100 |

Conclusion:

In India, where the population is very large and resources are limited. Social forestry is an instrument for rural development particularly for poor people. Through social forestry, progress of the country can be speeded up by fulfilling the needs of the rural people. As it is clear from the findings of the study that almost of women were from the families remaining below poverty line. They were not educated as well as literate but they were getting employment. Their contribution in social forestry activities was very low. They were getting poor wages. As a result, their socio-economic status was very low. For improving socio-economic status and their level of contribution in social forestry, there is a need of hour to provide support services namely; training to improve skills, reduction of drudgery, and appropriate land use technologies for socio-economic status of the country.

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