

Women empowerment through agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme in India

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ABSTRACT

The present study assesses the effects of central government's sponsored scheme agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme on women empowerment in India. Women empowerment includes the social, economical and entrepreneurial empowerment and evaluated in terms of participation, access, employment opportunities and decision making. The present study reviews the whole gamut of issues related with women empowerment for empowering women in the country through the agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme. In analysis, it was found that southern states including Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Karnataka have very good status in women training and agri-preneurship comparison than north eastern states of the country. Government need to give special attention on the implementation of ACABCs in the northern eastern states of the country to improve the performance of the scheme in respect with trained women agri-graduates, agri-venture established by them and successful implementation of agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme.

KEY WORDS : Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, Government initiatives, Decision making, Business opportunities

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Gender empowerment is a prerequisite for growth and development of any economy especially women must have more equitable access to assets and services should be improved for empowering them. The growing social awareness across the globe has brought a number of issues to the fore among which gender equality and empowerment of women are very significant. Discrimination against women in the form of male-female differentiation constitutes the core of the gender biased system (Ghadoliya, 2005). Inequalities between men and

women in their access to productive resources, services and opportunities are one of the causes of underperformance in the agriculture sector, and contribute to deficiencies in food and nutrition security, economic growth and overall development. These inequalities are costly and undermine the effectiveness of international development efforts and the impact of development cooperation (Dookie *et al.*, 2012). Empowerment of women involves many things, economic opportunity, property rights, political representation, social equality and personal rights. Department of women and child development (DWCD), Ministry of human resource development, government of India is the nodal agency looking after the social and economic empowerment of women to ensure the gender equality. Indian Mahila Yojana, Mahila Samridhi Yojana, empowering strategies and policies include Swa-shakti Project, training of rural youth for self-employment, Swayamsidha, Swawlamban, Support for training and employment programme, norwegian agency for development cooperation, socio-economic programme. Some condensed

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courses of education and vocational training, Swamjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, women's vocational training programme, Swama Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana, urban self-employment programme, development of women and children in urban areas, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, trade related entrepreneurship assistance and development, national rural health mission, national rural employment guarantee scheme bringing out an umbrella scheme of training and employment for women (Gupta, 2009). Rural women make a large food and agricultural production contribution to guarantee food and livelihood security for the entire household. Men and women often have different roles, rights and responsibilities with regard to farming systems and the marketing of products, land ownership and management of natural resources (land, forests and water). Normally, women have limited access to male dominated institutions such as saving and loan groups, farmers' associations and forest management committees. By strengthening women to play an effective role in decision-making processes in institutions such as saving and loan groups, farmers associations or forest management committees our programmes work towards equitable access and control over and benefit from income, food and agricultural production (Stummer, 2009). Women perform 66 per cent of the world's work, and produce 50 per cent of the food, yet earn only 10 per cent of the income and own 1 per cent of the property. Whether the issue is improving education in the developing world, or fighting global climate change, or addressing nearly any other challenge we face, empowering women is a critical part of the equation (Former president Bill Clinton addressing the annual meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative, September 2009). Closing the gender gap in agricultural inputs alone could lift 100-150 million people out of hunger (FAO, 2011). Government of India has adopted the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women on 20th March, 2001. The main objective of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and to ensure their active participation in all spheres of public life and activities. The themes and issues covered by the policy include judicial - legal system, economic empowerment of women, social empowerment (health, education, violence, science and technology, drinking water and sanitation etc.), women in decision-making, media, the girl child (Gupta, 2009).

The Human Development Report for 1995 published by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) made a striking revelation that there was not a single country where women enjoyed equality with men. The estimates showed that women performed \$ 11 trillion worth of unpaid or invisible economic activity worldwide. According to the findings of the 31country study, women work longer hours than men do. On an average, women put in more time on

work than men: 13 per cent more in developing countries and six per cent more in developed countries. Women bear 53 per cent and men 47 per cent of the burden of work in developing countries; the corresponding figures are 51 per cent and 49 per cent in developed economies. Women, in fact, contribute more than half the wealth of a nation, yet, they are denied economic, social and even legal rights and privileges that are granted to men (Sreekumar, 2001).

Women empowerment in agriculture by government initiatives:

The women are the backbone of agricultural workforce but worldwide their hard work has mostly been unpaid. She does the most tedious and back-breaking tasks in agriculture, animal husbandry and homes. The research efforts at the ICAR institutes have been tried to relieve her of the drudgery by providing time and labour saving tools. In order to empower and improve the women farmers' productivity, they need to have proper farm training and capacity building programmes to compete various challenges in their rural livelihood. Sharma *et al.* (2005) stated that training to farm women is necessary to empowering them in the dairy farming. Similar study also reported by Umasah *et al.* (2001) that high level training to women has more empowered in dairy farming in Uttarakhand state. Women land ownership plays a major role in their credit worthiness, if they have right on the agriculture land they will have access to financial resources and savings. New legislations have to be taken place in farm land reforms like allocating the wasteland to women self-help groups (SHG). Rural women have been acknowledged as the core food producers and processors, banks should recognize them as entrepreneurs, loans and Kissan credit cards have to be approved for them. Special support and market connectivity have to establish for rural women artisans to sell their agro-based handicrafts. The farm labour wages should be the same without gender differences and the equal employment benefits have to be given in all rural schemes like NREG. Sufficient political representation must be required by rural women in local level councils, it directs them as an equal partners in political, economical and legal decision making.

In order to bring gender issues to the centre stage in all aspects of public expenditure and policy, a gender budgeting cell (GBC) has been constituted by government of India to look in budgetary commitments of various schemes and ensure a proportionate flow of public expenditure to benefit State Horticulture Mission (SHM) has been directed to earmark at least 30 per cent of the budget allocation for women beneficiaries in all their programmes. Under TMNE, during 2008-09, about 4037 women entrepreneurs were trained on different aspects of horticulture (Shekara *et al.*, 2011). The centrally sponsored

schemes support to state extension reforms (ATMA) under implementation in 583 districts of 29 States and two union territories (UTs). Under the approved scheme while there is no separate allocation under the women component plan (WCP), however, a minimum of 30 per cent of resources are to be essentially utilized for women farmers and women extension functionaries. Since inception of the scheme, over 19.84 lakh farm women have participated in farmer-oriented activities. In other schemes of Ministry of Agriculture viz., macro-management, crops, rain-fed farming system, mechanization and technology, integrated nutrient management (INM), agriculture marketing and seeds special measures also have been taken to ensure budgetary support to the farm women. The main aim is to ensure that women contribute significantly. Appropriate structural, functional and institutional arrangements are being promoted to empower women and improve their access to inputs, technology and other resources. The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) was launched by the Government of India on International Women's Day in 2010 with the aim to strengthen overall processes that promote all-round development of women. In the recent past added emphasis has been laid on acknowledging and preparing database on multidimensional role sets of women where their roles have become an inbuilt factor for input-output system of empowerment. In this process, the All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP) on Home Science aims at developing resource base of rural women for empowering them to become subsistence-generating units for sustaining development and improving quality of life. Table 1 shows the major Government initiatives undertaken for women empowerment in the country.

The five domains of women's empowerment in agriculture:

The index uses information collected in household surveys to determine how a woman empowered five domains of empowerment (5DE), which include agricultural production and income generation; power over productive resources such as land and livestock; control of income and expenditures; leadership in the community; and use of time (www.wikigender.org).

Women empowerment through agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme:

The central sector scheme, agri-clinics and agri-business centres is being a tool for women empowerment in rural areas due to its nature of business opportunities for women agricultural graduates with the subsidy based credit linked scheme. Present time, Government of India is providing a credit linked subsidy of 44 per cent of the cost of project especially for trained women agri-graduates under the scheme. Agri-clinics and agri-business centre scheme is playing a proactive role in empowerment of male and female unemployed Agri-graduate through establishment of various agri-venture across the country. Since inception to 2009, a total number of 1187 women agri-graduate have undergone two months training by identified nodal training institutes (NTIs) all over the country, this has resulted the establishment of 225 agri-venture during this time period (Shekara *et al.*, 2011). In top five states having maximum number of trained women candidates, Tamil Nadu (211) has first position followed by Maharashtra (192), Jammu and Kashmir (106), Manipur (96) and Bihar (75) during this period. Women agri-graduate established maximum number of agri-venture in Tamil Nadu (64) followed by Maharashtra (46), Andhra Pradesh (24), Bihar (19) and Karnataka (12) in top five states

Table 1: Major government initiatives for women empowerment in India

Schemes	Year	Provisions
Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana	2010	A cash incentive of Rs. 4000 to women (19 years and above) for the first two live births.
Janani Suraksha Yojana	2005	One-time cash incentive to pregnant women for institutional/home births through skilled assistance.
Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya	2004	Educational facilities (residential schools) for girls belonging to SC, ST, OBC, minority communities and families below the poverty line in educationally backward blocks.
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act	2005	Legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage of Rs. 120 per day in 2009 prices.
RNTCP	1997	Tuberculosis control initiative
Sabla or Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls	2011	Empowering adolescent girls (AGs) of 11–18 years with focus on out-of-school girls by improvement in their nutritional and health status and upgrading various skills like home skills, life skills and vocational skills.
Udisha		Nationwide training component of the World Bank (External website that opens in a new window) assisted women and child development project (External website that opens in a new window).

Source: www.wikipedia.com

in the country. Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Jharkhand and seven sister states of India (Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim and Manipur) have very poor status in both trained candidates and agri-venture established under the agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme. The problem of poor performance may be lack of NTIs, agri-graduates and timely supervision of the scheme. Table 2 shows details of trained women graduates and established agri-venture by them under the agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme during April 2004 to November

2009. It is found that total number of trained women graduates was 1187 in the all states in India. In this, Tamil Nadu (211) and Maharashtra (192) has maximum trained women agri-graduates which was 17.77 and 16.17 per cent of total trained women graduates, respectively in the country under the scheme.

Conclusion:

The agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme have transferred the real empowerment including social, economical and entrepreneurial etc. in the hand of women and

Table 2: States wise number of trained women graduate and agri-venture established by women under ACABCs Scheme as on November 2009

Sr.No.	Name of state	Trained women		Agri-venture established by women		% of trained women (%)
		Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
1.	Andhra Pradesh	62	5.22	24	10.66	37.5
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	0	0	0
3.	Assam	38	3.20	6	2.66	15.78
4.	Bihar	75	6.31	19	8.44	25.33
5.	Chandigarh	0	0	0	0	0
6.	Chhattisgarh	4	0.33	3	1.33	75
7.	Delhi	0	0	0	0	0
8.	Goa	2	0.16	1	0.44	50
9.	Gujarat	24	2.02	7	3.11	29.16
10.	Haryana	3	0.25	0	0	0
11.	Himachal Pradesh	11	0.92	0	0	0
12.	Jammu & Kashmir	106	8.93	2	0.88	1.88
13.	Jharkhand	46	3.87	0	0	0
14.	Karnataka	78	6.57	12	5.33	15.38
15.	Kerala	45	3.79	6	2.66	13.33
16.	Madhya Pradesh	6	0.50	1	0.44	16.66
17.	Maharashtra	192	16.17	46	20.44	23.95
18.	Manipur	96	8.08	11	4.88	11.95
19.	Meghalaya	0	0	0	0	0
20.	Mizoram	19	1.60	0	0	0
21.	Nagaland	24	2.02	2	0.88	83.33
22.	Orissa	59	4.97	3	1.33	5.08
23.	Pondicherry	2	0.16	2	0.88	100
24.	Punjab	9	0.75	2	0.88	22.22
25.	Rajasthan	47	6.23	9	4.0	19.14
26.	Sikkim	0	0	0	0	0
27.	Tamil Nadu	211	17.77	64	28.0	30.33
28.	Tripura	0	0	0	0.0	0
29.	Uttar Pradesh	7	0.58	1	0.44	14.28
30.	Uttarakhand	11	0.92	2	0.88	18.18
31.	West Bengal	10	0.84	2	0.88	20.00
	Total	1187	100	225	100	18.95

Source: Compiled from Shekara *et al.*, 2011

has made self-dependent to women in the society. The agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme have empowering to rural and urban women by providing professional and technical skills through two month's training programme, loan facilities and 44 per cent subsidy on loan amount for establishment of agri-venture. Agri-clinic and agri-business centres scheme have potential of empowering women in different angles such as social, economical and entrepreneurial status but there is a need to give especial attention on the implementation of scheme in the union tertiary and seven sister states of India for improving the performance of the scheme. Government should make periodically inspection of training programme, performance of NTIs and disseminating the scheme in rural areas especially in north east part of the country. It is also expected from women agri-graduates that they should take the scheme as opportunity for empowering themselves by taking the benefits of specialized training, credit linked subsidy and handholding support of the agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme.

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