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Empowering Tribal Women through SHG in Hilly Areas of Koraput District

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ABSTRACT

The 11th plan through its 'Bharat Nirman' aimed at empowering rural women through Self Help Groups (SHG). SHG is known to be one of the most effective and potent means of empowering women. It is observed that the SHG members in Koraput are able to take decisions, often appropriate for the survival and growth of their SHGs and simultaneously nourishing their individual growth. Decision making, communication skills which are superior indicators of development and empowerment are widely observed in SHGs of tribal women in Koraput district of Odisha. These tribal women have started taking control over their lives and situations through attending group meetings, public functions, involving in income generating activities and joining other women in social causes. The present paper brings out strategic interventions and participatory role of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Koraput in diverse areas such as vegetable cultivation, mushroom cultivation, poultry rearing, livestock farming, ginger cultivation, vermicomposting, food processing/ value addition, Bee keeping etc through Front Line Demonstrations (FLD), On Farm Trials (OFT) and Trainings. Adoption to new technologies such as off-season vegetables, oyster mushroom with niger sticks and different strains, Italian honey bee keeping, Banaraja poultry rearing in backyard etc by farm women has been discussed. It is found that there is a threefold increase of returns in several income generating activities adopted by the tribal women. Introduction of new technologies like oyster Mushroom cultivation, vermicomposting and value addition in cereals, vegetables and fruits gives a return of Rs. 8000/100 beds in 45 days, Rs. 10000/pit/annum and Rs. 6500/ quintal/annum respectively. It can be concluded that participatory research by KVK and farm women leads to desired outcomes. Effectiveness of this approach can be further enhanced by eliminating the constraints faced by SHGs.

1. Introduction

"Self-help is the best help", goes the time tested adage. Self-help is both a means and a goal within the basic strategies of empowerment. In the words of Chanakya - Self initiative and self-realization are very powerful weapons in empowering the poor and eradicating poverty from the world.

Easy access to credit through Self-help groups is the biggest need of the hour because financial resource is a fundamental requirement for empowerment. Also financial strength can bring attitudinal, social and cultural changes. SHGs can bring all round development which includes social, economic, political and spiritual development of the poor section of the society.

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Innovative efforts like SHG hold out fresh hopes for enabling the poor to participate in the process of development. The group approach makes available the collective wisdom and combined resources for any risk or eventuality. The basic objective of self-help groups is to act as the forum for the members-the poor, to provide space and support to each other. It is often argued that groups are of fundamental importance to economic social, and political outcomes, despite their relative neglect by economists, who continue to treat groups as quasi-individuals. Group formation among the poor has great potential for enabling the members to reach their goals. Such groups may affect poverty directly, via improved income generation, or indirectly via empowerment and political action. Groups potentially do offer an escape from poverty. The benefits of SHGs are based on cooperation rather than competition. In reality it follows the principle of “contribute according to your ability and extract according to your need”.

2. Strategic Interventions of KVK and Methodology

Empowerment is a multidimensional process which should address several aspects of living and livelihoods of women. Social, cultural, financial, intellectual and physical aspects, not necessarily in this order, need to be addressed. Needless to say that knowledge, awareness & training are the basic ingredients which will help women in particular and society in general to realize the potential of women. Therefore it is obvious that KVKs can play a significant role in empowering the women Self-help groups. Potentially significant is the role of the state, both at national and local levels, which have been variously emphasized. While State hostility can prevent successful group formation; state support can assist in replication due to perceived and demonstrated benefits. Local governments, in this case KVK, in particular can play a crucial role.

Figure 1. The various linkages to empower SHGs of Koraput district of Odisha



Localities or villages, where KVK undertook the participatory approach, were selected based on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) technique. Awareness was generated through exposure visits, Kisan Mela, field day, exhibition and use of mass media. Capacity building (training)/Front line demonstrations (FLD) and On farm trials (OFT), various interventions/ activities of KVK for farm women were aimed at reducing their drudgery & increase the family income. Therefore training programs , FLD and OFT were organized in the areas of crop production , vegetable cultivation, floriculture, poultry rearing, up gradation of local breeds of Goat/ sheep, mushroom cultivation, bee keeping, preservation and value addition of cereals/vegetables/fruits & spices, vermicomposting, farm implements to reduce drudgery.

3. Results and Discussion

Various problems are identified during PRA studies and thrust areas emerging out of the study are taken up by the KVK specialists. Normally on farm trials followed by front line demonstrations are conducted in farmer’s field. The following table depicts very encouraging results of OFTs/FLDs averaged for a period of five years.

Since its inception, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Koraput, Odisha has adopted 65 villages from different blocks of Semiliguda, Nandpur, Koraput, Baipariguda etc. Over the years it has conducted 1650 trainings, in which about 16000 farm women were trained. Also 95 numbers of training on behalf of sponsoring agency have been conducted in which 1345 farm women were trained. Further, 195 Front Line Demonstrations in the areas of frontier technologies as applicable to Koraput District have been conducted in the adopted villages of KVK. A total of 950 farm women beneficiaries were actively involved. On farm trial is another successful intervention of KVK. 92 numbers of location specific trials were conducted in the farmers’ field where 550 farm women actively participated. Given below is the percentage of adoption and effect of KVK intervention on income.

Conclusions

The strategy for empowering tribal women has to take into account the basic characteristics of tribal areas of Koraput i.e. forested, hilly/sloppy and remote. The natural resource endowment is vastly different from that of other parts, they are cut off from the main stream and various technological opportunities are yet to reach them. Their leisurely pace of life, culture also stands in the way of any rapid change for their socio-economic development.

Table 1. Impact of FLDs/OFTs on different enterprises on the economics of the farmers

Crop/Enterprise	Yield		Cost of cultivation(Rs)		Gross return(Rs)		Net return(Rs)	
	FP	RP	FP	RP	FP	RP	FP	RP
Tomato(Ha)	175.5	239.0	39000	39920	175790	239080	136790	199160
Onion(Ha)	143.0	205.9	50000	53700	143000	205900	93000	152200
cabbage(Ha)	205.0	299.4	38000	39440	102500	149700	64500	110260
Cowpea(Ha)	33	45	31800	32800	33000	45000	1200	12000
Sweet potato(Ha)	155.5	205.6	42000	42610	77750	102825	35750	60215
marigold(Ha)	55.5	89.2	58900	60200	83250	133800	24350	73600
Ginger(Ha)	50	110.5	80000	120000	125000	276250	45000	156250
Mushroom (kg/10beds/45 days)	10	19.6	300	300	1000	1960	700	1660
Poultry kg/10birds/year	12	28	500	800	3500	8500	3000	7700
Livestock(kg/year)	10	15	600	900	3000	4500	2400	3600
Honey bee (kg/box)	10	50	200	3000	1500	7500	1200	4500
Vermicomposting	-	3	-	3000	-	9000	-	6000
Preservation of fruits and vegetables	-	1	-	2000	-	8000	-	6500

Table 2. The percentage of adoption and effect of KVK intervention on income of farmers

Specific Technical Skill Transferred	% of Adoption	Change in income(Rs)	
		Before intervention	After intervention
Vegetable cultivation	60	66,000/ha	1,06,700/ha
Floriculture	34	24000/ha	73,000/ha
Backyard poultry	65	3000/10 birds/year	7700/10 birds/year
Mushroom cultivation	70	1200/20beds/	2400/20 beds/
Italian Honeybee	50	1200/box	4500/box
Ginger	50	45,000/ha	1,56,000/ha
Vermicomposting	45	Not practiced	3000/pit/harvest(3 months)
Livestock	40	2400/goat	3600/goat
Preservation/Processing of vegetables and fruits	40	Local practice in poor hygiene	6500/1 quintal/year

Therefore the strategy of empowerment should be different as compared to rural and suburban areas. Thus the participatory role of KVK in increasing their awareness, motivating them, improving their skills and knowledge and above all directly assisting them to increase their income has paid rich dividends. Introduction of new technologies like Oyster Mushroom cultivation, Vermicomposting and Value addition in Cereals, Vegetables and Fruits are well accepted and effectively adopted by the tribal community of Koraput. Several grey areas such as literacy, financial support and proper marketing network of their products need to be addressed.

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