

# GENDER FOCUS IN NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMME (NATP) :SOME ISSUES

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Innovations in technology dissemination is one of the important components of National Agricultural Technology Project, which lays greater emphasis on the participatory approaches for planning and implementation of strategies. The project envisages gender focus in its strategies to make the extension services more accessible to women farmers. While gender is inherent in the notion of participatory approach, it is often not addressed automatically. One needs to understand that unless concerted and sincere efforts are made to understand and flag the gender issues and thereafter-specific strategies are planned for addressing these issues by integrating them into the project design, no progress can be expected in this regard. This article is an attempt to highlight some of the important gender issues in the development process and raise some questions for serious thought and action while planning and implementing Strategic Research and Extension Plans (SREP).

## **Why Women Farmers Need Specific Focus?**

The following are some of the gender issues, which justify a specific focus on women in NATP project.

### **1. Data About Women in Agriculture**

According to 1991 census, the female population of the country is 406.38 million (48.15 per cent of total population) of which 75 per cent are rural. The percentage of women cultivators is 34.22, women agricultural labourers is 44.93, in livestock, forestry, fisheries and other allied activities 1.60 per cent of women are involved.

### **2. Contribution of Women Farmers to Agriculture and Family**

FAO , IFAD and other international agencies estimated that women account for 70 to 80 percent household food production in the developing countries but receive only 2 to 10% of agriculture support services. Studies have shown that Indian women

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contribute a much larger share of their earnings to basic family maintenance than men.

### **3. Myths About Women Farmers**

Women farmers are not competent enough to handle certain tasks, women's needs are met automatically, developmental programmes benefit men and women equally and women voices are heard through their men are some of the myths about women farmers, which are based on the culture of the society rather than biological differences between men and women.

### **4. Gender Bias in Research and Extension Programmes**

Most of the extension programmes and research projects are designed and implemented with an assumption that all farm managers and decision-makers are men. Although farm women are knowledgeable about traditional technologies, they have very little access to the latest technologies. Women's participation in setting the research priorities is an area, which is totally ignored.

### **5. Social Status of Women Farmers and Gender Discrimination**

Women in general and rural women in particular are given secondary status in the society. As a result they are subjected to lot of discrimination in the areas of literacy, ownership of assets, freedom to take decision, access to credit and other resources and wages. In addition to this, lack of mobility, drudgery, dual responsibility of women farmers are some of the impending factors for their development.

The above facts and figures about women in agriculture need to be considered while designing the project and its activities, so that the issues concerning the women farmers will find some place in the project. The above facts also reveal that women are vital and productive workers in India's national economy. Therefore, they must be given special focus in the project. Along with this, women farmers also have to be given respect, opportunity and be recognized as farmers, entrepreneurs and decision-makers - not simply as women.

### **Planning for Gender Focus**

As mentioned earlier, women farmers have specific constraints and the extension project designs have to be sensitive to these. There may be some common constraints to both men and women, which can be addressed by a common strategy. But gender specific problems cannot be addressed by a common strategy, therefore, they need to be addressed through gender specific strategies.

For preparing a successful gender focused project design, an important requirement is to understand the roles in different farm related enterprises, access and control of resources, problems, perceptions and needs of men and women farmers in a given specific socio-cultural environment of the project area. The second requirement could be an ability to predict the different impacts and benefits of the project to men and women farmers.

### 1. Tools for Collecting Gender Related Information

A few PRA and gender analysis tools, may be useful for collecting information on gender. The advantage of using these tools are

- i. field workers can rapidly understand the gender, socio-economic, cultural and technical issues in a particular situation and
- ii. involve different groups and sections of the community in problem analysis and planning. These include:

<b>TOOLS</b>	<b>PURPOSE (S)</b>
1 Mapping	Community wise habitation, women headed households, houses of non-practicing farmers, resources and their use by men and women, broad idea about constraints and opportunities for development.
2 Ranking	Gender based priorities can be revealed by choosing the alternatives e.g., varieties of crops, trees, seeds, enterprises, income generation activities, credit sources etc.,
3 Seasonal activities calendar	Gender based division of labour in different enterprises, season activities wise and sources of women's and men's income, season wise calendar rainfall, migration, work load of men and women, availability of vegetables, fuel, fodder, drinking water. Helps the project designers in analyzing the changing responsibilities of men and women and the best time for working with them.
4 Venn diagram	Perceptions of women and men about importance, accessibility and effectiveness of various community service institutions.
5 Changing trends	Understanding the changing trends with regard to differ

	ent aspects of life-family structure and size, education, health, mobility, dowry, men and women's social status, participation in community activities, participation in different farm enterprises, decision making and leisure time activities etc.,
6 Daily routine analysis	Indicates gender-wise relative amounts of time spent on each (farm, home and other) activity, drudgery, rest periods etc.
7 Framework for gender analysis	Analysis of activities, access and control of resources, constraints, benefits and incentives of household representatives of the key socio-economic groups of the community
8 Participant observation/ 1 Direct observation	Gather data about men, women and children in their daily lives. Observing the respondents 'on the job' allows an understanding of the division of work, constraints and opportunities for resource use at household and illuminates intra-household relations.
9 Focus group discussion	Gender role in various aspects of community life-gender bias in access, management and control of family resources, gender division of work and decision making etc., gender based priorities for community action.
10 Contrast comparisons	Asking men to analyze how women spend their time and vice-versa.

In addition to these, secondary sources of information, informal surveys, group discussions, semi-structured interviews and case studies can also be used for eliciting detailed information on gender aspects.

## II Identification of Issues and Interventions

Information generated through gender analysis has to be consolidated and specific issues with regard to gender have to be isolated and discussed in a participatory meeting where men and women farmers jointly decide upon the prioritization of the issues and solutions for them. Using the focused group discussion method, the project team / facilitators should encourage both men and women farmers to identify the areas where and how the project can make useful interventions based on which the action plans could be evolved. The project team has to ensure that action plans reflect the specific priorities of different groups of the community. The areas of interventions could be -

- a. Campaigns for creating awareness among the farmers, particularly women about the developmental issues and need for their participation in the project.

- b. Generation of appropriate technologies for women for increasing production and reducing drudgery.
- c. Community organization and local level institution building.
- d. Improvement in access to support services like credit, inputs, processing and marketing
- e. Extension training and demonstrations for dissemination of technologies.
- f. Human resource development through building capabilities of local facilitators and para extension workers.
- g. Developing leadership skills in rural women and women farmers.
- h. Preparation of materials for the field functionaries on ways to integrate gender concerns into their extension activities.

This whole exercise greatly demands active participation of all categories of farmers particularly the resource poor and project functionaries in all the stages starting from initiation to completion of the project.

### **III. Change in Attitude and Undoing with Target Oriented Approach**

We have a history of meeting targets, where year after the year the cumulative figures of achievement are reported through progress and annual reports. The qualitative aspects of the projects such as the process of project designing and implementation are paid a very little attention. The experiences from the past have created a considerable amount of awareness about the importance of process among the policy makers, politicians and project personnel. It is essential to highlight here that crude targets such as increasing the numerical representation of women and men in project activities is an insufficient indicator of gender awareness and with this one cannot claim to have done a gender focused project.

### **IV. Gender Sensitivity**

In order to mainstream the gender issues and make the project gender focused, all the personnel in the hierarchy starting from donors and policy makers to the implementing agency and facilitators should be sensitized about gender issues. In addition to this, gender sensitive person preferably a women should be included in the team right from the policy level (GOI) to Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) at district level, Farmer Information and Advisory Center (FIAC) at block level and in State Team which is going to prepare and finalize the SREP. At the circle level there is greater need for having a woman functionary among the para extension and technical staff and other field level functionaries as they are the people who are in regular touch with the farmers and responsible for providing services.

At the end I would like to conclude this article by raising some questions, which could be given a thought while planning a project with gender focus.

1. Have we done gender analysis ? If yes, to what extent is there gender division of enterprises, activities, resources, benefits etc.,
2. Who has got access to and control over resources ?
3. How suitable are the existing technologies to women ?
4. To what extent are the perceptions of men and women farmers taken into consideration while identifying the problems, needs and actions required ?
5. What specific activities / interventions are proposed specifically for addressing the needs of women and to make the project gender focused ?
6. How is the project going to improve women's access to and control of resources and benefits ?
7. What is the expected impact on women and men as a result of project interventions ?
8. What are the milestones expected to be achieved with regard to gender focus ?
9. What specific indicators are set for measuring gender focus in the project ?
10. What is the mechanism for getting feedback about women's participation in project activities ?
11. What is the system evolved for monitoring and evaluating the impact of project interventions on women and men ?
12. What is the plan for documentation of key lessons learnt with regard to gender issues in the project?

Note: The above list is not absolute. Let more ideas be added further.

## **Conclusion**

The process narrated above is expected to facilitate bottom up planning that is envisaged under NATP particularly with reference to Innovations in Technology Dissemination and also help policy makers and project functionaries to develop more *gender responsive* plans.

## **References**

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