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Impact of social forestry activities on socio-economic conditions of rural women

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Abstract

Rural women in Asia often play an important role in the collection of fuel wood, fodder and water. They are the primary users of forest products, which are not only used for domestic consumption but also for commercial purpose to obtain additional family income. Usually women make different use of forest products than men and therefore their priorities can conflict. The difference in priorities between men and women justifies the need for specifically involving women in social forestry projects, not only for reasons of equity, but also because of their role in the management of fuel wood resources (although less frequently recognized) and their role in income generating activities.

Keywords: Impact, forestry, conditions

Introduction

In longquan, women have a very close relationship with forest. Longquan was very famous for leather products in Yunnan, Sichuan, and Tibet and many village men were engaged in leather production. Before the 1950s women also actively helped the men in leather working, while many of the women making laces for leather shoes. The laces made by longquan women were known far and wide for their high quality and therefore had many customers in Lijiang, Zhongdian, Deqin and Heqing countries. Yunnan only used the laces made by the longquan women. Since many longquan women derived a good income from this traditional sideline production, not many of them collected firewood for sale and most gathered enough for daily use.

Objectives

1. To study the background characteristics of beneficiaries of social forestry schemes.
2. To ascertain the level of empowerment achieved among various categories of rural women.
3. To find out the level of impact of social forestry activities on socio-economic conditions of rural women.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the 5 blocks namely, Kalyanpur, Bilhaur, Chaubepur, Kanpur City and Sarsaul in Kanpur district. Five nurseries were selected from each block. For selection of samples, a multistage sampling procedure has been adopted. The data were collected with the help of structured interview schedule. Socio-personal variables and economic variables were selected as independent variables for the study. The dependent variables were selected for the study of social forestry constraints and empowerment. The results were obtained by applying appropriate statistical tools, viz., Chi-square test, percentage, arithmetic mean, weighted mean and standard deviation.

Results

Table 1: Holding wise distribution of respondents

Category	Frequency	Per cent
Landless	144	72.0
Marginal	42	21.0
Small	14	7.0
Large	-	-
Total	200	100.0

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72.0 per cent women respondents are landless while 21.0 per cent women respondents were having only marginal land.

Only 7.0 per cent women respondents were having small land.

Table 2: The contribution of women respondents engaged in social forestry

Contribution	Frequency	Per cent
Low medium contribution	32	16.0
Medium contribution	130	65.0
High medium contribution	38	19.0
Total	200	100.0

Contribution of rural women in forestry is increasing day by day, because nurseries are established at block level where women are associated in activities related to work like raising nursery, transplantation, filtering, filling of bags, putting the bags in serial, cleaning of bags, manuring, digging of pits,

boundary making etc. In addition, after doing 4-5 hours work per day on casual basis they are also used to bring fodder for animals and vegetables for their houses. It also contributes in social forestry.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to women's profession

S. No.	Statements	Yes	No	Scores	Rank
1.	Collect fire woods from forest for earning	180(90.0)	20 (10.0)	0.90	I
2.	Preparation of <i>pattal</i> and <i>donas</i>	125 (62.5)	75 (37.5)	0.63	IV
3.	Engaged in preparation of <i>bidis</i> from tobacco leave	-	200 (100.0)	-	IX
4.	Preparation of traditional hand fan	174 (87.0)	26 (13.0)	0.87	II
5.	Preparation of mats for sale	82 (41.0)	118 (59.0)	0.41	V
6.	Preparation of wooden work like toys and other accessories items	74 (37.0)	126 (63.0)	0.37	VI
7.	Involved in handicraft preparation	42 (21.0)	158 (79.0)	0.21	VIII
8.	Cultivation of medicinal and herbal plants	48 (24.0)	152 (76.0)	0.24	VII
9.	Cultivation of vegetable and kitchen gardening	136 (68.0)	64 (32.0)	0.68	III

Maximum score (0.90) falls for the respondents who collect firewood from forest for earning. 87 per cent respondents were found to prepare traditional hand fans with the second highest score of 0.87. 68.0 per cent respondents were engaged in cultivation of vegetables and kitchen gardening with the

third highest score of 0.68. Minimum (21.0 %) number of respondents were found involved in handicraft preparation. None of the respondents were engaged in preparation of *bidis* from tobacco leaves.

Table 4: Showing the distribution of the respondents facing the problems during social forestry work

Particulars	Related to family	Related to officer	Other	Total respondents	Per cent
Problems	98 (59.8)	58(35.4)	8(4.8)	164	82.0
No problem	-	-	-	36	18.0
Total	98	58	8	200	100.0

(Figures in parenthesis represents the percentage)

These problems are obvious, if the women is working lady. Problems like, giving money in time, using absurd language and harassment are faced by the women at work from their officer due to which in most of the cases they leave the work.

Table 5: Distribution of women respondents according to financial help

Particulars	Frequency	Per cent
Received financial help	12	6.0
Not received the financial help	188	94.0
Total	200	100.0

The Government must make provisions so that the officer/employer can pay the concerned in case of causality. However, this can be deducted every month from the salary. Loan facility should also be introduced or if available should be extended, so that she may not feel alone in crisis and can perform hard work. Then only her interest in forestry will be created.

Conclusion

80.0 per cent women respondents were expected from the social forestry scheme beneficial for fuel, food and fodder availability of prominent women groups in village were

involved in social forestry given by majority of the respondents. Maximum women respondents were given a name of common place in the village where women can meet for Chit-Chat-Chaupal, Panchayat Ghar and blocks. The perception of women has always been dominated by the desire to have stability and continuity in the flow of goods and services, which are needed for the family. In order to achieve this, women work closely with environment and, therefore, have a natural perception of this linkage. They are also most affected by the environmental degradation. On the other hand, forestry in general, and social forestry in particular, aims at bringing in ecological sustainability with economic growth for the well being of the community.

Recommendations

1. Landless women interested in forestry and want to start it as an occupation, should be provided land by the government or Panchayats or large farms on lease.
2. Women engaged in forestry should be provided with greater income generating opportunities through diversification in the field of products made from locally available raw materials like handicraft items, etc.
3. Women in forestry should form committees at state and central level and encourage more and more women to

participate in issues such as the problem of drinking water, pollution, deforestation, etc. They should be motivated to present their views and workout a fruitful plan or solution for future implementation.

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