

Nutritional Security and Management of Farm Women

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Abstract

For a considerable social development women empowerment is essential. But how can we look at the development and empowerment of women when they have been suffering from acute poverty amidst nutritional insecurity. The main factors behind such hunger and nutritional insecurity are poverty, illiteracy, population growth and unequal distribution of assets. The study was carried out in Kendrapara district of Orissa. The sample consisted of 150 respondents. The farm women used to face many constraints like absence of ownership of land, inadequate women's program, lacking technical guidance and knowledge, exposure to mass media, and financial inability to purchase, occupational health hazard and social stigma. The suggestions to overcome such constraints are flow of latest information for increasing crop production, extensive training programme, access and control over food, awareness on the different welfare schemes, strengthening of public distribution system, removal of gender disparities, storage facility, formation of community grain bank for poor and needy persons.

Key words : Social stigma, Public distribution system, Grain bank, Nutritional security.

The social thinkers and developers focused on the development of gender components by empowering the rural women. Their substantial contribution to the field of agriculture has been highly appreciated along with their capacity on health care of family members. Food is undoubtedly the prime necessity of one's livelihood. Dietary inadequacies coupled with poor health care in rural areas is one of the most important factors for growth retardation of children. It further causes low birth weight, anemia, iodine deficiency and diarrhoeal diseases which ultimately help in increasing infant mortality rate. It has been globally realized that one billion people are absolutely poor, living on less than one US dollar a day and about 800 millions are hungry. Poverty and hunger reduction has been slowest among the poorest. People living in remote areas are deprived of facilities of education, health service, marketing, lack of assets and access of credit facilities (IFPRI, 2007). The world bank mentioned in its report that half of the children under four are malnourished and 60% of women are anemic in India. The main reasons of hunger are poverty, illiteracy, increasing population and unequal distribution of produce. The social customs and attitudes towards women have adverse effects on women's nutritional status and consequently there is high rate of maternal mortality and anemia among

pregnant and lactating women. "World Food day" is observed every year throughout the world on 16 October, the founding day of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nations in 1945. The main goal of the observance of World Food Day is to remind people everywhere that "Food for all" ought to be the ultimate reality (Ara and Chauhan, 1999). India's domestic production of food grains has averaged 211.4 million tonnes. Considering the day to day increase in price of food grains, it creates an alarming situation for the people those who are living below poverty line (25%). There is a growing consciousness to treat women at par with men, and all the five year plans have given much importance to the development of women. The objectives of this study were to find out knowledge of farm women about nutritional security and its management, to assess constraints faced by farm women, and to give suggestions as expressed by farm women.

Methods

An exploratory research design was adopted for the purpose of study. The study was undertaken in five villages of Kendrapara district of Orissa. A sample of 150 respondents were selected at random. It covered 52 landless, 47 marginal (upto one ha of land), small 37 (below 2 ha) 14 big farmers (above 2 ha). The

Table 1. Knowledge of farm women about nutritional security and management.

Sl. no.	Aspects	Number of respondent	Percentage	Rank
1	Daily requirement of nutrients of different age group	15	10.00	X
2	Scientific way of preparing food	28	18.67	V
3	Safe use of drinking water	22	14.67	VIII
4	Inclusion of pulses and greens in cereal diet.	25	16.67	VI
5	Use of sprouted pulses and gram	18	12.00	IX
6	Establishment of nutritional garden in homestead land	40	26.67	II
7	Rearing of fish in local pond	24	16.00	VII
8	Backyard poultry rearing	35	23.33	IV
9	Mushroom cultivation	37	24.67	III
10	Post harvest storage of produce	42	28.00	I

data base of the study was drawn from a variety of secondary sources and the primary data were collected through observation and interview schedule.

The collected information was tabulated, analyzed and the results obtained were presented below.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 reveals that farm women (28.00%) are following post-harvest storage of cereals and pulses only. About 26.67% of farm women have knowledge about development of nutritional garden for daily consumption of vegetables and greens which contain large amount of vitamins and minerals. About 24.67% of farm women are growing mushroom about which is a good supplement for family nutrition and selling the surplus which gives a good remuneration. Among them 23.33% of farm women are rearing poultry in backyard for egg and meat purpose followed by 18.67% of farm women are maintaining carefulness while preparing food. About 16.67% of farm women have knowledge about importance of pulses and green in cereal based diet followed by 16.00% rearing fish in local pond for house hold consumption. About 14.67% of farm women expressed safe use of drinking water is essential followed by 12.00% of farm women have knowledge about use of sprouted pulses and gram in daily diet. Only a few of them (10.00%) have

Table 2. Constraints expressed by Farm Women.

Sl. no.	Constraints	Number of respondent	Percentage	Rank
1	Lack of knowledge	85	56.67	V
2	Social stigma	78	52.00	VIII
3	Occupational Health hazard	80	53.33	VII
4	Lack of technical guidance	92	61.33	IV
5	Lack of exposure to mass media	82	54.67	VI
6	Inadequate women's programme	97	64.67	II
7	Absence of ownership of land	110	73.33	I
8	Lack of purchasing power	95	63.33	III

knowledge about daily requirements of nutrients for different age group.

Table 2 reveals that each of the respondents has identified some problem or other. About 73.33% of farm women expressed that they feel unsecured as the ownership of land that lies with their male counter parts. About 64.67% of the sample women feel that inadequate women program followed by lack of purchasing power (63.33%) lack of technical guidance (61.33%) lack of knowledge (56.67%), lack of exposure to mass media (54.67%) act as hindrance while thinking about nutritional securities of family members. About 53.33% of farm women feel that occupational health hazard and social stigma (52.00%) are the constraints while going for nutritional security of family members (Boradolo and Sarmah 2008, Tripathy 2008).

Table 3 gives some suggestions of farm women to meet nutritional security of family members. About 83.33% of farm women are of opinion that flow of latest information is necessary for increasing production of different crops, 78.67% of farm women suggested extensive training program for them. About 76% of respondents are of opinion that women should have access and control over food and 74.67% of farm women require knowledge about different government schemes, loan and subsidy. Among them 72.00% expressed to strengthen public distribution system so that it could widely reach remote areas, followed by removal of gender disparities (60.00%) relating to intake of food and wages. About 58.00% of farm women expressed need for more storage facility for storing surplus farm produce which helps poor during scarcity, 50.67% of respondents suggested

Table 3. Suggestions of Farm Women.

Sl. no	Suggestions	Number of respondent	Percentage
1	Flow of update information	125	83.33
2	Removal of gender disparities	90	60.00
3	Extensive training programme for farm women	118	78.67
4	Formation of community grain bank	76	50.67
5	Access and control over food	115	76.67
6	Knowledge about different loan, subsidy and Govt. Scheme	112	74.67
7	More storage facility	87	58.00
8	Strengthening of public distribution system	108	72.00

formation of community grain bank for easy accessibility to the poor.

Conclusion

Awareness can be created among rural folk in local language. Education on nutrition, health, and agriculture must become a part of school curriculum for diffusion of information to the younger generation. The dietary guide-lines must become an important part of health education as it helps in prevention of deficiency diseases. For eradication of poverty and malnutrition the growth of population has to be checked. The food grain that is produced is not sufficient to meet the need of growing population. Exten-

sion personnel and scientists need to provide extensive training to the farm women relating to establishment of nutritional garden, diary, goatery, beekeeping, post-harvest care of food grains, storage of fruits and vegetables in zero energy cool chamber, value addition in fruits, vegetables and mushroom that helps in minimizing storage loss.

Occupational health hazards, disparities in wages, legal rights such as ownership of land are to be taken into consideration while making development plans for farm women. Motivating farm women for formation of self help group and its strengthening helps economic empowerment of farm women, thereby increasing their social status in society. The IFPRI (2007) also gives emphasis on rural growth, access to assets, infrastructure, markets, more investment in health, nutrition, education particularly for children and women, strengthening social protection and inclusion of excluded.

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