

mainstreaming gender concerns in agriculture and creating equitable gender impact.

Why Gender for researchers?

There seems to be an initial reluctance on part of researchers in general to accept the concept of gender. Very often they do not find the concept comfortable to work with. It is but natural for them to ask, 'why to add gender perspective in research'?

All researchers invariably look for certain output from their researches. Except in case of basic researches, outputs from all other types of researches have implications for development, and could be used for designing, planning and implementation of programmes. Outputs could be new information and knowledge, technology, methodology and even policy recommendations. Therefore, every scientist should ensure that the outputs from her/his research be relevant, acceptable to, and used by the stakeholders.

The very objective of adding gender perspective in our research is 'to add value to our research output so that research output becomes contextually more relevant and appropriate, and there is enhanced scope for application and acceptability of research findings'.

Considering that men and women should have equal stakes in the use of technology, there is a need for adding gender perspective in research to obtain gender friendly technologies. Further, research with gender perspective would also generate information of value and new knowledge that can be used in planning gender based research programmes. To realize this, there has to be a change in the mindset and actions of researchers. In other words, the scientists should be gender sensitive, and motivated to discuss, debate, understand and incorporate gender in their own fields of work.

VII. Gender and Indices of development

Different indices are being used to measure and compare the level of development of states, countries and regions. For example, gender development index (GDI) developed by UNDP is one such index that adjusts average achievement to reflect the inequalities between men and women in three dimensions such as life expectancy at birth, knowledge and standard of living (UNDP 2005). Therefore, conscious attempts to incorporate gender perspective in agricultural development would surely push up the average

achievement and reduce gender inequality in medium run at least with respect to the second and third dimensions. Similarly, adding gender perspective in research would positively influence GDI in medium and long run through greater flow and utilisation of gender based knowledge in development. All these further emphasize the point why understanding and incorporating gender perspective in agricultural R & D should receive greater attention.

Summing up

Addressing gender issues in agricultural R & D has become an important challenge for sustaining economic growth and development. No doubt a paradigm shift is taking place in the approach of international agencies and national governments to resolve the issue, particularly at policy level. However, there is still a large segment of our R & D systems that is not yet sensitized on the subject. Therefore, there is a need for making the systems gender sensitized and enabling the stakeholders understand and incorporate gender perspective in agricultural R & D in the context of changing social, cultural, technological and economic situations. The onus lies largely with the researchers and development managers as they have to make their programmes more effective. This underlines the need for working in multidisciplinary and multi-agency mode. To this end, the gender experts and gender specialized institutions have an important role to play in bringing the much needed reorientation of stakeholders in agricultural research and development.

Acknowledgment

The support rendered by Santosh Kumar Samantaray, Madhumita Jena and Iteshree Panda of V-PAGe sub-project in bringing out this document is sincerely appreciated.

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February, 2009

Directorate of Research on Women in Agriculture (DRWA) has been established to carry out basic, strategic and applied research to identify gender issues and test appropriateness of available farm-technologies/ programmes / policies with women perspective. To do training and consultancy for promoting gender mainstreaming in research and extension for empowerment of farmwomen and capacity building of scientists, planners and policy makers to respond to the needs of the farm women.

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Gender Notes

2

Understanding Gender Perspective in Agricultural Research and Development

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I. Introduction

Gender has, now-a-days, become an area of increased interest and importance in agriculture and rural development. The term 'gender' was first used by Ann Oakley and others in 1970s to describe the characteristics of men and women which are socially determined in contrast to biological differences. Gender means the socially constructed differences in roles and responsibilities assigned to women and men in a given culture or location.

The distinction between sex and gender is made to emphasize that everything women and men do, and every thing expected of them, with the exception of their sexually distinct functions (childbearing and breast feeding; impregnation) can change, and does change, over time and according to changing and varied social and cultural factors. As culture is dynamic and socio-economic conditions change over time, so also gender patterns. Thus gender is a dynamic concept (Williams et al 1994).

II. Women Vs Gender

Many often wonder- why 'gender'? Why not 'women'? In fact shifting of focus from women to gender reflects the changed approach of world community for addressing problems of women. The term 'women in development' (WID) was coined in the early 1970s by the Women's Committee of the Washington, DC, Chapter of the society for International development, a network of female development professionals. The term was adopted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and gave rise to what is known as 'Women in Development' (WID) approach. The underlying rationale of WID approach is that women are an untapped resource who could contribute to economic development. Therefore, development outcomes would be better realized if women were fully incorporated into the development process. It focuses mainly on women in isolation, and advocates measures such as access to credit and employment for integrating women into development process. But WID approach by focusing on women in isolation ignored the real problem, i.e. subordination of women to men, which is manifested in unequal gender relations.

Gender is a component of Visioning, Policy Analysis and Gender (V-PAGe) under National Agricultural Innovation Project . Gender notes are meant to disseminate gender related concepts and information to initiate debate and discussion on gender issues in agricultural research and development.

There emerged another school of thought, which, after recognizing such limitations of WID approach, drew attention to the concept of gender and propounded 'Gender and Development' (GAD) approach. This approach focuses on gender rather than women. In other words, it look not only at women as a category, but also at women in relation to men, and the way relations between men and women are socially constructed (Moser 1999).

To explain the term 'gender' further, it is a neutral term meaning either men or women or both in a particular context. For example, in men dominated society, gender issues would mean mostly the issues concerning women as it can be fairly assumed that men in general are better off socially as compared to the women. Similarly, in women dominated system, gender issues should focus on problems faced by men. Our goal is to improve the status of disadvantaged class and get rid of socially created and approved discriminations. Therefore, while discussing gender issues in particular context focus could either be on men or women or both. Obviously, reference has to be made to the relative gender position in the society or system or domain in question in order to assess and appreciate the situation from gender perspective.

III. Gender- some connotations

The word 'gender' carries different connotations that are discussed below.

Gender - a concept

It describes the socially constructed roles played by men and women. This concept has given rise to several other concepts and terminologies that are of socio-economic relevance. Importantly, these concepts are having significance for planning research and development interventions.

Gender - a subject

Gender is an important subject of research & development. During past years, there has been a spurt in gender related activities in areas like research, development and documentation. This has contributed to a wealth of literature, including volumes of gender disaggregated data, tools and techniques for

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gender analysis and framework for planning and implementation of research and development activities with gender perspective. After all, as a subject it has not only found space within many other disciplines, but also has given rise to new universe of study encompassing different disciplines. For example, within disciplines like agriculture, horticulture, fishery, livestock production and management, the subject of gender is gradually taking shape and gaining importance. Similarly gender as a subject can also encompass other disciplines into its fold for a comprehensive understanding of the situation. However, till today the subject has remained largely unexplored and is still evolving.

As a subject, it may be interesting as well as exciting for many, particularly those in the field of social science. Importantly, it is also being accepted by those who are in the fields of crop science, animal science and fisheries research in consonance with their objectives. It is also a challenging area especially when we are looking at gender in the context of technology generation and refinement for creating gender friendly technologies. Notwithstanding the challenges in incorporating the idea, it has become an important area of attention in research and development.

Gender-a factor

Gender is also a factor because men and women are primary stakeholders in development process. It is the quantity and quality of human resources that determine the outcome of development process. It is precisely in this context that researchers have tried to investigate if 'gender' (man or woman) as a factor has any influence on output or outcome. In this case we treat gender as a categorical variable expressed in nominal scale that takes values either 0 (say for man) or 1 (for woman) for doing empirical analysis. Lessons from such exercises may imply if the presence of men or women differentially affects the outcome of interventions.

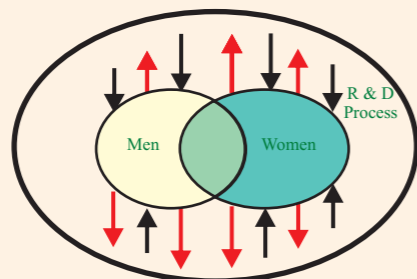


Figure 1: Gender in Agricultural R & D

IV. Gender and Agricultural R & D

There are two ways that we can look at gender in the context of agriculture R & D as depicted in the schematic diagram (fig. 1). First, effects of R & D process on gender as indicated by inward arrows (shown in black colour), and second, gender role in R & D process or, how gender influences R & D processes as indicated by outward arrows (shown in red colour).

How R & D process affects men and women?

This is an important approach to study relationship between gender and R&D processes. A very common

area of research in this context is gender impact analysis of agricultural research and development. For example, as to how the structural, technological and institutional changes have affected men and women from different background in different situations in matters like sharing of benefits, work burden, changes in gender role, access to resources etc. and reasons thereof. How the much talked triple role of women i.e. reproductive, productive and community roles, are affected by the developments in nature and technological and policy changes in agriculture and allied sectors. Such studies are quite useful as the findings can be used in revision of the programmes and policies to create wider and equitable gender impact.

How gender affects agricultural R & D process?

The focus here is on gender as a factor in R&D process. This approach to study the relationship between gender and R & D considers both similarities and differences between men and women. Similarities, because both men and women are important stakeholders in R&D process, and differences, because men and women have different roles to play and needs to address. The objective is to see how men and women do participate in R & D process and influence the outcomes. How they differ in their perception about R & D processes and in managing the situation. In other words, we have to characterize the situations to explain the level and diversity of gender participation. What should we do to make men and women more effective?

In this approach we can focus on case studies, evaluation studies like performance of men and women managed systems and enterprises. Some useful theme areas could also be gender role, participation and contribution in agriculture and allied sectors, and their dynamics under varying situations to understand gender implications in research and development. Findings from such studies would be useful in designing interventions for strengthening gender role in agricultural research and development and developing gender based R & D models.

V. Gender perspective in development

In development context, there are two critical issues that a development manager should worry about; smooth implementation of programme as per plan, and attainment of envisaged objectives leading to desired outcomes. Adding gender perspective to an intervention would, therefore, mean looking at these two different aspects through gender lens. First, what is gender role in implementation of interventions? Is there any scope for strengthening gender role in implementation of the intervention? Secondly, how would the development

interventions affect men and women? Would there be gender equity in sharing of benefits of intervention, or would there be differential incidence of adverse consequences on gender?

Even though the two aspects appear completely different, at certain level, one reinforces the other. For example, adding gender perspective in planning and implementation of interventions may lead to higher level of output and better outcomes in terms of gender equity in sharing of benefits. On the other hand, equitable gender impact may motivate men and women to participate in development process.

In recent years there has been a greater emphasis on people's participation in development. Since the impact of these interventions ultimately reflects upon the living conditions of people, following the same traditional approach of project planning without understanding gender implications thereof may exclude women from benefit sharing process. In certain situations, it may even make women worse off in normal course of development. Therefore, a development manager should be careful not to lose sight of gender perspective before implementation of the intervention in order to reap additional dividends in terms of enhanced output and gender equity.

Incorporating gender perspective in development necessitates two simultaneous activities; (a) making development institutions gender sensitive, (b) enabling development managers and planners understand and apply gender perspective in respective areas.

To make the R & D organizations gender sensitive, there is a need for re-orientation on following lines.

- Adding gender dimension in development approach
- Making an explicit mention of gender in mandates, objectives and policy documents of departments
- Recognizing women as stakeholders in organization's programmes
- Creating opportunities to encourage women's participation

Besides the above, there is also an urgency to introduce reforms both in structure and functioning of the organizations to impart gender sensitivity. We have, in India, a host of centrally sponsored women specific programmes being implemented by agriculture and related departments of state governments. However, a perusal of the policy documents, thrust areas and mandates of these departments suggests that only a few departments of certain states have made explicit mention of gender/ women and others have simply ignored it.

To enable development managers understand gender perspective would certainly involve orientation and capacity building on the subject. In other words, they

should not only be gender sensitized, but also trained to look at the issues in gender perspective and identify the action points.

VI. Gender in the context of research

It is obvious for many to ask, 'is there any need to incorporate gender perspective in agricultural research; If so, how?'

Technology development

It is generally said that the process of technological development in agriculture has largely bypassed the needs of women. Our research system has developed a number of equipments for carrying on specific field and post harvest operations, some of which are often called 'women friendly' because of their efficiency enhancing and drudgery reducing features. But many of the technologies developed so far have failed the test of gender suitability as evidenced from very low level of adoption by women and gender inequity in sharing of benefits of such technologies. Take the case of paddy transplanter. Efforts have been made under different development and action research projects to promote and popularize use of transplanter among farmwomen. But it is yet to become a success. Despite several rounds of refinement, its adoption rate is very poor because of several reasons.

There should be high natural demand of a technology for its better acceptability and higher level adoption. When we talk of natural demand of a technology, it means the technology must have the characteristics to meet different gender needs in a particular context. This is possible only if a researcher adds gender perspective into the technology development process considering the relevant gender needs. In the process we will have gender friendly technologies to meet the needs and preferences of women which would ultimately push up the adoption level.

Social science research

With increasing complexities of socio-economic environment, social science research has assumed greater significance. Moreover, poor adoption of agro-technologies among clientele and not-so-encouraging performance of technologies in the field have led us to realize the importance of socio-economic inputs not only in technology development and refinement process but also in planning and implementation of technology transfer programmes. Since rural women are becoming target groups for transfer of technology and scientific knowledge under various research and extension initiatives, blending gender with socio-economic perspective would certainly provide new insights to make the programmes effective. Policy research is another area that have gained significance at a time when there is need for gender sensitive policies for



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