

FARMER'S ORGANIZATIONS FOR EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBAL FARM WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Women among the tribal population have very important role in the agriculture-cum forest-based economies. Women's work is regarded as crucial for the survival of tribal households in terms of provisioning for food, income, earning and management of financial resources. Food gathering is also a vital economic activity even for women of agricultural tribes. As the socio-economic progress of the community has a direct link with the empowerment of women, the development programmes for women are receiving greater attention. The task now is to ensure effective participation of women in sustainable development of the community. In this scenario, Farmers' Organizations are seen as a useful organizational mechanism for mobilizing Tribal farm women collective self-help action aimed at improving their own economic and social situation and that of their communities. Such organizations were perceived to have an ability to generate resources from their members. They could operate at different levels from the local to the national.

Farmers' organizations of all types have an important role in development – they provide space for participation, which contributes to group members' ownership of the issue at one hand as well as any solutions. This in turn builds group cohesiveness, solidarity and promotes mutual support. They can be the platform for building a sense of community, a social support system, increasing self-confidence, learning together and providing a sense of equality. A well-organized group can be taken seriously in a wider environment. Groups with common interests can secure access to services that individuals cannot such as training, credit or equipment, infrastructure etc. Lack of access to any of these could be the vital issue that an individual farmer faces. This is particularly the case where farmers organize as a response to marketing concerns, as there are clear economic benefits of working in groups. These include the ability of groups to buy inputs in bulk, access more distant markets and access to information, etc. Working together can increase members' bargaining power, which helps to share, and lower risks and costs. In areas where tribal farmers are scattered geographically, and transport and communications are difficult, the importance of such organizations is even greater.

The present paper is substantially based on field experiences, case studies and documents on farmers organisations. An attempt has been made to focus on importance on promotion of Farmers Organisation for empowerment of tribal farm women. Accordingly, paper focuses on some crucial aspects, discusses concept on formation and management of women Farmers groups, federations and so on. The paper concludes that the farmer's organization is critical and central for empowerment of tribal farmers and also for sustainable agriculture. This works at every level, from farmers experimenting together to locally improve techniques to jointly representing their interests at an international level. Given the difficulties faced by tribal farmers, every effort is needed in order to achieve the improvements needed in their various circumstances. Farmers' Interest groups, networks or federations can all make a huge contribution to raising awareness and campaigning for change. In majority of cases, strong local organizations are, and will continue to be, key to building sustainable development of agriculture.

KEYWORDS: Farmers' Organisations, Upward Accountability, Downward Accountability