

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AGAINST RURAL WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF AGRARIAN DISTRESS IN MEDAK/SANGAREDDY DISTRICT

Research Dissemination Workshop

Date: 27-03-2024, 11AM to 4 PM

Zilla Mahila Samakhya Meeting Hall, Sangareddy

Background

Over the last year, SOPPECOM (www.soppecom.org), in association with Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch (MAKAAM) (www.makaam.in) and Gramya Resource Center for Women (<http://www.gramya.org.in>) have been engaged in an in-depth study on structural violence against women in agriculture in the states of Maharashtra and Telangana. In Telangana the study covered two undivided districts, Medak, and Nalgonda. In the erstwhile Medak district women farmers from 517 households from 10 villages in 3 mandals in newly formed Sangareddy, Medak and Siddipet districts were surveyed. To prepare for the survey, interviews were held with key informants in the districts and focus group discussions were held. Individual case stories of women were recorded and discussions with project displaced communities held. The objective of the study was to understand the nature and forms of violence and harassment against women in agriculture in the context of agrarian distress and inform policy and practice to improve their status. The study focused broadly on women's livelihoods, asset ownership, cultivation, tenancy, debts, Food and Nutrition, Health, access to government schemes, violence, and redressal mechanisms.

Workshop Report



A district level workshop was held in Sangareddy on 27th March to share and disseminate the study findings with women farmers, activists, local groups working with farming communities, government officials and Civil Society representatives. The purpose of the workshop was also to get feedback from the women farmers on the study findings and make policy recommendations to address individual and structural violence

against women farmers.

Ms. Lakshmi, a member of MAKAAM, who supported the study as research investigator welcomed the participants. The members of the research team, and the enumerators who did the quantitative survey were introduced to the audience. Caring Citizens 'Collective (CCC) and Dalit Bahujan Front (DBF), the two local organizations, Mr. Gopal Reddy from Yelgoi and Aranya Permaculture Academy were acknowledged for assisting the study in Sangareddy district.

Seventy (70) persons participated in the district workshop. Out of the total, 45 persons were women farmers from 5 villages belonging to 2 mandals in Sangareddy district. Farmers from

Bardipur and Yelgoi villages, whose land was acquired for proposed National Investment and Manufacturing Zone (NIMZ) Jarasangham mandals in Sangareddy district, Members of Women farmer Producers Organizations and sanghams supported by DDS and Aranya Permaculture Academy, Women from farmers suicide affected families, landless agriculture labourers and tenant farmers, participated and shared their experiences and demands.

District and mandal Agriculture officers, Staff from the Department of Women and Child Development, team members of Sakhi centre, Members of Telangana Progressive Teachers Federation, local NGO' s and people's organizations such as Deccan Development Society (DDS), Society for Women Awareness and Rural Development (SWARD), Aranya Permaculture Academy, members from MAKAAAM and Rythu Swarajya Vedika (RSV), members from Mahila Samakhya, Sangareddy and independent activists from Hyderabad have attended the workshop. All the participants introduced themselves.



Session 1: Ms. Asha Latha from MAKAAAM has presented the study findings to the audience. She started the presentation by describing the Medak district as ‘Metuku Seema’ (rice morsels land) and its geo, political economic situation of the then and present districts of Medak bifurcated into Medak, Siddipet and Sangareddy Districts. The presentation consisted of the study objective, methodology,

demographic data, livelihood activities, land displacement and its impact on the farmers and women, agricultural crisis, and its impact on the women, indebtedness, farmers suicides, low availability of work, migration, issues around Mahatma Gandh National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGS) work, nutrition and health issues, accessibility of government schemes, domestic violence and violence at workplace, data of violence cases recorded at Sakhi centers from Sangareddy in the past 5 years and redressal mechanisms available.

Session 2:

Dr. Usha Seetha Lakshmi, an independent Researcher, and member of MAKAAAM anchored the session to gather the opinions of women farmers. She invited the women to share their issues and give their suggestions/demands to resolve the issues. She asked the women to give their ideas on what measures/initiatives to be taken by the government to improve the situation of women farmers. She has explained about the aggressive land acquisition drive of the State since 2014 and its impact on the marginal/small farmers and the landless communities.

Sharing by Women Participants:

Swarupamma, member of DDS: She remembered the days when all members in DDS struggled to prohibit alcohol in the state. She underlined the impact of alcoholism on the families when men drink and die due to ill health. She says, the Rythu Bandhu amounts are going to men’s accounts and men are drinking with all the money received from the government. The funds are not reaching the families. Rythu Bhīma is given only to families having land. **She demanded that alcohol be banned immediately.** “There was watershed

programme implemented in 100 acres of land in DDS. We prevented sale of our land and asked for livestock and started cultivating the land. We request the agriculture department to provide livestock for agriculture instead of machines to continue our cultivation”. We are all doing organic farming and demand the government to provide genuine seeds to all the farmers.

Dr. Usha has added that in Bidekanna village 6 wine shops promote alcoholism in the villages and more men die leaving single women. She stressed that women must work towards the prohibition of alcohol in the state.

Sammamma, Bidekanna: She told that around 200 women have been cultivating crops without fertilisers and pesticides for 40 years as sanghams promoted by DDS. But there has not been a big change around. Now use of weedicides has increased and many varieties of food crops and greens that were available earlier are disappearing. Due to this nutrition to children has reduced. Cultivation of soybean and cotton increased tenfold reducing food security and impacting the health of communities. Along with decreased food security, the availability of work to women was reduced. If work is not available in the villages, she warns that all the women must migrate to other villages for work. **She demanded that the usage of pesticides and weedicides to be stopped and close all the companies.**

Chukkamma, DDS: Chukkamma informed that the members of DDS cultivate 10-20 varieties of crops and millets in 1 acre of land through organic farming. The government is harming the human beings, livestock and nature through its fertiliser/pesticide-ridden agriculture policies. Men always wanted commercial crops whereas women preferred food crops. Hence there is no unanimity in their opinions on what should be grown. Farmers are losing crops due to spurious seeds and fake/duplicate pesticides. **She thinks that there should be a change in government policies to support farmers through the supply of seeds and prevent use of chemicals in the land to promote chemical-free agriculture. She also emphasised the need to prohibit sale of alcohol in the villages.**



Santamma, Yelgoi: Land in the village was taken by the government. “Our livelihood was agricultural labour in the field of the village. Since there is no land for cultivation, we lost our work and livelihood. Not able to give food to our children or send them to school. Those who had land got compensation. We workers did not get any benefit. **Government must do something for us who live on agriculture labour in other lands”.**

Jayamma, Bardipur: “Land was acquired in Bardipur and Jarasangham villages for NIMZ. Around 3000 acres of land were taken away. The government paid less compensation and made people to sign by force. Those who had patta land received 5 lakh rupees per acre and without patta (title deed), 3 lakhs per acre. However, the land now costs 2 crore per acre. We used to work as labourers in the land and we lost our livelihoods. Now we are going to other far away villages to work. We leave early in the morning and reach home in night (7am to 9 pm). She also informed that a case was filed against GO-123 (as per The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 - LARR, 2013) in the High Court. The Court gave a judgement that “the labourers are to be paid

compensation since they lost their livelihoods”. **She demanded payment of compensation to her and others like her, at the earliest as per Court order.**

Dr. Usha has explained about GO-123 and the judgement given by the Court. Due to the intervention of High Court, the project was stopped. But human relations in the communities have been affected due to land acquisition and the compensation received through rehabilitation.

The High Court has quashed the GO 123 issued by the Telangana government which provides for expeditious acquisition of lands from landowners for public purpose. The court held that the GO bypasses The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013. The 2013 Act confers rights not only on those whose lands and other immovable property are to be acquired by the State, but also on families which do not own land, but one of whose members is an agricultural labourer, an agricultural tenant, an artisan, or a sharecropper whose primary source of livelihood is adversely affected by the acquisition of land. Certain rights are also conferred on the Scheduled Tribes, other traditional forest dwellers who have lost their forest rights, gatherers of forest produce, hunters, fisher-folk and boatmen, and on those who have been assigned lands by the State government. Thus, the 2013 act confers on these non-landowners too the status of affected families. <https://www.thehansindia.com/posts/index/Editors-Desk/2017-01-11/GO-123-the-2013-Act-and-the-displaced/273142>)

Jyothi, Guntapalli: Jyothi’s husband committed suicide, as he could not repay loans due to crop failure. They have only 2 acres of land. She has not received any ex-gratia or any other support from the State after the demise of her husband. **She demands immediate support for children’s education and their future from the government.**

Manohar, Yelgoi: He is a farmer involved in filing the case challenging GO-123. He explained about the case filed by Bardipur workers, that 21 members/families filed case challenging GO-123. They have collected 2000 per head and paid the fees to process the case. The High Court has given a favourable judgement The State has brought another GO-129 based on the judgement. According to GO-129, each landless family/person should get 750000 INR, a house and 5000 INR per month as a pension. **He demands immediate payment of compensation without further delay.**



Dr. Usha said that women always wanted to keep the land, where as the youth wanted to give away the land expecting jobs from industries established in the lands acquired by the government. She asked the women and other participants whether it is justifiable to give away land for the sake of jobs. The State must create infrastructure and companies in non-agricultural lands to generate jobs to youth. She demanded that the State to establish industries without causing environmental pollution.

Balamma, Bidekanna: She has 4 children and only 1 acre of land. She cultivates 50 varieties of crops in her land. She does not have any livestock. She wonders how to bring up her children with 1 acre of land. **She demanded land to all women and to promote chemical-free natural farming.**

Recommendations/Demands by Women Farmers: These demands were compiled from their sharing of issues in the meeting.

- Ban on the use of chemicals-weedicides/pesticides in the fields and close all the chemical companies.
- Government policy to supply quality seeds and prevent use of chemicals in the land.
- Demand to promote chemical free natural farming.
- Government must provide livelihoods to the landless when they lose their livelihoods.
- Payment of compensation to landless labourers who lost livelihoods due to land acquisition in the villages at the earliest as per Court order.
- Immediate support to children from farm suicide families for children's education and their future, from the State.
- The State must create infrastructure and companies in non-agricultural lands to generate jobs to youth.
- The State must establish industries without causing environmental pollution.
- Ban on belt shops (alcohol shops) in the villages and prohibition of liquor.

Session 3: Response from the District Officials, Civil Society

Ms. Siva Kumari heading SWARD in Siddipet and managing a Sakhi centre in Sangareddy has facilitated the session.

Mr. Kondal Reddy, Rythu Swarajya Vedika (RSV) /MAKAAM: Mr. Kondal said, it was thought that Zaheerabad area had lower numbers of farmer suicides. But data from the District Crime Records Bureau (DCRB) revealed the greater number of farm suicides in the area. According to the official data on farmer deaths (based on Rythu Bheema data) the death rate was high in Sangareddy district. Most of the deaths were of people below 40 years and this phenomenon should be investigated he told. He informed that, if the suicide is confirmed as Farmer suicide through the FIR, then that family is eligible for the ex-gratia announced by the State government. He assured women from farm suicide families that they would get their ex-gratia amount though it gets delayed. RSV filed a case in the High Court on behalf of farm suicide families, the court ordered exgratia payment. The families are now getting ex-gratia, after 8 years of their submission of required documents. He further added that the tenant farmers are not getting any benefit through Rythu Bhima. He concluded that the present government in Telangana has promised to extend Rythu Bhima facility to all tenant farmers and agricultural labourers and this needs to be ascertained from the government.

Ms. Pushpa, District Agriculture Officer: She questioned the women, why nobody was asking about Rythu Bhima, Rythu Bandhu or investment for input for tenant farmers? She continued saying that women were not recognised as farmers and their work was not valued. Since marketing was done by men, money comes in their hands. She informed that women do not attend Rythu Vedika meetings. They do not rotate crops. Paddy is grown by using pesticides. This causes health issues. The soil is losing fertility, and the climate gets polluted with the spray of pesticides. Women are not consulting the agriculture department. Since planting of paddy is done by workers from other states like Bihar, they do not follow the

approximate distance between plants hence, the crop yield is decreased. She suggested to practice intercropping and change of crops in seasons instead of monocropping. She advised the women to protect their seeds and store them to avoid spurious seeds. She suggested that women take up making vermicompost and honeybee keeping along with cultivation.

Ms. Nifha, Aranya: She has informed about the activities of Aranya and how the organization is helping women farmers. Their main activities involved watershed programmes. In their project area there was land acquisition and communities lost their lands and livelihoods. Due to this there is increase in farm suicides too. She says due to lack of awareness on the existing Acts, communities are not able to fight for their rights. Presently Aranya helps farmers to use better cultivation methods like biochar, silt application to improve soil fertility. They promoted one FPO which takes up production and marketing. Aranya also takes up E-Shram Bhima registration for the benefit of workers. She advised women to demand linkage of schemes to phones should be avoided so that women can have access to all schemes. Or else, all women must have smartphones and linked to their bank accounts to access the schemes and the funds.

Mr. Gopala Reddy, Yelgoi, Jarasangham Mandal: Mr. Gopal Reddy is an activist working in the mandal helping the farmers. He donated 22 acres of land to the poor and the government has acquired that land also and labelled it as assigned land. He refused to give his land to NIMZ and filed a case in the court, and strongly supported filing the case challenging the State towards resettlement of agricultural workers who lost their livelihoods. He says, the sanghams in DDS are strong and involved in organic farming since decades. He advises women farmers to strengthen their groups as sanghams.

Ms. Pallavi, WCD: She has explained the programmes of “Mission Shakthi” for the empowerment of women. She requested the Department of Horticulture to provide schemes to women farmers without the condition of 5-acre land ownership which would help many marginal farmers.

Ms. Kalpana, Sakhi Centre: She is the Centre Administrator in the Sakhi Centre of Sangareddy. She explained how the centre helps women who face domestic violence through the support systems. The women are not only protected from violence, but the centre also supports them to provide legal support and other support.

Dr. Rukmini Rao, Gramya Resource Centre for Women: Dr. Rukmini Rao said women face harassment and violence at workplace but do not report or talk about it, she added that special efforts should be made to identify agriculture as workplace and resolve work place violence in unorganized sector. She informed about the Local Complaints Committees (LCCs) at the district level set up to address the women from the unorganised sector including the women farmers, agricultural workers and other daily wage labourers, migrant labourers, domestic workers etc. But none of the workers have any awareness on the existence of these centres. She has demanded that these LCCs should function properly and that awareness to be created to implement the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 in its fullest spirit.

Ms. Gita Madhuri, Teacher: She is a member of the Telangana Progressive Teachers’ Federation. She urged the women not to discriminate against girls and they must be sent to schools. Many parents in villages take their children to agricultural labour so girls are missing their education. She suggested to educate the girls, prevent child marriages, and allow them to become independent.

She said that women would be able to manage marketing of their produce to have control over their resources. She also demanded the government to stop acquiring agricultural lands for non-agricultural purposes.

Conclusion: Ms. Siva Kumari, who heads SWARD talked about the poor implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. She informed that she herself is the member of LCC in the district, but the committee is not functioning as it must. Though the LCC at district level is meant for unorganised workers to see justice is done to them. However, so far, the committee has not received any complaints from the workers. But received 3 cases from the Department of Agriculture. She concluded that the Department of Women and Child Development must strengthen the LCCs at the district level and take up awareness programmes on the role of LCCs.

The meeting was concluded with vote of thanks by Ms. Lakshmi to all stakeholders.

Press Reports

వ్యవసాయ సంక్షోభం... మహిళా రైతులపై అధ్యయనం!

- ఎన్.ఇంద్రాణి, మహిళా సంస్థలకు కలిసి కుటుంబ మండలాల్లో పని
- గుర్తింపబడి అంశాలతో సాగు శీమితంగా ఉన్నందున పంటలు విఫలమవుతున్నాయి
- పంట పోషకాంశాల అందం అంతగా లేదని పండితులు తెలిపారు

మహిళా రైతులను ఎదుర్కొన్న పరిస్థితులను గురించి పరిశోధనలు చేసిన మహిళా సంస్థలకు కలిసి కుటుంబ మండలం వారు సమీక్షలు నిర్వహించారు. ఈ సందర్భంగా ఎన్.ఇంద్రాణి, మహిళా సంస్థలకు కలిసి కుటుంబ మండలం వారు సమీక్షలు నిర్వహించారు. ఈ సందర్భంగా ఎన్.ఇంద్రాణి, మహిళా సంస్థలకు కలిసి కుటుంబ మండలం వారు సమీక్షలు నిర్వహించారు.

సాక్షి

మహిళా రైతులపై హింసను అరికట్టండి

సంగారెడ్డి టౌన్: మహిళా రైతులపై హింసను అరికట్టాలని మహిళా జాతీయ నాయకురాలు ఆశాలత అన్నారు. జిల్లా సమాఖ్య భవనంలో మహిళా సంస్థ అధ్యక్షులతో మహిళా రైతులతో కలిసి బుధవారం సమావేశాన్ని నిర్వహించారు. ఈ సందర్భంగా ఆమె మాట్లాడుతూ ప్రభుత్వం చొరవ తీసుకొని ఇందిరమ్మ పాఠశాలలో మాదిరిగా ప్రతి కుటుంబానికి పశువులను ఇవ్వాలని కోరారు. భూమిలేని ప్రతి కుటుంబానికి రెండెకరాలను ఇవ్వాలన్నారు. మహిళలకు పని ప్రదేశాల్లో ఎదుర్కొంటున్న వేధింపుల హింసను అరికట్టాలన్నారు. ఈ అంశాలను ప్రభుత్వ దృష్టికి తీసుకెళ్లి విధానపరమైన మార్పులు తీసుకువచ్చేందుకు కృషి చేస్తామని వివరించారు. కార్యక్రమంలో జిల్లా వ్యవసాయ అధికారి పువ్వురాజు, మహిళా జాతీయ నాయకురాలు ఆశాలత ఉన్నారు.



మాట్లాడుతున్న ఆశాలత
రాలు ఉషాసీతా, సబ్ గెంటల్ డైరెక్టర్ శివకుమారి, వినీడీసీ చల్లవి, తెలంగాణ జనసమితి మహిళా విభాగం రాష్ట్ర అధ్యక్షురాలు అక్షయి, రైతు స్వరాజ్య వేదిక రాష్ట్ర నాయకులు కొండలేరెడ్డి తదితరులు పాల్గొన్నారు.

28/03/2024 | Sangareddy | Page : 9
Source : <https://epaper.sakshi.com/>

N. IndiraRani, 18-4-2024