

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

Research Dissemination Workshop
Date: 28-02-2024, 11AM to 4PM
TTC Bhavan, Mythrivanam, Siddipet

Background

Over the last year, SOPPECOM (www.soppecom.org), in association with Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch -MAKAAM (www.makaam.in) and Gramya Resource Center (<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 along with carrying out focus group discussions and individual case stories. 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 Siddipet on 28th February to share and disseminate the study findings with women farmers, activists, local groups working with farming communities and government officials. The purpose of the workshop was also to get feedback on the study findings and make policy recommendations to address individual

and structural violence against women farmers.

Mr. Praveen, the district coordinator for the study and a member of CCC welcomed the participants. The study team and four enumerators who did the quantitative survey Lakshmi, Sujatha, Lalitha and Anitha were introduced. Caring Citizens' Collective (CCC) and Dalit Bahujan Front, the two local organizations were acknowledged for assisting the study in Medak district.



One hundred and twenty-seven (127) persons participated in the district workshop held in Siddipet on 28th February. Out of which 85 persons were women farmers from 12 villages belonging to 7 mandals in Siddipet and Medak districts. Women from farmers suicide affected families, Mallanna Sagar displaced families, landless agriculture labourers, tenant farmers, women farmers doing collective farming promoted by Bhumika participated and shared their experiences and demands. District and mandal Agriculture officers, team members of Sakhi centre, Staff from the Department of Women and Child Development, local Degree college students and lecturers, local NGO' s and people's organizations have attended and shared their work and experiences. The participants introduced themselves.

Session 1: Ms. Asha Latha from MAKAAAM has presented the findings to the audience. The presentation consisted of the study objective, methodology, demographic data, livelihood activities, agricultural crisis, and its impact on the women, indebtedness, farmers suicides, low availability of work, migration, issues around 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, Medak and Siddipet districts 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.



Sharing by Women Participants: Women farmers from various sections spoke about their issues and articulated their demands especially for land rights and work.

Dommata Yadamma, an elderly single women from Mallanna Sagar project displaced village, presently living with her son in R & R colony, Mutajpally said that women like her were now totally dependent on their children as they did not get separate compensation package, even though the 2013 act says they were eligible for package. She lost her land through land acquisition. She applied for house site, which is not yet sanctioned. She shared that more than 100 single women filed a case in the court and the judgement was given in favour of them, but it is yet to be implemented. She says, they are just surviving on their pension and 6 kg rice given on ration card. If they get compensation package she and other single women can live independently with dignity. She said, she is asking this on behalf of all single women who are displaced. **She demanded land for land and a house to live in and fair compensation to live with dignity.**



K.Geetha (Siricinagandla villlage) and Nagalakshmi (Pidched village) are both from farmer suicide affected families from Siddipet district. They did not receive any help from the government, compensation was rejected on the pretext that their husbands did not own any land in their names. Both do not have a proper house to live in. They do various kinds of daily wage work to feed their children. Double bedroom house was sanctioned in the name of Nagalakshmi in the first list of beneficiaries two years ago, but later because of political interference it was cancelled, and the ruling party person has given to his favourite person belonging to the party. **They demand compensation as per GO and also demanded support for children's**

education.

Katta Syamala, a woman farmer from Dongala Dharmaram village, Ramayampet mandal in Medak district said that because of the increased menace of monkeys raiding crops, all farmers have shifted to paddy. She cultivates 1 acre of her own land and does share cropping in 2 more acres, but she does not get any income at the end of the year because of low rainfall and pest attack. For her survival, she goes for wage labour. She mentioned that NREGS work was not available last year. **She demands support from agriculture department to protect crops from animal attacks and regular work through MGNREGS.**

A woman from farmer suicide family- Raja Lakshmi from Pidicherla, shared that she was sanctioned a two-bedroom house, but later her name was deleted from the beneficiary list. Rajitha, from Hasnabad is a landless tenant farmer: She narrated her woes: that labour days have come down, loss of crops, not getting Rythu Bandhu, elder daughter got married and incurred loans due to this. Younger daughter just started working in Metro. She says, “poor are not benefitted in any way”. **They both demand two-bedroom house, Rythu bandhu and crop compensation. Also, provision of regular wage work in the villages.**

Rajeswari and Neeraja, both from Lakshmapur village informed that 5 acres of land was taken away from each family under Mallanna Sagar project. They quoted “Though we received compensation we are not able to buy land and are surviving by taking up agricultural wage work.” **Land to land, housing and livelihood opportunities to the displaced is expected from the State.**

Bhagyalakshmi from a displaced family from Vemulaghat village said that her father Malla Reddy has committed suicide as compensation package was not given to him but to his son. Malla Reddy has used the beams of the ceiling of his house (wooden/thatched) and burnt himself. His wife died with Cancer several years ago and Bhagyalakshmi moved to her maternal vilalge to look after her mother during that period and looked after her father when mother passed away. She never got any compensation as a member of the family although, as per LARR, 2013 she was eligible for compensation as she lived in the village for more than 7 years before displacement. Bhagya Lakshmi also informed that lack of work availability

impacted their livelihoods. Lack of work availability was also due to migrant workers from other states brought in by large farmers for sowing paddy. **Fair compensation to the displaced as per the latest Act and provision of livelihoods for their survival is her demand.**

T. Srimathi from Hasnabad shared that her joint family owned 5 acres of land, and another 4 acres was leased in by the family. But crop loss due to heavy rains, lack of crop loss compensation and lack of benefits for tenant farmers like Rythu Bandhu resulted in high expenditure and loss of income and landed in indebtedness. **Tenant farmers must be considered for Rythu Bandhu, crop insurance and credit from banks would help the tenant farmers is her demand from the State.**

Mr. Hayathuddeen an activist from Mallanna Sagar working on behalf of project displaced persons through a platform called Mallanna Sagar Porata Samithi shared that women were not getting work in the resettlement colony. He suffered due to his struggle for justice. His school permission was cancelled by the government due to his activism. He informed that women were not getting work in the resettlement colony. He also informed that considerable land acquisition has been happening in Medak district since last 10 years. He stated that women from the submerged villages were in the forefront of the struggle against land acquisition. They fought cases in the court also but ultimately, they are the worst sufferers. He also shared that “if women owned land government would not have acquired it so easily for projects. **Women should have land in their name which is a great security for them”.** **He pronounced that proper rehabilitation and resettlement of the displaced is yet to be done in Mallanna Sagar project.**

Bhagya Lakshmi, Mallanna Sagar oustee said that lack of work impacted their livelihoods. Migrant workers from other states were being brought in by large farmers to work for lower wages while local workers were put out of work. Another woman shared that they had 5 acres of land, and another 4 acres was leased in. But crop loss and lack of benefits for tenant farmers like Rythu Bandhu resulted in loss leading to marginality and despair. **Rythu Bandhu and crop insurance for tenant farmers and provision of livelihoods in the villages is what she wanted.**

Chandrakala, Banjarpalli said that alcoholism is the main reason for violence on women in the villages. Husbands beat women to give the money earned by women through hard labour. **Government should ban it as it is one of the main reasons for domestic violence and destroy many rural families.**

Recommendations from Women Farmers:

- Tenant farmers must be considered as farmers and all the schemes and entitlements should be extended to the tenant farmers including Rythu Bandhu, Rythu Bhima and institutional credit.
- Earlier variety of crops were cultivated, and this changed to mono cropping of cotton and paddy. This along with mechanization reduced the work availability to women. Diversity of crops and intercropping should be encouraged so that work would be available for women.
- Women should be given land which is cultivable.

- While some of the land distribution schemes were implemented earlier many women received pattas but were not shown where the land was actually located. All those lands must be given to the beneficiaries with pattas. Irrigation facilities must be provided by the government so that the lands become cultivable.
- In each mandal there should be a Nodal Officer to make comprehensive planning for the livelihoods of farm women and skill building trainings to be part of the planning.
- Women should be provided employment by establishing Agri-related subsidiary industries in the villages.
- If land is acquired by the government, the same land if not used should be given back to the beneficiaries. Land distributed to the poor (which is for a public purpose) should not be taken away for another public purpose.
- Women to be encouraged to take up group farming.
- Alcoholism is the main reason for violence. This should be abolished.

Session 3: Dr. Rukmini Rao from MAKAAAM and Gramya facilitated the concluding session of responses from Agriculture officers, activists, WCD staff, Sakhi Centre staff and college lecturers and find a way forward.



Responses from Agriculture Department:

In the concluding session, Agriculture officer of Ramayampet mandal, Mr. Rajanarayan and Siddipet district Agriculture officer Mr. Siva Prasad explained about various schemes and suggested women farmers to approach their nearest agriculture officers for any help. They said that around 50% of the officers

were females. Women farmers can get support from Krishi Vignan Kendras for their agricultural needs. Women can get technical support to maintain accounts of the input costs and to reduce the costs. They also said that women farmers should attend farmers meetings held by the department in every village in Rythu Vedikas and share their problems. They also suggested women farmers to be formed as FPOs, so that they get support from the department. Mr. Siva Prasad said that most of their time is going in maintaining the records of Rythu Bandhu and Rythu Bharosa and they get hardly any time for other schemes. They also suggested to promote kitchen gardens.

Response from Women and Child Department and Civil Society

Ms. Swaroopa Rani from Department of Women and Child Development explained the role of Sakhi Centres to protect women from violence. Ms. Sobha Rani from Mission Shakthi (WCD) spoke about the project to empower women. Sakhi Centres and WCD staff said that all organizations from government and non-government should join hands and work together to end violence against women.

Ekalavya Foundation, a civil society organization has formed 27 groups of women farmers and supporting FPOs. Ms. Sujatha from SWARD (NGO), Prof. Sujatha, Faculty from department of Political Science, Degree College for Women, Siddipet have expressed their solidarity to women farmers and stated that all women working in the agriculture field should have at least one acre of land in their name.



Dr. Rukmini Rao from MAKAM and Gramya articulated that whatever budget is spent on agriculture has not come to women with small land holdings and landless women as the minimum land holding is 5 acres of land for any government scheme. She demanded that one dedicated meeting for women in a week must be organized for the women farmers in the villages. In this para

separate out what department has said and what university has said and what other NGOs have said.

The meeting was concluded with a positive note that there is a need for all organizations coming together to work collectively to improve the accessibility of government schemes for women farmers and take concerted steps to reduce violence against women.

Press Coverage in Eenadu



శాస్త్రీయ ఆలోచనలపై అవగాహన కల్పించే తదితరాలు పాల్గొన్నారు.

వ్యవస్థీకృత హింసను నిర్మూలిద్దాం

సిద్దిపేట, న్యూస్ టుడే: మహిళలను రైతులుగా గుర్తించాలని, వ్యవస్థీకృత హింసను నిర్మూలించేందుకు సమష్టిగా కృషి చేయాలని మహా సంస్థ జాతీయ నాయకురాలు డా. రుక్మిణి రావు, ఆశాలత అన్నారు. సిద్దిపేటలోని బీటీసీ భవనంలో మహా సంస్థ ఆధ్వర్యంలో జిల్లాకు చెందిన 200 మంది మహిళా రైతులతో బుధవారం సమావేశం నిర్వహించారు. 'వ్యవసాయ సంక్షోభం నేపథ్యంలో మహిళా రైతులపై వ్యవస్థీకృత హింస' అంశంపై చర్చించారు. ఈ సందర్భంగా హాజరైన ఆమె మాట్లాడుతూ.. ఉమ్మడి మెదక్ జిల్లాలో సదరు అంశంపై గడిచిన రెండేళ్లు సర్వే చేశామన్నారు. వాటిని ప్రాజెక్టు ద్వారా ప్రదర్శించారు. మహిళా రైతుల బీవనోహాది, పంటల

మాట్లాడుతున్న డా. రుక్మిణి రావు

సాగు, సంక్షోభం, కొలు వివరాలు, ప్రాజెక్టుల నిర్మాణానికి భూసేకరణ, పోషకాహారం - ఆరోగ్యం, మహిళలపై హింస తదితర అంశాలపై సర్వే చేశామన్నారు. సంబంధిత నివేదికను ప్రభుత్వానికి సమర్పిస్తామన్నారు. జిల్లా వ్యవసాయ అధికారి శివకుమార్, మహా సంస్థ ప్రతినిధులు ఉషా సీతాలక్ష్మి, రైతు స్వరాజ్య వేదిక ప్రతినిధులు కొండల్ రెడ్డి, పద్మ, కరిం గో సీతమ్మ కలెక్టివ్ జిల్లా సమన్వయ కర్త ప్రవీణ్, వివిధ సంస్థలు ప్రతినిధులు ఉన్నారు.

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List of Participants attached as annexure.

**Report by N. Indira Rani
29-3-2024**