

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

Research Dissemination Workshop
Date: 19-03-2024, 11AM to 4PM
Nalgonda Club, Nalgonda

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 Nalgonda district, women farmers from 545 households from 11 villages in 3 mandals- Devarakonda, Kattangur and Miryalaguda were surveyed. To prepare for the survey interviews were held with key informants in the district 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, indebtedness, food and nutrition, health, access to government schemes, violence at home, at workplace and redressal mechanisms to safe guard from violence.

Workshop Report

The present workshop was organized on 19th March 2024 at Nalgonda Club, Nalgonda. The major aim was to disseminate the research findings to all the stakeholders, especially to the women farmers and to the government for policy advocacy.

Women farmers from Devarakonda, Neredugommu, Chandampet, Chintapalli, Dindi, Kalwapalli (Gurrumpode), Mutyalamma Gudem (Kattangur mandal) and Turkapalli, (Yadaadri Bhuvanagiri district) have attended the meeting. Women from different FPOs in the district also joined. Officials from different departments participated in the meeting. This included Mr. Sravan Kumar, District Agriculture Officer, Ms. Sangeetha Lakshmi, District Horticulture officer, Mr. Krishnaiah, Chairperson, and two members from Nalgonda District Child Welfare Committee, representatives from Bharosa Centre/district Police department, team members from One stop Crisis centres/Sakhi Centres from Nalgonda and Suryapet and members from Women Empowerment hub of the department of Women and Child Development.

Active NGO representatives from the district and Yaadadri Bhuvanagiri district have attended that include Mr. Lakshmi Narayana, State Director, Telangana, Centre for World Solidarity, Ms. Sumalatha, Executive Director, Gramya Resource Centre for Women, Nalgonda, Mr. Janardhan, Founder of Pilupu, and Mr. Amarendar, Director, Pilupu, Bhuvanagiri district. Research team and team members from Gramya were also present in the meeting.

Overall, 167 persons participated in the district workshop. Out of which 147 were women farmers from 34 villages belonging to 12 mandals of Nalgonda district. 20 officials and activists participated in the program. Women from farmer suicide affected families, landless agriculture labourers, tenant farmers, women farmers doing collective farming participated actively and

shared their experiences and demands. Women members from an FPO in Neredugommu village also joined the meeting.



Session 1: Dr. Rukmini Rao, Secretary Gramya and member of the NFT, MAKAAAM presented the findings to the participants of the workshop. The presentation consisted of the study objectives, 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, violence at workplace, and redressal mechanisms available. She also presented the recommendations. The policy brief based on the district study is attached.

Session 2: Schemes and entitlements from Government-sharing by government officials

District Agriculture Officer

Responding to the presentation, Mr. Shravan Kumar, District Agriculture Officer, informed that Department of Agriculture has 40 % women officers who are ready to support women farmers. Priority is given to SC/ST women farmers and marginal farmers in all the schemes and programmes. He informed that meetings are organised on every Tuesday and Wednesday in Rythu Vedika fora and requested all women farmers to attend the meetings at their village level and avail the services of the department. Agriculture Extension officers conduct trainings to support women farmers. He suggested women to form into groups/committees and assured support from the department to solve problems women farmers are facing.

District Horticulture Officer

Ms. Sangitha Lakshmi, District Horticulture Officer informed that the department promotes dry land crops like, lemon, sweet lime, vegetables etc. The department also encourages cottage industries like silkworm farming and honeybee keeping along with farming. Subsidies are available in the department for sprinklers and other equipment for farming. Trainings are also provided to women on making vermi compost, bio-fertilisers, and producing organic pesticides. She mentioned the success story of 'Kattangur horticulture company private limited' supported by the department.

Chairperson and Members of District Child Welfare Committee (DCWC)

Mr. Chinta Krishnaiah, Chairperson, informed that he is aware of the struggles of women farmers and the invisibility of women farmers. His mother was a farmer and involved in all the farm related activities along with household work. But she was never identified as a farmer but known as wife of... or mother of.... Her struggles and work as a farmer were never recognized. He asserted that women should be recognised as farmers. He advised against child marriages. The committee supports girl child education and stands for the survival of girl children and takes care of adoption related services for the protection of children.

Mr. Kiran, member of DCWC explained about the sponsorship programme for orphan children and children with HIV positive parents. Support to girl child education through admission into Kasturba residential schools, Bala Sadans, and in polytechnic colleges will be taken care of by the committee.

Ms. Nazia from Kisan Mitra Helpline explained the support given through the help line with a toll-free number. She works as an intermediary between farmers/women farmers and the government and creates awareness on MGNREGS works, Rythu Bandhu, and other issues related to farming. Ms Nazia and her team work on behalf of Rythu Swarajya Vedika (RSV), a voluntary platform to address farmers' distress and prevent suicides.

Session 3:

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

Ms. Yadamma's husband committed suicide due to indebtedness. She did not receive compensation for several years and had to struggle for it. She faced domestic violence when her husband was alive. After her husband committed suicide, she had problems with her brother-in-law who was verbally abusive towards her. She continued growing cotton on her land with crop losses, due to drought and heavy rainfall. She says that, though they wanted to cultivate food crops like jowar and pulses, wild boar attacks do not leave any crop in hand. Despite all the difficult conditions she is facing she is confident she can sustain herself as a farmer. She wants support from the department of agriculture to get rid of animal attacks and save her crops.



Aandalu from Neredugommu village whose husband committed suicide due to indebtedness. She told that she lost her crop due to non-availability of quality seeds. She wanted seed support from the department. Aandalu would benefit from knowing how to make seed dealers accountable for poor quality seeds.

Alivelu belonged to Gagillapuram village, Chandampet mandal. She was married at the age of 14 years and lost her husband at the age of 18 years. She faced discrimination and harassment from the marital family who refused to give her share of land. She struggled for 10 years as an agricultural coolie. She is presently selling vegetables with financial support from Gramya. She mentioned monkey menace as the biggest issue to protect the harvest.

Mariyamma from Malkapuram, Yaadadri Bhuvanagiri district shared her story. Her husband passed away in 2010. She started cultivating the land since 2014. She reports crop loss due to animal attacks-monkeys and wild boars. She says, "despite hard work, farming is not profitable due to lack of minimum support price. We are not able to leave farming, because it is our life, and we continue to face all hard ships".

Swapna is a farmer from Turkapally. She is a member of women farmers group in the village. The group consists of 15 women. They have started farming in 150 acres of land with the support from Pilupu, a civil society organization in the mandal. They have initiated millet farming. Due to unexpected rains and hailstorm the harvest was meagre. Monkey menace added to the losses and government has neither declared minimum support price to millets nor purchased the crop. Pilupu has supported the group and purchased the produce. She demanded that the government should encourage collective farming and declare MSP for millets and promote millet farming as millets are nutritious.

Chandrakala from Turkapally village is a single woman with 2 children, from farmer suicide family. She narrated how difficult it was to struggle as a single woman. She is engaged in construction work now in the village. She faced many difficulties to bring up her children.

Jyothi is from Duginevally village, Kattangur mandal. She shared that her husband is an alcoholic. Crop losses year by year and digging bore wells and loans for input cost, made them indebted. They have sold half acre of land from an acre they possessed. In Kattangur many families from the village migrate to Gujarat for their livelihoods leaving the children behind with grandparents. Due to lack of parental care and monitoring, majority of the adolescent boys from migrant families are not studying. They dropout from school and get involved in anti-social activities such as eve teasing, gambling, drug addiction and drinking.

Yamuna, a member of FPO in Kalvapalli, Munigode mandal has shared that the group use solar dryer to dry the vegetables and fruits they produce to export to other countries. She demanded equal pay for equal work to women.

Lakshmi, a 19-year-old girl from Devarakonda shared about the domestic violence she faced in her life. Parents got her married when she was studying in the 12th class. She was only 17 years old at the time of marriage. Despite her unwillingness to get her married, parents went ahead. She suffered terrible violence from her husband and in-laws'. She came back to parents' place and is currently staying at home. She was neither sent to college nor work. She reported that her parents continue to control her mobility and not allowing her to study/work. She wanted to learn some skill to become independent. She was keen to start a beauty parlour. She says, "my parents do not understand me and are not allowing me to learn anything. I feel depressed and want to commit suicide". She was counselled by the organizers not to lose hope but to find a way to become independent.

Recommendations/demands from Women Farmers:

- Prevention of animal attacks to protect crops/harvest by the department of Agriculture
- Demand for extension services and measures to address the vagaries of climate change
- Rythu Bandhu, Rythu Bharosa schemes to be extended to all tenant farmers
- Institutional credit to women farmers to protect them from indebtedness
- Department must supply quality seeds to farmers to avoid crop loss
- Government has to announce Minimum support price considering the production cost
- Provision of marketing facilities to women farmers within the villages
- Government should buy the produce from farmers within the villages
- Livelihood support to women farmers and single women from farm suicide families to be provided
- Immediate relief to be sanctioned to farm suicide families as per available GOs and educational support to children of single women from such families
- Skill building trainings to youth in the villages to be offered

Response from the DAO: Mr. Shravan Kumar, District Agriculture Officer responded saying that women should form farmer groups in the villages and go for collective farming to access the schemes from the department. He advised women farmers to consult the technical personnel from the department for information such as type of suitable crops, seasonal crops, and new crops/ short duration varieties if they want to try for the first time. He mentioned that the farmers collective from Bhuvanagiri incurred loss in millet farming due to lack of marketing information. He assured that the department would provide different types of seeds. Regarding

the attack of wild boars, he informed that there is an Act which allows for culling the boars to protect crops, for which the farmers must make an application to the Sarpanch in the panchayat. Solar fencing may eliminate the monkey menace to some extent he added.

Session 4

Speakers from Civil Society

Mr. Kondal Reddy from Rythu Swarajya Vedika (RSV) has been working on the issue of farmers suicides in Telangana for the past 15 years. He has extensively travelled to districts where farmer suicides were high and supporting the families to access ex gratia from the State. He has collected information on farm suicides through RTI. He urged the women farmers from farm suicide families not to lose hope to get ex gratia and other entitlements from the government. RSV has filed a PIL in the High Court challenging the State to provide ex gratia to 100 recognized cases of farm suicides. After court orders the State government has started releasing ex gratia to old cases. He assured that all the eligible families would access the entitlements. He also informed that there are seasonal hostels for children of migrant families in Kurnool district and requested the women farmers to utilise those services for children's education when they migrate.

Ms. Asha Latha from MAKAM has shared the study findings of Medak district. While presenting the study, she has narrated the displacement issues of Mallanna Sagar project, and the situation of women who lost land and livelihoods. She has highlighted the lack of work availability to women due to mechanization, use of weedicides and land displacement. She informed that the women farmers from Mallanna Sagar project area are demanding non-polluting industries in villages to provide employment to women and enhance the wages of MGNREGS work.



Dr. Usha Seetha Lakhmi, MAKAM and an independent researcher asked the women, what was violence in their view. Women knew that verbal, physical and emotional harassment was violence. She shared that the current study is redefining violence---- not only examining individual violence against women but structural violence or systemic violence which is a result of exclusion of women from work, resources, services and non-recognition of their role in agriculture She stated that lack of adequate work for women was a form of violence. Lack of work site facilities are also considered as violence. As per Census 2011, only 22 % women owned land and 58 % of women



are working as agricultural workers. According to the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act of 2013 (LARR Act of 2013), full compensation should be provided to the owners of assigned land. The landless agricultural workers who lost livelihood because of land acquisition are also eligible for compensation. Similarly, adult daughters and single women in the families are eligible for

compensation when land is acquired. She demanded that the State must provide land to women.

Mr. Madhu, Faculty of Social Work, MG University, Nalgonda, appreciated the research team and commended them on taking up such an important research. He says lack of identification of women as farmers is also violence. He assured that the department of Social Work will support the efforts of Gramya and other organizations to prevent violence against women and girls. He was happy to join the meeting on the World Social Workday, where social workers humanize the whole world. He promised to organise a seminar to share the study findings in the university.

Mr. Janardhan, Pilupu has shared about the work of Pilupu with women, single women, and women farmers. Narrating the story of the MACS, Pilupu nurtured, for the financial inclusion of poor women from villages, he noted all the credit goes to the women who have put constant efforts to mobilise 3000 plus women members and they now manage by themselves with confidence. The MACS now has 4 crore INR as revolving fund. The members in the MACS revolve the funds to use for cultivation and other consumption activities. He emphasizes the need to form into women farmer groups in the villages to support themselves. With this unity of power, women can demand their entitlements from the government, he added. He called all women farmers to make plans ready with the support of MAKAAAM, to address the violence, meted out to them.

Mr. Lakshmi Narayana, Centre for World Solidarity has shared about CWS work with women farmers and their support to the livelihoods of single women. He shared that, the civil society works as a bridge between people and the government.

Mr. Amarendra from Pilupu suggested that women should be ready with proper plans to address violence at workplace.

Ms. Nalini from Bharosa centre has shared information about the programmes taken up by the Bharosa centre in Nalgonda. Through Bharosa centres, children under 18 years who suffer violence are supported. She teams (Police) from Bharosa centres support the adolescent children 24/7 through their online phone services.

Sharing of schemes and entitlements by Women and Child Welfare Department

Ms. Sunita from Department of Women and Child Development has explained about the programmes the department takes up as an umbrella of services covering children, adolescent girls, women, persons with disabilities and senior citizens. She has also informed about the programmes of Mission Shakthi, to provide livelihoods for women empowerment.

Ms. Nagamani has informed about the programmes of Sakhi centre run by department of WCD under the guidance of Gramya in the district and the services it provides to protect women and girls from violence. Ms. Sumalatha, Gramya concluded the meeting with vote of thanks.

Press Coverage

The meeting was covered in local media. The Agriculture Officer was interviewed to share information about the services in the department. The overall conclusion was that structural violence against women in agriculture can be prevented with Government action

Press Coverage

ఆపదలో.. మె..!

మహిళా రైతులకు ప్రాధాన్యత ఇవ్వడం కోసం ప్రభుత్వం చేపట్టిన ప్రయత్నాలను గురించి ప్రజాస్వామ్య పార్టీ నేతలు ఆసక్తిగా చర్చించారు. ప్రభుత్వం చేపట్టిన ప్రయత్నాలను గురించి ప్రజాస్వామ్య పార్టీ నేతలు ఆసక్తిగా చర్చించారు. ప్రభుత్వం చేపట్టిన ప్రయత్నాలను గురించి ప్రజాస్వామ్య పార్టీ నేతలు ఆసక్తిగా చర్చించారు.

ప్రభుత్వ మద్దతుతోనే మహిళా రైతులపై హింస కనుమరుగు

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మహిళా రైతులపై వ్యవస్థీకృత హింస పై వర్క షాప్

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హింస కనుమరుగు

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Agriculture Officer committing to support women farmers
<https://youtu.be/wMOgdiv7IZs?si=hbQia4utMhcTpd3s>

N. INDIRA RANI, 18-4-2024

