



Are tribal women empowered: understandings from Sustainable Tribal Empowerment Project (STEP) and IKP in ITDA Paderu of Visakhapatnam districts, AndhraPradesh

Susanta Kumar Barik

Vice President, Agrigold Group, Agri Division, Andhra Pradesh, India.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 5 March 2012;

Received in revised form:

25 April 2012;

Accepted: 14 May 2012;

Keywords

Tribal,
Self sufficient,
STEP.

ABSTRACT

Tribal are self-sufficient and self-contained by nature. The demand for life sustenance originates at home and ends from the supply of nature at most of the cases. Empowerment and dis-empowerment is always viewed and weighted with outside lenses. Dimension of well-being of tribal women is captured in the study through the level of household income, food security, institutional participation and access to credit facilities and leveraging resources based on the principle of inclusion of the excluded.

© 2012 Elixir All rights reserved.

Introduction

“Empowerment of women” and “women empowerment” is the buzz word across the globe. The first phrase emphasizes on the process while the later explicitly deals with the level of women empowerment.

Very often it is interpreted that are women really empowered? And then where is it leading them to? In moving forward, it is emphasized on inclusion of the marginalized and excluded from the mainstream living to the overall process of development and growth (IFAD, 2002). The common denominations accredited to the side of tribals are that they are poor, marginalized and are away from mainstream living. The process of snaskritization and globalization do have negative impact on their life and livelihood and pushed them to the corner of development.

The fifth five year plan in this effect has given focus on the development of tribals categorically and with special focus on development of tribal women (Rao. M, 1999). Subsequently, since 2002 and with support of World Bank it has been persistently tried to empower the tribal women of agecy areas of Andhra Pradesh. Adding to the empowerment drive, the execution of European Union supported Sustainable Tribal Empowerment Project-STEP (EU India Update 2001). Both drives are executed in agency area of Paderu to empower the tribal women and economically alleviate them to the next level empowerment and development.

STEP was executed through the grass-root Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), while Indira Kranthi Pratham (IKP) is being executed in Agency Areas in coordination with the established Integrated Development Agencies (ITDA's) of the state.

In this context, empowerment is viewed as the process of increasing assets and capabilities of individuals or groups to make purposive choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Empowered people have freedom of choice and action. This in turn enables them to better

influence the course of their lives and the decisions which affect them. The social relations of gender, in fact, mediate women's experience of poverty. This implies that it is only by looking at the context that we can deduce whether social relations of gender act to exacerbate or relieve scarcity (Kabeer, 1996,1997).

The paper is therefore attempted to understand the level of women empowerment economically, politically and socially at different levels.

Study methodology:

The study has primarily relied on information from people's mouth and institutions working at village level. Opinion of women and men across the agency area of Paderu has been sought to assess the level and extent of freedom exercised to access the use the services offered.

Interestingly, focus has also been given on understanding the nitty-gritty of projects/programmes executed for the development of tribals and especially the IKP and STEP. Sector and theme-wise opinion has been taken across the agency area. Survey of beneficiaries, group discussion and Focus Group Discussion has been carried out on length on the multiplicity of issues of development and women participation in the process. Household as an institution is thoroughly scanned for assessing the role and importance of women at household decision as well as economically.

Study findings:

This paper has attempted to view the level of women empowerment at three broad levels i.e. Household, Village, Panchayats and/or Mandals, and District level with respect to their participation as well as contribution in different activities in shaping the economy and institutions concerned. It is also pertinent to mention that there are 10 different tribal and Primitive Tribal Groups resides in the agency area of Visakhapatnam district, formed to the total population of 5.66 lakhs (See table 1) and spread over the geographic area of 2629 square kilometers.

TABLE – 1: MANDAL-WISE TRIBAL POPULATION IN PADERU AGENCY AREA

Sl. No.	Mandal	No. of house Holds	Population			
			Schedule Caste	Schedule Tribe	Others	Total
1	Chinthapalli	13926	754	55956	7694	64404
2	Koyyuru	12049	635	42553	9249	52437
3	G.K.Veedhi	12275	1208	49222	5720	56150
4	Paderu	12274	640	43482	9207	53329
5	G.Madugula	11169	80	47625	2980	50685
6	Munchingiput	9901	137	41636	2145	43918
7	Pedabayalu	11288	45	46660	4126	50831
8	Hukumpeta	11291	74	47750	2291	50115
9	Arakuvalley	11608	699	47005	8255	55959
10	Ananthagiri	9790	1097	40057	3038	44192
11	Dumbriguda	9650	267	41928	2678	44873
	Total	125221	5636	503874	57383	566893

Source: ITDA, Paderu, Visakhapatnam District

It is also important to mention that the sex ration in agency area is 1007, reveals the fact that there are more number of women per male and a skewed literacy level is witnessed towards male in comparison with female.

Women Empowerment at Household Level

Women are considered to be one of the strongest pillar of house in tribal society. Their contribution is not purely confined to the economic gains rather beyond. Overall contribution to the household is far beyond. Despite their contribution, they are under estimated, under valued and in most often neglected with low and no self-esteem. In a male dominated society, role of women is multiplied but with low acrediction to their contribution.

The paper found that involvement of women in decision making in household matter is very much regulated and guided by the level of education as well as the economic contribution to the household income kitty. The foregoing table reveals that a host of factor regulate the decision making power of the tribal women in agency area.

TABLE-2: PARAMETERS OF WOMEN INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING

S.L No	Parameters of women involvement	Level of involvement (in Per Centage)
1.	Level of education	80
2.	Contribution to Household Income	88
3.	Member in SHG/VO/MMS	75
4.	Member in other Village level Institutions	70
5.	Exposed to City Culture	60
6.	Have Interaction with Government Officers	60
7.	Member in Panchayat	90
8.	Owning the Valuables	70
9.	Self-employed/ Salaried	95
10.	Ist wife	75

Source: Village Survey, ITDA, Paderu, Visakhapatnam District

Note: The percentage is the average of findings across the Mandals of the agency area.

Women involvement in decision making is also guided by the tribal and primitive tribal groups. It is reported that women are consulted for sending children to school, marriage of girl, sale of valuable, growing agricultural crops as well as advance planning of the house. The study found that women participation is relatively better in sending children to schools, and marriage.

TABLE-3: WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING IN AGENCY AREA

Sl. No.	Sub – tribe	Women participation in HH decision making (in per centage)
1.	Bhagatha	60
2.	Kondadora	60
3.	Valmiki	55
4.	Khonds(PTG)	60
5.	Kondakapus	60
6.	Kotia, Benthoriya	60
7.	Yendia, Yerukalas, Nookadoras	55
8.	Kammara	60
9.	Gadaba (PTG)	70
10.	Others	50
	a) Koya or Gundu	
	b) Porjas(PTG) , Reddy doras	
	c) Manyadora	
	d) Malies	
	e) Naiks	
	f) Kondareddies	
	g) Jatapus	
	h) Kulia	
	I) Savaras	
	j) Chenchus	

Source: Village Survey, ITDA, Paderu, Visakhapatnam District

Involvement of women in the sale of valuables and agricultural and/or horticultural products is minimal but very often guided by the parameters mentioned in table 2.

Economic contribution of tribal women to alleviate household vulnerability is grossly visible across all communities. Tribal women are no more strictly confined to the traditional age-old practice of agriculture and also agriculture following the shifting mode. They are now in to petty-business and jobs. There are almost 86,680¹ petty-shops exclusively run by the tribal women in the agency area and more than 2450² are engaged in different activities of sewing, Lady driving, She Association of Ki-mens, Soap Manufacturing etc.

Women empowerment at village, panchayat, mandal level and agency level

Moving beyond the house, women's participation is seen in various local institutions. The IKP and STEP formulated and supported Self-help Groups (SHGs) are the platforms for the village tribal economy and for the tribal women as well. 8325 SHGs with a membership of 43, 387 is catering the financial need of 693.72 lakhs across the agency area. The amount of fund is injected in to the tribal economy and exclusively through the Self-help Groups of tribal women to take up Income Generation Activites both at individual level as well as in groups. The study also noted that women involvement in group Income Generation Programme is more than individually.

The market study in the agency area reveals that most of the women in the fold of Self-help Group are in to petty business at Shandy Points and also engaged in value addition of the products available naturally e.g. adda leaf, tamarind, turmeric, broom stick, incense stick preparation etc.

¹ Women taking up petty-business with support of Indira Kranthi Pratham (IKP) and Sustainable Tribal Empowerment Project (STEP).

² The progrmme is exclusively taken up by IKP for imparting training to women from the RIAD and Non-RIAD Villages and provisioning placement.

The Micro Credit programme executed under both the interventions has marked an era for promotion of leadership among the tribal women. All these SHGs (see table-4) have experienced leadership of rotation for past four years, which invariably given chance to most of the women to regulate, manage and plan for successful operation of the SHGs and thereby broaden the vision of participation, exposure and courage and the same is applied to their day-to-day life.

Table-4: Micro Credit Plan for Income Generation in Paderu Agency Area

Year	No. of SHGs	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount supported	Schemes
2004-05	2674	33855	309.14	CIF
2005-06	1303	9532	384.58	CIF
2006-07	999	7484	398.58	ESS
2007-08	514	3861	274.06	ESS
Total	5490	54732	1366.36	

Source: Indira Kranthi Pratham, PMRC, Paderu, Visakhapatnam District

Note: Community Investment Fund (CIF) is exclusively supported under the World Bank Project-IKP while Economic Support Schemes is the support leveraged from ITDA, Paderu.

Women are not only engaged in Self-help Groups, where women exclusively works in teams for economic as well as social up-liftment of family as well as the village tribal economy rather participates in state promulgated institutions at habitation and Panchayat level and work in tandem with male. It is pertinent to mention that there are several Committees promoted by the state Government to work for the development of village. The common committees found are Village Forest Committee, Mothers Committee, Education Committee, Health Committee, Land and Natural Resoure Committee, Agriculture Committee etc. women participation is invariable seen and recorded in all Committees. However, role of women in Mother Committee and Health Committee is of paramount importance to all tribal habitations as reported. 80 per cent women across the agency area reported of monitoring the health and education issues of the village.

Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Area (PESA) is executed in the agency area to restore the ecology, economy, culture as well as political participation tribal. Women participation in celebration of PESA day speaks of the level of awareness of the issue (see table-5). Not only participation in public meeting but also direct participation in operation of local tyre i.e. Panchayat Administration is evidenced in the recently help election.

Table-5: Women Participation in Celebration of PESA Day in Paderu

Year	No. of Women
2004-05	12,210
2005-06	14,890
2006-07	16,480
2007-08	22,080

Source: Dhimsa (Tribal NGOs) Network, Paderu, Visakhapatnam District

There are almost 322 tribal women are elected as word members and 24 as Sarpanches in the recently held election in agency area.

Women and livelihood diversification:

Overall trajectories of livelihood shift are evidenced in agency area for either sex, while the shift is favorable for women. Women are now engaged in petty-business, embroidery works, sewing works, and technical jobs like driving, working in shopping malls and mills etc. All activities executed are

centering around women and women only to play a lead role for sustainable use.

Table-6: Livelihoods Diversification in Agency Area

SI No	Activities	No of beneficiaries
1.	Lac Cultivation	10,000
2.	SRI method of Agriculture	67
3.	Para Vets	275
4.	Sewing	792
5.	National Academy of Construction	404
6.	She Association Ki-men's	188
7.	Lady Driving	68

Source: Indira Kranthi Patham, TPMU, and STEP, Paderu, Visakhapatnam District

As revealed from the table above, apart from bringing-in technicality to the agriculture sector, attempt has been made by both projects to introduce new methods of livelihoods for promotion of income kitty of the tribal. Women are eagerly participating in the drive for more income and power and self-esteem. The SRI has yielded increased productivity on land as well as reduction in cost of cultivation by 40³ per cent.

Similarly, women engaged in different non-agriculture activities experiencing enhanced income on a sustainable manner. The occupational shift is evidenced in case of women and practically very slow and sluggish for male. The financial and technical assistance injected through the interventions may be the motivating factor for women to shift the occupation.

Women empowerment and food security

Food Security is an alarming issue with tribals. Agriculture through the shifting mode followed by a handful of income from labour forms the major source of household income to address the food requirement of tribal. Within agriculture, the segmentation of activities shows that women participation in agriculture activities is significantly more than male. They are the conscious decision maker for effective management of food during the lean and pick season.

Income from all sources added together is not providing two squares meal a day. 4413⁴ grain banks have been opened up with women Self-help Groups to address the food security

Conclusion:

Women as the catalyst for changing themselves as well as the society are visualized to a greater degree in all spears. Retention of identity and self-esteem at household and community level is well accredited. Participation in Income generation, institutional management, food security, administration of programmes etc is well recognised.

Challenges ahead:

Just mere engagement of women in achievement of short term objectives will not bring in economic, social as well as cultural sustainability for all generation to come. A long way is still to go. More complicated and higher order issues like retention and sustainable use of achievements are long term issues of concern for the up-coming institutions. Benefits of doubt still herald on the efficacy of the institutions created for

³ Farmers adopting SRI reported of One and half time increase in Per Acre Land Productivity as well as almost 40 per cent reduction in operating cost in terms of reduced seed use, low and no use of chemical fertilizer and less requirement of labour/manpower for weeding

⁴ IKP and STEP together opened up 4413 grain banks across the agency area to cater the need of seasonal food requirement of tribal. These Grain Banks are linked with the Women Operated Self-help Groups. IKP and STEP Annual Report, 2007

empowering women in agency area. This also leads to the higher order question of who will take care of women empowerment issues? And then what issues will be taken up?

The paper concludes the study with the findings that tribal women are retaining their identity and self-esteem at household and community level but with opening up new areas of challenge for the development thinkers and social activists these includes,

- a) Are tribal losing the tradition and culture in the wake of development?
- b) How sustainable is the technical intervention for agriculture?
- c) Are all issues of tribal addressed?
- d) How long the handholding support? Help us to stand up on our own
- e) No more subsidy please?

Bibliography

1. Anderson, Edward and Tammie O'Neil. "A New Equity Agenda?" Reflections on the 2006 World Development Report, the 2005 Human Development Report and the 2005 Report on the World Social Situation, WP 265.
2. Alex Ekka, Tribal Development And Empowerment, Responding to India's Social Challenges, Pages 54-67
3. Baumann, Pari, Rajesh Ramakrishnan, Manish Dubey, Rajiv K. Raman, and John Farrington (2003). "Institutional Alternatives and Options for Decentralized Natural Resource Management in India", WP 230.
4. Berlin, I. (1969). "Two concepts of freedom", Four Essays on Liberty. Oxford: Oxford.
5. Clark, D.A. (2005). "Sen's Capability Approach and the Many Spaces of Human Well-Being", Journal of Development Studies, 41(8), 1339-1368.
6. Deb, Uttam Kumar, G.D. Nageswara Rao, Y. Mohan Rao and Rachel Slater (2002). "Diversification and Livelihood Options: A Study of Two Villages in Andhra Pradesh, India, 1975-2001". WP 178.
7. Deshingkar, Priya and Craig Johnson (2003). "State Transfers to the Poor and Back: The Case of the Food for Work Program in Andhra Pradesh", WP 222.
8. Deshingkar, Priya and Daniel Start (2003). "Seasonal Migration for Livelihoods in India: Coping, Accumulation and Exclusion", WP220.
9. Dollar, David and Aart Kraay (2000). "Growth is Good for the Poor", World Bank mimeo.
10. Dreze, J. (1990) "Poverty in India and the IRDP Delusion", Economic and Political Weekly, 25 (39): Mumbai.
11. Dreze, J. and A. Sen (1991) "Public Action for Social Security: Foundations and Strategy", in E. Ahmad, J. Dreze, J. Hills and A. Sen (eds.), Social Security in Developing Countries. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
12. Dreze, J. and A. Sen (1995) India: Economic development and Social Opportunity. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
13. Dreze, Jean and Amartya K. Sen (1989). Hunger and Public Action, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
14. Dreze, Jean, and Amartya K. Sen (1995). India: Economic Opportunity and Social Development. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
15. Fukuda-Parr, S. (2003). "The Human Development Paradigm: Operationalizing Sen's Ideas on Capabilities", Feminist Economics, 9(2-3), 301-317.
16. Gasper, D. (2002). "Is Sen's Capability Approach an Adequate Basis for Considering Human Development?", Review of Political Economy, 14(4), 435-461.
17. Ghosh, B. S. Marjit and C. Neogi (1998). "Economic Growth and Regional Divergence in India, 1960 to 1995", Economic and Political Weekly, June 27-July 3, Vol XXXIII, No 26, pp 1623-30.
18. Ghosh, J. (1998) "Assessing Poverty Alleviation Strategies for their Impact on Poor Women: A study with special reference to India", Discussion Paper 97. Geneva: UNRISD.
19. Gill, Gerard J., John Farrington, Edward Anderson, Cecilia Luttrell, Tim Conway, N.C. Saxena and Rachel Slater. (December 2003) "Food Security and the Millennium Development Goal on Hunger in Asia".
20. Goetz, A.M. and R.S. Gupta (1996). "Who takes the Credit? Gender, power and control over loan use in rural credit programs in Bangladesh", World Development.
21. GoI (2005) Economic Survey 2004-2005, New Delhi, India: Economic Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.
22. Haq, Mahbub ul (1995). Reflections on Human Development, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
23. Harriss, J. and P. De Renzio, (1997). "Missing link or Analytically Missing? The concept of social capital", Journal of International Development (9) 7, pp. 919-37.
24. Johnson, C. (2003), "Decentralization in India: Poverty, Politics and Panchayati Raj", Overseas Development Institute, London, WP 199.
25. Johnson, Craig, Priya Deshingkar and Daniel Start (2003) "Grounding the State: Poverty, Inequality and the Politics of Governance in India's Panchayats" WP 226.
26. Jos, Mooij. "Smart Governance? Politics in the Policy Process in Andhra Pradesh, India", WP 228.
27. J. Harrison and E. Freeman (1999), Stakeholders Social Responsibility and Performance . Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Perspectives., Academy of Management Journal, Vol.42,
28. Kabeer, N. (1991) "Gender and Rural Poverty: Analysis from Bangladesh", Journal of Peasant Studies 18 (2): 241-62.
29. Kabeer, N. (1998) Money can't buy me love? Re-evaluating gender, credit and empowerment in rural Bangladesh. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.
30. Kabeer, N. (2001) "Conflicts over Credit: Re-evaluating the empowerment potential of loans to women in rural Bangladesh". World Development 29 (1): 63-84.
31. Kabeer, N. (2002) "We don't do credit": Nijera Kori, social mobilization and the collective capabilities of the poor in rural Bangladesh. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Nijera Kori.
32. Narayan, Deepa (1997). "Voices of the Poor: Poverty and Social Capital in Tanzania". Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Studies and Monographs Series 20. World Bank, Washington, D.C. ODI working papers.
33. Narayana, D. "Institutional Change and its Impact on the Poor and Excluded: the Indian Decentralization Experience", OECD Development Center, WP 242.
34. Nayak, Radhika, N.C. Saxena and John Farrington (2002). "Reaching the Poor: The Influence of Policy and Administrative Processes on the Implementation of Government Poverty Schemes in India".
35. National Institute of Rural Development (1999). India Rural Development Report 1999: Regional disparities in development and poverty. Hyderabad: National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD).

36. Planning Commission (2001). National Human Development Report, GOI.
37. Project Implementation Plan for Vulnerable Groups Under RCH II (December 2004). Government of India, Department of Family Welfare, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
38. Prasanna K. Samal(1996): Tribal Development Options, proceedings of National Seminar (May 23-24), page, 363-367.
39. P. Krishnaiah (2003): Poverty Reduction, Self-help Group Strategy, UBI Publishers' Distributors Pvt. Ltd, page 77-117.
40. P. Kashyap and S.Raut (2006):The Rural Marketing Book, Biztantra, page 29-57
41. Saxena, N.C. and John Farrington (2003). "Trends and Prospects for Poverty Reduction in Rural India: Context and Options", WP 198.
42. Saxena, Naresh C. "Policies for Tribal Development: Analysis and Suggestions".
43. Sen, A. (1985) "Well-being, Agency and Freedom: The Dewey Lectures 1984"; in: 64. UNDP. Nepal Human Development Report (2004).
44. World Bank (1999) The India Poverty Project: Poverty and growth in India, 1951– 94, Washington DC: World Bank.
45. World Bank (2000). India: Reducing Poverty and Accelerating Development. World Bank Report. Oxford University Press.
46. World Bank (2002). Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A source book.