

Livelihood Security of Tribal Women in High Altitude and Tribal Zone of Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the livelihood systems & livelihood security of tribal women in high altitude and tribal zone of Andhra Pradesh. Most of the households earn a living by maintaining a diversified livelihood patterns viz., farming, forest based activities, wage employment, migration, petty business with a very low annual income. Majority (42.22%) of the respondents were involved in Agriculture + Forest based activities + wage earners followed by (27.22%) were involved in Agriculture alone (15.00%) were involved in Agriculture + wage earners + Animal husbandry (8.88%) were involved in forest based activities + wage earners (6.66%) were involved in Agriculture + petty business. 57.77% of the households in the study are having better livelihood security while (35.00%) had poor livelihood security and (12.23%) of the households had rich livelihood security. Apart from farming women in the study are engaged in collection of forest products namely, honey, fuel wood, leaves, Amla fruits, Tamarind, Markingnuts etc., Tribes in the study area uses the forests as sources of firewood, housing materials, medical herbs, water and irrigation grazing their cattle, hunting & charcoal making. The empowerment of tribal women and development of tribal women and sensitization of research and extension systems about their roles and contributions are important for sustainable growth and management of livelihood security. A strategy in this study was conceived as a plan of action in order to empower the tribal women and sensitize the development agencies for greater contribution for ensuring livelihood security.

Key words: Livelihood security; Livelihood systems; Tribal women.

There are 437 tribes in India and Andhra Pradesh is inhabited by 33 tribes, out of these, 13 tribal groups inhabit in high altitude zone of Vikakhapatnam. Livelihood security is the ability of a household to meet its basic needs like food, health and shelter, basic education and community participation. Livelihoods can be made up of a range of on-farm and off-farm activities which together provide a variety of procurement strategies for food and cash. Thus, each household can have several possible sources of entitlement which constitute its livelihood comprises the capabilities of people, their assets and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is a system, which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, enhance its capabilities, assets and provide sustainable opportunities. Each household combines its livelihood resources within the limits of their social and political content to pursue a number of livelihood strategies such as various types of production and income generating activities (Frankellis, 2007). A holistic analysis of livelihood security begins with the understanding of the dimensions, the factors that influence the range of possibilities for each livelihood system and should include the household livelihood analysis to determine the information on the resources held by each household and how these are used to earn adequate income and critical outcomes achieved in terms food security, nutrition and health status and access to resources like water, shelter and safe environment. Households combine their livelihood resources within the limits of their content and use their institutional connections to pursue a number of different livelihood strategies. Such strategies can include various types of production and income generating activities like farming, non-farm activities,

formal sector employment or a combination of all these.

In this context, an understanding of livelihood security of tribal women with a multidimensional approach was undertaken with the following objectives.

1. To examine the livelihood systems and livelihood security of tribal women.
2. To design a strategic model for enhancing livelihood security.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in 6 tribal dominated mandals of high altitude and tribal zone of Andhra Pradesh during 2010-11. Six mandals namely, Chintapalle, G.K.Veedhi, Hukumpeta, G. Madugula, Araku and Pedabayalu were selected for investigation. Three villages from each of the six mandals were selected and from each village 10 respondents were selected thus making a total of 180 respondents. Data were collected through structured and pre-tested interview schedule developed covering all the facts of livelihood security. The collected data were coded, tabulated and analyzed statistically and the results were interpreted accordingly.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Livelihood systems and livelihood security of tribal women : Livelihood systems in the area of study are primarily dependent on combinations of agriculture, forest and wage earners. Due to very small holdings and very low productivity of the land most households earn a living by maintaining a diversified pattern of occupations, no single activity provides sufficient resources to entirely ensure their livelihood. Women among tribal population have very important role in agriculture cum forest based economies.

Table 1
Distribution of the respondents according to their livelihood systems (N=180).

Sr. No.	Livelihood systems	Frequency (%)
1.	Forest based activities + wage earners	75 (42.22)
2.	Agriculture + Forest based activities + wage earners	49 (27.22)
3.	Agriculture + wage earners+Animal husbandry	27 (15.00)
4.	Agriculture alone	15 (8.88)
5.	Agriculture + petty business	13 (6.66)
	Total	180 (100.00)

It was found from Table 1 that majority (42.22%) of the respondents were involved in Forest based activities + wage earners followed by Agriculture + Forest based activities + wage earners (27.22%), Agriculture + wage earners+ Animal husbandry(15.00%), Agriculture alone (8.88%) and Agriculture + petty business (6.66%). Most of the households supplemented their household income through Forest based activities + wage earning occupation for their livelihood. This might be because of two reasons : (i) most of the tribes were landless and (ii) those who possessed land, hold only limited land holding. They were not in a position to meet the expenditure required to run the family with only one source of income. Hence most of the households earn a living by maintaining a diversified pattern of occupations viz., on-farm activities, wage employment, forest activities, small enterprises. Tribal women in the study area are involved in seasonal collection of forest products like leaves, hill-brooms, tamarind, honey, medicinal plants and barks, thatching grass. Majority of the respondents agreed with the fact that they were getting employment under the scheme of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). The scheme provides alternative employment opportunities to earn wage income and reducing the drudgery (Shrinidhi, 2006). Respondents indicated that income from this scheme is sometimes utilized as a coping strategy to meet household expenses.

The overwhelming conclusion is that women not only bear a greater proportion of the burden and their efforts are critical in contributing up to 50 percent of the household income. Women in tribal households often have a greater say because of their enormous contribution to the welfare of the household. Once the sale of the forest produce is made in the weekly market or at the forest cooperative, women generally purchase food and other basic necessities for the household. The results indicate that appropriate steps need to be taken to improve upon livelihood of tribal women.

Livelihood security of tribal women : Almost in all the sample villages, besides agriculture the tribal

women including children go to forest for collection of leaves, hill-brooms, tamarind, honey, medicinal plants and barks, fuel wood, roots, tubers, leafy vegetables and medicinal plant species, whereas wage labour provides engagement for 100 days, which has been possible after implementation of NREGS and other poverty alleviation schemes. Majority of the households have poor access to safe drinking water. Health measures and village sanitation are unsatisfactory in most of the villages.

On the basis of livelihood security index score, the respondents were categorized into three groups viz., Rich, Better and Poor.

Table 2
Distribution of the respondents according to their livelihood security (N=180).

Sr. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Rich	22	12.23
2.	Better	95	52.77
3.	Poor	73	35.00
	Total	180	100.00

From the above Table 2 it is evident that 52.77 per cent of the households in the study area had better livelihood security while (35.00%) had poor livelihood security and (12.23%) of the households had rich livelihood security. Women among the tribal population have very important role and 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 (Singh, 1993). Therefore it can be said that in order to contribute to their household needs women must have exposure to areas of new developments which would relevant in opening the windows of livelihood opportunities which would be able to ensure their livelihood security.

Based on the findings it is suggested that, it is endeavor of all the line departments like agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, extension agencies and other non-governmental organizations have to give more emphasis on women participation. This will make them to get aware of day to day technological developments and the impact of adoption of those scientific practices on their enterprises and in turn enhances their livelihood.

Strategy for enhancing the livelihood security of tribal women : The empowerment of tribal women and development of tribal women and sensitization of research and extension systems about their roles and contributions are important for sustainable growth and management of livelihood security. It is this reason that emphasizes the need to develop understanding about tribal women, their potentials, awareness of household

food security, management, and extent of participation in planning and decisions of different farm and home management, works towards food security and the constraints inhibiting them to efficient food security management at household level. A strategy in this study was conceived as a plan of action in order to develop the tribal women and sensitize the development agencies for greater contribution for ensuring livelihood security. Suggestions made by the sample were listed and filtered them based on their feasibility and retained only the workable suggestions for developing a strategy as an action plan of activities to be undertaken by the administrators.

Knowledge dissemination : Under the knowledge dissemination strategy training / demonstrations, exposure visits etc. of women may be included in order to impart them with the necessary skills and techniques and they should be encouraged and involved them in starting up an enterprise. Establishing institutional mechanisms for knowledge building, management and dissemination by women could be another element of this component. Knowledge, particularly relating to markets, post harvest practices and village level value addition should be included for the dissemination strategy. The role of female extension workers has been pivotal to the programmes owing to the social 'distance' between women and men workers who are strangers to the community and the connotations of this distance. More intensive personal contacts to the tribal women should be the primary task for the extension system. The tribal women should be encouraged to form into groups to solve their common problems.

Food security : Food security is more concerned about availability, stability of supplies, access to nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for healthy living. Every household is supposed to be food secured. Women play a vital role in improving their household food & nutritional security as they contribute to food production, enhance dietary quality and add diversity in consumption. Tribals from the study area consume mainly cereals, seldom eating any fruits and vegetables; as such they do not get nutritional foods consisting of vitamins and minerals resulting in inevitable malnutrition. There is immense scope to develop backyard nutrition garden and backyard poultry to increase the physical availability of nutritious food to tribal households. Besides getting materials for their own consumption the surplus material can be sold for generating income. This can also be improved by giving training on low cost food processing technology, nutrition awareness campaigns. Having researched tribal women's role in managing household food and nutritional security it may be concluded that women's knowledge of diverse uses of agricultural products, could be vital for improving the food security of the household and should not be bypassed or undervalued. The skill and knowledge of

tribal women can be accelerated through training and various extension activities which further improves food and nutritional security of the household.

Educational security : The concept of functional literacy programmes should be deeply disseminated and stress on the importance of literacy. Several massive awareness camps, campaigns should be started in all the villages involving particularly women. The Krishi Vigyan Kendras, ITDA officials should take lead in providing minimum education to the tribal women. Government should provide enough funds for the purpose and encourage tribal women to participate in the programme. Focus on girls education and launching special and sustained education initiatives/drives in low female literacy tribal pockets.

Health security : Health policy needs to provide adequate support for improving traditional and indigenous practices (which are effective and not exploitative), as the respondents in the study area utilize these practices widely. Furthermore, medical expenses are a major cause of debt. Attention needs to be given, in particular, to safe motherhood, weaning practices and prenatal care for mothers. Healthy nutrition should be encouraged through local produce and local recipes. Nutritional needs should be solved by the tribal women themselves through a better utilization of their locally available cheap but nutritious food. The nutritional and health status of pregnant tribal women needs to be improved by adequate intake of a nutritious diet, including iron and minerals and also by hundred percent immunization.

Habitat security : House is the symbol of status in the society. It also indirectly contributes to the health and hygienic conditions of the family members. But almost all the respondents were living in thatched houses with very limited household articles. Technology policy needs to pay attention to women's drudgery in the processing of food and to widening the base of energy-efficient cooking practices. Food processing accounts for the largest amount of women's time. This time use could be diverted productively to adult education, training and other activities, thus lessening the drudgery. Community forestry or community fuel wood farms need to be established as development programmes in areas where women's time and energy are expended on fuel wood collection.

Holistic approach :

- For the benefit of women, introduce drudgery-saving devices for food processing, cooking and storage.
- Create better linkages with mainline departments (veterinary, agriculture, banking and so on) and other collaborating training institutes to improve group performance.
- Create women's economic development corporations.
- Focus on women among agricultural extension systems.

- Increase the number of female extension staff.
- Promote diversification among micro enterprises (that is, non-farm-based activities).
- Access to developmental programmes.
- Extension officials, NGO's must provide regular training sessions in different possible activities to sustain members' interest.
- Some of the women should be specially trained in new skills so that they may serve as master trainers to communicate to other group members.
- Emphasize on creating links to education, health and nutrition initiatives.
- Formation of tribal women co-operatives to take up dairy, sericulture, fisheries, handicrafts, horticulture and agri-food processing and post harvest technologies.
- Ensuring social protection through provision of support prices to tribals and should be allowed to collect, process, transport and market the non-timber forest produce.
- Devising new systems to improve the access of tribes to modern health care

responsibilities and sensitize them about the new provisions.

- Encouraging women's organizations and ensure the formation, stabilization and bank linkages of SIIGs to promote viable micro-economic activities with substantial support in terms of credit and market.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that holistic approach is desirable for success of tribal development and for a sustainable livelihood pattern a strong resource base is a pre-requisite. It is most desirable to extend sustainable socio-economic status, empowering women, better health care, programmes aiming to improve nutritional status, providing transport & communication facilities to tribal households. Efforts should be strengthened by conducting group trainings in a systematic manner, providing continuous facilitation support by exchange of information & ideas, mutual trust between banks and SHG's motivation campaigns & skill oriented trainings for empowerment of tribal women which also facilitates in

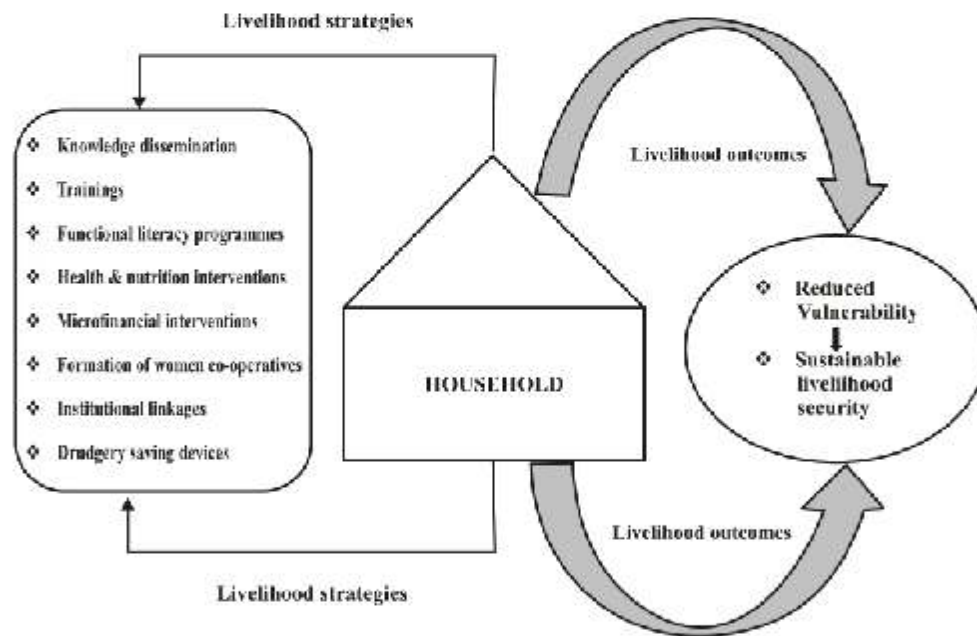


Fig 1: Strategy for enhancing the livelihood security of tribal women

- Strengthen the tribal sub-plan strategy with an institutionalized mechanism to develop a workable system.
- Training of tribal women to take up their

terms of better livelihood support, poverty reduction, food and nutritional security of the family.

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