

Socio-Economic Conditions of Tribal Women in Villupuram District

Dr. S. SAVITHA

Assistant Professor (GL), Department of Economics, C Kandaswamy Naidu College for Women, Cuddalore, India

Abstract: Common Property Resources (CPR) are the important in addressing poverty issues for marginalized, forest dependent communities, by contributing to livelihood outcomes including food security, health and well being, and income (FAO, 1995; Falconer, 1996). The common property resources include land, water, river, riverbeds dumping places, waste land, grazing place and fisheries, it constitutes to basic support system of "Life on Earth". There is a new and increasing emphasis on poverty alleviation and livelihoods improvement in forestry, representing both a challenge and an opportunity. A substantial opportunity exists to enhance livelihood of marginalized forest dependent communities, through the utilization of forest resources. The women, including their contribution to household income generation through the use and management of natural resources, needs to be recognized, United Nations estimates indicate that upto 70 per cent of the world's poor are female. Women in developing countries constitute the majority of the labour force playing a key role in managing common property resources and helping to protect the environment. This study explores some of the benefits, beside the livelihood of their household delivered by the rural women form the forest resources and the challenges faced by them in utilizing these resources. With this background, the present study attempts to analyse the interlink ages between CPR and the role of women in livelihood strategies of the rural households in Villupuram districts of Tamil Nadu.

I. INTRODUCTION

The CPR and Forest Produce are particularly pertinent to the poor households, especially for women. The role of CPR in their day to day livelihood changes with seasons and year. In the dry season, when the crop lands shrink under the sun the local forest and grass lands provide food and fodder. Especially during drought and famine years, common resources become critically important. Edible fruits, roots and flowers are utilized during droughts and famines by the destitute and starving poor. Due to the variety of roles that the CPR play in the rural as well as low caste households. It will be useful to examine its significance in terms of households, food security, asset generation, the farm employment the market, poverty reduction and the social organisation. The present section is an attempt at developing criteria for classifying or discriminating powers of the socio-economic and CPR indicators among the different sizes of land holding classes in the selected districts of Tamil Nadu State. In this context, the most appropriate technique i.e. linear discriminant function is applied. The following section recapitulates the specific objectives and hypotheses.

Most of the micro level studies give an insight into the present status and the use of CPR within the local communities and very few studies examine the' locally evolved institutions on Common Property Resources. Still fewer studies deal with the current status and utilization of CPR across diverse resource use systems and the social organisation of production in an integrated manner. The studies which take a holistic view

of communities that are exclusively dependent on CPR for their livelihood. A study of this nature acquires crucial role in understanding the intricacies of resource use patterns in different socio-economic occupational and caste groups as well as geo-physical regions, which in turns help to address the larger issues of economic development, alleviation of poverty and conservation of environment. The study attempts to address the relevant processes involved in the use-pattern and the present status of Common Property Resources. This assumes great significance in the context of declining community control of various forms and the lack of encouragement from the government at all levels. The present study deals with access to CPR by the rural women in terms of encroachment of lands, asset generation, inputs to land cultivation, fuel consumption, various forms of products collected, consumption expenditure, generation of income in relation to agricultural and non-agricultural sources and the CPR that have reduced the poverty level of the occupational and caste groups, particularly the women weaker sections like landless labour, marginal farmer and small farmer in the backward, most backward and scheduled caste groups, in the state of Tamil Nadu, rather than with management of Common Property Resources. Therefore, the present study has been concerned to fill in the gaps indicated above. The results of the study would be useful to experts and administrators to make specific policy recommendations, and to policy makers to make decisions on these recommendations. Though the investigation is limited only to Villupuram district, it is believed that the findings are a pointer to what is happening in general in the rest of the country.

II. COMMON PROPERTY RESOURCES AND TRIBAL WOMEN

Tribal have been residing in forest areas for generation, cultivating land and for collecting non-timber forest produce. As per the forest survey of India Report, 2003, 60.04 per cent of the 63 per cent of dense forests lie in 187 tribal districts. Though, the geographical area of these districts is just 33.6 per cent of the country's geographical area. Out of 58 districts, which have more than 67 per cent of their area under forest cover, 51 are tribal districts. A comparison of the 2011 assessment of forest cover in tribal districts shows a net increase of 321,100 hectares underscoring a very strong symbiotic relationship between tribals and forests and of tribals being at the fore front of conservation regimes. While tribal women have more say in family decision than their non-tribal counterparts, they also share more responsibilities. Preparing food and providing for drinking water is solely their responsibility. So, they operate closely with the forests from where they get water, fuel and minor products including edible fruits, tubers, flowers, vegetables, and berries. Minor forest produces plays an important part in the tribal economy. Its collecting and marketing is a major source of livelihood for the most of the women tribal families contributing around 70 per cent of their total income. The different varieties are classified

as plants for used in pharmacy and perfumery and teendu leaves. Firewood is also provide by forests. Since firewood gathering is done mainly by women. The interacting between forests and women, gets further enhanced. Since all the duties of tribal women are connected with the forests and they look towards the forest for nature's gifts their dependence on forests is strong and intrinsic.

III. STATUS OF TRIBAL WOMEN

The status of women in a society is a significant reflection of the level of social justice in that society. Women is often described in terms of their level of income, employment, education, health and fertility as well as their roles within the family, the community and society. In tribal communities, the role of women is substantial and crucial. They constitute about half the total population, but in tribal society women are more important than in other social groups, because they work harder and the family economy and management depends on them. Even after industrialization and the resultant commercialization swamped the tribal economy, women continued to play a significant role. Collection of minor forest produce is done mostly by women and children. Many also work as labours in industries, households and construction, contributing to their family income. Despite exploitation by contractors and managers, tribals are more sincere and honest than non-tribals. However, tribal women face problems and challenges in getting a sustainable livelihoods and a decent life due to environmental degradation and the interference of outsiders. The strategy for tribal development and specially women needs improvement, betterments, development and upliftment to effect their livelihood status. Tribal women have adjusted themselves to live a traditional life style in the local environment and follow occupations based on natural resources. Undoubtedly, the programmes, oriented towards the empowerment of tribal, particularly women, have improved their socio-economic conditions and status. However, there are wide variations across regions and tribes in terms of work participation, sex ratio, economic productivity and social life. The impact of development planning needs to be evaluated in terms of designed and to be evaluated in terms of desired and unanticipated consequences. The development process should be perceived as an involvement and reorganization mechanisms of not only the socio-economic system, but the entire eco-system. Against this backdrop, the present study reviews the emerging perspective in the context of the socio-economic empowerment of tribal women and changing paradigms of economic development through CPR.

Health

Health care is a major problem in for flung isolated tribal areas. Lack of food security sanitation and safe drinking water, poor nutrition and high poverty levels aggravate their poor health status. The problem of malnutrition is

multidimensional and few and far between. Till recently, an abundance of fruits, tubers, roots and leaves in forests on the one hand and indigenous health-care system on the other, contributed positively to tribal health. Tribal people have over the centuries developed their own medicinal system and other items collected from nature and processed locally. They have their and processed locally. They have their own system of diagnosis and cure. But the skills and natural resources are fast disappearing treat or prevent many diseases that modern medicine can. Some health indicators of tribals, SCs and other (per thousand persons) are given below to establish their poor state of health.

Objective

The specific objectives, which are based on the inner components of the general objectives, are as follows:

- i) To identify the Socio- Economic and CPR indicators, which discriminate the rural households in terms of different occupational and the caste groups, and
- ii) To test the results of the sample survey on the basis of 'Socio- Economic and CPR indicators and use it as a yard stick to measure the representation of the general population.

Hypotheses

- i) The socio-economic and CPR indicators differ significantly in between the occupational as a well as the caste groups, and
- ii) The socio-economic and CPR indicators of the sample groups are equivalent to measuring the representation of the general population.

Methodology

The study based on four stage:

1. Selection of Villupuram district as the study area.
2. Selection of two blocks (forward and one backward blocks) in the selected district.
3. Selection of a few villages in each of the selected block.
4. Selection of sample households from each of the selected villages in the study area.

Villupuram district is selected as the study area due to the middle ranking position on the basis of two selected indicators.

1. Parcapita availability of CPR
2. Percentage of CPR to the total geographical area of the district.

In this context, out of 32 districts in Tamilnadu, Villupuram district is ranking 16th position in the overall index of the above parameters.

Table 1.1: Spectrum of non-poor households at current prices by excluding CPR income

| Occupational Holders | Marginally non-poor (Rs.22000-36000) | Better-off- (Rs.36000-50000) | Rich (above 50000) | Total Household non-poor | Grand Total Poor & Non Poor |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Landless Labourer | - | 2 (2.86%) | 1 (1.43%) | 3 (4.28%) | 70 (100) |
| Marginal Farmer | 17 (28.33%) | 13 (21.67%) | - | 30 (50.00%) | 60 (100) |
| Small Farmer | 12 (30.00%) | 25 (62.5%) | - | 37 (92.5%) | 40 (100) |
| Medium/ Large | 4 (13.33%) | 14 (46.67%) | 12 (40.00%) | 30 (100) | 30 (100) |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-----------|
| Farmer | | | | | |
| Overall | 33 (16.5%) | 54 (27.00%) | 13 (6.5%) | 100 (50.00%) | 200 (100) |
| Caste groups | | | | | |
| Kattunayakan | 10 (14.08%) | 11 (15.49%) | 14 (19.72%) | 35 (49.30%) | 71 (100) |
| Kurumba | 17 (20.99%) | 12 (14.81%) | 15 (18.52%) | 44 (54.32%) | 81 (100) |
| Urlikurumba | 7 (14.58%) | 9 (18.75%) | 16 (33.33%) | 32 (66.67%) | 48 (100) |

Source: Computed

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to the total households

Table 1.2: Spectrum of non-poor households at current prices by including CPR income

| Occupational Holders | Marginally non-poor (Rs.22000-36000) | Better-off- (Rs.36000-50000) | Rich (above 50000) | Total Household non-poor | Grand Total Poor & Non Poor |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Landless Labourer | 26 (37.14%) | 16 (22.86%) | - | 42 (60.00%) | 70 (100) |
| Marginal Farmer | 19 (31.67%) | 15 (25.00%) | 3 (5.00%) | 37 (61.67%) | 60 (100) |
| Small Farmer | 11 (27.5%) | 12 (30.00%) | 16 (40.00%) | 39 (97.5%) | 40 (100) |
| Medium/ Large Farmer | - | 7 (23.33%) | 23 (76.67%) | 30 (100.00%) | 30(100) |
| Overall | 56 (28.00%) | 50 (25.00%) | 42 (21.00%) | 150 (75.00%) | 200(100) |
| Caste groups | | | | | |
| Kattunayakan | 24(33.80%) | 15 (21.13%) | 19 (26.76%) | 58 (81.69%) | 71 (100) |
| Kurumba | 19 (23.46%) | 22 (27.16%) | 32 (39.51%) | 73 (90.12%) | 81 (100) |
| Urlikurumba | 17(35.42%) | 15 (31.25%) | 10 (20.83%) | 42 (87.5%) | 48(100) |

Source: Computed

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to the total households

CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis exhibits that the socio-economic and CPR like net-non-agricultural income, dung, manure, fodder and rope making, fuel wood collection CPR product collection in the form of fish and herbal medicines, households consumption, total household income by including CPRs, CPR inputs in agricultural land, total household income by excluding CPRs, are the major criteria which discriminated among the occupational holders, such as landless labourers, marginal small, medium and large farmers. The poverty ridden & tiny land holders mostly depend on fodder and rope making, fuel wood collection, CPR inputs in agricultural land, CPR product collection, non-agricultural income. CPR on household consumption and household income due to CPRs. On the other hand, the medium farmers and large farmers are mostly influenced by dung manure, fodder and rope making, timber and building materials, household income by including and excluding CPRs.

The results would be useful in fixing the priorities as to formulate socio-economic and CPR policies in order to improve the poverty ridden and tiny land holders like landless labourers, marginal and small farmers.

This chapter presents the results obtained in the analysis and integrates them. It also suggests a policy prescription for better functioning of CPRs and thereby improving the socio-economic conditions of weaker sections.

The CPR (Common Property Resources) are the resources, which are collectively used by a group of people. These resources include community forests, common grazing

grounds, tanks, and their beds, foreshores, threshing grounds, rivers, river beds, etc., Since the historical past, these resources have been contributing a lot to the village economy. The rural poor, particularly, survive on these resources to a greater extent Common Property Resources, apart from maintaining the ecological balance by a way of checking soil erosion, deforestation and situation, benefit the rural masses in terms of availability of fodder, fuel wood, small timber, building materials, much and manure, fruits and medicinal herbs. Due to more than one reason these resources have either detained or been found in the state of degraded condition, as a result of which the rural economy particularly the economy of the rural poor is subject to severe stress. Common Property Resources play a crucial role in the economy of the rural poor, who have a very low access to remunerative income earning opportunities.

The conclusions of the study are summarised under the following heads,

1. The socio-economic profile of the sample respondents.
2. The Role of CPRs in various activities of the rural households.
3. CPR and the income inequality.
4. Discrimination of the socio-economic and CPR indicators among the tribal households: an integrated analysis.

Suggestions

1. There is a need to reduce the dependence of CPRs by providing vital inputs at subsidised rates to meet the indigenous fodder and fuel requirements.

2. Rigorous punishment by heavy penalty with imprisonment to the misuser's of CPRs should be vigorously promulgated by amending the existing rules and regulations suitably, so as to conserve atleast the existing resources for the use of further generations and reduction of poverty.
3. Effective participation by village people highly critical for the sustainable use of CPR can be achieved only by educating the people through mass media, group meetings, campaigns etc.
4. The responsibility for the development, preservation and regulation of the CPRs should be given to the village panchayats and the voluntary agencies wherever functioning.
5. Higher productivity and yield of CPRs play important roles in including their better management. The becomes more important when these gains are shared more equally. The productivity – management linkage, offers useful clue for breaking the vicious circle of “degradation – neglect degradation” character.

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