

Sustainable Forest Management in Rainfed Area of Chhattisgarh: Significance of Women Participation

Garima Tiwari

*Department of Forestry Wildlife and Environmental Sciences, Guru Gahsidas Vishwavidhyalya Bhaspur
(Chhattisgarh) India*

ABSTRACT :

Women in India are playing a crucial role in protection and conservation of environment. Women in our country have brought a different perspective to the environment debate, because of their different experience base. Poor women's lives are not compartmentalized and they see the issues in a broad and holistic perspective. They understand clearly that economics and environment are compatible. Their experience reveals to them that soil, water and vegetation, necessary for their day-to-day living, requires care and good management. Environmental degradation is related not only to the biosphere alone, but to the social sphere as well.

Women are also the active members of most of the community forests. Women are providing an important role in sustainable development of community forests. However, their role is neither properly identified nor explored. This paper explores and analyzes women's role in development and conservation of forest for its sustainable development. Present study had been conducted in five villages of central Chhattisgarh. To formulate a systematic approach for studying about women's participation an elaborate exercise was taken for data collection.

Key Words: *Sustainable forest management, Women Participation, Rain fed area*

INTRODUCTION:

Women have always been the major conservers of bio-diversity. Traditionally, women have been responsible for subsistence and survival for water, food, fuel, fodder and habitat, though they rarely get the credit for nurturing these life support systems. Even today they perform duties such as seed selection, multiplication and conservation. The on-farm conservation traditions of rural and tribal women, with reference to agro-biodiversity are well known.

Janjgeer district of Chhattisgarh is a typical example of severe deforestation, soil erosion and destruction of natural resources resulting in degradation of environment, and social problems such as poverty unemployment and unrest. Frequent drought had made the situation worse.

To Arrest forest degradation and rehabilitation of degraded forests the Government of India issued guidelines on June 1, 1990. Joint forest management advocates strong community participation, bottom up planning and sustainable use of forest resources. Women are also the active members of these committees. Thus, women are providing an important role in sustainable development of community forests. This paper explores and analyzes women's role in development and conservation of forest for its sustainable development.

STUDY SITE :

Present study had been conducted in five villages of central Chhattisgarh. Janjgeer was one of the area of central Chhattisgarh that were severely drought-affected for several years. Only 4.2% of the land area of the division is under forest cover. Villages *Pakariya*, *Banahil*, *Tarod*, *Lagra* and *Nariyara* are selected for study.

SN	Villages	Existence of Forest	No. of household	Population	No.of houses surveyed
1	Pakariya	Villages Surrounded by Forest	250	1250	25
2	Banahil	Villages Surrounded by Forest	100	500	10
3	Tarod	Villages more than 5 km from forest	200	1000	20
4	Lagra	Villages more than 5 km from forest	120	600	12
5	Nariyara	Villages Surrounded by Forest	300	1500	30
		Total	970	3050	97

Table 1: Villages selected for study

METHODOLOGY:

To formulate a systematic approach for studying about women's participation an elaborate exercise was taken for data collection. For the purpose socio economic survey of the villagers was conducted. Techniques were based on PRA, RRA as well as questionnaire methods depending upon the suitability. Questionnaire records had been collected from 10% representative houses of each village.

OBSERVATION & DISCUSSION:

A total 97 selected households were surveyed in five villages which is about the 10 % of total 970 household. Socio economic surveys have revealed that main occupation of the villagers is farming.

In all these villages large population is dependent on various non timber forest resources obtained from forests. During PRA its has been come to know that fifteen years prior 100% fuel wood requirement of the house were met from forests. Largely by women. This dependence on forests consumes long useful working hours of women. According to Bandyopadhyay *et al* (2004) village proximity to forest, leadership and fuel wood dependence are significant factors in forestry.

Alternative means of energy like solar cooker is not very popular in all these villages. In all the houses women are using more than one source of energy. Only in village Nariyara about 20% women are using LPG cylinders besides this about 80 % houses are using fuel wood.

Use of hot plate and heater are also most common in as 14 % women have given positive response for use of electrical appliances (Table-2).

In Janjgeer forest division where only 4.2% forest cover is there average 80% women are using fuel wood. During the PRA it has been noticed that women of these areas are very keen to raise trees in their private land. Though their response about forest protection was very poor. But through these activities they are conserving the forest.

SL	Villages	Electricity Utilization in (%)	LPG Utilization in (%)	Kerosene Utilization in (%)	fuel wood Utilization in (%)	Solar cooker Utilization in (%)
1	Pakariya	05	04	10	80	1
2	Banahil	05	06	15	78	0
3	Tarod	10	02	20	77	02
4	Lagra	20	01	30	85	0
5	Nariyara	30	20	35	80	03

Table 2: Energy Utilization Status of the villages

CONCLUSION:

Fuel wood is still the most common source of energy in all these villages. In Janjgeer division where forest cover is only 4.5% it is very tough for women to collect the fuel wood from forest. The women play most significant role in collection of fuel wood thus in village economy dependence especially on forest is through women. Fuel wood requirement of the house is met largely by women.

In all these study areas women are collecting their fuel requirement not only from nearby forest areas but also from farm and community lands.

Their efforts for collecting the cow-dung for spreading on the fields, instead of using in the kitchen is helping to control depletion of soil resources and creating a positive effect on the environment.

Despite climatic vagaries agriculture is the main occupation of the people in Chhattisgarh. Various studies conducted reveal the extensive participation of women in farm operations (Gupta, 1987, Nayyar, 1987). During the time of agricultural practices women play very significant role for raising trees and their conservation. In all these activities of women, practices of Joint forest management play a very important role. The kind of awareness generated through JFM motivated women for all environment conservation practices.

It has been observed that in areas where forest cover is quite good as in Pakariya and Tarod women are dependent over forest for collection of fodder and other forest products like Mahua, Tendupatta etc. This supports their earning during the agriculture lean period. Women do about 75 percent of the marketing of mushrooms, fruits and mahua flowers, gum collection. The women collect large quantities of NTFPs from forests. (Nanavaty, 1996). During last 15 years various programmes and projects have been undertaken by government for promoting people's participation in natural resource management which has been gradually

generating awareness among women. The JFM approach has undoubtedly helped in rehabilitating and improving the degraded forests.

Soil, water and forest can be conserved if alternative kitchen fuel is provided. Our women can again contribute in this direction and come forward by raising the plants for fuel wood instead of deforestation.

REFERENCES

- i. Bandyopadhyay, S., Shyamsundar, P., 2004. Fuel wood consumption and participation in community forestry in India, World Bank .Policy Research Paper 3331, June.
- ii. Gupta, S.C. (1987) Household structure, weaning practices and health education. J. Family Welfare, Personal, Marital and sociological 23(4): 77-79.
- iii. Nanavaty, Reena. 1996. Feminise our forests. Consultation World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development, New Delhi. Feb., 1996. SEWA, Ahmedabad. 9 pp.
- iv. Nayyar, R. (1987) Female participation rates in Rural India. Economic and Political weekly. December (1987).
- v. Saxena, N.C. women and wasteland development – Policy issues Paper presented in the international Workshop on women development programme on rural women, New Delhi, International labour office.