**Rural Youth and women involvement and social issues in family farming in drylands**

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As men increasingly go out of agriculture, women get more opportunity to work regularly, thereby substituting their subsidiary worker status with the main worker status (Acharya and Sagar, 2007). During 1991-2001 there has been a reduction in male workers in agriculture, and from among the incremental workers, only women have joined this sector. There is thus feminization and ageing of workforce in agriculture. It is not that feminization of agriculture per se is undesirable, in the context of Rajasthan women workers in agriculture are disempowered and low skilled. They do not own the land, and in many cases they represent the residual labour force. They have fewer occupational choices owing to lower mobility and lower education status. At the national level, Hirway and Roy (1999) have noted that “rural women workers are the least diversified component of the labour force in the country”. This is corroborated by primary studies as well that show that men have withdrawn from agricultural activities leaving women to take up the slack. Varghese et al (1999) have reported from Rajasthan that due to low female literacy and reasons of status, non-farm employment opportunities are not readily available to women in Rajasthan. Studies from various states of India show that rural female workers are experiencing negative occupational diversification. Women find marginal and casual employment mostly in agriculture and informal sector, which accounts for almost 90% of the total marginal workers. The feminization of the workforce and that of the rural areas has resulted in larger number of women taking on entire responsibility for farming operations.

**The major social issues around women and rural youth are summarised below:**

**Marginalisation and vulnerability of rural youth**

1. Low access to information, technologies, capacity building
2. Poor access to credit, seeds, fertilizers, irrigation, high indebtedness
3. Lack of market information; low marketable surplus, poor negotiating power
4. Higher vulnerability in rain-fed areas
5. Weak participation and involvement in planning and decision making

**Marginalisation of women in agriculture**

1. Women are not recognized as farmers in their own right
2. Significant contribution as farm labour but unequal access to resources.
3. No role in decision making, finances and marketing of produce
4. Low access to information technologies, training and capacity building
5. Need to ensure that woman’s workload and drudgery is reduced.

**Institutional Input towards improving women and youth in family farming**

We are working in Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) which is a centrally controlled scheme by ICAR. KVK efforts are likely to be an increase in the farm production, productivity and income as a result of improved seed management and cultivation practices, including through INM and IPM. With establishment of strong village level institutions will also emerge stronger collective community decision-making forums that could potentially play a significant role in improved governance at the Panchayat level. Market-led advisory services and establishment of producer companies will result in higher incomes and greater access of farmers to markets and financial institutions. As a result of improvement in water use efficiency, it is expected that the gross area under cultivation will increase, resulting in higher crop production, enhanced farm incomes, and availability of on-farm wage labour opportunities to women and men. With availability of water for irrigation for through rain water harvesting it is expected that there will be a decline in seasonal and daily migration rates. **Social Inclusion in Selection of Individual Beneficiaries.** : KVK is offering a range of assets and resources to individual beneficiaries on a cost-sharing basis. Since most of these will not be on a saturation basis, the targeting and beneficiary selection criteria for all the categories of private assets will prioritise selection of women and rural youth highlighted in the social assessment.

**Social Inclusion in Farmers Organisation:** KVK follows inclusive criteria for membership, representation, participation in meetings and institutional planning and decision making processes, membership in executive committees and office bearing positions in farmers organizations, in line with the government policies and ongoing projects implemented by the GoR. KVK work with the farmer organisations and committees to strengthen their organisational capacities and facilitate equitable arrangements in cost and benefit-sharing norms. KVK support Farmers’ Field Days, Field Schools, and training of Community Resource Persons.

**Social Management** **Framework** **strategy**

The SMF consists of the following strategies:

1. Consultation and Participation Strategy
2. Social Inclusion Strategy
3. Youth Development Framework
4. Resettlement Policy Framework
5. Gender and Women Empowerment Strategy : Social Inclusion Strategies will ensure inclusion of the primary stakeholders women and rural youth farmers within the community institutions and interventions . Explicit recognition of women as farmers and farm managers, with consequent implications in project planning, implementation and monitoring, involving women farmers in local farming institutions, institutional enablers like exclusive women’s meetings, women’s participation quotas gender-based training and capacity building.

**Mainstreamed approaches**

1. Representation of women and rural youth in farmer organizations and their federations,
2. Women and rural youth in training and exposure visits
3. Focused consultations with women and rural youth on interventions on common lands, rural infrastructure and markets in extreme located clusters
4. Training of at least 1 or 2 community mobilizers from each cluster on women and rural youth issues.
5. Convergence with other rural livelihood schemes that focus on women’s mobilisation and empowerment.
6. Developing a cadre of women resource persons in agriculture, animal husbandry, market linkages, and so forth and financial and market literacy among women.
7. Women and youth will be given priority in training programmes on agriculture, horticulture and livestock development and value chains for gender-inclusive benefit.

**Key Issues:**

1. Women not recognized as farmers in their own right
2. Unequal access to & ownership of resources; no role in decision making, finances, marketing of produce
3. Low access to info, technologies, capacity building
4. Low mobility, health status, and literacy levels of women
5. Risk of increasing women’s workload and drudgery
6. Existing policies & guidelines make no attempt at mainstreaming role of women in water management.

**Summary of Key Social Issues:** The experiences of working with women and youth highlighted the following key social safeguard and social development issues.

1. Ensuring Targeting, Inclusion, Participation and Access of women and rural youth farmers to agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilisers, credit, training, information, etc.), extension services and markets; need for the project to reach out to and involve these groups at all stages.
2. Ensuring representation, inclusion and participation of women and rural youth farmers in programme preparation, farmer mobilization, and farmers’ organisations; planning to be based on strong participatory processes involving all primary stakeholders
3. Ensuring equitable access of these socio-economic groups to resources and benefits
4. Dealing with traditional bias towards medium and large farmers with resources to influence project processes, farmers institutions and benefit sharing norms;
5. the need for customisation of project interventions to suit the requirements of women and youth
6. Promotion and strengthening of community based approaches and capacity building for farmer mobilisation and resource use;
7. Inclusion and participation of women and youth farmers in project institutions, interventions and benefits. Project interventions could increase gender imbalances and/or enhance the drudgery of women; these should be accompanied by other interventions that offset the imbalance by reducing drudgery, or re-distribute work responsibilities between women and men; Ensuring that women are not further disempowered because of, nor do they get excluded from, promotion of market-oriented agriculture.
8. Avoiding social conflict over water, natural resources and common lands. Addressing issues of inequitable sharing and unregulated use of water resources, both surface and ground water, and conceptualising water as a common resource, while it continues to be used as a private good.

**Social Management Framework**

Based on the findings of the social assessment exercise, the field visits and stakeholder consultations, a comprehensive Social Management Framework (SMF) is proposed to promote participation, inclusion and empowerment of the women and rural youth. The SMF includes a Development Framework to ensure inclusion and participation of the women and rural youth in project processes, institutions, benefits in a socially and culturally sensitive way etc. The SMF also includes a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) to avoid, minimise or mitigate any adverse social and livelihoods impacts emanating from various sub-projects. The RPF will be used for developing appropriate social mitigation strategies, and mechanisms for minimizing the risks and expected adverse impacts. In addition, the SMF also includes strategies for consultation and participation, social mobilisation and inclusion, gender women and rural youth.