Name of the Scholar: Sabreena Khan

Name of the Supervisor: Prof. Halima Sadia Rizvi

Name of the Department: Economics

Topic of Research: Women Empowerment and Economic Development: Evidences from Government of India Programs in Agriculture and Allied Sector

Findings

Inequality is the major phenomena of developing economy like India given the societal structure which is characterised by disparities on access towards assets like land, credit, skills, technology. Given the unbalanced strategy and process of Indian planning, human development concerns have become important for achieving the inclusive welfare of all sections of Indian population. In Indian economy women have been in vulnerable conditions with respect to their economic representation where, due to gender dynamics and inequality they lack access to resources like credit, knowledge, and technology and were found to be operating in unorganised economy. In urban areas they are found in unpaid labour or under paid tasks and in rural areas their presence in agriculture has been the mainstay for their livelihood. With the upsurge of feminisation of agriculture in rural areas, there are problems of unaccountability of women's work in national accounts and lag of disaggregated data makes it difficult for getting the nature of relationship of women's contribution to agricultural work. Also, major issues related to agriculture and empowerment were explored on limited domain in Indian context which stresses on the comprehensive investigation in present context that can lead to better policy implications.

Given the backdrop of the study, the major purpose of present thesis is to examine the inequality from gender perspective for women in agriculture sector in India. This has been undertaken in form of three objectives where to develop on the broad overview, state-wise inequalities of agriculture for women in India was examined through gender gap analysis by using operational holding as an indicator of asset ownership. Also, evidential analysis was conducted by examining National Rural Livelihood Mission- Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (NRLM-MKSP) as evidence. These objectives were systematically examined in the

present study through use of gender disaggregated data on operational holdings and use of unpublished data sources of Ministry of Rural Development for NRLM-MKSP program.

These objectives are of significance by the fact that various research studies related with women empowerment and agriculture dealt with different gender development indicators from social to economic like health and education. Gender gap analysis has been an addition to knowledge for India's state-wise situation which depicted mixed results for the states in terms of operational holding despite their being more gender neutral or equal on other indexes of development. Furthermore, the literatures undertaken had identified the issues that women face in agricultural work that is, their unpaid low skilled work and being them not considered as "farmers." Government initiatives in Indian and western context have reached to proper solution to few things like increasing women empowerment in income generating activities on a larger scale and their working in groups like SHGs have helped them. The exploration of MKSP program based on budget performance and primary data analysis has filled the research gap on knowledge or skill building among women in agriculture in present context whereby it presented fruitful evidence of women development in agriculture sector. So, the study becomes significant in delving this issue as they need to have better skills and their technological empowerment which can lead to better economic empowerment opportunities for them. Most of the researches focussed on credit as a source of empowerment but human capital formation is the new source which needs to be tapped and the present study has tried to make new contributions on this aspect.

The importance of the study rests on the addition to area of gender and development and women in agriculture theory and practice. Also, the exploration of MKSP program generated severe policy implications at the planning and implementation levels. It presented outcomes by generation of more inclusive policy making and questioned on data lags where women are still invisible in agriculture.

The study attempted to explore and fill the gaps with respect to women's role and invisibility in development process with special reference to agriculture sector. SDGs taken as the major development platform because of its uniqueness in separately introducing link of women and agriculture using operational holding and women's equality question was linked to their economic empowerment in Indian context. Operational holdings for both genders were taken as indicator of asset ownership and gender gap and percent variations provided new addition to methods of measurement of inequality in agriculture. It revealed that feminisation of agriculture has different levels of interpretation where the study rested on premise that by size group of land holding and decreasing gender gap for women in them reveals their better situation in asset holding. Exploration and analysis of MKSP state -wise level has been new addition for women and agriculture literature. The status report and its progress showed positive results being practised in demand driven mode. This can provide impetus for other schemes too to work in such manner. Even the centrally sponsored schemes can generate such outcomes with co-ordination and convergence with mission mode-based programs as MKSP works with SRLMs as well as PIAs and the success can be attributed to this decentralisation process. The analysis of performance and ranking of states based on per beneficiary cost of states for projects reveals exact monetary or income benefits to the beneficiaries. These types of indicators can be useful for getting the know-how of effective implementation and other schemes can also conduct potential benefits-based analysis rather than just cost benefit.

Major suggestions include the need for more exploration of new emerging trends in field of women and agriculture in India. Women's technical skill building in extension and agricultural training through different schemes which are undergoing needs to be documented on a larger scale by Indian states. Also, more disaggregated datasets in public domain are a necessity to understand contextuality and policy creation as per social-cultural context with real time-based solutions. There is a need for estimating and formalising the activities with larger women presence within the agricultural policy in India where gender mainstreaming can work as a major tool from bottom-up approach rather than top-down mechanism. Land and asset ownership data is a necessity to understand timely variations for states in India. Also, their gender data base needs to be maintained by states for different options like agriculture or housing distribution which can help for more transparent analysis.