

INTRODUCTION

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Women in India have been placed in different social status and positions in different periods of history. Though, in contemporary times, the status of women in Indian society is undergoing a change, yet historically, it has been largely a status of subjugation to men. The standard structure of the patriarchal society in India, its social taboos and prevailing role stereotypes have prevented women from being equal partners of men in socio-economic process of society (Ghosh, *et al.*, 2008).

Even after five and a half decades of planned development, Indian women, except a privileged minority, have not achieved expected success in the mainstream of life. If we have to improve the status and role of women, it is necessary to empower Indian women in general and rural women in particular. Women with varied social, economic, political, regional, linguistic backgrounds and atmosphere constitute almost half the nation. Women are to be viewed as productive members of the society rather than child bearers. They share equal authority and responsibilities of being citizens. Social justice also demands equal participation by women in the nation building process and other activities (Krishnaraj and Desai, 2007).

The 2011 Census registered that the total population of India is 1.21 billion out of which 58.6 crore are female. Among the total population 51.53 per cent are male and 48.46 per cent are female. Female population in relation to total population has recorded a slight increase from 48.2 per cent in 2001 to 48.46 per cent in 2011. Decade female population growth rate is 15.33 per cent is also slightly higher than the male population growth rate (14.67 per cent) (Government of India, 2011).

The concept of empowerment has become one of the widely used development terms. Empowerment is a way of defining, challenging and overcoming barriers of one's life through which people increase their ability to shape their own lives and environment. Empowerment is an active,

multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full potential and powers in all spheres of life (Agarwal, 2005).

Empowerment can be attained through awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, decision-making process, control and transformative action. The empowerment of women is an essential category for the elimination of world poverty. The purpose is to ensure that women's empowerment and gender equality are actively pursued in the mainstream of all development activities (Kulandaivel, 2005).

The Women's Empowerment Year was launched on 4th January 2001 for enhancing the status and sustainable achievement in women's empowerment. The National Perspective Plan for Women 1988-2000 A.D. (1998) which has a free, frank and objective analysis highlights the pathetic profile of women in India. There is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in all sectors-economic, social, political, education, health care, nutrition and legal. As women are oppressed in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all walks of life (Mishra, 2006).

Empowerment of women is a challenge to society because it breaks the long established pattern of family life. Women need support, counseling and training in order to become empowered. Her desires and her goal finally enable her to break the barriers to reach her goal (Purushothaman and Sangeetha, 2008). Ensuring gender equality by removing gender discrimination is the key to real empowerment (Latik, 2007). The empowerment process encompasses several mutually reinforcing components but begins with and is supported by economic independence (Meenambigai, 2004).

Our constitution in its fundamental rights has provisions for equality, social justice and protection of women. These goals are yet to be realized. Women constitute to be discriminated, exploited and exposed inequalities at various levels. So the concept of empowerment as a goal of development projects and programs has been gaining wider acceptance (Revathy, 2004). Women's empowerment is not merely important but crucial if development is to be sustained (Nithya, 2006).

As defined by the United Nations, gender mainstreaming is "...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and in all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated (Ashine, 2003).

Gender equity means fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. It often requires women-specific programmes and policies to end existing inequalities. Gender equality means that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles. Different behaviour, aspirations, and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally.

The principles of Gender equality and equity and protection of women's rights have been the prime concerns in Indian thinking right from the days of independence. The five year plans have consistently placed special attention to the empowerment of women and the objective of the plan was stated in general term as "Empowering women as the agents of social change and Development" (Revathy, 2004).

Gender policies may be enshrined in national constitutions (equal rights), in legislation, in gender frameworks, charters, and declarations. Implementation strategies may include affirmative action to address gender-based inequalities, including representation in governance structures. Several countries and regions have put in place policies and targets for gender equality in governance (Mukta, 2005).

Gender mainstreaming does not replace government policies on gender inequality. Gender equality and women's issues are complementary strategies and should be examined together, but this depends on the data available in determining what is needed (Rath, 2007).

Agriculture is the most important sector of our country contributing about 35 percent of the national income. About 65 percent of working population is dependent on agriculture. Agriculture is keen supporter for India's leading industries and transportation sectors. It provides a large proportion of India's traditional sector. Thus agriculture is the backbone of Indian economy and prosperity of agriculture can also largely be responsible for the prosperity of the entire Indian economy (Johl, 2005).

Agriculture has always been a key sector for India, as it is critically important for ensuring food security, along with alleviating poverty and to a greater extent, for generating rural employment. Apparently, agriculture has made many strides in the modern world economy. There have been significant innovations leading to increased production of food and non-food crops necessitating greater integration of markets, both within and between developing countries (Bhadouria and Dua, 2008).

India being the second largest country in terms of population in the world next to China depends for the national economy on agriculture. In the past few decades, it has made its presence felt internationally in terms of total agricultural production and productivity. But in comparable situation, its productivity is lagging behind. There is a wide gap between information generation in agriculture and its application. The farmers must be exposed to latest technologies in agriculture, obtain those information and retain them for future application (Mishra, 2006).

Rural Development Programmes for women must provide them with ownership of land, better credit facilities, agricultural inputs, skill upgradation in production and marketing. Policies and programme interventions must be aimed at improving the socio-economic status of rural women (Mukta, 2005).

The harmonious and balanced rural development not only gives due emphasis on agriculture and allied fields but also on gender mainstreaming. Strengthening the role of women in agriculture, by paying attention to the economic value of their time and labour is an important dimension of gender mainstreaming (Sundar, 2008).

The upliftment of the farm women economy, the development of agriculture depends on transfer of technologies. Unless and until the agricultural technologies developed by the scientists reach the actual users, the farmwomen, their development will not fall in line with the development of the country (Haque, 2003).

Women have always played an important role in agriculture, undertaking a wide range of activities relating to food production, processing and marketing. Beyond the farm, women play a key role in land and water management in all developing countries. Women are most often the collectors of water, firewood and fodder. They have access to a store of local knowledge on the medicinal use of plants; they have been in the forefront of soil conservation programmes; and it is women who perform most of the household labour devoted to animals. As migration to the cities of the developing world gathers speed, women carry with them these rural skills and are responsible for the growth of urban and semi-urban agriculture, which is now recognised as being vital to food security in cities (Hall, et al 2003).

The key role played by women in agriculture was in the past largely unacknowledged in government statistics. This situation has started to change over the last two or three decades and much has been achieved in giving recognition to the importance of women in the agricultural sector in many parts of the developing world. However, these recent advances may be endangered by such factors as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), the drive to commercialise agriculture and the retreat of government from rural development. These factors have eroded gains and threaten a return to the situation where women's role is not fully recognised, and where gender-blind policies and programmes fail to address the needs of women in agriculture (Punia, 2005).

Siddarth *et al.* (2006) viewed that in order to enthuse and motivate farmers especially farmwomen to accept and adopt recommended technologies, a new combination of extension methods is essential. The recent advancement made in instructional technology, which could be used

effectively in extension education is computer. In extension, computer can become an integral part of the information dissemination technique.

A Public Private Partnership can be defined as a collaborative arrangement between public, private, and/or civil sector entities under which each party contributes to the planning, resources, and activities associated with accomplishing a mutual objective, while at the same time sharing in the associated risks and benefits. Partnerships in agricultural innovation often arise from the need for an interactive exchange of information related to knowledge and technologies underlying innovation (Spielman and Grebmer, 2004).

PPPs refer to partnership between government and private sector. Under a broader definition, private sector can include all NGOs including voluntary sector, corporate sector, self help groups, partnership firms and community based organizations (Ekboir and Parellada, 2002).

Public Private Partnerships constitute a new mode of operation in many fields of development, including the development of innovation in agriculture. Capacities to identify opportunities, develop common interests, and negotiate commitments are prerequisites for successful public-private partnerships. Yet, many public-private partnerships fail due to lack of both skills among the partnering agents and efforts to strengthen these skills (Spielman and Grebmer, 2004).

Public Private Partnerships are increasingly being emphasized as a mechanism for improving public service provision and implementing development programs. In developing countries, such partnerships are often used to mobilize complementary and scarce resources in the public and private sectors for projects involving the development of infrastructure, communities, and agriculture. There are many cases of partnerships among farmers, private companies, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) under which each entity contributes human, physical, and financial resources to foster the generation and diffusion of innovations, new forms of technologies, and knowledge to redress gaps in the

development, production, processing, and marketing of improved agricultural products (European Commission, 2004).

Public Private Partnerships are voluntary and collaborative relationships among various performers in both public (State) and private (non-State) sectors, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common goal or undertake specific tasks. Partnerships may serve various purposes, including advancing a cause, to implement normative standards or codes of conduct, or to share and coordinate resources and expertise. They may consist of a specific single activity, or may evolve into a set of actions or even an enduring alliance, building consensus and ownership with each collaborating organization and its stakeholders. While they vary considerably, such partnerships are typically established as structured cooperative efforts with a sharing of responsibilities as well as expertise, resources and other benefits (Atanassov, 2004).

Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) are a mode of implementing government programmes/schemes in partnership with the private sector. The term private in PPP is often understood to stand for the “private corporate sector” and includes individual farming and other small scale enterprises also (Geethanjali, 2007).

The changing nature of science, technology, and innovation in developing-country, agriculture necessitates new approaches to conducting research and development (R&D). Public private partnerships (PPPs) in agricultural Research & Development are increasingly viewed as an effective means of conducting advanced research, commercializing new technologies, and deploying new products for the benefit of small-scale, resource-poor farmers, food-insecure consumers, and other marginalized groups in developing countries (Spielman and Grebmer, 2004).

Public Private Partnerships in agricultural innovation in developing countries often include agricultural research institutes, extension agencies, universities, producer organizations, farmer associations, cooperatives, and local governments, as well as many other entities. Partnerships can focus on issues such as efficient production, improved harvesting, storage and

processing technologies, adding value, and the ability of local producers to react to changing demands on local and international markets (Varkkey and Raghuram, 2006).

Research partnership between the public and private sector is essential to achieve faster progress and dissemination of technology to the end users. Thus, there is a need to know as to how best to link these two sectors to have their activities complemented in a partnership mode for better research and development endeavors. Agricultural biotechnology offers innovative ways to improve both productivity and quality of the agricultural produce while ensuring better income for the resource-poor farmers through reduced cost. Presently, research in this area is being carried out both in the public and private sector organizations. Partnerships between these two are critical to let cost-efficient technologies disseminate to the end-users. Both the public and private sector organizations have their own strengths and could complement each other's efforts in taking research from lab to field (Spielman and Grebmer, 2004).

Agricultural research, extension and education are critical components of innovation. In turn, is vital to enhancing agricultural production, reducing rural poverty, and fostering sectoral and economy-wide growth and development. In many developing countries, however, conventional approaches to research, extension, and education--and traditional frameworks for collaboration--are increasingly challenged by a rapidly changing scientific, social, and economic environment, and the rapid entry of new technologies, and institutions (Masters, 2003).

The Constitution of India proclaims in its preamble, three most important and cherished constitutional goals of the nation which are justice (social, economic and political), equal status and opportunity (Singh, 2006). The Planning Commission, Government of India, constituted a Working Group in the field of Agriculture, focusing on Gender Issues, Panchayat Raj Institutions, Public Private Partnership, and Innovative Finance and Micro Finance in Agriculture for the Eleventh Five Year Plan on 14 August 2006 (Ghosh, *et al.*, 2008).

It is clear that in the Eleventh Plan there was an urgent need to promote the kind of agricultural growth that is broad based and inclusive, and covers small and marginal farmers as well as the regions that had lagged behind in agriculture so far. There was a need to promote agricultural growth that ensures food security to all, brings about rapid reduction in poverty, and generates large scale productive employment within agriculture and allied activities, and then facilitates shifting of agricultural workforce to non farmers sectors gradually. Looking into the predominant role that women are playing in agriculture today, it is clear that there is now a need to recognize women as producers/farmers or co-farmers, and treat them as primary stakeholders in the process of agricultural growth rather than beneficiaries of some schemes and programmes. That is, the future agricultural growth will have to be engendered if it has to address the agricultural crisis effectively (Ghosh, 2007).

Keeping the above said need for research in view, the present study on **“Developing a Model on Public Private Partnership for Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture”** was taken up, with the following objectives: To

- identify the PPP projects available in selected areas
- examine the status of gender mainstreaming in selected PPP projects related to agriculture
- assess the strength and weakness of the PPP efforts
- develop a model of PPP for gender mainstreaming and
- evaluate the impact of developed model

Formulation of Hypothesis

The basic assumption of the study was that the existing PPP projects in agriculture with gender mainstreaming components were not significantly improved the status of women in agriculture and allied activities. The model PPP project implemented for gender mainstreaming in agriculture had positive impact on farm women. With the help of review of literature related to the study, the following specific hypotheses were formulated pertaining to the objectives outlined:

- Extent of participation of women in agriculture and allied activities associates with factors such as age, community, marital status, family type, educational qualification and monthly income of the family.
- The innovative marketing strategy established for PPP Project (model) influences gender participation, adoption and profit making among the respondents
- The extent of awareness on Gender sensitization among the selected farm women improves after implementation of the model Project.

Limitations of the Study

1. The findings of the study were based on the expressions of the respondents or responses through recall mechanism of the respondents. Therefore considerable subjectivity might not have been completely overcome in spite of the best efforts of the investigator.
2. Since the location of the model project was confined to one block of Coimbatore district, the findings cannot be generalized.
3. Though Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore was the project implementing agency and one of the public partners of model PPP project, the responsibility was to act as a facilitator both for public and private partners.