

Original Research Article

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Constraints Faced by Agricultural Extension Personnel in Reaching Farm Women

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture extension is one of such development efforts taken up by government and non-government agencies that aim at reaching farming community for bringing about an increased level to total as well as per unit agricultural production. These efforts include bringing about a positive change in knowledge, attitude and skills of all those engaged in farming related operations by means of providing training and technical advice and also assisting farmers in taking decisions regarding adoption and integration of new research results/extension message to farm conditions. The agriculture extension services in India which originally intended to serve the farming community as a whole had failed to reach farm women, as the extension personnel faced constraints in reaching the rural women. Thus the study was undertaken to study the Constraints faced by agricultural extension personnel in reaching farm women. For the study 125 Government officials having complete knowledge on the operation of the agricultural extension services were selected purposively. Coverage of too many target groups by one agent, too much official work in addition to field work, lack of technology suitable for farm women were the three major constraints faced by the village level extension workers and agriculture development officers. The study revealed that coverage of too many target groups by one agent, too much official work in addition to field work, lack of technology suitable for farm women were the three major constraints faced by the village level extension workers and agriculture development officers. The finding also shows that lack of technology suitable for women farmers, lack of knowledge in understanding problems and needs of farm women, lack of essential teaching and communication equipment are the constraints faced by administrator and Senior Agriculture Development Officer.

Keywords

Constraints,
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Suggestion

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Introduction

Agricultural extension and advisory services play an important role in agricultural development and can contribute to improving the welfare of farmers and other people living in rural areas. Agricultural advisory system

have not only bring relevant knowledge and practical solutions to farmers; but also brought farmer's problems to researchers, who can work towards feasible and economical solutions. Agricultural extension is becoming more pluralistic, with different actors concurrently using different approaches

and extension methods. It is the entire set of organizations that support and facilitate people engaged in agricultural production to solve problems and to obtain information, skills and technologies to improve their livelihood. Agricultural extension strategies have focus on increasing production of crops by providing training, information and access to inputs and services.

Agriculture extension is one of such development efforts taken up by government and non-government agencies that aim at reaching farming community for bringing about an increased level to total as well as per unit agricultural production. These efforts include bringing about a positive change in knowledge, attitude and skills of all those engaged in farming related operations by means of providing training and technical advice and also assisting farmers in taking decisions regarding adoption and integration of new research results/extension message to farm conditions. Importantly, the clientele of such programme and efforts is inclusive of both farmers as well as farm women. The agriculture extension services in India which originally intended to serve the farming community as a whole had failed to reach farm women, as the extension personnel faced constraints in reaching the rural women. Thus the study was undertaken to study the Constraints faced by agricultural extension personnel in reaching farm women.

The main objectives of this study include to determine the constraints of the agricultural extension services in reaching farm women and also to assess the suggestions of extension personnel for improving agricultural extension services to farm women.

Materials and Methods

For the present study 125 Government officials from six districts namely Jorhat,

Sibsagar, Nagoan, Marigoan, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur and from Directorate of Assam, Guwahati having complete knowledge on the operation of the agricultural extension service namely Village Level Extension Workers (VLEW), Agriculture Development Officers (ADO), Senior Agriculture Development Officer (SADO), Sub-divisional Agricultural Officer (SDAO), District Agriculture Officers (DAO), Administrative Officer, Director of Directorate of Agriculture, Additional Director of Extension, Deputy Director of Planning, Joint Director of Statistics, Govt. of Assam were purposively selected. The data were collected through questionnaire and interview method.

Findings

Constraints of agricultural extension services in reaching farm women, as perceived by extension personnel

Constraints analysis is one of the important component for getting information that can lead to effective design and implementation of extension programmes that will maximize female participation and benefits, in turn maximizing agricultural development.

Extension agents (Village level extension worker and Agriculture Development Officer), Administrators (Director, Additional director of Extension, Joint director of statistics, Deputy director of planning, Administrative officer, District agriculture officer and Sub divisional agriculture officer) and Senior Agriculture Development Officer of extension organizations were requested to rate the constraints faced by them in reaching farm women on three-point scale (Always, sometime, never).

Ranking of possible constraints are presented in Table 1 and 2, that could affect agricultural extension in reaching farm women, as

perceived by Village level extension workers, Agriculture development officers, Administrator (Director, Additional director of Extension, Joint director of statistics,

Deputy director of planning, Administrative officer, District Agriculture Officer and Sub divisional Agriculture Officer) and Senior Agricultural Development Officer.

Table.1 Constraints faced by village level extension worker and agriculture development officers N=90

Sl. No.	Constraints	Mean Score	Rank
1	Lack of technology suitable for farm women	1.92	III
2	Lack of practical agricultural training in improved technology	0.67	XIII
3	Lack of training in extension methods and communication skills to work with farm women	0.89	XI
4	Lack of adequate transportation to reach farm women efficiently	1.12	X
5	Lack of essential teaching and communication equipment	1.78	V
6	Lack of demonstration materials	1.34	VIII
7	Lack of knowledge in understanding problems and needs of farm women	1.90	IV
8	Too many changes in policy objectives	1.23	IX
9	Too much official work in addition to field work	1.94	II
10	Coverage of too many target groups by one agent	1.96	I
11	Lack of provision for farm women's participation in extension programmes	1.41	VII
12	Lack of subject matter specialists to serve farm women's specific programmes	1.67	VI
13	Lack of awareness of farm women	0.78	XII
14	Lack of interest in farm women	0.18	XIV

Table.2 Constraints faced by administrators and senior agriculture development officer n= 35

Sl. No.	Constraints	Mean Score	Rank
1	Lack of technology suitable for farm women	1.92	I
2	Lack of practical agricultural training in improved technology	0.67	XIII
3	Lack of training in extension methods and communication skills to work with farm women	0.89	XI
4	Lack of adequate transportation to reach farm women efficiently	1.76	IV
5	Lack of essential teaching and communication equipment	1.80	III
6	Lack of demonstration materials	1.34	VIII
7	Lack of knowledge in understanding problems and needs of farm women	1.84	II
8	Too many changes in policy objectives	1.23	X
9	Too much official work in addition to field work	1.67	V
10	Coverage of too many target groups by one agent	1.29	IX
11	Lack of provision for farm women's participation in extension programmes	1.62	VI
12	Lack of subject matter specialists to serve farm women's specific programmes	1.52	VII
13	Lack of awareness of farm women	0.78	XII
14	Lack of interest in farm women	0.18	XIV

Table.3 Some suggestions by extension personnel for improving agricultural extension services to farm women N=125

Sl. No.	Suggestions	Extension agents N= 90		Senior agricultural development officer N=12		Administrators N=23		Total number of extension personnel as respondents N=125	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	Farm women must be explicitly specified as target clientele group in policy statement of agricultural extension	65	72.22	9	75.00	14	60.86	88	70.40
2.	Need for separate wing for farm women.	68	75.56	7	58.33	11	47.82	86	68.80
2.	Increase in number of female extension agents	62	68.88	8	66.67	12	52.17	82	65.60
3.	Using female agents as supervisors in women's extension programmes	34	37.78	6	50.00	17	73.91	57	45.60
4.	Farm women should be included in all stages of programme planning	55	61.11	5	41.67	15	65.21	75	60.00
5.	Increase research work to produce suitable technologies that would improve the farming operations normally done by women	78	86.67	10	83.33	20	86.95	108	86.40
6.	Increased separate budget allocation for execution of projects for farm women	47	52.22	7	58.33	16	69.56	70	56.00
7.	Improve the content of extension messages which are appropriate for women farmers	73	81.11	11	91.67	21	91.30	105	84.00
8.	Deliver messages through mass media, viz. radio and television, to overcome women farmer's constraints of time and mobility	70	77.78	10	83.33	19	82.61	99	79.20
9.	Provide adequate transport facilities for female extension agents	58	64.44	7	58.33	10	43.48	75	60.00
10	Adequate budget for demonstration materials/equipment for implementation of gender-specific projects	45	50.00	4	33.33	17	73.91	66	52.80
11.	Organized training for farm women according to their convenient time	80	88.89	10	83.33	14	60.86	104	83.20
12.	Train extension agents on how to work with farm women in groups	68	75.56	8	66.67	18	78.26	94	75.20

Expressed by village level extension workers and agriculture development officers

As shown in Table 1, coverage of too many target groups by one agent ranked I (1.96), too much official work in addition to field work ranked II (1.94), lack of technology suitable for farm women ranked III (1.92), lack of knowledge in understanding problems and needs of farm women ranked IV (1.90), lack of essential teaching and communication equipment ranked V (1.78) were the five of the major problems faced by the village level extension workers and agriculture development officers. This finding is in line with Lele U, *et al.*, (2010).

Expressed by extension personnel (administrators and senior agriculture development officer)

As shown in Table 2, lack of technology suitable for women farmers ranked I (1.92), lack of knowledge in understanding problems and needs of farm women ranked II (1.84), lack of essential teaching and communication equipment ranked III (1.80), lack of adequate transportation to reach farm women efficiently ranked IV (1.76) and too much official work in addition to field work ranked V (1.67) were first five problems faced by the administrators and senior district agriculture officer. The finding is in agreement with (Birner *et al.*, 2006; Birner and Anderson 2007; Sulaiman and Hall 2008; and Swanson 2009).

From the above findings it can be assumed that current agricultural research and extension tends to ignore women's activities. So it can be suggested that research centers/institutions should develop suitable gender specific technologies for farm women and these should be available to extension staff for communicating messages to women farmers effectively.

Some suggestions of extension personnel for improving agricultural extension services to farm women

The views of extension personnel were also sought on ways to improve agricultural extension services to farm women. Majority of respondents (86.40%) suggested for increasing research works to produce suitable technologies that would improve the farming operations normally done by women followed by 84.00 per cent improve the content of extension messages which are appropriate for women farmers, organized training for farm women according to their convenient time (83.20%), deliver messages through mass media *viz.*, radio and television to overcome women farmer's constraints of time and mobility (79.20%), train extension agents on how to work with farm women in groups (75.20%), farm women must be explicitly specified as target clientele group in policy statement of agricultural extension (70.40%), need for separate wing for farm women (68.80%), increase in number of female extension agents (65.60%), farm women should be included in all stages of programme planning (60.00%) and provide adequate transport facilities for female extension agents (60.00%). These findings are in line with those areas suggested by Saito and Spurling (1992).

In conclusion the coverage of too many target groups by one agent was the first major constraint faced by the village level extension workers and agriculture development officers. Constraints faced by administrator and Senior Agriculture Development Officer were lack of technology suitable for women farmers, lack of knowledge in understanding problems and needs of farm women, lack of essential teaching and communication equipment. Majority of respondents (86.40%) suggested for increasing research works to produce suitable technologies that would improve the

farming operations normally done by women. Extension personnel are the key person in the process of transfer of technology and the present study advocated that they faced a number of constraints which hinders them in transferring of technologies so those constraints has to be addressed by respective authority, for example government can fill the vacant posts of departments for effective functioning. Policy decision has to be formulated for better promotional, transfer opportunities and such policies should be need based which promote the working environment of extension personnel. Regular training programme should be organised for extension personnel for updating of knowhow and recent advancement in their field.

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