

## **Women Empowerment Through National Afforestation Programme in Andhra Pradesh**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study was conducted by Regional Centre, National Afforestation and Eco-Development Board, UAS, Bangalore in Forest Development Agency (FDA) of Guntur, Karimnagar, Anantapur, Mahabubnagar and Eluru of Andhra Pradesh to analyse the socio-economic profile, extent of participation and empowerment status of women under National Afforestation Programme (NAP). Majority of the women respondents were middle aged, illiterate and agriculture was the main occupation. The extent of participation of women in FDA activities showed that more than half of the women members (68%) were involved occasionally in nursery activities under afforestation work. Majority of the women members did not attend any kind of workshops, training programmes, demonstrations and educational tour. However, more than three fourth of the women members (78%) occasionally participated in the group discussions. Nearly half of the women, regularly participated in FDA activities, attended the management committee meetings and offered suggestions regularly in the meetings. Empowerment status of women analyzed based on the income generation, employment status and additional employment generation indicated a steady increase in the income level and decrease in unemployment status among the women after joining Vana Samrakshana Samiti (VSS) in forest fringe villages of Andhra Pradesh.

**Key Words :** Afforestation, forest development agency, women empowerment

### **INTRODUCTION**

The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was passed in India with the objectives to create an environment through positive economic and social policies and equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life. Many programmes have been undertaken to guarantee women equal access to and full participation in decision making bodies at every level, including the legislative, executive, judicial, corporate, statutory bodies, as also the advisory Commissions, Committees, Boards, and Trusts *etc* (Anonymous, 2001). The National Afforestation Programme (NAP) was started in the year 2002 with an objective to empower the women who are dependent on forests and are residing in the fringes and tribal villages. Women participate in Join Forest Management (JFM) activities in various ways and the level of participation is no single activity can suffice. JFM activities broadly include development of protection and management strategy for JFM areas, field operations, participatory process and decision making, and sharing of usufructs. Government of India and State Governments have undertaken various programmes to empower women under NAP (NAP, 2005). In this context, it is essential to analyse the extent of empowerment of women so as to develop suitable strategies. Hence, the present study was conducted in Andhra Pradesh with the following objectives.

To know the socio-economic profile of women in FDA's, study the extent of participation of women and analyse the empowerment status of women

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted by the Regional Centre, National Afforestation and Eco-Development Board, UAS, Bangalore in the purposively selected Guntur, Karimnagar, Anantapur, Mahabubnagar and Eluru of Andhra Pradesh. These divisions were chosen based on different agro climatic zones for the study. A total of 15 Vana Samrakshana Samiti (VSS) were selected randomly. From each VSS 10 respondents (women members) were selected as sample respondents. Thus, a total of 150 women were interviewed and data were collected using pre-tested interview schedule. The data on socio-economic aspects like age, education, family type, land holding, occupation, participation, training, empowerment, media exposure besides problems and empowerment dimensions were collected by visiting the VSSs. The information was also gathered through focused group discussion and observation methods. The collected data were tabulated and analysed using frequency and percentages.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Socio economic profile of women members**

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**i. Participation in afforestation activities**

Participation in afforestation activities includes Nursery Establishment, Advance Works, Pitting and Planting and Soil Moisture Conservation (SMC) works. The results showed that 80 per cent of the women members were involved occasionally in nursery activities of the afforestation programme and only 20 per cent were involved regularly (Table-2). In Karimnagar division, 83.33 per cent of women were occasionally involved in nursery activities followed by Guntur division (66.67%). Regarding advance works, around 48 per cent women members were involved occasionally before establishment of plantations. In Guntur and Ananthpur FDAs all the women members were occasionally involved in the advance works. With respect to pitting and planting activities and SMC works the women members were not involved in any of the divisions. Similar findings were reported by Anonymous (2004)

**Table 3: Extent of participation of women in extension activities  
n=150**

Activities (Frequency of participation)	Guntur (n = 30)		Karimnagar (n = 30)		Ananthpur (n = 30)		Mahabu-bnagar (n = 30)		Eluru (n = 30)		Total (n = 150)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>Workshop</b>												
a. Regular	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b. Occasional	-	-	02	6.67	-	-	-	-	-	-	02	01.33
c. Never	30	100	28	93.33	30	100	30	100	30	100	148	98.67
<b>Training programme</b>												
a. Regular	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b. Occasional	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	16.67	15	50	20	13.33
c. Never	30	100	30	100	30	100	25	83.33	15	50	130	86.67
<b>Demonstration</b>												
a. Regular	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b. Occasional	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
c. Never	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	150	100
<b>Krishi mela</b>												
a. Regular	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b. Occasional	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
c. Never	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	150	100
<b>Exhibition</b>												
a. Regular	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b. Occasional	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
c. Never	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	150	100
<b>Educational tour</b>												
a. Regular	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b. Occasional	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
c. Never	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	150	100
<b>Group meeting</b>												
a. Regular	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b. Occasional	5	16.67	15	50	15	50	-	-	-	-	35	23.33

**Table 4 : Participation of Women in FDA activities  
n=150**

Activities (Frequency of participation)	Guntur (n = 30)		Karimnagar (n = 30)		Ananthpur (n = 30)		Mahabu-bnagar (n = 30)		Eluru (n = 30)		Total (n = 150)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>General body meeting</b>												
a. Regular	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b. Occasional	10	33.33	5	16.67	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	10
c. Never	20	66.67	25	83.33	30	100	30	100	30	100	135	90
<b>Management committee</b>												
a. Regular	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b. Occasional	5	16.67	5	16.67	10	33.33	12	40	14	46.67	46	30.67
c. Never	25	83.33	25	83.33	20	66.67	18	60	16	53.33	104	69.33
<b>Participation in offering suggestions</b>												
a. Regular	-	-	13	43.33	15	50	3	10	19	63.33	50	33.33
b. Occasional	-	-	17	56.67	-	-	15	50	6	20	38	25.33
c. Never	30	100	-	-	15	50	12	40	5	16.67	62	41.33
<b>Participation in planning / task decision</b>												
a. Regular	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b. Occasional	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
c. Never	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	150	100
<b>Participation in the preparation of micro-plan</b>												
a. Regular	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b. Occasional	-	-	18	60	10	33.33	12	40	-	-	40	26.67
c. Never	30	100	12	40	20	66.67	18	60	30	100	110	73.33

**ii. Participation in extension activities**

Extension participation includes the frequency of participation of women in the programmes like workshops, training programmes, demonstrations, exhibitions, educational tours, group meeting and Krishi Melas. Table 3 indicated that it was astonishing to quote that 98.67 per cent of the women members did not attend in any kind of workshops. Training Programmes were never attended by majority (86.67%) of the women members. However, in Eluru FDA, 50 per cent of the women members occasionally attended the training programmes. Not even a single women member was involved or exposed to the demonstrations of all the FDAs and the similar trend was observed in krishi melas, exhibitions and educational tour. More than three fourth of the women members (76.67%) never participated in the group meetings and only 23.33 per cent discussed in the meetings of micro-finance by other funding agencies. Around 50 per cent of the women members in Karimnagar and Ananthpur divisions occasionally attended the group meetings

### iii. Participation in FDA activities

FDA activities includes participation in VSS meetings *i.e.*, General Body meeting, management committee meeting, participation in planning, decision making in the meeting and participation in the preparation of micro-plan. The results are depicted in Table 4.

About 90 per cent of the women members never attended general body meeting of the VSS, . In Guntur (33.33%) and Karimnagar (16.67) FDAs, the women VSS members occasionally attended the general body meeting. Management Committee involves 15 members out of which 50 per cent is represented by women members.

Around 70 per cent of the members never attended the management committee meeting. In Eluru (46.67) and Ananthapur (33.33%) FDAs, women members occasionally attended the management committee meeting.

Only 33.33 per cent of the women members offered suggestions regularly in the meetings. Women members in Eluru (63.33%) and Karimnagar (43.33%) divisions regularly offered suggestions, while in Guntur division, no member offered suggestions in the meetings. In many of the VSS meetings both in general body meeting and executive body meeting, women members have to take part actively in planning and or in any decision making activities.

It is observed that none of the women members participated in decision making. Micro-plans acts as the document for the future line of work for the VSS and the women members have to participate in the formulation of the micro plan. It is seen that only 26.67 per cent of the women members were involved in preparation of the micro-plan.

In Karimnagar (60%) and Mahabubnagar (40%) divisions the women members occasionally involved in the preparation of micro plan, while in Guntur and Eluru divisions, no women member knew about the preparation of micro plan. Anonymous (2006) reported similar observations.

### Empowerment status of women

Empowerment status of women was analyzed based on the income generation, employment status and additional employment generated and the findings are highlighted in Table 5.

**Table 5 : Empowerment status of Women through FDA  
Income generated from the VSS**

Income generated from the VSS	Guntur (n=30)		Karimnagar (n=30)		Ananthpur (n=30)		Mahabubnagar (n=30)		Eluru (n=30)		Total (n=150)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>Forestry based</b>												
a. Labour works (advance work / nursery / pitting and planting / SMC)	30	100	30	100	15	50	15	50	30	100	120	80
b. NTFP collection / Adda leaf making	-	-	-	-	15	50	15	50	-	-	30	20
<b>Non-Forestry based</b>												
a. Dairy	-	-	15	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	4.36
b. Other allied	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

### Employment status

Employment status	Guntur (n=30)		Karimnagar (n=30)		Ananthpur (n=30)		Mahabubnagar (n=30)		Eluru (n=30)		Total (n=150)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>Before Joining VSS</b>												
a. Unemployed	30	100	30	100	-	-	30	100	30	100	120	80
b. Underemployed	-	-	-	-	30	100	-	-	-	-	30	20
c. c. Employed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>After Joining VSS</b>												
a. Unemployed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b. Underemployed	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	-	-	120	80
c. c. Employed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	100	30	20

### Additional employment generated

Additional employment generated (Man days per year)	Guntur (n=30)		Karimnagar (n=30)		Ananthpur (n=30)		Mahabubnagar (n=30)		Eluru (n=30)		Total (n=150)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
< 100	28	93.33	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	148	98.67
100 – 150	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
150 – 200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nil	02	6.67	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1.33

### Income generation from the VSS

Income generation from the VSS involves forestry based and non forestry based activities. Forestry based income generation includes collection of NTFPs like *Pongamia pinnata*, *Syzygium cumini*, *Emblica officinalis*, *Tamarandius indica*, *Azadirachata indica*, *Annonus squamosa*, *Butea monosperma*, *Sapindus laurifolia*, *Diospyros melenoxylon* and broom grass. No value addition of NTFPs was done. Adda leaf making is

another income generation activity where Bahunia vahii leaves are used for the preparation of leaf plate which is known as adda leaf and in some of the FDAs women members were involved in making adda leaf especially in Mahabhubnagar, where Bahunia vahii leaves are abundantly available. In Ananthpur division, Butea monosperma is used for leaf plate preparation. Non-forestry based income generation included brick making, masonry, tailoring and dairy. Most of the women members, (80%) were involved in labour works, whereas 50 per cent of the women members of Mahabubnagar and Ananthpur FDAs generated their income through leaf plate preparation. Only in Karimnagar FDAs 50 per cent of the women members were involved in non-forestry based activities

#### **Employment status**

Employment status of the VSS women members was ascertained before joining and after joining of the VSS. Employment status was categorized as unemployed, under employed and employed. Eighty per cent of the women members were unemployed before joining of the VSS, whereas 20 per cent were fully employed after joining the VSS. In Eluru FDA, all the women members attained the status of full employment after joining the VSS and in remaining FDAs, almost all the women members (80 %) were under employed after joining the VSS.

#### **Additional employment generation**

Additional employment generation was categorized based on the mandays per year. Mainly the status was categorized into three types viz., <100 mandays per year, 100-150 mandays per year and 150-200 mandays per year. Around 98.67 per cent were employed <100 mandays per year. In all the FDAs, the women members got the additional employment only less than 100 days.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The study revealed that majority of women members (80 %) were involved occasionally in nursery activities. Majority of the women members never attended any workshops and training programmes, but occasionally attended VSS meetings. Few women members were involved in afforestation activities, micro plan preparation and forestry based income generation activities. The initiation of VSS under NAP has reduced the dependency of women members on the forests for fuel wood which in turn resulted in improving the forest cover. Therefore there is a need to conduct adequate training for women members by Andhra Pradesh Forest Department so as to involve them in all the activities of Forest Development agency.

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