

An Overview into the Activities of Women Extension Wing in Agricultural Development of District Muzaffarabad-AJ&K

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Abstract

Women Extension wing is a sole department which provides a platform for the women extension workers to interact directly with the female farmers. The present study was conducted in 2011 to overview the activities of women extension wing in district Muzaffarabad-AJ & K. For this study all the female extension staff was interviewed, including 16 Lady Extension Assistants and 4 Lady Extension Officers. Multistage sampling was used to select the required sample, 67 female farmers were randomly selected from the three selected villages. A pre-tested questionnaire and interview schedule was used for data collection. Female extension staff was satisfied from the extension department activities; they faced problems of communication and lack of cooperation. On the other hand, it was found that majority (46%) of female farmers was illiterate but had several year experiences which were helpful to them in applying the knowledge given by the extension workers practically. It was observed that 100% female farmers knew female extension staff both by name and face, and also satisfied from their activities. Majority (96%) were owner-cultivators as they grow vegetables and crops on their lands. About 58% of the female respondents had >5000 rupees monthly increase in income because of their participation in agricultural activities. They faced problems; lack of education, awareness and financial problems while participating in agricultural development. It is concluded that majority of the female extension staff and female farmers were satisfied from activities of women extension wing. Also, women extension wing is carrying out activities which are beneficial to female farmers. By using Chi-square test it is cleared that there is a non-significant association between the farming experience and the satisfaction from extension wing activities. It was recommended that female extension workers should be in regular contact with the female farmer, and number of trainings for both the farmers and staff should be increased by the Extension department. Also, audio-visual aids should be used for educating farmers.

Keywords; Women; Extension wing; Agricultural Development

1. Introduction

Agricultural extension is responsible for the growth of agricultural productivity by transferring latest and better technologies to the farmers and finally strengthens the national economy. Therefore, the farming community must be made familiar with the agricultural techniques, improved practices and scientific knowledge (Gibson and Brown, 2003).

Main purpose of agricultural extension education is to provide farmers with information which is helpful to them in decision making, transfer of appropriate technologies to eliminate hunger and poverty. In gaining access to credit and extension education services related to agriculture, livestock management and food security rural women faces more problems and than men (Achamyelesh, 2000). To improve farmers' crop production, agricultural extension provides advice and assistance (Adams, 1988).

Women constitute over fifty percent of the total population of the country. In Pakistan, women are among millions of landless male labourers and small farmers who are fighting back rural poverty and toil hard to meet basic needs of food, clothing and shelter through their reliance on crop production. Women participate in all the small and large farm operations. Women are involved in the cultivation of crops right from the preparation of soil to the post-harvest operations (Shah and Khan, 2004).

The women of the state of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir have traditionally been burden with work load, restricted mobility limited access toward health education and other basic social services. In this connection, the Neelum Jeelum Community development project (NJVCDP) was financed by IFAD, with technical assistance component by UNDP. The project offered a package aimed at socially organizing community development groups for females (CDGs). For the first time in Pakistan, women extension wing was introduced in Muzaffarabad AJK with the help of Neelum and Jeelum Valley Community Development Project (NJVCDP) 1992-2004. The project worked in 32 union council of district Muzaffarabad including whole Neelum valley and right side of Jehlum River. By the effort of this project in each union council one lady extension agent and total three lady extension officers in all districts were appointed. The main concept of the program was social mobilization of the local people to eradicate poverty and involve them in the progressive package of the project and with the help women extension services, the transfer of improved technology from the researcher to the farmers especially rural women and giving them important training relating to agriculture such as: Kitchen

Gardening, Plant nursery raising , Plantation, home based poultry development etc and many others related to agriculture was made easy. The main responsibilities of LEAs were; trainings, supply of inputs and introduce new technologies to farmers. For motivation of farming community to adopt innovative production technologies, demonstration plots of vegetables and fodder were planted at farmers' fields. Training courses were also given to the LEAs related to vegetable, fodder and fruit production.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The researcher felt a great need of the problem regarding the role and participation of female extension workers working in the study area. So, while I worked for my internship, I got interested in determining the role of female extension workers in Agricultural development of the study area. In the present study the researcher focuses on the effectiveness of the women extension wing services of agriculture department, the role that women farmers are playing in agricultural development and the problems faced by them. Previously men were the only carriers of information, as they got information from extension workers; they pass it on to their females. Male extension workers cannot directly interact with the female farmers because of social, religious, gender and many other reasons. By the establishment of women extension wing by Government of AJ & K, it is hoped that many problems of female farmers will be solved. This study will be helpful for policy makers, researchers and students.

1.2 Objective of the study:

- To analyze the existing situation of women extension wing in the study area.

2. Research methodology

This section describes the parameters and techniques that were used to conduct the study. District Muzaffarabad constitutes the universe of this study. There are two tehsils in District Muzaffarabad namely Muzaffarabad and Nasirabad. Tehsil Muzaffarabad was selected purposively. A list of all union councils from the selected tehsil was prepared with the help of Assistant Revenue Officer. Out of 17 union councils, three union councils namely, Gojra, Muzaffarabad and patika were selected purposively. A list of villages was obtained from revenue officer and three villages namely, Upper Gojra, Dherrian and Dhani were purposively selected. In case of extension workers, all (20) the female extension officers and extension assistants were selected. Thus, the sample size reached to 87.

For the present study a questionnaire for female extension workers was prepared in light of the objectives of this study. Questions were asked in local language in order to maintain accuracy and validity of data. The data were analyzed by using computer software; Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel. The results were presented in terms of counts and percentages. To test the association between farming experience and satisfaction from women extension wing activities, a Chi-square test was applied

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Educational level

The developed countries are socially, economically and politically correlated with the educational level of females because female constitutes 50 percent of the population of a country. Increased female education should be considered a social asset, because they play an important role in developing character. Also, their training and education will surely help in creating awareness about their current and future problems (Ghayur, 2003). In the table 1 show out of 67 respondents, 5 had primary education, 6 had middle, 9 had matric and 16 were above matric and 31 were illiterate.

3.2 Designation of the female extension staff

The Table 2 shows that only 20% were Lady Extension Officers (LEO) and 80% of the respondents were Lady Extension Assistants (LEA). As the total number of women extension staff is 20.

3.3 Professional trainings attended

The table 3 shows that 5% of the respondents got kitchen gardening and food preservation and 5% got budding and food preservation trainings, 10% of the respondents got each of the kitchen gardening, budding and poultry, 10% got kitchen gardening, Food preservation and budding, 10% attended kitchen gardening, followed by 20% attended kitchen gardening, food preservation and poultry and 40% of the respondents attended all the four trainings.

3.4 Feel easy in working with female farmers

Extension workers should develop good rapport with the farmers so that they can easily communicate with the farmers, also they should create an environment so that farmers can feel ease to share their problems with them.

The results showing the perception of the respondents to feel easy in working with female extension staff is displayed in Table 4. It is evident that 20% were not feeling easy because they faced problems while 80% of the respondents felt easy in working with female farmers. This shows that when extension workers feel easy with the farmers then it is feasible for them to work with the farmers.

3.5 Trainings needed

Women farmers have a need for adequate agricultural extension information. So, training extension agents should have high priority, considering that majority of farmers are women (Pamela, 1995). Table 5 show that ten percent of the Extension staff demanded trainings related to orchard management, 15% asked for office management trainings, 25% of them needed IPM, and 50% demanded for trainings related to extension education to make farmers aware of the agriculture. Many people ask information about the use of pesticides and for this purpose the extension staff should have sufficient knowledge about the pesticides. Also, the trainings related to extension education should be provided so that they can communicate more easily with the farmers.

3.6 Association between the farming experience and the satisfaction from extension wing activities.

Chi-square test was conducted to test the association between the farming experience and the satisfaction from the women wing activities. The p-value is greater than “0.05”, which shows a non-significant relationship between the two variables explaining that there is no association between farming experience and satisfaction from the activities of women wing.

Recommendations

- Extension staff should introduce the department to the respondents, so that if someone asks about the extension department and its role, they can easily answer it.
- Female extension workers should have regular contact with the female farmers, so that they can easily sort out their problems and have good communication with them.
- More training programs should be offered as demanded by women extension wing and respondents.

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Table 1: Distribution of respondents by their level of education

Location	Education of the Respondents					Total
	Illiterate	Primary	Middle	Matric	Above Matric	
Upper Gojra	14 (56)	2 (8)	2 (8)	2 (8)	5 (20)	25 (38)
Dherrian	7 (35)	1 (5)	3 (15)	4 (20)	5 (25)	20 (29)
Dhani	10 (45)	2 (9)	1 (5)	3 (14)	6 (27)	22 (33)
Total	31 (46)	5 (8)	6 (9)	9 (13)	16 (24)	67 (100)

Source: Field Survey 2012 Data in parenthesis () are percentages

Table 2. Distribution of respondents on basis of their designation

Designation	No.	% age
Lady Extension Assistants (LEA)	16	80
Lady Extension Officers (LEO)	4	20
Total	20	100

Source: Field Survey 2012.

Table 3: Professional trainings attended

Trainings	No.	%age
Kitchen gardening	2	10
Kitchen gardening & food preservation	1	5
Budding & food preservation	1	5
Kitchen gardening + food preservation + budding + poultry	8	40
Kitchen gardening + food preservation + budding	2	10
Kitchen gardening + budding + poultry	2	10
Kitchen gardening + food preservation + poultry	4	20
Total	20	100

Source: Field Survey 2012.

Table 4: Feel easy in working with female extension staff

Responses	No.	% age
Yes	16	80
No	4	20
Total	20	100

Source: Field survey 2012.

Table 5: Trainings needed by women extension staff

Trainings	No.	% age
Orchard management	2	10
IPM	5	25
Office management	3	15
Extension Education	10	50
Total	20	100

Source: Field Survey 2012.

Table 6. Association between the farming experience and the satisfaction from extension wing activities

Farming experience	Satisfaction from extension wing activities	
	Yes	No
Below 10	24 (36)	0 (0)
11-20	10 (15)	0 (0)
21-30	17 (25)	0 (0)
Above 30	14 (21)	2 (3)
Total	65 (97)	2 (3)

Number in parenthesis represent percentage number of respondents; Chi-square = 6.51 with p-value =0.87 and df = 3