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Sustainability Of Food Security To Households Through Micro Credit

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ABSTRACT

Household Food Security is an important dimension of well – being. A household is food secure when it has access to food needed for a healthy life for all its members, and when it is not at undue risk of losing such access. Theoretical evidence suggests that the endowment set and entitlement mapping together determine a household's ability to acquire food. The inability of households to obtain access to enough food for a productive healthy life is an important component of poverty. That is to say, the link between poverty and food insecurity reflects household's access to food.

Women play a key role in ensuring the capacity of their families to procure adequate supplies of food on a sustainable basis. Since women often make a greater contribution to household food security than men, lack of access or decline in women's access to resources may have a significant impact in the consumption status of the households who often strengthen the coping mechanism. It is often important to understand their coping and risk aversion strategies because these very strategies enhance development efforts and avoid putting household food security at risk. Based on the primary data, the present study finds that women tend to use a number of coping strategies such as early sale of livestock, underselling products to get quick cash, pledge farm, incur debts, performing small income generating activities such as collecting and selling of fuel woods and calling on children's labour, etc. These ex-post coping strategies as pursued by households are to simply maintain the current level of food consumption rather than to ensure future income generating capacities. Long-term security should be a fundamental objective of household coping strategies.

Keywords: Food security, Empowerment, Poverty, Nutritional Status, Long term security.

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INTRODUCTION

Food security is an important component of human welfare and considered the most important basic requirement for human resource development

Food security has 2 main requirements

1. One is assuring the availability of food through production and the
2. Other is assuring the ability of the households to acquire food.

The second requirement is very difficult to meet in rural India (in rural poor households). Even though food insecurity continues to exist at the household level. A direct indication of the extent of food deprivation (as observed by the expect committee) is that nearly 14% of rural households are not getting 2 square meals a day for either part or whole of the year.

As stated by the world bank, food security essentially means that all people at all times have access to safe nutritious and adequate food to maintain active and health life.

This definition focuses on three important dimensions of food security

1. Availability of food
2. Access to food
3. Usage (Utilization o food)

- participation of women in Decision making in matters related to

1. Food related activities
2. Family Administration

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3. Caring of children and health

Studies Radha (2009) have shown that women higher level of participation in Decision making is influenced by level of access to resources and education which have a direct bearing on household families. From latest reviews, we understand that livestock rearing is indentified as the most important ex-anti coping strategy of women where as borrowing is by far the most important ex-post coping strategy for majority of the households.

To strengthen the view expressed by various researchers, a study was conducted by us involving a sample selection of 40 households in usupur village, Chidambaram Taluk. Data were collected with regard to the coping mechanism adopted by the women in times of food shortage or in lean season. During food shortage it is only the females of the households who often strengthen the coping mechanism. Women's Ex-anti coping includes strategies for maintaining consumption such as saving grains, livestock rearing and Home garden with regard to their ex-post coping strategies such as borrowing, gathering of food, selling of livestock.

During the interview it was found out that households who owned large livestock like milching animals and small livestock like goats were less vulnerable to food insecurity. In case of poultry, they were slaughtered for food in times of hardship.

Women respondents reported that the potential contribution of livestock to food security was great. Because in few households, these livestock contributed to food security through increased output of livestock and income generated on that might assure access to food. For few

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households selling of small livestock is used as an important ex-post coping strategy.

At the household level almost all food related activities and decisions fall within the domain of women, it is imperative that any household food security and nutrition analysis should have female perspective. This aspect receives particular attention in this paper. Women are not only responsible for feeding their families but also have the added responsibility for promoting, protecting and preserving the health of their families.

- yet the role and responsibilities in managing household food security and sustaining family nutrition are insufficiently taken into consideration in the development process.

The amazing fact that the rural poor despite their food insecurity, continue to survive because of the coping strategies adopted by women against the threat of transitory food insecurity. Many Erst while studies have identified that empowering women through access to and control over resources and decision making are important and they are path-breaking variable in improving household food security.

Access to control over resources – land, income, credit, fuel and water, health and sanitation and nutritional knowledge. Women expressed their difficulty in getting credit to purchase live-stocks. Women access to credit was generally limited particularly from formal sources such as banks. They experienced difficulties in getting loan mainly because of problem in producing security in banks and heavy rate of interest with private money-lenders who waived security.

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So, micro credit facilities should be examined as an effective sustainable strategy for supporting women livelihood. Women must be motivated to become a member of the self groups in their respective village. This is suggested because in the village women access to credit is found to be greatly limited to only formal sources like banks. Micro credit intervention at the village level through self -groups or women's groups is bound to help women to gain access to financial resources, which would facilitate them to gain better status within the family. Credit provision would result in increasing their income, which would have direct bearity on the food and nutritional security of the family.

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