

A Study On The Unconventional Concepts Of Rural Women Livelihoods In Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

India has their 80% of the population in villages and present days more than 60 percent of population lies in agricultural and allied sectors. Agriculture sector is the main occupation of the people. In other words it is the back bone of our country. The illiterates and middle level education women primarily only their livelihood by working as more wage laborers on agriculture farms, rural industries and other allied activities. In this juncture present day rural and cottage sector industries has faced several problems because of major problems in agricultural sector due to water scarcity and monsoon failure. At this juncture, the paper deals with their problems and alternate ideas to overcome the problems.

Key word: Livelihood, rural industries, alternative, scarcity

Introduction

India has their 70 percentage of the population in villages and more than 60 percentages of population lies in agricultural and allied sectors. Agriculture sector is the main occupation of the people our country. In other words agriculture is the back bone of our country. The prime livelihood of the woman India is agriculture an allied activities. The major portions of the women are uneducated or primary education. Most of them are wage laborers in agriculture farms, rural industries and other allied sectors for their livelihood. The unemployment or discussed unemployment is major problems in rural people. In agricultural sector, employment is only season and after the season agricultural labourers are migrated to one place to another place for their livelihood. Aduse-Poku (2003), explained in his article the idea of livelihood has remained a subject of utmost importance due to its foreseeable role to human life. A livelihood is much more than a job as it covers a whole range of things people do to make a living. Increase in population and technology have also brought about more variations in livelihood activities thereby further confusing the livelihood thought. Most people especially in the rural areas obtain their means of livelihood from their immediate environment. Carney (1999) also argues that, the livelihoods and quality of life of the rural areas in developed countries is affected or even controlled by a variety of factors or contexts that make life for them almost a struggle for survival. These factors border on economic policies, agro-climate, environment, socio-culture, demography, infrastructure, services, governance and so on.

According to Donald (2005) have also noted that the livelihoods of poor rural households are diverse across regions and countries, and within countries. While some rural households rely primarily on one type of activity, most people now seek to diversify their livelihood base as a way to reduce risk. In most developing countries, it is the small-holder farmers who produce greater proportions of staples but mostly at the peasant levels.

If government take action to promotes livelihood security through improving the diversity and security of resources, skills and technologies that are available to agricultural communities. If households are to be resilient then they need adequate resources to fall back on in times of need and this means finding other ways to earn an income. Livelihoods are made up of resources

such as skills, technologies, organisations and finances that are built up over time for people to make a living and have a good quality of life. Understanding resilient livelihoods does not just mean looking at one source of employment or produce, but at all of the different activities and choices within the household and community which provide an income, food, shelter and other factors that ensure wellbeing. Livelihood options available to individuals and households depend upon the diversity of resources, skills and technology they are able to access. Therefore the security of their livelihood also depends on the security of their available resources and diversification of other allied agricultural activities with availabilities of minimum resources and technologies.

It is therefore as a result of the above that farming activities farmers are shifted to alternative income sources such as petty trading, coir mat waving, handicraft, toys making, cattle rearing, mushroom production, bee-keeping, weaving, pottery as such. Other than non-farming activities are increasingly becoming important across the rural areas of Tamil Nadu, and income gains at the household level therefore seem to be associated with a shift towards more non-farming wages and self-employment income.

Problem issues

Such employment provides vital income diversification and access to cash at key moments especially where the risks of farming are high and rural savings, credit and insurance mechanisms are poorly developed or not available. Rural non-farm or alternative livelihoods may among other things; absorb surplus labour in rural areas, help farm-based households spread risks, offer more remunerative activities to supplement or replace food-crop income, offer income potential during the farming off-season, and provide a means to cope or survive when farming fails. At the same time there is a lack of knowledge in the non-farming activities, technologies, availabilities of raw materials, lack of sufficient training and guide lines, proper management, and marketing problems. The above problems account for the increasing inability of the traditional farm sector to sustain rural livelihoods. Hence, there is the need for alternative strategies that will enhance the wellbeing of the rural poor farmers. The growing consensus is that although farming continues to play a central role in rural development, the promotion of complementary engines of rural growth should be of paramount importance. It should also be noted that, sustainable rural development and poverty reduction requires that the incomes of poor households and the sources from which they derive their livelihoods must be enhanced and therefore, pro-poor income growth needs to be encouraged. In conclusion, additional livelihood options for rural poor households will provide new coping strategies that will reduce the impacts of unforeseen contingencies on their means of survival.

Methodology

For the analysis purpose, the multi stage simple random sampling methods were followed. In the first level Cuddalore district were selected and in this district two blocks 1. Cuddalore and Parangipettai blocks were selected. The next stage two villages in Cuddalore and Parangipettai block were selected and each block two village are selected. And the final stage each village 30 respondents are selected as Agriculture farmer (small land holdings) and agriculture labuorers (coolies). In total 120, 40 respondent are from male and 80 of them female respondent.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine some selected alternative rural livelihood practiced in the Cuddalore District and their contribution towards the development of the people in the study area.

Specific objectives

- Assess the traditional livelihood options for rural households in the Cuddalore District.
- Assess the economic importance of alternative rural livelihood options in the Cuddalore District.

Analysis of sample data

This section deals based on primary data collected through a field survey in study area analysed and deliberate to make a comparison between farm activities and non-farm activities in the study area.

Table: 1 Gender wise classification of the respondents

Sl. No	Villages	Total No. of respondents in sample blocks				Total Respondents (%)
		Agriculture Farmers		Agriculture Labours		
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
1	Salakkarai	5(4.2)	10(8.3)	5(4.2)	10(8.3)	30(25.0)
2	Sothikuppam	5(4.2)	10(8.3)	5(4.2)	10(8.3)	30(25.0)
3	Madavapallam	5(4.2)	10(8.3)	5(4.2)	10(8.3)	30(25.0)
4	Samiyarpettai	5(4.2)	10(8.3)	5(4.2)	10(8.3)	30(25.0)
	Total	20(16.8)	40(33.2)	20(16.8)	40(33.2)	120(100.0)

Source: Computed

The table 1 explains the gender wise classification of selected village in Cuddalore and Parangipettai block of Cuddalore district. The study area two type of respondents are selected and each block, i.e. Agriculture farmer (small land holdings) and agriculture labuorers (Coolies). In total 120 respondents 40 respondents are from male and 80 of them female respondent, in majority of respondent belongs to female.

Table: 2 Alternative livelihood classifications of the respondents

Sl. No	Alternative livelihood	Number of respondents in Block wise				Total
		Cuddalore Block		Parangipettai Block		
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
1	Petty shop & Tea shop	2(1.7)	3(2.5)	2(1.7)	5(4.2)	12(10.1)
2	Cottage industry work	5(4.2)	14(11.7)	5(4.2)	5(4.2)	29(24.2)
3	Bamboo	4(3.3)	8(6.7)	4(3.3)	8(6.7)	24(20)
4	Basket making	3(2.5)	7(5.8)	2(1.7)	13(10.8)	25(20.8)
5	Dry Fish	4(3.3)	10(8.3)	5(4.2)	11(9.1)	30(24.9)
Total		18(15.0)	42(35.0)	18(15.0)	42(35.0)	120(100.0)

Source: Computed

The above table brings out the respondents alternative livelihood adoption in the surveyed area. The alternative livelihood adoptions are petty shop / tea shop, coir industry, bamboo work, basket making and try fish processing. In Cuddalore block 11.6 percent engaged in try fish processing 8.3 respondents engaged basket making, 10 percentages of the respondents were doing bamboo work, 15 percentages of respondents employed in coir industry. A very low percentage of respondents engaged in small shop business. Similarly in Parangipettai block 13.3 percentages respondents engaged in dry fish processing, 12.6 percentages of the respondents are making basket, 11 percentages of the respondents doing bamboo work and remaining respondents are engaged in coir industry.

From the table it is inferred that maximum of 25 percentages respondents engaged in dry fish processing. 24.2 percentages of the respondents has adopted their livelihood in coir industry. It is clear from the table, dry fish processing, coir industry and basket making place dominant role in the study area.

Table: 3 Alternative livelihood monthly income wise classifications of the respondents

Sl. No	Alternative livelihood	Alternative livelihood income of the respondent					Total
		Shops	Cottage	Bamboo	Basket	Dry Fish	
1	Below ` 8000	4(3.3)	9(7.5)	6(5)	6(5)	10(8.3)	35(29.1)
2	` 8001- `10000	4(3.3)	8(6.7)	8(6.7)	8(6.7)	8(6.7)	36(30.1)
3	`10001-`12000	2(1.7)	6(5)	7(5.8)	7(5.8)	7(5.8)	29(24.1)
4	Above ` 12000	2(1.7)	6(5)	3(2.5)	4(3.3)	5(4.2)	20(16.7)
	Total	12(10)	29(24.2)	24(20)	25(20.8)	30(25)	120(100.0)

Source: Computed

The table brings out the respondents monthly income from alternative livelihood in surveyed respondents. Among the total surveyed respondents, 30 percentages of the respondent's income fall on ` 8000-10000 per month. The 29.1 percentages of the respondent's monthly income fall on ` 8000 & below. The 24.1 percentages of the respondents are earned monthly income `10000 to 12000 and 16.7 percentages of the respondents have their income above ` 12000 per month. From the analysis it is clear that alternative livelihood is given more income of the respondents engaged in various category of livelihood adoption in the study area.

Table: 4 Average differences of monthly income earned from Alternative livelihood & Traditional work of the respondents

Sl. No	Gender	Average Income of the respondents		Income difference
		Farm activities	Non – Farm activities	
1	Male	10000	12000	2000
2	Female	8400	10250	1850

Source: Computed

The table 4 high lights the deference between farm workers and Alternative livelihood workers of the study area. From the table it is clear that there is income deference in both gender workers engaged in Alternative livelihood.

Findings

- The female respondents are playing pivotal role in livelihood activities in the study area.
- It is clear from the analysis, dry fish processing, coir industry and basket making place dominant role in the study area.
- From the analysis the alternative livelihood is given more income of the respondents engaged in various category of livelihood adoption in the study area.
- The study shows that there is income deference in both gender workers engaged in Alternative livelihood.

Conclusion

From the analysis and finding, it is clear that due to failure of monsoon, water scarcity, the farm activities are failure the livelihood is a big question mark. The farmers and rural peoples fall in the indebtedness and they are unable to overcome from this. But they changing their attitude from the agriculture farming to alternative rural livelihood options farmers and rural peoples are

got higher income when compared to farm activities. Especially, in handicraft industry items like coir mat, bamboo work, cane work, wood carving work etc.

Hence, the rural peoples are prepared themselves to change the activities their livelihood and improve the economic status of family.

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