



Livelihood Systems of Tribal Farmers in Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the livelihood systems of tribal farmers in three districts of Andhra Pradesh i.e. Visakhapatnam, Chittoor and Khammam. Most of the households earn a living by maintaining a diversified livelihood pattern i.e., farming, forest based activities, Livestock and wage employment. Majority (77.50%) of the tribal farmers were involved in Agriculture + Livestock + wage work + Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP) followed by Agriculture + wage work (11.67%), Agriculture + Livestock + wage work (8.33%) and Agriculture alone (2.50%). 62.09 per cent of the tribal farmers in the study area are having medium level of livelihood followed by high (20.83%) and low (17.08%) level of livelihood.. Tribes in the study area uses the forests as sources of firewood, housing materials, medical herbs, grazing their cattle, etc. A well structured and pre tested interview schedule was used to collect data. The statistics employed for data analysis were simple frequency and percentage. A strategy in this study was conceived as a plan of action in order to empower the tribal farmers and sensitize the development agencies for greater contribution for improving livelihood.

Key words: Livelihood systems, NTFPs, Tribal farmers.

The concept of livelihoods has become increasingly popular in development thinking as a way of conceptualizing the economic activities poor people undertake in their totalities. Livelihoods are the means people use to support themselves, to survive and to prosper, which are shaped by the broader environment in which they live and other factors like economic and cultural systems. There are 437 tribes in India and Andhra Pradesh is inhabited by 33 tribes. Livelihoods can be made up of a range of on-farm and off-farm activities which together provide a variety of procurement strategies for food and cash. Thus, each household can have several possible sources of entitlement which constitute its livelihood comprises the capabilities of people, their assets and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is a system, which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, enhance its capabilities, assets and provide sustainable opportunities. Each household combines its livelihood resources within the limits of their social and political content to pursue a number of livelihood strategies such as various types of production and income generating activities. Such strategies can include various types of production and income generating activities like farming, non-farm activities, animal husbandry or a combination of all these.

In this context, an understanding of livelihood systems of tribal farmers with a multi dimensional approach was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To examine the livelihood systems of tribal farmers.
2. To design a strategic model for improving the livelihood of tribal farmers.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted by using ex-post facto research design. The state, Andhra Pradesh was selected purposively as the researcher belonged to this state and well acquainted with the regional language i.e., Telugu which would help to build a good rapport and also facilitates for in depth study through personal observation and interview. One district had been selected from each region of Andhra Pradesh based on highest number of tribal population i.e. Visakhapatnam from Coastal, Chittoor from Rayalaseema and Khammam from Telangana region. Two mandals had been selected from each district based on highest number of tribal population. From Vsakhapatnam - chintapalle and Gudem kotta veedhi, Sri Kalahasthi and Madanapalle mandals representing Chittoor region and Cherla and Dummugudem representing Telangana region. From the selected mandals, four

villages had been selected randomly. Accordingly, twenty four villages were selected. From the selected villages ten tribal farmers from each village have been selected. So total of 240 tribal farmers had been included in the study. The primary data were collected using a pre-tested structured interview schedule by conducting personal interview. Data was tabulated, classified and analyzed using frequency and percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Livelihood systems of tribal farmers:

Livelihood systems in the study area are primarily dependent on combinations of agriculture, non-farm activities and animal husbandry. Due to very small holdings and very low productivity of the land most households earn a living by maintaining a diversified pattern of occupations, no single activity provides sufficient resources to entirely ensure that livelihood.

It was found from Table 1 that majority (77.50%) of the tribal farmers were involved in Agriculture + Livestock+wage work + Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP). Agriculture + wage work (11.67%), Agriculture + Livestock + wage work (8.33%) and Agriculture alone (2.50%). This might be because most of the tribes were marginal, hold limited land holding. They were not in a position to meet the expenditure required to run the family with only one source of income. Hence most of the households earn a living by maintaining a diversified pattern of occupations viz., on farm activities, wage employment, forest activities, small enterprises. Tribal farmers in the study area are involved in seasonal collection of forest products like leaves, hill brooms, tamarind, honey, medicinal plants and barks, thatching grass. Majority of the tribal farmers agreed with the fact that they were getting employment under the scheme of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). The scheme provides alternative employment opportunities to earn wage income and reducing the drudgery. Respondents indicated that income from this scheme is sometimes utilized as a coping strategy to meet household expenses.

It was found from Table 2 that more number of tribal farmers (62.09%) had medium level of livelihoods i.e., medium level of access to all the five capitals, followed by almost equal levels of high (20.83%) and low (17.08%) levels of access to the

resources. Similar results were observed with Anand (2007) and Kiran (2011). Therefore, it can be said that in order to contribute to their household needs tribal farmers must have exposure to areas of new developments which would be relevant in opening the windows of livelihood opportunities which would be able to ensure their livelihood security.

Strategy for improving the livelihood of tribal farmers:

The empowerment of tribal farmers and sensitization of research and extension systems about their roles and contributions are important for sustainable growth and management of livelihood security. Based on the findings of the study, it was evident that, the tribal farmers were found to have poor access to human capital assets compared to the rest of the four capitals. Human capital forms the base for rest of the four capitals. It is to be noted here that, even in the rest of the four capitals, lot of improvements are required. The following suggestions, which are broadly categorized under each livelihood capital were arrived by the researcher based on the discussions with different stakeholders such as the respondents, ITDA officials, GCC officials, NGOs, and based on the results of the study.

Human capital improvement

From the results of the study we can conclude that, tribal's had less access to human capital issues such as health care, education and opportunities for trainings. ITDA and local NGOs have to work in coordination to organize the trainings to improve their employment potentials such as trainings on the following aspects which will ultimately help tribal's to improve their knowledge, skills and abilities to access the capitals of Livelihoods. Areas for future trainings could be - making cane furniture, making bamboo furniture, carpentry, electrical works, SHG group creation and monitoring, nursery management, grading of the NTFPs and value addition to their NTFP (deseeding of tamarind, proper drying of soapnuts etc).

1. ITDA and NGOs should conduct training programmes and demonstrations on the skill development such as making leaf bauhinia plates, nursery raising, running of SHGs, health worker training, trainings on Vanasamrakshna samithis,

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to their livelihood systems. (n=240).

Livelihood systems	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agriculture	6	2.5
Agriculture + wage work	28	11.67
Agriculture + Livestock+ wage work + Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP)	186	77.50
Agriculture + Livestock + wage work	20	8.33
Total	240	100.00

Table 2. Distribution of respondents based on their livelihoods. (n=240)

S.No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Low level of livelihoods	41	17.08
2	Medium level of livelihoods	149	62.09
3	High level of livelihoods	50	20.83
	Total	240	100.00

bamboo basket making etc. and scientific methods of collection of NTFPs

2. Better health care facilities should be provided through establishment of Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in tribal areas.

3. Better educational facilities should be established by opening more number of ashram schools to boys and girls.

4. Establish hospitals in the tribal areas and deploy more number of staff. It is essential to update and provide 24-hours hospital facility to the people in the tribal area.

5. More research needs to be done on the traditional herbal medicines used by tribal people and their use encouraged, wherever beneficial.

6. Traditional healers should be sensitised and trained to deliver simple interventions for diarrhoea and anti-malarials as well as to refer patients to the PHC in a timely manner.

7. Tribal boys and girls (who complete school but often have no further opportunities) could be trained as community health workers or nurses and incentivised to stay and work in their own communities.

Physical capital improvement

From the results of the study we can conclude that the physical capital is effected due

to the poor infrastructural and physical facilities such as poor affordable transport and housing, poor water supply and sanitation, poor source of information and material possession.

1. Improving the road connectivity to tribal villages will reduce the drudgery on the tribals and improves their accessibility to access other institutions like schools, banks, and government offices etc.

2. Providing safe drinking water facilities.

3. Supply of telecommunication facilities to remote areas.

4. Construction of pucca houses under Indira Awaas Yojana scheme.

5. Provide good quality all-weather roads in all the rural areas where urban-rural road connectivity is found to be very weak.

6. Transportation facilities should be improved for access to primary health centres in case of emergency and selling of farm produce in local markets.

7. Establishment of local fair price shops for selling of agricultural and minor forest produce.

8. Arranging required subsidized agriculture inputs and farm machines in time by ITDA and department of agriculture.

9. Weekly purchase points should be set up at local shandies.

Natural capital improvement

The study clearly brought out the importance of the natural capital in the lives of tribals. The study also indicated a clear need to conserve the natural capital resource base as they directly depend on the collection and selling of various natural capital assets. The following measures could be considered by the policy makers in order to improve their natural capital base in the forest areas.

Issue of patta pass books to tribal farmers

Tribal habitats are totally dependent on rainfall in both agricultural seasons. Storage and conservation of water resources is important.

Procurement of NTFPs at remunerative prices by Girijan cooperative corporation at girijan super bazars.

In situ conservation of land races and participatory plant breeding for selection of the best suitable varieties for their regions

Encouraging the tribals to grow the landraces by providing remunerative prices and supply of high yielding variety seeds.

Improvement of processing facilities of NTFPs.

Non-timber forest products constitute an integral component of the food for the communities dependent on forests. Non-timber forest products provide far greater employment to the people than the wood. They have much greater potential for providing employment in future.

Conservation of medicinal plants which leads to loss of biodiversity. Medicinal plants should be encouraged by establishing fair price shops located in proximity.

Social capital improvement

Strengthening the local institutions, SHGs, and members participation

Encouraging tribals to organize the local festivals, which are the important forms of cognitive social capital, which in turn helps in popularizing local food crops and recipes as ethnic crops and recipes, so that younger generation will have a chance to learn about their cultures.

Tribal farmers should maintain good contacts with the government and non-governmental agencies.

ITDA should encourage and motivate the tribal farmers to involve in local panchayat activities.

NGOs should motivate the tribal farmers to become SHG members to improve self confidence.

Financial capital improvement

Encouraging the ecotourism projects in the tribal areas to provide them an opportunity for the tribals to sell their artisan products directly to the visitors which is beneficial to both tribals as well as tourists. This will also enhance their employment opportunities.

Providing basic facilities such as leaf press for making leaf plates with Bauhinia leaves, tamarind dryers for hygienic drying adds value to their NTFP which in turn will improve them to get better price for their produce.

Encouraging thrift among the tribals by providing banking services in their vicinities through the existing SHGs or Mahila Samakhya, reduces their spending on bad habits such as liquor and improves their economic conditions.

Employment opportunities should be provided through MGNREGS and other wage works.

Providing short term credit to the tribal farmers for their Seasonal Agricultural Operation.

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