

# Promoting Rural Growth: Empowering Country Women and Youth through Agriculture & Human Resource Management

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## ABSTRACT-

This topic focuses on the transformative potential of agricultural initiatives in rural areas. Rural women and youth have pivotal role in agricultural development. So an overall socio-economic upliftment is possible through their optimal empowerment. Some targeted interventions such as access to education, training and capacity building may break the vicious cycle of poverty, gender inequality and youth unemployment. Awareness generation on resource utilization and modern technology adoption is also essential too. Sustainable livelihood development of rural women and youth is only possible through fostering rural entrepreneurship, leadership and innovation. Collaboration among Government, NGOs and rural communities is truly needed for promotion of optimal potential of agriculture as a key catalyst for rural women and youth empowerment. Multiple strategies of human resource management may bring the best performance of rural youth and women by employing them in the main course of farm economy. It would bring the optimal socio-economic prosperity of rural community as well as whole country.

**Keywords:** Transformative Potential, Agricultural Initiatives, Rural Women, Youth, Socio Economic Upliftment, Empowerment, Sustainable Livelihood Development, Entrepreneurship, Collaboration

**“Each time a women stands up for herself without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women”**

- Maya Angelou

**“Girls we love for what they are; young men for what they promise to be”**

- Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

**“It is the malady of our age that the young are so busy teaching us that they have no time left to learn”**

- Eric Hoffer

## 1. Introduction- If we look at the factors behind rural economic growth,

we would find that agriculture has a prime role to make a remarkable evolution in recent years for transitioning rural community from conventional farming practice to the era of stable socio-economic progress. This is to be recognized that rural women and youth play a pivotal role in agricultural production, food security in the way of prolonged sustainable development. This article is a compelling narrative intersecting rural development through rural women and youth empowerment via precision agriculture.

Though rural women are considered historically marginalized and undeserved, they have noteworthy contributions to farm labor, agril food production and household livelihoods. But they've to face several formidable challenges such as constrained access to land, resources, markets etc. One thing to be specifically mentioned that they have been neglected in decision-making process in spite of having such major contributions. But the potential of rural women and youth must be unlocked for optimal promotion of agricultural productivity, poverty eradication. It would bring a new dawn of gender equality.

Rural youth also have the key of the future of agriculture and rural communities. They often encounter numerous constraints such as poor access to quality education, lack of employment opportunities and land tenure. Financial issue is also a critical hindrance for their development. But rejuvenation of rural economies require empowerment of rural youth. Innovation, cultivation of resilient agricultural systems would be automatically accomplished if their farming expertise could be well strengthened. It would help in confronting the challenges on the way of food security.

Promoting gender equality and youth empowerment in agriculture are highly prioritized through multiple initiatives. Important policy reforms, institutional interventions at grass root level are emphasized for fostering inclusive and sustainable rural development.

Rural youth and women empowerment initiatives include multifarious interventions such as vocational training and capacity building, financial supports, access to land and resources, market linkages etc. Exclusive assistance is employed for entrepreneurship and agribusiness development specifically for rural women and youth.

So it's clear to us that efforts for empowering rural women and youth through agriculture have been continuing for several decades. Such initiatives reflect the evolution of development paradigms, policy frameworks and different institutional mechanisms. These encompass the importance of gender equality and youth empowerment in achieving sustainable community development.

United Nations Conferences of 1990s focused on it. So such initiatives have the noble agenda of empowering rural youth and women to encourage them for becoming pioneers of social change through the wand of resilient agricultural practice. One thing can't be denied that appropriate utilization of Human Resource Management tools could promote rural women and youth participation in agricultural sectors that would give us a surprising economic growth along with a glorious dawn of rural women and youth empowerment. The appropriate integration of human resource management and farming sector development would initiate golden era of sustainable rural welfare.

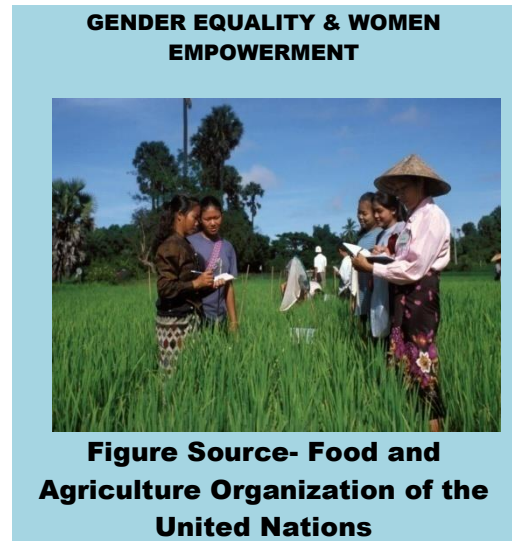
**2. Methodology-** Collected data and information from different secondary sources have been analyzed.

## 3. Discussion and Analysis-

The pioneering role of rural women and youth in enhancing country's economic prosperity can't be denied. Some major aspects should be discussed from this perspective to narrate the exact essence of this specific topic as follows-

### 3.1 Promoting Gender Responsive Climate Smart Agriculture Approach:

Agriculture is the backbone of Indian economy. Climate smart agriculture aims at sustainable growth of agricultural productivity and enhancement of the food security. It increases farm resilience and

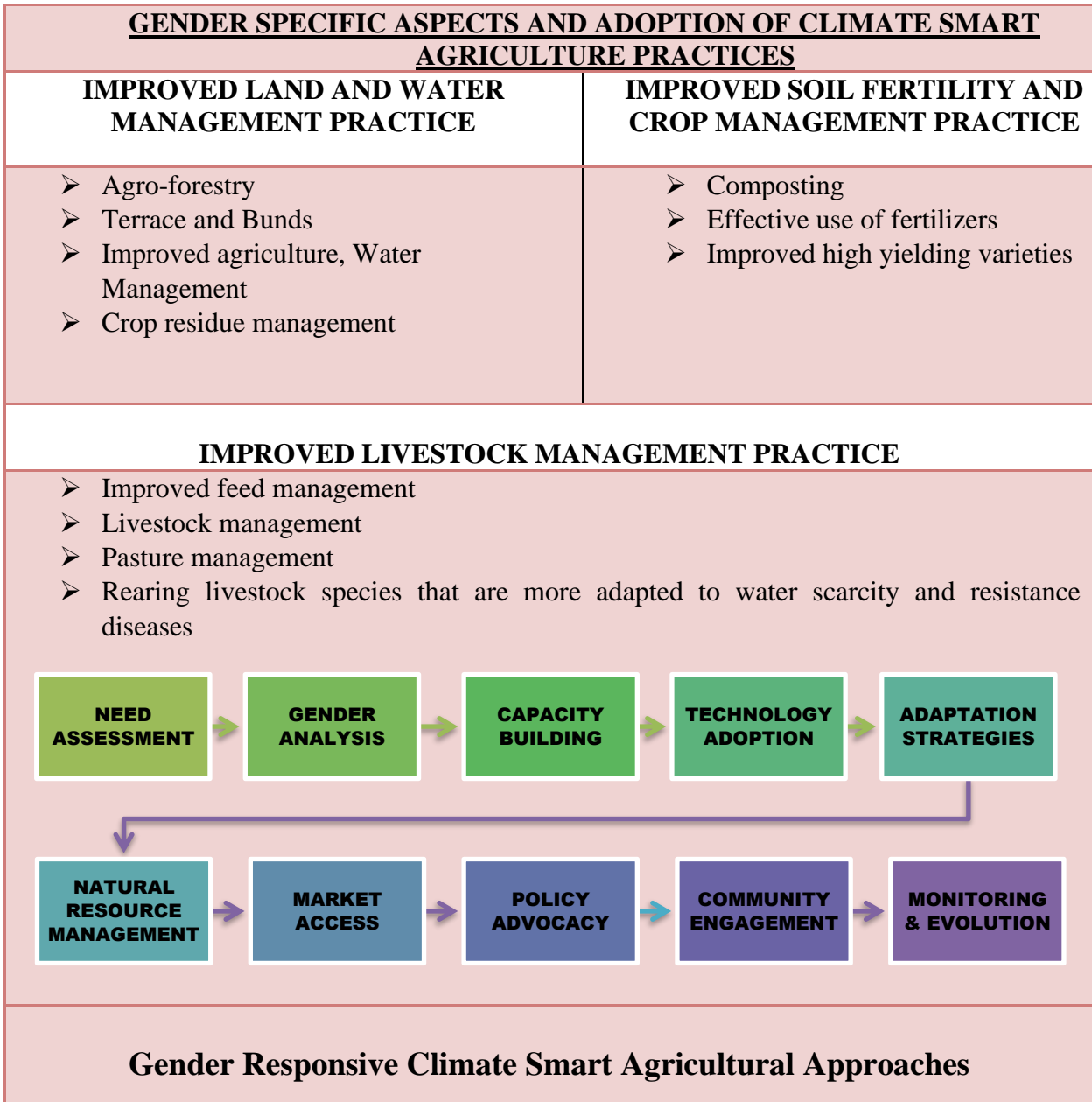


adaptation to climate change. Besides, it could address the critical challenges faced by the rural women farm practitioners.

According to FAO approximately 205 billion people are engaged in agricultural production system either fully or part-time farming or in the farming household. Agricultural system is solely based on small farm holding i.e. of 2 ha or less (Wiggins and Keates 2013).

Recent research says that women farmers are more affected by climate change than male farmers because of their excessive dependence on natural resources for earning livelihood.

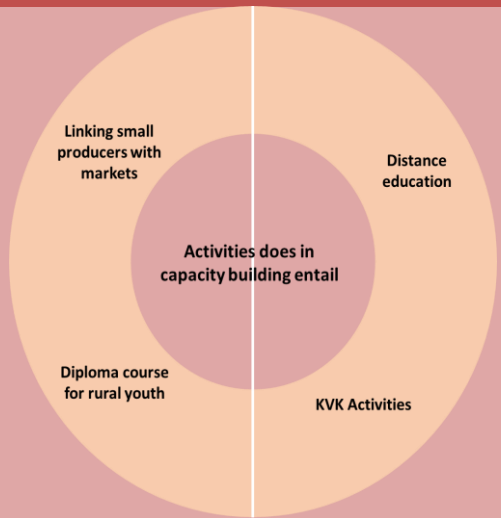
Small women farmers have less adaptability as they have poor access to resources, and other modern technologies. They are insisted to have lower decision-making capacity too.




### 3.2 Strengthening Women & Youth Farmers’ Capacity and Participation for Efficient and Sustainable Production:

Farmer capacity building is a continuous process that allows access to information facilitation and empowerment and fosters technical advancement too. Capacity building is mainly conducted through extensional services.

Benefits Of Capacity Building Toward Agriculture Success	
<b>Improved Food Safety</b>	Agri training teaches farmers safe food handling, storage, and processing of the farm products. This is helpful for preventing the food contamination and ensures that the consumers are provided with safe foods.
<b>Diversified Income Source And Resilience To Climate Change</b>	Farmer with diversified skills can explore alternative income source such as bee keeping, goat farming, fisheries, handcraft industries etc. are also aware of climate smart agricultural practices, land cropping techniques, changing weather patterns, such as biotic and abiotic stress resistant crop varieties.
<b>Migration Mitigation And Women Empowerment</b>	By providing opportunities for sustainable income and higher quality of life in rural areas, basic education in agriculture reduces the occupational migration of rural people. Agricultural training empowers rural women's by providing them with knowledge and skills which results in equitable gender participation in agriculture and promotes access to multiple resources such as accessing credit and land and opportunities for women to engage in income generating activities.



Agriculture has the potential to be a key driver of growth and the eradication of poverty. But the sector is underperforming in many nations in part because of barriers that prevent women, who are frequently a vital resource in agriculture and the rural economy, from working as productively as they could.



**Capacities and Participations for Efficient and Sustainable Productions: Women Youth Farmers**

*“If a society is to preserve stability and a degree of continuity, it must know how to keep its adolescents from imposing their tastes, attitudes, values and fantasies on everyday life”*

- Eric Hoffer

### 3.3 Trained Farm Women Empowered & Disempowered In Different Domains


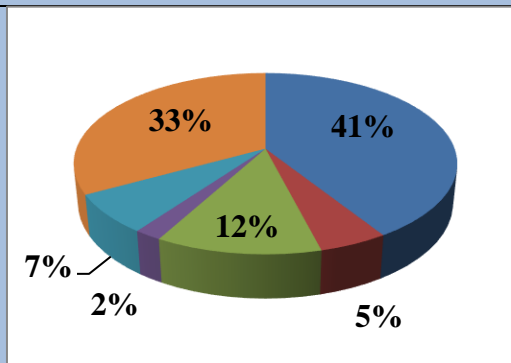
DOMAINS OF EMPOWERMENT IN THE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT DATA SOURCE- Alkire et al (2013)		TRAINED AND OUTREACH HELPING TO EMPOWER FEMALE FARMERS
DOMAIN	INDICATOR	
EMPOWERMENT	WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT	
Production	Input in Productive Decisions Autonomy in Production	
Resources	Ownership of Assets Purchase, Sale, Transfer of Assets Access to and Decisions on Credit	
Income Leadership	Control over Use of Income Group Members Speaking in Public	
Time	Work Load Leisure	

Figure Source- East West Seed Knowledge Transfer Team

#### CONTRIBUTION OF EACH INDICATOR TO WOMENS' DISEMPOWERMENT

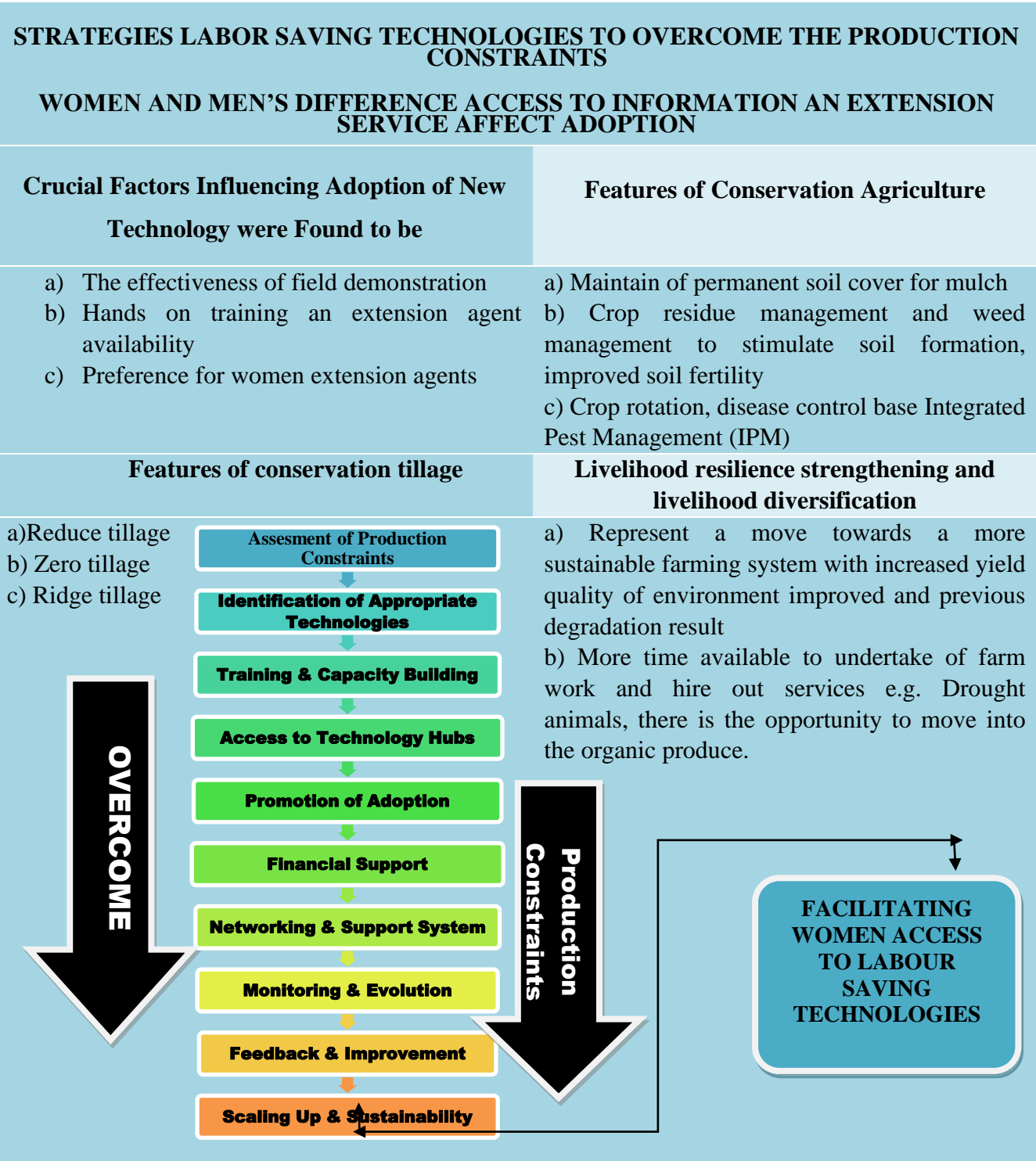
INDICATOR	WOMEN
Input in Productive Decision	41%
Ownership of Assets	5%
Access to & Decisions on Credit	12%
Control Over Use of Income	2%
Group Member	7%
Work Load	33%

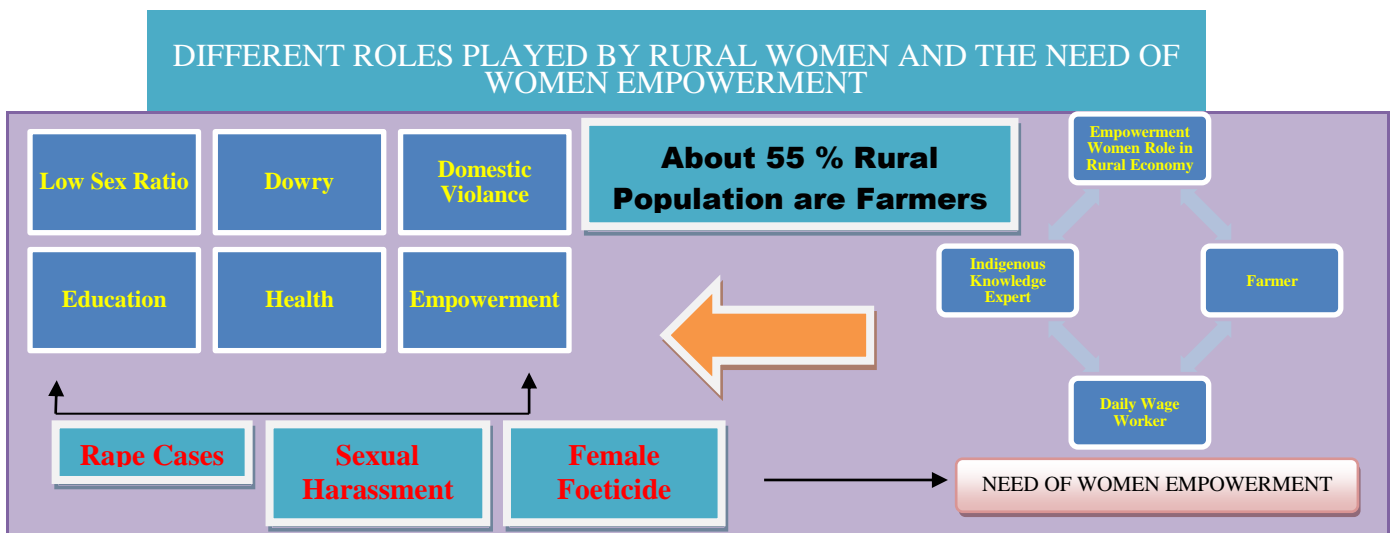
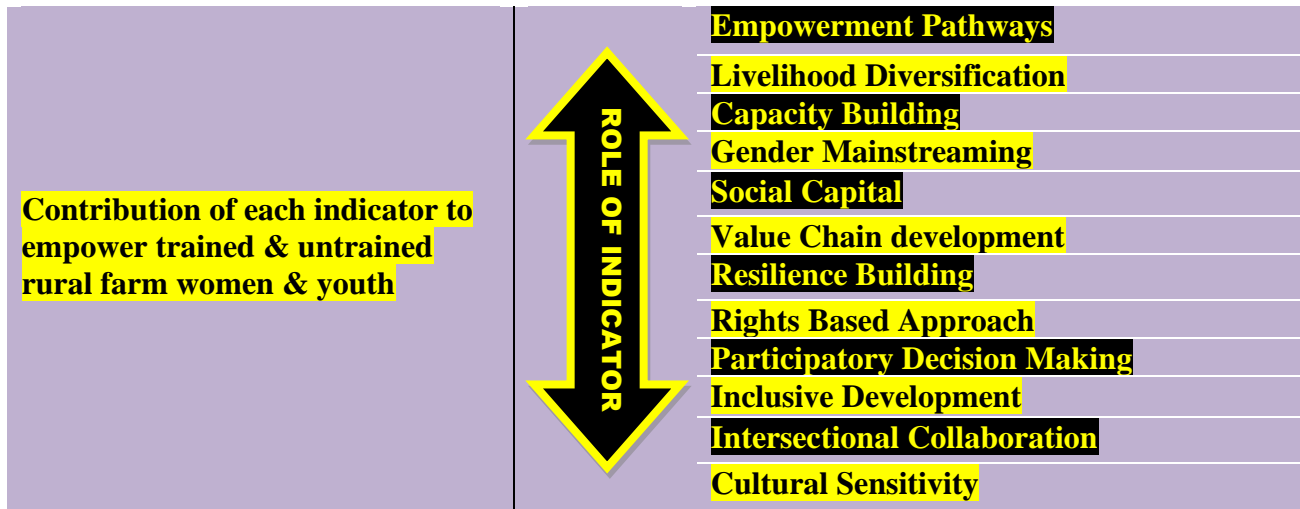


PERCENTAGES

#### 4. Facilitating Women Access to Labor Saving Technologies to Overcome Production Constraints-

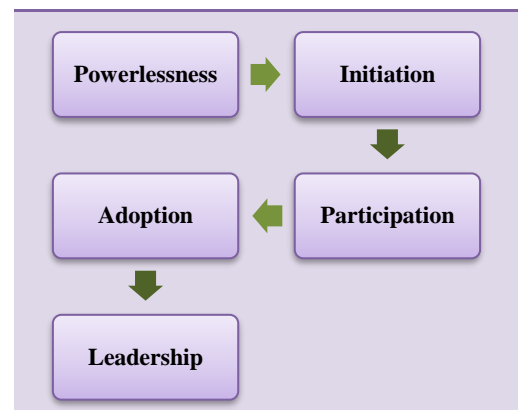
In recent years, research reported that women are more involved in agriculture overtime. Women are not only engaged in domestic household work and also spent time in agricultural sector across all the season. Agriculture operations are time consuming, physically draining along with their burden women face several constraints.





### 5. Stages of Empowerment

There are five steps identified in the process of empowerment. The first two stages powerlessness and initiation are more or less passive. Here, women are not aware of their injustice and do not speak up for their rights and needs. During these stages women are just getting to know that they can achieve a better life for themselves and their families. The remaining three stages i.e. participation, adoption, and leadership are considered active stage of development. Here women are deeply involved and seek interaction with organizational intervention, local agents and other active women in the community. During these stages of development, women are interested in learning how to bring an improved life to themselves and their families.



## 6. Schemes-

<b>WOMEN EMPOWERMENT</b>	
<b>The Govt. of India Implements Several Schemes for Women Empowerment</b>	
<b>BETI BANCHAO BETI PADHAO</b>	
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	In 2015, the Indian government introduced the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme to address concerns of gender discrimination and women empowerment in the country. The name Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao translates to ‘Save the girl child, educate the girl child’. The scheme aims to educate citizens against gender bias and improve efficacy of welfare services for girls. It was launched with an initial funding of Rs. 100 crore.
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve the child sex ratio.</li> <li>2. Ensure gender equality and women empowerment.</li> <li>3. Ensure survival and protection of girl child.</li> <li>4. Encourage education and participation of the girl child.</li> </ol>
<b>ICDS</b>	
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	This scheme was launched in 1975 by Govt. of India.
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To improve the nutritional health status of children below the age of 6yrs. and pregnant lasting others.</li> <li>2. To reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropout.</li> <li>3. To achieve an effective coordination of policy and implementation among various dept. to promote child development.</li> <li>4. To enhance the capacity of the mother to look after the nutritional needs of child through proper health and nutrition education.</li> </ol>
<b>MAHILA SAMRIDHI YOJANA</b>	
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	While empowering minorities, maximum emphasis is required to be given on empowerment of women because they are the weakest link among the minorities. Its launched on 2nd oct.1993.
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To provide economic security to the rural women through training and credit.</li> <li>2. To encourage the women from rural regions, underprivileged classes, and minority groups to adopt an entrepreneurial attitude.</li> </ol>
<b>NIRBHAYA FUND:</b> The Indian government established the ‘Nirbhaya Fund’ to improve the safety and security of women.	
Under this plan the rural women aged above 18 yrs. can open their saving account in the rural post office of their own area with a minimum 4 rupees or its multiplier. On the amount not withdrawn for 1 year. Govt. will deposit 25 of the bonus in the form of encouragement amount with a maximum selling of Rs. 300 every year.	



<b>WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: AGRICULTURE</b>	
<b>MAHILA KISAN SASHAKTIKARAN PARIYOJANA ( MKSP)</b>	
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	It is subcomponent of DAY NRLM ( Deendayal Antyodaya yojana ) National Rural Livelihoods Mission. This scheme is implemented since 2011. To empower women by making systematic investment to enhance their participation and productivity as also create sustainable livelihoods of rural women. Its objective is to strengthen small holder agri. through promotion of sustainable agriculture practice such as community managed sustainable agriculture ( CMSA) non pesticide management (NPM) zero budget natural farming ( ZBNF) pashu sakti model for doorstep animal care services
<b>MISSION FOR INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT OF HORTICULTURE (MIDH)</b>	
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Specific coverage schedule caste, schedule tribe, and women beneficiaries for programmatic interventions. Assistance for horticulture mechanization also available grower association farmers groups / self help groups / women farmers having at least 10 members , who are engaged in cultivation of horticultural crops provide the balanced 60% of the cost of machine and tools is borne by such group.
<b>NATIONAL MISSION FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE ( NMSA)</b>	
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Soil and Water conservation, water use efficiency, soil health management and rainfed area development. At least 50% of the allocation is to be utilized for small marginal farmers at which 30% are women beneficiaries / farmers.
<b>NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY MISSION</b>	
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Scheme launched in 2007 based on recommendation of Agriculture subcommittee of National Development Council (NDC)
<b>BENEFIT</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sustainable increase in the production of targeted crops through area expansion and productivity enhancement and also rise in farm level net income.</li> <li>2. Restoration of soil fertility and productivity at the individual farm level.</li> </ol>
<b>PRADHAN MANTRI MUDRA YOJANA ( PMMY)</b>	
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Provides financial support to women entrepreneurs.
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	To fund the unfunded with the twin of 349 crore enterprises supported during 2015- 2016, nearly 36% (1.25 crore accounts) were for first time borrowers (new entrepreneurs) 79% (2.76 crore women) were funded under PMMY

**Motivating and Attracting Youth in Agriculture:**

- To be job creator not job seeker.
- Youth as Entrepreneurs.
- Youth (including women) as extension agents in paid extension.
- Youth as input provider.

### 7. Social Protection-

Large number of women and youth are engaged in agriculture as subsistent farmers, small scale producers in plantation and agro industries. Youth in rural area are also employed in other sector such as educational tourism and domestic work. Here some activities those are also looked after by rural youth for the development of rural economy. Agricultural programs, health programs for humen and livestocks, community development programs, vocational and training programs etc. Social protection can support rural population by-

- A. Increasing their access to health care and maternity leaves and ensuring they receive adequate dietary aligning them to enjoy at least minimum intake
- B. Pro development and pro gender equality by reducing unpaid work burdens and also promoting equal wages for men and women



### 8. Constraints of Rural Women & Youth in Farm Activities-

1. Lack of technical skill support from resource person.
2. Lack of proper market facilities.
3. Lack of information about latest scheme and service in agriculture.
4. Inadequate irrigation facility.
5. Difficulty in accessing financial resource.
6. Poor Govt. commitment and also lack of awareness about important practices.



## 9. Programme for Skill Development-

### **Skill Training of Rural Youth ( STRY)**

The component aims at training rural youths, rural artisans ( black smiths, carpenters are designing /manufacturing farm implements) including farm women across the country. The training under this component focuses on specific vocational area in agri. and allied sector. Both public and private/non govt. institution including vocational training organization. Youth organizations like nehru yuva kendra are actively involved in the implementation of this programme.

### **Diploma in Agricultural Extension Services For Input Dealers (DAESI)**

Agri-input dealers in the country are a prime source of farm information to the farming community besides the supply of inputs and credit, however majority of these dealers do not have formal agricultural education. In order to build their technical competency in agriculture and to facilitate them to serve the farmer as for their better growth.

### **Establishment of Agri. Clinics and Agri. Business Centre (AC AND ABC)**

1. To supplement efforts of public extension by providing extension and other services
2. To farmers either on payments basis or free basis as per business model of agri. preneur, local needs or affordability of target group of farmers.
3. To create gainful self employment opportunities to unemployed agri. graduate, agri. diploma holders.

### **Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture ( ARYA)**

1. Attract and empower the rural youth in involving them in agri. development.
2. Generate employment and regular flow of income stream for rural youth.
3. Encourage the rural rural youth to purpose farming as a profession.
4. It can reduce migration of youth from rural area.
5. It can solve the food security problem associated with small holding and rising population in country

### **Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram (RYSK)**

The scheme aim to develop the personality and leadership qualities of the youth. It also aim to make the youth engage in national building activities. The scheme beneficiaries are youth in the age group 15-29 yrs. in line with the definition youth in the national youth policy 2014.

### **National Service Scheme and National Youth Crops**

The national services scheme is a public programme implemented by the ministry of youth affairs and sports. The scheme was launched in1969, marketing the birth centenary year of Mahatma Gandhi. It is a voluntary association of young people in colleges and universities. The scheme aims at developing a student's personality through community services.

The motto of NSS is 'NOT ME, BUT YOU'. Each educational institution covered under the scheme has at least one NSS unit comprising around 100 students volunteers by teachers designated as programme office. Each NSS unit adopts a village or slum for taking up its activities. Each NSS volunteer must put in a maximum of 120 hrs. of services per year for two year , a total of 240hrs. of besides , each volunteer must participate in a special camp of 7 days duration , organized by the NSS unit in the adopted village or urban slum. In National Youth Crops youth in the age group of 18 to 25 yrs. are engaged as volunteers to serve up to a maximum of two yrs, in nation building activities.

## 10. Participation of Rural Youth in Agriculture -

Participation or engagement of rural women and youth could upscale the overall agricultural economy in Such a way that it may bring a socio economic revolution. There are multiple precious contributions of rural women and youth in restructuring the dimension of agro based rural economy as follows:

- a) Improved decision making processes could be fostered by greater gender equity along with proper resource allocation within farming households.
- b) Engagement of rural women and youth in agriculture and allied sectors strengthens social cohesion within rural communities.
- c) Transfer of traditional wisdom is ensured alongside modern farming techniques through the collaboration between youth and older generations.
- d) Both women and youth play pivotal roles in integrating small scale farming activities into broader value chains
- e) Sustainable farming practices can be promoted through their active participation. It would promote environmental conservation too.
- f) They leverage information and communication tools which increasing scope of accessibility to modern digital techniques.
- g) They contribute a lot in eradication of poverty and inequality by promoting inclusive agricultural development.
- h) Preservation of cultural heritage could be fostered through their engagement in agricultural practices.
- i) They leads to a more diversified and resilient agricultural sector.
- j) Enthusiastic, energetic youth would inject new charm in to environmental farming communities.
- k) Greater gender equity could be fostered through engagement of rural women with farming community.



### 11. Recommendation for Youth and Women Empowerment through Agriculture-

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Promoting access to education & training
	Policy advocacy & institutional support
	Enhanced access to resources
	Timely monitoring & education
	Fostering gender equality
	Capacity building and skill development
	Access to markets and value addition
	Utilization of technology & innovation
	Financial inclusion & support
	Community engagement & empowerment
	Promotion of entrepreneurship & innovation
	Environmental sustainability through youth & women engagement in agriculture
	Inadequate irrigation facility
	Poor Govt. commitment and also lack of awareness about important practices
Lack of information about latest scheme and service in agriculture	

### IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: SWOT ANALYSIS

#### STRENGTHS

- a) More Confident
- b) Financial Independence
- c) More Innovative and Techno-friendly
- d) Gain Respect
- e) Job Providers
- f) Awareness Increase
- g) Regular Income
- h) More Adaptability
- i) More Assets
- j) Institutional Support
- k) Work Life Balance
- l) Creditability/ Loaning/ Lending Capacity Increase

#### WEAKNESSES

- a) Less Quality Time for Family Members
- b) Social Relations
- c) d) Less Awareness
- d) Guilt
- e) Lack of Legal Awareness
- f) Less Mobility
- g) Low Risk Taking Capacity

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- a) Awareness about Govt. Schemes
- b) Training
- c) More Saving
- d) Industrial Linkage
- e) More Exposure

#### THREATS

- a) Lack of Family Support
- b) Conflicts
- c) Easy Accessibility of Loans

## 12. Authors' Statement-

**Koyel Mukherjee<sup>1</sup>** - Conceptualization; Data Collection & Analysis; Theoretical Discussion; Writing; Reviewing & Editing

**Anweshan Jana<sup>2</sup>** - Conceptualization; Data Collection & Analysis; Designing; Theoretical Discussion; Writing; Reviewing & Editing

**Souvik Das<sup>3</sup>** – Writing; Reviewing & Editing

**Sukumar Gorai<sup>4</sup>** - Writing; Reviewing & Editing

## 13. Conclusion-

Women and youth empowerment are most vital aspects of a country's socio-economic development. They've great contribution in integrated social development. They could be much more strengthened through multifarious interventions of several segments of agricultural sector. But it is high time to manage their talent and expertise with the help of different tools or strategies of Human Resource Management. Rural women and youth are facing multiple challenges in this field of agricultural practice. It happens due to lack of expertise in human resource management. They suffer a lot instead of having ample capabilities. This is not a little issue. Because there are lacuna in the way of optimum resource allocation for them in this particular sector. HRM may bring a new dawn of revolution by altering such weaknesses into prospective strengths. An extensive awareness along with serious initiatives may change the scenario. Rural women should be inspired in such a way that they would prioritize agriculture as their sole occupation other than unproductive household works. Active participation of both strong forces can't be ignored to uplift the overall rural economy. A stable sustainable growth is expected by engaging them in the main course of economic activities. Agriculture has the potential to restructure this whole process with evolving a fruitful outcome. So they should be well empowered through the proper utilization of agriculture and human resource management in integrated way. It would facilitate prolonged socio-economic development.

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