

## **Experiences of Women Beneficiaries of the Rural Backyard Poultry Scheme in the Aligarh District of Uttar Pradesh**

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### **Abstract**

*Unorganised poultry sub-sector generates additional income and improves the nutritional status among the poorest of the poor, especially women. However, until now there has been little support to this sector. Now, however through one of the components 'Rural Backyard Poultry Development' under Centrally Sponsored Scheme 'Poultry Development' assistance is provided for to cover beneficiaries from BPL families. It is one of the steps that have been taken to empower poor women in rural areas and limiting the economic dependence of women on male counterparts of their family. Animal husbandry plays an important role in the empowerment of rural women in general while poultry sector plays the same in particular. The paper tries to communicate the experience about the Rural Backyard Poultry Scheme, which aims to empower rural women with the help of structured interview of women beneficiaries. The study also aims to understand the expectations and suggestions of rural women from the scheme.*

Key words: Poultry Development, Rural Backyard Poultry Scheme, Animal husbandry

### **Introduction**

Women comprise of half of the World's population and produce half of the agricultural products according to the UN report. Still, women suffer from womb to tomb in the male dominated society. They play a key role in the survival of millions of families. Problem of; poverty cannot be tackled without providing opportunities of productive employment to rural women (Sathyavati et al., 2010).

Livestock husbandry is looked at as having a latent potential and boon for employment generation and poverty alleviation in poor resource regions (Picca 2008; Leonard 2006). The generation of income through various operations i.e. rearing, milking, marketing and processing improves the economic viability of poor farmers i.e. landless, marginal and small land-holders in the developing world (Taneja 2008; Ramarao et al., 2005).

In India, the livestock industry is dominated by women, with more than 77 percent of the work involved in taking care of animals carried out by women. Furthermore, 93 percent of people employed in dairying

are women. Livestock rearing helps rural women to come out of poverty by making them financially strong. The massive demand for livestock products especially poultry gives considerable opportunities for the rural women to escape poverty by diversifying livestock production.

Backyard poultry farming (BPF) implies traditional rearing of usually desi chicken (typically 5-15 in numbers) by rural masses especially women folk in the backyard of their households. It is by and large envisioned as a hobby in urban regions but constitute a lifeline in rural areas; providing nutritional security particularly to the children and pregnant women or even remuneration via sale of surplus production. BPF relies on minimal cost inputs in the form of kitchen waste, cheap locally available grains, worms, insects, leaves and other scavenging material. Backyard poultry birds are highly adaptable and resistant to diseases. Male birds are ordinarily consumed for table purpose or used for recreation activities while as the female counterparts are typically retained for egg production.

Thousands of women across rural India are now empowered through backyard poultry, which has

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become as an important means of supplementary income. It plays a role in bringing socioeconomic improvement among the more vulnerable sections of society, especially among tribal populations, landless labourers and women in remote areas.

According to the Indian government's National Action Plan for Egg & Poultry-2022 (NAPEP), backyard poultry accounts for 20 percent of India's poultry sector, which is worth over 800 billion (around £8.5 billion). Across the country, around 30 million farmers are engaged in backyard poultry, estimates the 19<sup>th</sup> Livestock Census of India.

The Government has been emphasising the need for the development of rural women and their empowerment through various schemes. However, five decades of planned development in India have not achieved much for women, especially rural women. Therefore, properly designed government schemes are needed to enhance women's capacity to earn and make them empowered.

Government schemes play an important role in the empowerment of women, especially in rural areas. Steps have been taken to empower poor women in rural areas through the schemes like: Mahila E Haat, Mahilakisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojna, Mahila Utthan Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana etc.

In this background, the research aims to communicate the experience of the rural women about the performance of the government scheme entitled "Rural backyard poultry scheme" in empowering rural women in Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh is a culturally and historically rich State of the country. The study also aims to understand the expectations and suggestions of rural women from the scheme.

The main aim of rural backyard poultry scheme is to generate income and provide nutrition supplementation in form of valuable animal protein by giving assistance in terms of (50 chicks, 425 Rs. for shelter, 3000Rs for maintenance and 20 kg feed for the chicks) to rural women. The scheme provides assistance to the women of BPL group (Schedule castes) only.

### **Research Methodology**

We selected Aligarh, a micro geographical unit from the Upper Ganga plain of Uttar Pradesh for this study. Livestock husbandry is an economically viable, socially acceptable and environmentally sustainable

farming system in the study area of the Aligarh district.

The list of women participants was collected from the Department of Animal Husbandry, Aligarh district. 60 beneficiaries of the scheme were interviewed (qualitative research technique) for assessing the performance of the scheme. Structured interview was conducted. Open ended questions were asked to converse with the respondents and collect elicited data about the usefulness of the scheme under study.

Data is being collected through personal interviews of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (rural women).

Interview covered the discussion on not only the benefits of the scheme but also the suggestions and expectations of rural women from the scheme. They were asked whether they feel some improvement in their financial condition. Is there some improvement in their livelihood and the consumption of food whether they are able to acquire new skills (technical and social) after availing the scheme.

Rural Backyard Poultry Development Scheme is implemented in the two tehsils (Gonda and Jawa) (Department of Animal Husbandry, Aligarh). Four, out of eight villages for Gonda tehsil and two, out of four villages of Jawa tehsil have been covered.

The scheme did not run in the past two years due to corona pandemic so the data collected is for the period 2018-19

### **Results and Discussion**

Across India, backyard poultry farming is increasingly offering remote rural families both food and financial support – and as take-up grows, its effects on marginalised groups, especially women, could prove dramatic. But the scheme of backyard poultry development is not implemented properly in the district. In our study, it is observed that the flow of financial assistance to women is too marginal to enable them to cross the poverty line. It is found that the asset which the government is providing to the rural women i.e. "chicks" is a very fragile asset and it should be replaced with some concrete asset. More than 90% chicks (distributed through the scheme) died due to bad weather condition of the district within about 8-10 days. These chicks and the marginal amount of financial assistance (absent in many cases) which is being provided in the scheme to the rural women is unable to motivate them to come out and engage

themselves in economically viable activities.

In terms of financial aid women got nothing, the chicks died so early and could not become an earning asset for them rather gave them an emotional discontentment. Most of the women consider it the act of sin and have the guilt that they could not save the chicks despite of their efforts. There was no upliftment in their livelihood. The women also reported that conflicts took place with their husband due to the scheme, as the chicks become liability rather than the asset.

As far as skills are concerned, there was no enhancement in their technical skills as no training was provided to them but many women reported that socially they became more active and friendly after availing this scheme as they used to organise meetings because of the scheme. No upliftment in the food standard occurred after availing the scheme so the scheme has zero effect in terms of financial gains and food security gains of rural women. So the scheme is the act of sin which is cheating the innocent women. Many women reported that they denied for taking the chicks which were so young but they were told that 3000 Rs. will be transferred to their account so better take them. No veterinary help training and marketing facilities were provided to the innocent women for earing the chicks was provided, no aid of 3000 Rs. was given the chicks were newly born and of poor quality. The scheme is the act of cruelty both for the chicks and the innocent women.

### Suggestions

- Chicks were to be provided in the month of March – April rather in the month of January-February. Whether conditions should be considered before the distribution of the livestock.
- Instead of chickens, Goats could be distributed. Goats are concrete asset according to the recipients of the scheme in the district.
- Proper monitoring should be done after the distribution of livestock in the concerned area.

- Proper training marketing and veterinary help should be provided to the beneficiaries of the scheme.
- Scheme should be flexilible enough to cover other castes as well as many women who were not from the scheduled caste category showed the desire to avail the benefits of the scheme
- Active participation of rural women would boost their socio-economic recognition, confidence in economic competence, and promulgate sustainable societal growth that could be achieved with proper implementation of the scheme which could provide genuine assistance to the poor rural women.

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