

Impact of Government packages on livelihood sources of suicide prone farmer's families

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Abstract: The present investigation was carried out in Akola, Buldana, Washim, Amravati, Yavatmal and Wardha districts of Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. From each district, 10 families were interviewed who lost their family head during 2001 to 2011. Thus, totally 60 families of suicide victim farmers were selected randomly from 46 villages, covering 9 *Tahsils* of 6 distressed districts of Vidarbha. The study revealed that majority of the selected families were having small to medium family size, 51.67 per cent were marginal dry land holders, moderate fertile land was observed with 55.00 per cent families, crop to crop farming system was noted with 83.66 per cent families. Annual income of 46.67 per cent families was noted between Rs. 20, 001 to 40, 000. Over half (58.33%) of the families have accrued the benefits from Government (State/P.M. Package). Out of the total 60 families, 31 (51.66%) families had accrued the benefits of milch animals from government package, out of them 16 (51.61%) families had sold the milch animals for either economic or non-profitable issues. About the other benefits accrued, the results revealed that well was dug by 11.67 per cent families, followed by power spray pump (8.33%), pipes (6.67%), hoe (3.33%), bullock pair (1.67%) and water pump (1.67%) were taken by the selected families and the quality of animals and all other items were good. Further, the results revealed that among 36.67 per cent families, livelihood sources were changed due to government help/packages. The lack of remunerative prices for the farm produce, high price fluctuations, erratic rainfall over the year and lack of irrigation sources were the severe problems perceived by the families for rural livelihood sustainability in Vidarbha.

Key words: Benefits accrued, Distressed districts, Government package, Livelihood

Introduction

As per the Government record, in six distressed districts of Vidarbha during January 2001 to December 2011 about 8220 farmers committed suicide, out of which 2854 (35%) cases were compensated at Government level. These suicides have happened, by and large, due to yield, price, credit, income and weather uncertainties (Mishra, 2006).

In the context of an alarming increase in the farmers' suicide in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, the Government of Maharashtra announced a Special Package of ₹ 1,075 crore for six districts of Western Vidarbha in December, 2005. Subsequently, Hon'ble Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh toured in the six districts of Vidarbha and announced a comprehensive Package of ₹ 3,750 crore for the development of agriculture and allied sectors in Vidarbha on July, 2006. Total ₹ 165 crore was allotted through this Government Packages for promoting subsidiary income opportunities in six districts of Vidarbha through livestock, cattle, fodder, etc. (Anon., 2008). Now the questions arises that what changes are noticed in the livelihood sources due to this Packages among the families who lost their family head in Vidarbha. Hence, this study was conducted with the objectives to study the socio-economic profile of the selected families who lost the family head in agrarian crisis, to know the benefits accrued by the families of suicide victim farmers from various packages regarding livelihood sources, to know the quality of the compensatory items, to study the change in livelihood sources due to the government help and the problems perceived by the families in betterment of livelihood.

Material and methods

The present investigation was carried out in six distressed districts namely Akola, Buldana, Washim, Amravati, Yavatmal

and Wardha of Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. Exploratory design and analytical social research design were used. The respondents were the households of selected victims who committed suicide during 1st January 2001 to 31st December 2011 and had been declared as legal heirs by district level committee headed by Collector of the respective district and got ₹ 1 lakh compensation. From each district, 10 families were interviewed, who lost their family head during 2001 to 2011. Thus, totally 60 families of suicide victim farmers were selected randomly from 46 villages for fulfilling the study objectives. It covered total 9 *Tahsils* of 6 distressed districts of Vidarbha. Data were collected by personal interview method with the help of structured interview schedule.

Results and discussion

The data with respect to the socio-economic profiles of the selected families of suicidal farmers are furnished in Table 1. Results revealed that 35.00 per cent of the immediate family heads of selected victim farmers were under young age category of up to 35 years. It was followed by one third (33.33%) of family head were found in middle age category of 36 to 50 years and remaining 31.67 per cent were found under old age category of above 50 years. The age profile analysis of the selected families of the victims indicated that more or less in all age group respondents were covered under the study.

While considering the educational level of immediate family head it was observed that out of the total respondents, over one fourth *i.e.*, 28.33 per cent were illiterate and remaining 71.67 per cent were literates. Within the literates 21.67 per cent family head were educated up to high school level, followed by 20.00 per cent of the family head having education up to the

Table 1. Socio-economic profile of the selected families

| Age of the immediate family head (Yrs) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Young (Up to 35) | 21 | 35 |
| Middle (36-50) | 20 | 33.33 |
| Old (Above 50) | 19 | 31.67 |
| Education level of the immediate family head | | |
| Illiterate | 17 | 28.33 |
| Primary school | 12 | 20.00 |
| Middle school | 11 | 18.33 |
| High school | 13 | 21.67 |
| Higher secondary school | 7 | 11.67 |
| Selected victim's Caste category | | |
| Scheduled Caste (SC) | 11 | 18.33 |
| Scheduled Tribe (ST) | 05 | 8.33 |
| Vimukta Jati (VJ-A) | 04 | 6.67 |
| Nomadic Tribe (NT-B) | 03 | 5.00 |
| Nomadic Tribe (NT-C) | 01 | 1.67 |
| Nomadic Tribe (NT-D) | 01 | 1.67 |
| Other Backward Classes (OBC) | 31 | 51.66 |
| Special Backward Class (SBC) | 03 | 5.00 |
| Open | 01 | 1.67 |
| Family Size | | |
| Small (Upto 3) | 35 | 58.33 |
| Medium (4 to 6) | 18 | 30.00 |
| Large (7 to 9) | 6 | 10.00 |
| Very large (Above 9) | 1 | 01.67 |
| Land Holding group | | |
| Marginal (Upto 1.00 ha) | 31* | 51.67 |
| Small (1.01 to 2.00 ha) | 22** | 36.66 |
| Semi-medium (2.01 to 4.00 ha) | 04 | 06.67 |
| Medium (4.01 to 10.00 ha) | 03 | 05.00 |
| Note: 3* + 2** =5 (8.33%) farmers leased out the land | | |
| Type of soil | | |
| Rich fertile | 03 | 05.00 |
| Moderate fertile | 33 | 55.00 |
| Poor/Warkas | 24 | 40.00 |
| Irrigation sources | | |
| No source | 50 | 83.33 |
| Well | 10* | 16.67 |
| (*Out of 10 wells, 7 (70.00%) wells were dug after suicidal death under Govt. scheme) | | |
| Farming system | | |
| Crop-crop | 50 | 83.33 |
| Crop-dairy | 10 | 16.67 |
| Annual income (2011- 12) | | |
| Up to ₹ 20,000 | 19 | 31.67 |
| ₹ 20,001 to 40,000 | 28 | 46.67 |
| ₹ 40,001 to 60,000 | 11 | 18.33 |
| Above ₹ 60,000 | 2 | 3.33 |

primary, 18.33 per cent have middle school and remaining 11.67 per cent had higher secondary school level education and not a single family head possessed college level education. From the results it is concluded that overall education level of the selected families were low.

Caste wise classification of the selected families revealed that over half (51.66%) of the respondents belonged to other backward classes (OBC) category and mostly the Kunbi's from

six distress districts. This was followed by scheduled caste (SC) category (18.33 %), scheduled tribe (ST) 8.33 per cent, Vimukta Jati (VJ-A) category (6.67 %), three families each (5.00%) from Nomadic Tribe (NT- B) and special backward class (SBC) category. Whereas one (3.33%) each of the family from Nomadic Tribe-C (NT- C), Nomadic Tribe-D (NT-D) and open category. The data revealed that over half of the families were from OBC group. Kale (2008) also found that Majority (57.00%) of the suicide cases belonged to OBC category and mostly the Kunbi's from all selected six districts of Vidarbha.

The data regarding family size revealed that over half (58.33%) of the selected families were concentrated in small size family having up to 3 family members. This was followed by 30.00 per cent families under medium (4 to 6) family size. While 10.00 per cent victims' families having large family size (7 to 9 members). Whereas, 1.67 per cent respondents were having very large family size (above 9 members). Thus, it is inferred that majority of the families were having small to medium family size. The similar results were observed by the Kale (2008) and Kachhawah Tejashri (2013).

Over half (51.67%) of the families were under marginal land holding group *i.e.*, having land up to 1.00 ha. This was followed by small (36.66%) land holder (1.01 to 2.00 ha) group. Whereas 6.67 per cent were having semi-medium (2.01 to 4.00 ha) and 5.00 per cent had medium (4.01 to 10.00 ha) land holding. Out of the total 60 families, 5 (8.33%) families leased out their land to others.

The data from Table 1 reveals that over half (55.00%) per cent of the selected families were having moderate fertile soil, followed by 40.00 per cent families with poor fertile soil and 5.00 per cent with rich fertile type of soil.

Majority (83.33%) families did not possess any source to access the irrigation. They solely depended on monsoon rains. While 16.67 per cent families were having open well as irrigation source. Out of the 10 wells 7 (70.00%) wells were dug after suicidal death of family head by the respondents under government scheme. This group of the families now needs electric connections. It is therefore concluded that majority (83.33) of selected families were not having any source to access the irrigation. They were mostly depended on monsoon rains only. The data regarding farming system reveals that majority (83.66%) of the families of suicidal farmers were adopting crop-crop farming system and crop-dairy system adopted by 16.67 per cent families.

Income is a major determinant of the economic status of an individual. Every individual's style of living is decided to a great extent by his income. Low income creates very difficult for an individual to manage affairs of the family (Madan, 1980). Keeping this in view, the annual income was considered for the study. From Table 1 it is observed that 46.67 per cent of the families had annual income between ₹ 20,001 to ₹ 40,000. Whereas, 31.67 per cent having upto ₹ 20,000. This was followed by 18.33 per cent belonging to income group with annual income between ₹ 40,001 to Rs. 60,000 and remaining 3.33 per cent families had annual income of above ₹ 60,000.

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Table 2. Item wise benefits accrued and existing status of milch animals

| Items | Frequency (%) | Sold (Frequency) | Quality |
|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------|
| Buffalo-2 | 18 (30.00) | 9 | Good |
| Cows-2 | 1(1.67) | | |
| Buffalo-1 +Cow-1 | 3(5.00) | 1 | |
| Buffalo-1 | 5(8.33) | 4 | |
| Cow-1 | 3(5.00) | 1 | |
| Goat-10 | 1(1.67) | 1 | |
| | 31(51.66) | 16 (51.61%) | |
| Bullock Pair | 1(1.67) | - | |
| Well | 7(11.67) | - | |
| Seed drill | 4(6.67) | - | |
| Hoe | 2(3.33) | - | |
| Power spray | 5(8.33) | - | |
| Pipes | 4(6.67) | - | |
| Water-Pump | 1(1.67) | - | |

Table 3. Distribution of victim's families according to their changes in livelihood sources after suicidal death

| Sl. No. | Suicidal year livelihood sources | No (%) | Livelihood sources during 2011-12 | Number (%) | % Change |
|---------|----------------------------------|-------------|--|-------------|----------------|
| 1. | Agriculture + Labour | 55 (91.67) | Agriculture + Labour | 35 (58.33) | |
| 2. | Agriculture (only farming) | 05 (8.33) | Agriculture + Labour + Niradhar allowances | 08 (13.34) | 36.67 families |
| 3. | - | - | Agriculture + Labour + Milch animals | 10 (16.67) | |
| 4. | - | - | Agriculture (only farming) | 03 (5.00) | |
| 5. | - | - | Agriculture + Anganwadi Service | 04 (6.66) | |
| | Total | 60 (100.00) | | 60 (100.00) | |

Table 4. Problems perceived by the families in rural livelihood sustainability

| Problems | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| A) Natural resource related | | |
| Erratic rainfall/monsoon vagaries | 55 | 91.67 |
| Lack of irrigation sources | 49 | 81.67 |
| B) Technical problems | | |
| Untimely inputs availability in market | 35 | 58.33 |
| Poor accessibility of extension agencies for technical guidance | 30 | 50.00 |
| Lack of electric connection | 7 | 11.67 |
| C) Financial problems | | |
| Non availability of institutional credit and procedural delay in obtaining farm loan | 20 | 33.33 |
| D) Market and policy problems | | |
| Non remunerative prices and price fluctuations | 55 | 91.66 |
| High cost of inputs | 50 | 83.33 |
| Non availability of work in lean season | 20 | 33.33 |

Benefits accrued by the selected families from Government have been studied and results revealed that over half (58.33%) of the families have accrued the benefits from government/ P.M. Package and the remaining 41.67 per cent had not taken any benefits after suicidal death of the family member. The details about the benefits accrued have been abstracted in Table 2.

It is observed from Table 2 that out of the total 60 families, 31(51.66%) families accrued the benefits of milch animals from government schemes, out of them 16 (51.61%) families sold the milch animals for either economic or non-profitable issues. As per the discussion with most of the families, the quality of animals was good. About the other benefits accrued, the results revealed that wells were dug by 11.67 per cent families, followed by power spray pump (8.33%), pipes (6.67%), hoe (3.33%), bullock pair (1.67%) and water pump (1.67%) were taken by the selected families and the quality of all items was good.

Changes in livelihood sources after suicidal death of family head were studied and the data is depicted in Table 3. During suicidal year majority (91.67%) of the families were engaged in own crop cultivation (Agriculture) plus wage earning as a supportive endeavor and 8.33 per cent were engaged only in own farming. But, after suicidal death of family head most of the families (16.67%) presently availing benefits from milch animals those got them on subsidy from PM Package, 13.34 per cent families got the Niradhar allowances from government of Maharashtra and 6.66 per cent respondents got the service in Anganwadi. Hence, among one third (36.67%) families livelihood sources were changed due to the government help.

The problems faced by the families were classified into the natural resource related, technical, financial, and market and policy related problems and abstracted at a glance in Table 4. Among the natural resource problems, majority (91.67%) of the families expressed that erratic rainfall over the year and lack of irrigation sources (81.67%) were the problems for rural livelihood sustainability in Vidarbha.

Among the technical problems, 58.33 per cent of the respondents expressed about untimely inputs availability in market, particularly chemical fertilizers, followed by poor accessibility of extension agencies for technical guidance (50.00%). The reason might be due to the improper manpower policies and lack of recruitment of required staff at grass root level to give timely suggestions and technical guidance. Whereas, lack of electric connection on newly dug well from PM Package is the problem encountered by 11.67 per cent families.

The most prominent financial problems encountered by the 33.33 per cent families were non-availability of institutional credit and procedural delays in obtaining farm loans. This might be due to the lack of land documents in their names. It was observed that land was in the name of father of the victims and after suicidal death it was still not transferred officially in the name of widows, due to which they were not eligible for getting the institutional loans. In fact transfer of land is also a costly procedure and it requires more charges of stamp duties.

The major market related problems elicited by farmers were lack of remunerative prices for the farm produce and high price fluctuations (91.66%), followed by high cost of inputs (83.33%)

and one third (33.33%) of the families expressed about lack of wages in lean season of farming because of insufficient monsoon rains.

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