Executive Summary

On

UGC- Minor Research Project titled “Feminisation of Poverty: A Study among the Coastal and Tribal Women in Kerala”.

By

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INTRODUCTION

The idea that women bear a disproportionate and growing burden of poverty at a global scale, often encapsulated in the concept of a ‘feminization of poverty’. The term “feminization of poverty” was coined by Diana Pearce in a 1978 article in Urban and Social Change Review in which she argued that poverty was rapidly becoming a female problem and that women accounted for an increasingly large proportion of the economically disadvantaged (Pearce, 1978:28). But the “feminization of poverty” made its major breakthrough into the development lexicon in the 1990s. The three of most common tenets of the feminization of poverty are that women represent a disproportionate percentage of the world’s poor, that this trend is deepening, and that women’s increasing share of poverty is linked with a rising incidence of female household headship (Chant, 2006: 202).

In consideration the degree to which poverty is feminized, we are primarily considered with whether or not women disproportionately experience poverty as compared with men. In India, a few studies are available on different aspects feminization of poverty. Unfortunately, no comprehensive study has been made so far analyzing the situations of poor women in different regions and social groups, particularly in the coastal and tribal areas. India, being a country of diversities the condition of women also differs across regions. Kerala is the state in India with highest sex-ratio and incidence of female-headed households. Proposed study seems to be highly significant as it is the first attempt to analyses feminization of poverty across different regions and marginalized communities in Kerala. Thus, this study aims to fill the research lacunae through exploring the feminization of poverty in Kerala by analyzing the vulnerability of poor women in coastal and tribal regions.

OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the study is to understand the Feminization of poverty in Kerala with a special reference to coastal and tribal Women.
Specific objectives

1. To find out the incidence of poverty among the costal and tribal areas of Kerala.

2. To examine the extent and magnitude of the representation of women among the poor in these regions.

3. To analyses the pattern and the reasons for poverty among women different regions.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND THE APPROACHES

The design adopted in the study is descriptive as it focuses on the description of the process of Feminization of Poverty in Kerala. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative approaches and methods.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

TRIBAL AREA

- There is incidence of poverty among tribes in Kerala.
- The extent or magnitude of poverty among the tribes is more serious and it demands contingent attention.
- Among the poor women are the real victims of poverty
- Women take disproportionate burden of poverty among the tribes of Kerala.
- Female-headed households are on the rise among tribals
- Increasing number of Un-wed mothers
- Increasing sexual exploitation

The Paniyas, Kattunaikers and Adiyans are suffering from severe structural backwardness in terms of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. Therefore, the crucial problems which the tribal communities face today in Wayanadu is not empowerment, rather issues that are more fundamental such as illiteracy, poor health, poverty, and lack of land holdings, unemployment, and cultural diffusion. After understanding all the major issues and the related causes it is evident that all the three tribes are experiencing sheer poverty and women shoulder more burden of poverty than men among the tribes in Kerala.

COASTAL AREA

The analysis of the socio-cultural-economic profile of the respondents and the household members of the coastal area clearly portrays lower socio-economic profile of the
sample area. As the socio-economic conditions like monthly income, the monthly per capita expenditure, the living conditions household amenities etc show their comparative disadvantage therefore it can be concluded that these households are coming under the Below Poverty Line.

By analyzing the status and problems of women in the coastal area we can clearly say that in the households most of the women are taken or given the burden of responsibilities and commitments of their children, parents and the entire household chores. They are facing a lot of challenges from their own households and community itself. Most of the male members are addicted to alcoholism, gambling etc. The women are not getting sufficient education and most of the respondents are married at their early ages. Therefore, the study clearly shows that the position and status of the women in the coastal area is comparatively low than the women in the mainstream and they take more burden of poverty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Put restrictions on age at marriage for each community.
- The policy makers must analyze the process of ‘feminization of poverty’ especially in the coastal areas.
- Protection of women from sexual exploitation and the prevention of creation of dependencies are of prime importance.
- It is important that women are perceived as citizens with specific perspectives, and not as vulnerable victims.
- Women’s livelihoods must be prioritized and earning opportunities must be made available to them.
- The long-term impact of the change in gender balance must be considered in the formulation of all policies and programs, with the view of promoting women’s rights and protecting their interests.