



E-ISSN: 2278-4136

P-ISSN: 2349-8234

www.phytojournal.com

JPP 2021; Sp 10(2): 120-122

Received: 18-01-2021

Accepted: 21-02-2021

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Constraints in functioning of tribal FIGs and suggestions offered for effective functioning of tribal FIGs

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Abstract

Small and marginal tribal farmers situation is worse because of poor marketing system and lack of quality input and technical services. This worse situation can be empowered through group approaches like Farmer Producer Organization (FPO), Farmers Interest Group (FIG) and Self Help Group (SHG). Farmers Interest Group (FIG) is a self managed, independent group of farmers with a shared goal and interest. FIG is usually formed by 15 – 20 members. When the farmers are facilitated to organize groups, trained and guided properly, they can attain tremendous development goal which would eventually make the group self-reliant and self-sufficient. The present study attempts to study the constraints in functioning of tribal FIGs and elucidate suggestions for effective functioning of tribal FIGs. The findings revealed that major constraints faced by the respondents were dominance of one or few individuals (85.00%), lack of skills to resolve conflict (78.00%), limited financial resources (76.00%) and lack of involvement in group activities (73.00%). Majority of the members of tribal FIGs suggested that financial resource should be given by the government or other funding agencies (76.00%), all the members should be involved in group activities (73.00%) and training should be given to all the members of FIGs (70.00%).

Keywords: Tribes, farmer interest groups, functioning of tribal figs, constraints, suggestions

Introduction

Small and marginal farmers are the primary contributors for agricultural production in India and thus 85.00 per cent of farmers possessed less than or about two hectares (Sharma *et al.*, 2011) ^[6] of land. The productivity of small and marginal farmers is superior than that of medium and big farmers, but their economic condition is also worse. They face problems such as poor bargaining power, lack of technical services and insufficient research – extension – farmer linkages and also poor implementation of improved technologies and innovations. Approaches akin to collective action through cooperatives and farmer organizations had been introduced to perk up the scenario of small farmers (Shepherd, 2007) ^[7]. The problems encountered by the small and marginal farmers could be beaten through the model of group approach that empower the farmers by enabling them to access to quality input, technical services and direct marketing of their farm produces, etc. Farmer's organization was seen as a worthy device for mobilizing farmers and put together to comprehend the importance of group action. Around the globe it is evidenced that the profitability in farming would be possible in groups rather than practicing it individually. FIG approach is a business oriented approach which insists on money to money i.e., enabling farmers to market their produce directly through formation of Farmer Producer Organizations (Mathuabirami *et al.* 2020) ^[3]. Patil *et al.* (2014) ^[5] had studied the impact of collective action of farmers through FIG (Farmer Interest Group) and reported that cost of cultivation was reduced through sharing inputs and also it will lead to gain additional profit. Many governmental and Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) had been trying to organize farmers into groups and put together them into the advancement process by actively involving them in production, transfer of technology, planning, marketing, implementing and monitoring of different developmental projects on agriculture and rural development.

Tribes reside mostly in hilly areas i.e., major forest areas of our country which region is favorable for crop cultivation and yield most valuable forest produces. Tribal regions perform poorly in terms of infrastructure, returns from agriculture and almost all human development indicators. Tribal population of India mostly depends on forest resources and agriculture. Tribes are blessed with ample of forest resources like timber, wood oil, honey, bee wax, resins,

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etc., for improving their livelihood. Due to inaccessible to outer world they are not receiving fair price for their produce. FIG is an innovative approach with an idea to develop a value chain for the produces, establish brand value and link the farmers with market and consumers. It was promoted with the purpose of collectivizing production especially at small holder level and empower them for better bargaining power. Tribal FIGs will play a unique role in improving economic status of tribal people through which they can access credit, market facilities and value-added forest produce (Mathuabirami and Kalaivani, 2020) [4]. To overcome this situation FIG was established through which they can access to credit, value addition of forest produce and market facilities. They were facing problems in getting quality inputs and good price for their produce, timely technical advice for production, protection, harvesting aspects of crop cultivation. Hence, they can be organized into a group with the support of institution. The Government of India with the support of state government were implementing different schemes for the welfare of tribal people. Tribal FIGs would play a unique role in improving economic status of tribal people. The study was attempted with specific objective to study the constraints in functioning of tribal FIGs and elucidate suggestions for effective functioning of tribal FIGs.

Materials and methods

The research design adopted for this study is ex-post-factodesign. Erode district is purposively selected for conducting study. MYRADA Erode project has been assigned as resource agency for promotion of one FPO in Erode district of Tamil Nadu supported under Tamil Nadu Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (TNSFAC) to increase the income level of the farmers by building knowledge and facilitating supply inputs and linking to markets for produces. MYRADA KVK had planned to establish FPO through promoting Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs) concept among tribes. Dimbam Dhaniya Farmer Producer Company Limited (DDFPCL) comprises of 62 FIGs covering 27 villages. FIGs were federated into DDFPCL. Out of these 27 villages, nine villages were dominated by tribes namely Chilumaiedoddi, Devanatham, Pudhukadu, Guliyada, Sujjalakare, Kottamalam, Bejjalatti, Galidimbam, Ittarai. Total of four Tribal FIGs were randomly selected from 16 Tribal FIGs belonged to Dhimbam Dhaniya Farmer Producer Company Limited (DDFPCL) which had resulted in a sample size of 100 by employing whole sampling method. A well-structured interview schedule was prepared to collect the data and percentage analysis was used for analysing the collected data.

Table 1: Details of selected Tribal FIGs

S.No.	Name of the Village	Name of the FIG	No. of members
1	Guliyada	KadehattiMuniyappan FIG	15
2		Periyasamyaiyyan FIG	16
3	Sujjalakare	Sri Karppusamy FIG	25
4	Kottamalam	Sri Magaliamman FIG	24
5	Ittari	Ilandhalir FIG	20
Total			100

Results and Discussion

Constraints faced by the respondents in functioning of Tribal FIGs

The following are the constraints reported by the respondents during the survey. The distribution of respondents according to their constraints faced in the functioning of Tribal FIGs is furnished in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents based on their constraints faced as members of tribal FIGs, (n=100)

S.No.	Constraints	No.*	Per cent
1	Dominance of one or few individuals	85	85.00
2	Lack of understanding of FIG concept	46	46.00
3	Lack of skills to resolve conflict	78	78.00
4	Limited financial resources	76	76.00
5	Poor internal communication	36	36.00
6	Lack of involvement in group activities	73	73.00
7	Lack of monitoring of group activities	63	63.00
8	Insufficient training	70	70.00
9	Training at farer place	54	54.00
10	Lack of government interventions	65	65.00
11	Lack of Cooperation	46	46.00

*Multiple responses obtained

From Table 2 it could be seen that 85.00 per cent of the members of tribal FIGs had admitted that the major constraint faced by them was dominance of one or few individuals. This might be due to the autocratic style of leadership and the domination of highly educated members. Hence, they were not involved in decision making and their ideas were

neglected and not allowed to attend the training. More than three fourth of the tribal FIG members had faced constrains like lack of skills to resolve conflict (78.00%) and limited financial resources (76.00%) followed by lack of involvement in group activities (73.00%). Mostly conflicts did not arise in tribal FIG but if any conflict arises in future, the members would face struggles in resolving the conflict. All the FIGs are now ready to start business enterprise but due to lack of fund, only two FIGs had started their own enterprise. Insufficient training was also a major constraint faced by 70.00 per cent of the respondents. This is due to outstation training attended only by FIG leaders accompanied by two to three persons who were highly educated. Because of lack of funds, others were unable to attend training. About three fifth of the respondents had admitted that they were facing constraints such as lack of government interventions (65.00%) and lack of monitoring of group activities (63.00%). Due to lack of staff, they were unable to monitor the tribal FIG activities completely. Lack of cooperation and lack of understanding of FIG concept each were faced by less than half of the respondents (46.00%). Culture is the major factor that inhibits cooperation among the members of FIGs. Some members of tribal FIGs thought that FIG is meant for receiving credit. They didn't completely understand the concept of FIG. Only few respondents (36.00%) admitted that there was poor internal communication. Medium level of communication had taken place in groups. Introvert and insecure people had not participated in communication. The present findings are in line with the findings of Kavin and Divya (2019) [2].

Suggestions for the effective functioning of Tribal FIGs

The respondents were further enquired to offer suggestions for effective functioning of their FIG. The distribution of

respondents based on their suggestions for effective functioning of Tribal FIGs is furnished in Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents based on their suggestions for effective functioning of tribal FIGs, (n=100)

S.No.	Suggestions	No.*	Per cent
1	Cooperation among all the members	46	46.00
2	Training for all the members	70	70.00
3	Training at local place	54	54.00
4	FIG concept should be understood by all the members	46	46.00
5	Financial support should be given by funding agency	76	76.00
6	Improved Communication	36	36.00
7	Monitoring of FIGs activities by resource institution/ fundingagency	63	63.00
8	Involvement of all the members in group activities	73	73.00
9	Government intervention	65	65.00

*Multiple responses obtained

From Table 3 it could be seen that more than three fourth of the members of tribal FIGs (76.00%) had suggested that required financial resource should be given by the government or other funding agencies to carry out FIG's activities properly. Business oriented activities are inhibited due to lack of fund. This can be overcome through providing required fund for all the FIGs. More than 70.00 per cent of the respondents (73.00%) suggested that all the members should involve in group activities voluntarily. Less than three fourth of the members of tribal FIGs (70.00%) had suggested that training should be given to all the members of FIGs irrespective of their position in FIGs and educational status. Three fifth of the members of tribal FIGs (65.00%) reported that the government intervention is very much essential for group activities followed by less than three fifth of the members of tribal FIGs (63.00%) who had admitted that FIG activities should be regularly monitored by CEO, Board of directors of FPO and resource institution. More than half of the members of tribal FIGs elucidated the suggestions to have training at local place (54.00%) and understanding of FIG concept by all the members (46.00%). If trainings are conducted in outstation, only some members may be able to attend training and hence suggested to conduct training at the residential areas of members. A separate session can be conducted to make the members of tribal FIGs to understand the concept of FIGs and also to increase cooperative spirit among the members of tribal FIGs. Cooperation of all the members was suggested by 46.00 per cent of the respondents. One third of the members of tribal FIGs (36.00%) had recommended improving communication among all the members of tribal FIGs. The present findings are supported with the findings of Femina (2003) ^[1].

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicated that need based and sufficient number of trainings based on interest of the tribal people should be conducted at their residence for improving effectiveness and performance of tribal FIGs. Entrepreneurial activities could be promoted through strengthening accessibility to credit for aspiring tribal FIGs and also incentives are to be given for successful tribal FIGs in terms of awards / rewards in order to promote the effective functioning of tribal FIGs. The constraints faced and suggestions offered by the respondents need to be considered by the policy makers so as to make corrections in the existing programmes. This may pave way for making programmes more sustainable in future.

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