



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Arts

REBUILDING THE SCRATCHED LIVES AFTER FLOOD FURY-2018: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

KEY WORDS: Rainfall, destruction, disaster management, empowerment

Dr.A.N.Gayathri

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Sociology, FMKMC College Madikeri, Kodagu (Dist.).

ABSTRACT

Kodagu is a hilly region most famous for its coffee beans, martial prowess and, of course, for being the birthplace of the river Cauvery that is the lifeline for a million of farmers in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Over the last decade Kodagu has also seen a great inflow of tourists, with city slickers from Bangalore and other urban centred visiting for weekends. The number of homestays in Kodagu has increased to keep up with the tourists and, as of now, every other coffee estate in the region doubles up as a home stay. Monsoon arrived in 2018, received heavy downpours, leading to landslides. Many lost their home in the flood when the Cauvery River breached banks and engulfed nearby villages. The heavy downpours were debilitating for the people who depend on farming. The paper throws light on women who lost everything in natural disaster turn as entrepreneurs to rebuild their lives from the scratch. After the floods hits Kodagu is in the process of rebuilding their lives itself.

INTRODUCTION:

Kodagu, the small hilly district in Karnataka known as the coffee capital of India, is no stranger to heavy showers. The district is indeed used to heavy rains, especially when the Southwest monsoons traverses it during its journey across the Indian subcontinent, thus, when heavy rains battered the region in June to August 2018, there was an apprehension about loss of good coffee crop (Karnataka grows more than 50 per cent of India's Coffee) but no one was thinking of extensive damage, lesser still about entire villages being consumed by landslides. Due to heavy rain fall 2,568 houses were fully, severely and some are partially destroyed; while 6,996 persons were in 51 relief centres. Further, 805 kilometre of highway roads and 1,792 km of village roads were damaged (Gayathri, 2019). As entire hillsides came crashing down, many people fled their houses with only clothes on their backs. They moved to relief centres set up by government and civil society organizations etc. In some villages of the district, orders passed by the officials to mandatory evacuation. Disaster management teams from the state government and central government, besides local volunteers, Non Governmental Organizations, were involved in the rescue and evacuation operations.

An overwhelming amount of relief materials that flooded these centres, including food, clothes, footwear and even books and uniforms for children. Staff of governments and civil society organizations, students as well as individuals worked tirelessly to ensure the smooth conduct of these relief camps. Those who were involved in the relief operations feel that the quality of rescue operations minimised the loss of human lives compared to the scale of the disaster.

However, a year after the disaster, lives of the affected families continue to be in chaos. Coffee, pepper and cardamom are the main crops of most agricultural families in this district. Many of these families lost means of their livelihood; several pieces of lands have been completely wiped out from heavy rain. For such families, it is impossible to return to their agriculture activities. Some others lands are filled with six to eight feet of detritus and soil. The trees in the plantations some are uprooted. The streams and water sources have been filled up with silt. Landslides wiped out with the natural springs in several parts. After the relief camps closed, people whose houses were damaged and destroyed in the disaster, moved to rented houses in nearby towns and villages.

Women empowerment:

Economic empowerment increases women's access to formal government programs, mobility outside the house, economic independence and purchasing power. Policy makers are suggested that to support job training to aid in entrance in the formal markets. One recommendation is to provide more

formal education and training opportunities for women that would allow them for higher bargaining power in the home. They would have more access to higher wages for work; and as a result of this, make it easier for women to get a job in the market. Women's economic empowerment refers to the ability for women to enjoy their right to control and benefit from the resources, assets, income and their own time, as well as the ability to risk management and improve their economic status and well being.

Women's empowerment and achieving gender equality is essential for our society to ensure the sustainable development of the country. Many world leaders and scholars have argued that sustainable development is impossible without gender equality and women's empowerment. Sustainable development accepts environmental protection, social and economic development, and without women empowerment, women wouldn't feel equally important to the process of development as men. Only acknowledging men's participation will not be beneficial to sustainable development. In the context of women and development, empowerment must include more choices for women to make on their own. Without gender equality and empowerment, the country could not be just, and social change wouldn't occur.

Rebuild lives from the scratch:

Women who lost everything in natural disaster turn as entrepreneurs to rebuild their lives from the scratch. After the floods hits Kodagu is in the process of rebuilding their lives itself. While help poured in from all the sides soon after the tragedy, a few likeminded organizations have decided to stay back and continue their active support and help people to rebuild their lives.

Among these, the Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan, Kodagu Kendra who takes a consistent and active part in the development of life and culture at Coorg organized the activities and intentions of project Coorg and in the early October, 2018, extended a hand to help in the efforts undertaken. Firstly, the relief and rehabilitation work done in this regard has been in the town of Kalur, Coorg. Kalur is a taluk located at 17 km to the west of the District Headquarters Madikeri. It was one of the most affected areas of the natural disaster 2018. Being a predominantly agricultural society, the community suffered tremendously due to the destruction of the estates and farms, leaving many women and men without a source of income.

The first of the relief and rehabilitation work undertaken in this regard was in the town of Kalur, a taluk located 17 km to the west of the district headquarters Madikeri. It was one of the most affected areas during the disaster. Being a predominantly agricultural society, the community here suffered tremendously due to the destruction of the estates

and farms, leaving many women and men without a source of income. Besides, several inhabitants of the place were contemplating abandoning their home and resettling elsewhere.

Bharathiya Vidya bhavan met the women of Kalur village in this regard and slowly but steadily the women of the village began to express interest in expanding their skills and learning new ones. In this pursuit of deciding on the skills that could be taught to these women, after interacting with the women that preparation of masalas and training in stitching would be ideally suited to them as they were not absolutely alien them. The members of project Coorg wasted no time in publicising on social media about their need for finances to buy sewing machines and ingredients for the masalas. They also began to search for trainers who would not only them in the chosen skills but also understand the trauma that the women they would train have undergone due to the disaster, and therefore be patient with them(Nayana 2019).

In less than two months after the disaster 26 women of Kalur enrolled for tailoring classes. Twenty six sewing machines were transported to Kalur village owing to the magnificence of several contributors from all over India. They had responded to the appeals sent to them. The training in masalas preparation began with another lady from Udipi district of Karnataka agreeing to train the women who had opted for it. Apart from the masalas, pickles and papads, the women of Kalur were also trained in making chocolates. Both classes taught the women certain sets of skills that they might use individually or as part of the Yashasvi program of Bhavan. Besides, during the training period the women and their families had to be supported as they were lacking in income.

In light of this, Project Coorg launched the first of many efforts towards the rebuilding of lives affected from the (2018) Kodagu disaster by starting a programme called Yashasvi. With the spirit of overcoming the adversities and coming out victorious, this program intends to help the women of this community find alternate sources of income through skill development and entrepreneurship. It is established on the understanding that the rebuilding of lives is done through the rebuilding of livelihoods. Under Yashasvi, tailoring and commercial food processing units have been set up. Both units teach the women certain sets of skills that they may use individually or as part of the Yashasvi program.

CONCLUSION:

Scholars agree that women's empowerment plays a huge role in development and is one of the significant contributions of development and risk management. Without the equal inclusion of women in development, women would not be able to benefit or contribute to the development of the country. These works of the active organizations they are trying to rebuild their lives from the scratch.

REFERENCES:

1. Chakrabarti and Biswas (2008): Women Empowerment, Household Condition and Personal Characteristics: Their Interdependencies in Developing Countries. Discussion Paper ERU/2008-01
2. Gayathri.A.N. (2017) 'Climate Change: Its impact on coffee production of Coorg', Periex Indian Journal of Research, vol-06, Issue- 06/2017, ISSN: 2250-1991, Peer Reviewed and refereed International Journal.
3. Gayathri.A.N. (2019), "Coping with Natural Disasters", Strategies for disaster Management: A Multidisciplinary approach, 2019. ISBN: 978-81-933447-9-8. Pp-15-17.
4. Kabeer, N. 2001. "Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment in Discussing Women's Empowerment- Theory and Practice", SIDA Studies no 3. Stockholm: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.
5. Nayana, K.S. (2019), "The Role of NGO in disaster management", conference Proceedings on Strategies for disaster management: A multidisciplinary approach, CFGC, Madikeri.
6. Shah, M.M. "Sustainable Development". Science Direct. Encyclopaedia of Ecology.
7. Sridevi, T.O. (2005): "Empowerment of Women-A Systematic Analysis" IDP Discussion Paper. U.N.D.P. (1990, 1995, 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2007-08): Human Development Report.
8. World Economic Forum (2005): Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap. <http://in.rediff.com/money/2005/may/17wef.html>.