

## Utility of Farm Women Training Programmes in Livelihood Security

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### ABSTRACT

*Knowledge is power. Addition to knowledge or improvement in existing knowledge and skill base of farmers is another tool for empowering the farmers. Experiences show that the knowledge and skill acquisition programmes and mechanisms have largely been tilted against the male farmers. A study on utility of Farm Women Training Centre's (FWTC) training programmes was carried out with a sample of 110 women trainees who had undergone training on 3 subject matter areas at FWTC, AAU, Jorhat, covering 4 districts of Assam. Among 8 numbers of utility dimensions, it was found that the trainees thought the trainings to be very much useful for technical knowledge gain, technical skill development, performing day-to-day activities with the help of knowledge gain and skill developed during the training, fulfilling their needs and benefiting from group interactions among the trainees during trainings. Again, according to utility scores secured by trainees, the trainings were useful for them at medium level. Further, some personal and socio-economic characteristics of trainees were found to have positive and significant relationships with utility of training programmes. The study clearly brings out the reality of specifically designed farm women training programmes in empowerment and thereby contributing to the livelihood security.*

**Key words :** Empowering; Farm enterprise; Training exposure; Aspiration;

Agriculture constitutes the primary source of livelihood and engagement for seventy-five per cent people of our country. Farming is considered here as a family occupation and women of these families are also partners in crop and food production. The employment profile in India as per 1991 census indicated that 81.23 per cent of all economically active women are engaged in agriculture and agro-based enterprises (Chhabra, 1998). The State of Assam has a population of 26.64 million with a density of 340 persons /km<sup>2</sup> (Assam Human Development Report, 2003). The literacy rate in the state is 64.28 %. Women constitute 48.24 % of the total population with 56.03 % literacy (2001 census). Out of 87.00 % rural population, about 75.00 % of them depends on agriculture and allied activities for livelihood. These people are mainly smallholders. The average operational landholding is 1.17 ha in the plains. The highest operational landholding size is about 2 ha in the hills. Out of 26.83 lakhs farm families, 83.13 % constitute small and marginal farmers. Rice is the staple food in the state. Traditionally rice farming has been practiced in about 2.7 million ha of available floodplains and yields about 4.00 million t of rice.

Female work participation rate in Assam is only 18.07 %. Despite the fact that women play multi-dimensional role in the production chain from seed selection to post-harvesting, their works as producer neither is reflected in statistics nor recognized by the society. But today, with

the changing situation, the potentialities of farm women have been duly recognized and several programmes of training were introduced in India during the past few years so as to make them direct recipient of scientific information. In this background, with a view to uplift the socio-economics status of rural women, the State Department of Agriculture, Assam Agricultural University and the World Bank felt the need of training of rural women in scientific agriculture and allied subjects with two broad objectives, viz., to develop knowledge and skills of rural women in scientific agriculture and its allied branches in order to facilitate them to improve their socio-economic condition as well as their quality of life and secondly, to enable the trained farm women in turn to organize similar training in their respective villages and other NGOs to develop awareness and skills among their fellow farm women. These trainings have been organized since July, 1996 in the FWTC, which is located at the Assam Agricultural University headquarter. Since July, 1996 to July 1998, the FWTC have conducted 28 numbers of trainings in 12 subject matter areas of 5 and 10 days duration viz., farm and home management, horticulture, mushroom cultivation, improved agricultural practices, scientific method of food grain storage, animal husbandry, bee keeping, sericulture, fish farming, resource management, preservation of fruit and vegetables, nutritious snacks, organization of Mahila Samittee, mother

and child care, health care. Now the questions have arisen after implementation of training programmes as how far the trainings are been useful for the women and what are the personal and socio-economic characteristics of trainees that affects their perception about utility of trainings. In order to understand and explain the above queries, the present study was carried out.

## METHODOLOGY

The FWTC has conducted altogether twenty eight (28) training programmes up to July 1998 covering twelve (12) subject matter areas and six hundred eighty eight (688) nos. of trainees selected from all twenty three (23) districts of Assam. A purposive sampling technique was followed for selection of three subject matter areas in which the maximum numbers of trainings were held. The selected subject matter areas are farm and home management (12), mushroom cultivation (3) and horticulture (3). Out of 23 districts of the state, 4 districts were selected purposively which represent the trainees who had undergone training during July 1996 to July 1998 on 3 selected areas of training. Out of these 4 selected districts, 2 districts represent Central Brahmaputra Valley Zone (CBVZ) viz. Nagaon & Morigaon and rest two represents Upper Brahmaputra Valley Zone (UBVZ) viz. Jorhat & Golahat. From 119 trained farm women who have undergone training in 3 subject matter areas from 4 districts, 110 were personally interviewed for the study. This sample constitutes 25.00 percent of the total 432 trained farm women in the 3 selected areas of training from the whole state. Utility of training programmes was operationalized as the opinion of the trained farm women about the usefulness of the training programmes in serving its various purposes as per the selected utility dimensions. Utility was studied on three point's continuum with 2, 1, and 0, scores following procedure used by Upadhyay and Hansra (1982) with slight modification. The responses were collected against each of the response category. Further, the utility scores of each respondent were worked out by summing up the scores obtained on eight (8) dimensions of this variable. On the basis of total scores obtained by the respondent, they were classified into three (3) categories viz. low, medium and high using the procedure followed by Dasgupta (1989). A total of 12 variables have been selected after reviewing relevant literatures and consulting extension scientists of Assam Agricultural University assuming that these personal and socio-economic characteristics of trainees will affect their opinion about utility of trainings. For finding out the relationship between utility of training and personal & socio-economic characteristics of the trainees, Karl Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient was used and to test the significance of observed correlation

co-efficient, "Fisher's t-test" was used. The calculated t-values were compared with table values of 't' at 5 and 1 percent level of probability.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Utility of training* : A perusal of Table 1 reveal that majority of the respondent (70.19%) were of the opinion that the training programme was very much useful for acquiring various information related to scientific agriculture and its allied branches. 57.27 percent respondents considered the training programme to be very much useful for making them more capable of performing various practices related to scientific agriculture and its allied branches. It is evident that, skill development was less emphasized over knowledge gain during training.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents on the basis of responses on various dimensions of utility of the training programmes

S. No.	Dimension	Response category	Freq.	%
1.	Usefulness in technical knowledge gain	Very much useful	78	70.91
		Useful	32	29.09
		Not at all useful	-	-
2.	Usefulness in technical skill development	Very much useful	63	57.27
		Useful	47	42.73
		Not at all useful	-	-
3.	Extent of fulfillment of needs	Highly fulfilled	60	54.55
		Partially fulfilled	50	45.45
		Not at all fulfilled	-	-
4.	Benefit from group interactions among the trainees during training	Highly benefited	58	52.73
		Benefited	41	37.27
		Not at all benefited	11	10.00
5.	Usefulness of training experience in day-to-day activities	Very much useful	57	51.82
		Useful	49	44.52
		Not at all useful	4	3.66
6.	Usefulness of training experience for undertaking economic oriented agricultural projects	Very much useful	2	1.82
		Useful	36	32.73
		Not at all useful	72	65.45
7.	Usefulness in getting support from credit organizations for economic activities	Very much useful	-	-
		Useful	14	12.73
		Not at all useful	96	87.27
8.	Helpfulness in organizing similar training in their respective villages	Very much helpful	9	8.18
		Helpful	11	10.00
		Not at all helpful	90	81.82

Regarding extent of fulfillment of needs, more than half of the respondents (54.55%) thought that the training had highly fulfilled their needs and rest of them (45.45%) opined that it had partially fulfilled their needs. Further, 52.73 percent of the respondent thought they were highly benefited from group interaction among themselves during training. Ten percent (10%) expressed that they were not at all benefited. So it can be said that provisions for interactions among them during different training session could be enhanced to provide scope for developing better

understanding of the subjects taught and more structured interactions are needed. A large number of respondents (51.82%) also felt that training experience was “very much useful” in their day to day activities, where as, 44.52 percent thought it is “useful” for that purpose. As the needs of some respondents (45.45%) found to be partially fulfilled by the training, probably if the trainees were selected on the basis of their needs, the applicability will increase which will further enhance level of satisfaction.

The training experiences were not at all useful for the respondents (65.45%) for undertaking economic oriented agriculture projects. The training experience was also not at all useful (87.27%) for attracting financial support from credit organizations for economic activities. Lastly, the training was not at all helpful (81.82%) for organizing similar training in their respective villages. Therefore, the training executing agency should further redesign the courses with necessary changes in course contents for making the training programme more useful for the farm women (Table 1).

Table 2. Distribution of respondents on various levels of utility of the training programmes

Category	Score range	Frequency of respondents	Mean	S.D.
Low	4.00 - 6.15	24 (21.82)	8.49	2.33
Medium	6.16 - 10.82	74 (67.27)		
High	10.83 - 15.00	12 (10.91)		
		110 (100.00)		

(Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage)

The results reveal that the scores secured by the respondents varied from minimum of 4.00 to maximum of 15.00 with mean 8.49 & S.D. 2.33. Further, 21.82, 67.27 & 10.91 percent of the respondents belong to low, medium & high levels of utility of training programme respectively. The findings show that the trainings were useful in serving its various purposes at medium level (Table 2). This result might be due to the fact that, the trainings were not fully able to address the various expectations of the trainees. This provides enough scope for taking steps for enhancing the utility of trainings.

Table 3. Relationship between utility and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

S.No.	Variable	'r' value	't' value
1.	Age	0.045 <sup>NS</sup>	0.468
2.	Educational level	0.491**	5.857
3.	Family size	-0.110 <sup>NS</sup>	1.154
4.	Annual family income	0.451**	5.883
5.	Size of operational land holding of the family	0.414**	4.726
6.	Social participation	0.367**	4.419
7.	Mass-media exposure	0.224*	2.451
8.	Training exposure	0.542**	7.456
9.	Economic motivation	0.162 <sup>NS</sup>	1.706
10.	Achievement motivation	0.169 <sup>NS</sup>	1.781
11.	Extent of participation of decision making	0.233*	2.489
12.	Level of aspiration for economic independence	0.465**	5.458

#### *Relationships between utility & characteristics of trainees:*

The results of Table 3 show that there is positive & significant correlation of educational level, annual family income, size of operational land holding of the family, social participation, training exposure & level of aspiration for economic independence with utility of training programme at 0.01 level of probability. Findings further reveal that mass media exposure & extent of participation in decision-making were positively correlated with utility of training programmes & were significant at 0.05 level of probability. It is clear from the findings that with the increase in educational level, annual family income, size of operational land holding of the family, social participation, training exposure, level of aspiration for economic independence, mass media exposure & extent of participation in decision-making, the utility of training also increases. Therefore, the training executing agency should keep in view the characteristics while selecting trainees.

## CONCLUSION

On the other hand, age, economic motivation, achievement motivation and family size had no relationship with utility of training programmes.

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