

Disseminating Information among members of livestock based Women Self Help Groups (WSHGs) through Mobile telephony in India

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Livestock resources are important asset for women, who comprise 43 per cent of the agricultural labor force in developing countries. Though many technologies for better productivity exist, the information acquisition of women is very poor and adoption rates remain low resulting in poor productivity thus affecting their livelihood security. Use of Information Communication Technologies (ICT), especially mobile telephony has shown high potential to reach out women farmers through its three fold communication functions of provision, co-ordination and support of information towards effective dissemination and knowledge transfer. In this regard, a study was conducted in 2013 among 90 women selected randomly out of 15 WSHGs for whom livestock rearing is an important income generating activity, to assess the utilization pattern and effectiveness of mobile telephony dissemination of information. It was found that out of the WSHG members having access to mobile phones, 59 per cent had mobile ownership and SMS facility was primarily used by half of the members and significant number of women were using mobiles for financial transactions, veterinary services and market information. In spite of little formal education among the women, text SMS was the preferred mode to receive information. However, Information was broadcasted in two consecutive cycles for reinforced communication in two forms i.e. both voice and text SMS, designed according to the information gaps assessed. Significant difference with respect to knowledge was observed among the members of SHGs during pre and post SMS broadcast, indicating potential role of mobile telephony in information dissemination. Study confirmed that mobile telephony has significant role in transferring needful information towards enhancing knowledge and awareness among the women farmer groups, who often find it difficult to travel far to attend trainings.

Key Words: Dissemination, ICT, India, Mobile telephony, WSHG