

## The role of rural women in agricultural activities

Sharareh Khodamoradi<sup>1</sup> and Mohammad Abedi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Agricultural Extension Education, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

<sup>2</sup> Department of Agricultural Management, Islamic Azad University, Qaemshahr Branch, Iran

\*Corresponding author: [abedi114@yahoo.com](mailto:abedi114@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** Women form great part of total workforce that needed for agriculture part at universe, as one of the intangible factors at agriculture economy. So, statistics that was represented in relation to extent of women's activity is very lower than real extent. Because in this statistics, mostly, seasonal jobs, part time job, no wage job and their housekeeping activities, aren't considered. Rural women, have different roles and duties such as husband, mother, crops producer, participate at ranching activities, planting, maintaining, harvesting, processing, marketing and preparing food. Rural women maybe venturing to culture cash products, while cultivating subsistence products and if they have no farm land, they have to work for others instead receiving wage. We can consider such women as agriculture propagator, production expert and even in some case as policy maker. Other than activity at agriculture field, women's participation at rural development is critical and is considered in order to supply adequate and needed food.

[Sharareh Khodamoradi and Mohammad Abedi. **The role of rural women in agricultural activities.** Life Science Journal. 2011;8(2):340-344] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>.

**Keywords:** Rural women, Agriculture

### Introduction:

A positive relationship between women's participation in agricultural and non-agricultural employment of men can be seen, so that in some countries men migration to cities or bringing them on a day wage jobs has led them responsibilities in the absence of their husbands take charge of 30 to 40 percent of work related to home and agriculture. In some areas this figure reaches to 70 percent. Number of factors also led to a kind of common gender division of labor, especially in rural societies and one the most veteran of these factors is a particular power and ability of women to provide sustenance (Ghaffari, 2005).

Means participation of women in all stages of development, evaluate needs, identify problems, planning, management, implementation and evaluation is. Equity participation in a patriarchal society was not easily achieved, such matter requires the participation of women, especially rural women in projects is the way that they are concerned. Rural population of Iran always different roles in the production and distribution have been responsible. Agricultural sector, supplier of about one third of employment, food needs of more than Chharprnm country, half of exports, do not need the agricultural products industry and one-fifth of GDP countries.

Considering the role of women in the family play, as the main axis can development be considered according to the tangible realities of the world unfortunately Azmvqyty women have adverse effects

on international level. For example, differences in policy, investment and receive equal rights for the work phenomenon is universal. Participation rate of women in economic activities sufficient to confirm the lack of women's affairs and their added value, because rural women in all stages of agricultural production and livestock production, and general affairs of all men to work alongside, and often pay a small Fraqtshan the mere production of handicrafts such as carpets and kilims.

Macroeconomic view of employment of different aspects such as creating income, production and entrepreneurship, science and technology development, etc. is important, and gives the dignity, status and social position and a sense of confidence from the social viewpoint of man. Working and use of inherent forces, skills and knowledge and personal management to begin to work and to accomplish the activity, are not specific to particular groups. Men and women can work in a community and yet affect it with job situations that are provided to them or they themselves create.

Employment rate, like any social and economic variables directly or indirectly are affected by many factors among which can be reported the production rate, investment, wage levels, price level, government policies and foreign trade. Each of these factors may be positive or negative effects to be followed. Such factors and how they impact on employment rates, have a great influence in planning and policy and making coherent and efficient policy formulation

According to women's role at family, they can be considered as base of development and progress and unfortunately according to universal tangible realities, they possess unfavorable position at international level (Changizi Ashtiani, 2003).

For example, difference at levels of policy making, investing and receiving salary for equal activity, are universal phenomena. extent of women's participation at economic activities, extent of women's activity at economic activities, is confirmation on lack of adequate attention to women's affair and their added value, because rural women work alongside men, at all levels of producing agriculture crops and livestock products and generally all affairs, and also spend their little leisure time for handicrafts such as rugs and carpets and etc. so it is necessary to establish self acknowledgement fields, directing women's economic and social ability and programming to attract their participation at different activities. At rural area, women have more significant role on family economy and inside activities and cause economic prosperity of society. yet, women couldn't gain their real position as active citizens who have talent for participation at economic, politic, social and cultural arena at most countries, especially developing country, and still their activities in economic calculations aren't considered, and they be considered as intangible workforce. Disappointing estimation about number of active rural women and underestimate about extent of their participation at economic activities is confirmation on lack of adequate attention to women's affairs and their added value. they are major force to create revolution and potential sources to progress rural economy and increasing extent of growth rate of producing food productions, although traditionally, farming and ranching, has been male profession, but women's role was never restricted to house and family, so they are active outside (farming, ranching, forestry) other than inside activity (Balali, 2005).

while assessing historical flow of development, we find that trends to human dimensions after failure to fast industrialization, forced programmers and policy makers to revise their thoughts and consider occupation, population and adequate employing of workforce especially women who form half of population, as major goals of development (Fami, 2001).

Government and national organizations attention to this issue began from mid 1970's. After world conference in Mexico, year 1975 was named as "woman year" and after that year from 1975 until 1985 was named as "women decade", and their certain needs were considered.

In this regard, vast studies were performed and it became clear that most of development programs including Green Revolution and high yielding varieties, as caused increasing productions, had negative affects on women's occupation and has increased their duties. At 1997, world conference on rural development (WCARRD) was held by participation of 145 representatives from different counties in Roma and identified problems which women faced with. Main goal of this conference was: to support rural women as producers and their certain preferences at access to productive sources especially technologies that be able to decrease extent and hardship of their duties and lead to increase their efficiency (FAO, 1998).

Growing women's participation at labor market is one of development indexes of each society and represents increase of women's favorites to different aspect of participation at economic-social activities. Women's activities at its different dimensions at developed countries which rapidly changing by modern technology and difference at role and their functions is obvious even among poor countries. Attending to this point that women are at basic center of development, is very important. Because they control most of non-monetary economy by rearing generation, providing workforce and managing and performing family affairs and also subsistence agriculture. While always, women's productive role at agriculture has been introduces as concealed form and rarely manifested economically and socially, and maybe be most intangible participants at economic process (Emadi, 2001).

Although at all societies, rural women were introduces as one important factor for achieve to rural development goals but base on different economic, social and cultural reasons, they were considered less by programmers and practitioners, practically. Women as one intangible factor at agricultural economy, form great share of all human workforce needed for agriculture part, across the world (Ghaffari, 2000).

Economical-social studies have proven that various obstacles are at them way of women's role that majors are as follow (Samadi Afshar, 2004):

#### **1- individual obstacles :**

- 1-1 - Low literacy that further numerous problems, lead to lack of self confidence, inferiority feeling and resignation.
- 1-2 - high extent activities and increased work inside and outside due to various reasons including men seasonal migration and seasonal variation of rural women's activity (nursery, home affairs, farming, handicrafts and ranching)

1-3 - Having low information , knowledge and their applied scientific knowledge

1-4 - Malnutrition and low coefficient health and low individual health (Rivera, 2001).

### 2- family obstacles :

2-1- lack of knowledge about how to behave with girls and women

2-2- family biases and husband and father disagreement with women's attendance at social and economic activities due to various cultural reasons and even unwillingness to loss house workforce

2-3- negative attitude and belief about their abilities

2-4- gender discriminations

2-5- economic poverty of family (Varzgar, 2001).

### 3- social obstacles :

3-1- bad customs and traditions such as superstitious and fatalism and ...

3-2- patriarchy and disagreeing with women's attendance at group activities

3-3- low women's access to credits and facilities, inputs and production factors

3-3-being far of accessibility of extensional services and or orienting social activities and participatory programs toward men

5-3- limited number of female experts to educate rural women

6-3- problems of access to services and social and health facilities

7-3- low extent of rural women's wage compared to men

8-3- low attendance of women NGOs to track their issues and problems

9-3- low women's attendance at rural management (Banihashem, 1999)

### Conclusion and discussion:

One of the issues that government should pay attention to is rural development issue especially at undeveloped countries. in this countries due to lack of proper policy making to improve quality of people life level of these areas , villagers migration to cities has increased considerably and led to urbanization growth and emergence of problems and also psychological , social , cultural and economical abnormalities especially at agriculture and ranching part . Also method for growth and rural development growth, require research at this field which can help government in order to economic, social and cultural programming and policy making. Creating local organizations and regional institutions with affective women's attendance and villager participation to solve problems are among important and affective substances that should be considered in regional programming. at developing and changing process of developed economy system of agriculture, value of women's activity changed as form of money which

previously was as no wage workforce at family , and was given to her. Other than agriculture part (i.e. industry and public services) which are main field of women's work, rural women's participation is very important. The most important issues about women's social and political participation are participating at programming, decision making, performing decisions and valuing results.

Mr. Aghaee in on research as "rural women's role at economy of agriculture and their success at agriculture development programs " further assessing their status at different countries and also emphasis on their participation at production activity of family , has expressed factors that led to ignorance of their role at economy of agriculture .

Lahsae Zade at research as "assessing Iranian rural women's role at economy arena: first assessed their position at occupation structure then has compared it with rural men's occupation base. He expressed that rural women have equal importance compared to men.

Safiri, in his doctoral dissertation as "assessing quantitative and qualitative women's occupation ant its relation to economic development" has considered some of their problems of occupation due to obstacles which refers to structure of countries. And some contain social-economic and cultural obstacles.

Rasool Purarabi , in his thesis as "assessing women at economic activities in rural area of Ramsar " has shown that more than 96% of rural women , at least had participated at economic activity that was supplement for family income . But they don't participate at basic decision making of family, in spite of their affective role and vast attendance at economy of family, and also they enjoy owning production factors, less.

Development Realization is impossible without women's participation at different social-economic aspect. Therefore, to understand unknown, researchers should strive and take basic step in this regard. Some programs should be provided at national level as long term projects at the field of education and Cultural Revolution in order to create needed knowledge in society and in women to identify their rights, education and extending modern techniques, creating infrastructure facilities and also rural development.

Since, village is suitable place for agriculture and additional related activities, so it can be said that women's role at village and possibility to institutionalize proper infrastructure, we able to have suitable perspective toward development process.

Agriculture part as one of the most important productive parts of country have critical responsibility in preparing needed food security that can help this part to access its major goal according

to efficiency of workforce up to proper level . In this regard, women play critical role. Nevertheless, they couldn't represent their abilities at this field, due to various limitations which women face. Among this especial attention to this group of society and preparing them supporting, educational and extensional services for them can help to remove their vast future problems , according to major role of this forgot group at agriculture activities and finally lead to increase and improve their efficiency about agriculture and consequently lead to increase welfare and comfort of rural society .

In order to be able to remove obstacles and problems of women's activity at villages , we should reinforce stamina if women's work by one exact and codified programming in order to be able to progress at one correct direction.

villager access to education at different level , possibility to enjoy suitable occupation opportunities and also industrial , technical and healthcare equipment has caused that cities go out from concentration and attraction of inside and outside capitals , and so possibility of fair distribution of resources and facilities between city and village be provided , and government instead of bear heavy cost of urban population , spend these costs for rural development and support rural women whom get more damage while face lack of facility and compared to men enjoy less migration rate and also have to adopt existing conditions and use available facilities . In today world, it is impossible to achieve development goals without applying abilities of half of people of society (i.e. women).

Women at most countries, have low access to economic resources at the field of economic activity. They should reinforce them at this field by supplying economic facilities. Another part that changed women's attendance at economic affairs is agriculture activities. Opportunities which they gain at this part can have important impact on economic function and related social relations

Same discussions were presented about identifying women's role on environment changes (especially in preserving natural sources) that related to women's life and job. Women's access to agriculture credits, because increasing and improving their efficiency at agriculture. Women's membership at cooperatives, also help them to receive facilities in order to supply needed inputs of agriculture, sale productions and make some production with aim of increasing efficiency. Most of researches found that women's education is related to their agriculture efficiency. Indeed, years which women used educational programs, related to their productions meaningfully. So, by identifying their needs, demands and interests and also by determining their

issues, resources and preferences, we should prepare proper extensional and educational programs for them.

Also literacy programs and generally their basic education should be considered specifically with aim of better women's enjoyment of extensional and educational programs. And also access opportunities to different resources and needed inputs at agriculture activity should be provide for them. Development programs for rural women mostly have certain importance that should be considered at extension activity.

Empowering women is one of principal discussions of development process for many countries of today world. existing factors contain women's education , their ownership sample , their occupation opportunities and function of labor market but if we go beyond this rather classic variables , these factors also contain occupational relations nature , how to behave family and generally society with economic women's activity and economic and social conditions which encourage or prevent change at these moods .

Last conclusion is that men and women, play role at agriculture programs and rural development but each has different needs and knowledge base on kind of their activities, since total people activities were done to supply their needs and so governments should consider regional programming in their policy making and programming. This issue dose not achieved unless by identify climate, population, cultural, economic and politic constituents of each region and also kind of relation of these constituents with constituents outside village and region.

These kinds of study and recognition have provided causes of better programming and adopted with needs of region, and prevent loss of investment. If education, health, occupation, cure and ... facilities be provided in village and improving rural life level be considered, so migration would be regulated. At the other hand, protecting agriculture and livestock products and local industry, and attracting well condition markets for it, by governments, can be affective for villager's interest about rural life. Finally, positive attitude of development programmers, would help significantly to improve condition of one benefited rural family, and would act as a factor to diminish gap between urban family and rural family.

**\*Corresponding Author:**

Mohammad Abedi  
Department of Agricultural Management, Islamic  
Azad University, Qaemshahr Branch, Iran  
E-mail: abedi114@yahoo.com

**References:**

1. Amiri, Soodabeh. Female centered sustainable human development. *Journal of Agricultural and Development Economics*, 2000, No. 9.
2. Arefnia, kh (2004). Informal economy, in reality unknown issues of rural women. *Journal of Agricultural Economics and Development*, the third year, special role of women in agriculture. Tehran: Ney publishing.
3. Azkia, M and amiri A. (2006). Article "The role of micro-credit in empowerment and job creation released prisoners." Conference on rural development and poverty reduction, agricultural banks, Tehran.
4. Banihashem, F. Rural women, education, association and participation. *Jihad Journal village*, 14 years, No. 310, 1999, p. 21.
5. Balali, L. Mission Trip Reports samples producing rural women (rural women's efforts Affairs Ministry of Agriculture) to India and meeting with the board of directors and senior managers National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) self-employment Women's Association (SEWA), and the Empowerment Institute rural women (CARE), 2005.
6. Changizi Ashtiani, M .Including the share of women in producing countries. *Journal of Agricultural Economics and Development*, the third year, special role of women in agriculture. Tehran: Ministry of Agriculture publications, 2003, Pp 83-81.
7. Emadi, M. H. Women and political participation. Center for Women's Participation President, Publishing Olive Leaf, 2001.
8. Fami. Sh. Analytical process to determine the educational needs - extension of rural women (Part I). *Jihad Magazine*, 2001, No. 243-242.
9. FAO. Women in agricultural development. (Translated by: Saleh GH ancestry). Publisher: Management studies and studies and promoting people's participation Deputy Agriculture (the former). Pp 46-42, 1998.
10. Farghdan, M. Cultural Arts Festival the first report of rural women. *Monthly Jihad*, 2001, No. 243-242.
11. Ghaffari, GH. The role of women and social development. *Women's Magazine*, 2000, No. 10, p. 15.
12. Kamali, A. (2004). Participation of women in development approach prerequisites and obstacles. *Women's Research Quarterly*, No. 1, Tehran: Press Center Tehran University women's studies. P. 14.
13. Khani, F (2000). Position and role of women in rural development process (case study of Gilan province). PhD thesis, Terabit Modarres University.
14. Lahsaeizadeh, a (2004). Class base of rural women in Iran. *Journal of Agricultural Economics and Development*, conference papers, women participation and Agriculture 1400, Journal No. 3, Publishing Ministry of Agriculture. P. 14.
15. Lahsaeizadeh, A. Sociology of rural development. Tehran: Publication Publication Days, 2000, p. 58.
16. Nawab Akbar, F. The role of rural women in the past decade. *Journal of Agricultural Economics and Development*, conference papers, women participation and Agriculture 1400, Journal No. 3, Publishing Ministry of Agriculture, 1997, P. 186.
17. Rivera, W.M. and corning, S.L. Empowering women through agricultural extension: a global perspective, *journal of extension*, 28(4), 2001.
18. Samadi Afshar, S. Factors affecting rural women's participation in training programs and extension services in agriculture in West Azarbaijan Province 82-81. MSc thesis, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research, 2004.
19. Varzgar, sh. and azizi. M. Evaluation of labor force participation of rural women in cotton production and its related factors in the region and dome of Gorgan, 2001, P. 318.

3/21/2011