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Paper for Conference

on

Women & Agriculture

New opportunities for Skilled Employment

for Rural Women

by

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I. Introduction

Late Prime Minister

Twenty years ago, [Indira Gandhi began

the re-orientation of Government policies and

programmes for the purpose of achieving

~~a~~ a more effective coupling of

economic growth and equity. Equity

involved ^{adequate} attention to the needs of

the economically, biologically and socially

~~dis~~ disadvantaged sections of our

population. ^{For achieving} Growth with equity demanded

concurrent attention to economics, ecology, gender and generations

In terms of gender, the emphasis ^{was} on ^{enhancing} the productive role of women and reducing ^{respectively} ~~drudgery~~ drudgery and dangers ^{in their} the household and reproductive aspects of their

life. Various in-depth studies were undertaken to identify and ~~to~~ ^{to} articulate the ~~of the~~ real issues confronting women in

their triple role. ~~Both~~ The Reports of the Committee on the Status of Women in India and of the ^{National} ~~National~~ Commission on Self-employed women and women in the informal sector are significant landmarks in such studies.

The VI Five Year Plan (1980-85) introduced ^{for the first time in the history of Five Year Plans} a special chapter on Women and Development whose major ~~thrust~~ emphasis was on the ~~welfare~~ ^{welfare} of women. Economic upliftment

of the status of women through greater opportunities for salaried, self and wage employment. The National Perspective

Plan for Women published ^{last month} by the

Department of Women and Child Development

of the Ministry of Human Resource Development

~~published last month~~ brings together

~~and~~ provides an excellent synoptic account

of ~~all~~ the studies and work done so far

offers a blue print for action during.

and ~~provides an integrated plan of~~

~~work~~ for the rest of this century.

II The challenge

The ~~studies~~ ^{carried out} ~~done~~ so far in the

field of agriculture indicate that

underscore the key role of women in

Crop husbandry, animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry and post-harvest technology,

both in the past and now, those in

charge of formulating packages of

technologies, services and public policies

or ~~the~~ rural areas have

~~have paid little or no attention to~~

~~the specific needs~~ ~~the~~ tended to

neglect the productive role of women.

~~attention to~~ the development of

Consequently, technologies specifically

~~are~~ tailored to women-specific occupations

and ~~the~~ the involvement of women in

technology development and transfers have

received inadequate attention ~~has not received the needed attention~~

~~both~~ from ~~scientists~~ ^{both} and ~~scientific establishments~~

and ~~from~~ ~~the~~ administrative departments of Government

The same is true in the case of training. The very term "Home Science College" used ~~is~~ in our Universities is indicative of the emphasis on the household ~~responsibilities~~ ^{of women} ~~of women~~ ^{of women}.

~~Now~~ ^{is} ~~The~~ The National Perspective Plan report ^{of the} National Commission on Self employed women and women in the informal sector contain valuable suggestions, which if implemented, would help to accelerate economic growth with equity in terms of gender. We should analyse at this ~~by~~ Conference their implications ~~of this~~ for future strategies and programmes in research, education, ^{and public policy} ~~and training and extension~~.

It is not only in India that we face the enigma that ^{while} on the one hand women play a pivotal role in farm operations, from the time a seed is sown to the time the grain is consumed, ~~while~~ on

the other, they tend to be bypassed by research, ~~and~~ training and extension agencies. The role of women in the African continent was described with great emotional feeling by the Ugandan poet . . . in the following words

" Women of Africa
 Sweeper
 Smearing floors and walls
 with cow ~~dung~~ dung and black soil
 Cook, ayah, the baby on your back,
~~Waste~~ Planter, weeder, harvester
 Store keeper, builder,
 Runner of errands

Women of Africa - what are you not? "

This situation is equally valid in most parts of the developing world ^{Fortunately} ~~In spite of~~ such the implications of this situation for government policy as well as for priorities in science, technology and training have ~~now~~ ^{greater} started getting attention

2. But

~~only~~ in recent years. Even now, ~~the~~ the ~~conversion~~ conversion of words and sentiments into action is slow.

The eminent Filipino Social anthropologist

Prof. Gelia Caustello after participating in an international ^{Workshop} ~~Symposium~~ ~~is~~ on

"Women, Technology and ~~Development~~.

Development" held last year in New York,

summed up the papers presented

in the following words.

"There is a lot of gender,
not much technology and little development."

If wish to avoid a similar fate for this conference, what are some of the critical areas which we should come to grips with?

~~Fortunately~~, Enough information is ^{now} available in the ~~past~~, we know the ~~major~~ priority areas which urgent and need ~~of~~ integrated attention. What can we

~~do about them?~~ There are: first,

the ~~diff~~ hardship arising from unemployment, underemployment, uncertain employment and unpaid ^{or underpaid} employment

second, secondly, the drudgery involved because of the predominantly unskilled nature of the work assigned

third, thirdly, the lack of flexibility in terms of working hours, place of work and duration of work

fourth, the adverse impact of labour displacing technologies,

~~at~~ fifth, the lack of adequate

~~maternity~~ maternity, ~~and~~ health care, creche and associated needs

Sixth, little or no access to credit and other production inputs

Seventh, inadequate opportunities for the acquisition of new skills and for extension ~~advice~~ assistance, ~~or other asset~~

Eighth, ~~land~~ land ownership rights and ~~social status~~ ^{compounded by ~~poor~~ the handicaps of illiteracy}

Finally, ~~lack~~ ^{social status} of organisations which can help women ^{with the needed management expertise and collective strength}

The response to these challenging problems has to be in two time dimensions

from the scientific and educational viewpoints. First, there are many things

which can be done immediately with the technologies on the shelf

and the institutional infrastructure already in existence.

Secondly, we ~~can~~ ^{should} initiate specific research and development programmes ^{which within the next 5 to 10 years} ~~that~~ ^{designed} can help ~~in~~ ^{to} converting unskilled jobs into skilled ones, ~~to~~ ^{to} diversify opportunities for employment and ~~to~~ ^{to} introduce flexibility in the place, time and duration of work.

III The Response

First, let us illustrate ~~the~~ with a few examples what can be done ^{immediately} ~~in both~~ ^{time dimensions}.

In the short term, we should build on ~~exist~~ ^{historic and current} the professional skills of rural women and ~~remove~~ ^{beneficial} enhance their impact on income and quality of life, by removing ^{the major} ~~existing~~ handicaps and constraints. For example, since the dawn of agriculture, women

in developing countries have played a major role in the following areas:

- (a) Seed production and management and conservation of biological diversity
- (b) Energy management
- (c) Crop / livestock / fish / ^{pond} management
- (d) Post-harvest management including the utilisation of forest products

What steps can our Research and Development institutions take to strengthen women's roles in the above areas?

- (a) Seed Production and management and conservation of biological diversity

Women have traditionally been seed selectors and preservers. Whether literate or illiterate, they have the ability to spot

the healthy plants whose seeds they carefully preserve for sowing next year. We could not have made hybrid cotton a commercial possibility ^{but} for the skills of rural women to produce hybrid seeds of high purity.

If we organise our seed production at the village and block levels and entrust the work to women, after giving appropriate training, the problems of our seed industry will become problems of the past.

Similarly, in the area of conservation of biological diversity, women have traditionally been active conservationists. Their involvement in the organisation and conservation of

heritage sites, biosphere reserves, national parks and community gene banks will enhance the effectiveness of the conservation movement.

by Energy Management

Women have not only been collecting fuel for cooking but have also been providing nutrition for both crops and farm animals. Organic recycling and collection of fodder and feed have been their traditional occupations. Today there are new opportunities in the field of renewable energy generation management and utilisation, which they can handle effectively, if assisted to do so.

G Crop / Animal / Fish / Forest Management

Experience in the Philippines and elsewhere has shown that women can (IPM) organise integrated pest management involving ~~integrated nutrient supply~~ biological and cultural control, genetic resistance and need based application of chemical pesticides, in a very effective manner. This will help to prevent pest resurgence and epidemics. Similarly, women can handle very effectively bio-fertilizer production programmes ~~and~~ organise and help to implement ~~effi~~ integrated nutrient supply systems (INS)

In the case of horticulture crops the ~~most~~ importance ~~spe~~ spread of IPM and INS techniques becomes even

more important. Women's roles in animal husbandry and aquaculture can be further strengthened through appropriate training.

d) Post-harvest Management.

Here, there are possibilities for considerable improvement in all the links ~~to~~ in the producer-consumer chain. Preparation of value added products is ~~feas~~ feasible for every part of the plant ^{and} animal biomass.

To achieve all this, Agricultural Research and training institutions should ~~do the~~ undertake integrate the

following ground rules in all these programmes

(a) Job destruction and job creation must be ~~concurrent~~ Concurrent events

(b) The aim of technology should be labour diversification, ~~the~~ drudgery reduction ^{and} better energy conversion and not labour displacement

(c) ~~the~~ Knowledge and skill transfer mechanisms should be tailored to the ~~needs~~ socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions of rural women and the opportunities for remunerative marketing

(d) every effort should be made to increase the ^{active} participation of women both in technology development and dissemination.

and (e) there should be synchronisation in time and place between knowledge and skill transfer and the supply of the necessary inputs including credit; for the purpose the growth of women's organisations or strengthening of the professional management capacity of Mahila Mandals should be assisted.

IV New Frontiers

Developments in the following fields have opened up new ~~possibilities~~ opportunities for making rural jobs knowledge-intensive and skilled and introducing the dimension of flexibility in ~~time~~ ^{the} place and duration of work.

(a) Biotechnology including bioprocessing, microbiology, tissue culture and genetic engineering and applications in animal improvement and disease management.

(b) Information technology including
 mobilisation of
 computer applications and mass media,

particularly T.V and radio for awareness
 generation and
 knowledge dissemination

(c) Space technology including
 conservation monitoring and supporting
 ground truth work

(d) Micro-electronics which lends
 itself to decentralised production
 and arrangements

and (e) Management technology

The role of management is to help
 in integrating all the elements of
 a technological package in a mutually

supportive manner. In particular, the managerial and organisational aspects of decentralised production supported by a few key centralised services need attention. Also, the ~~the~~ planned strengthening of the beneficial linkages among the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors will have to be achieved.

Conclusion

In order to achieve the above I would like to suggest ~~the~~ the following ~~two~~ three immediate steps:

- (a) "Technology Blending" centres should be organised at the district

level in order to combine the good
 feature of traditional and frontier technologies.
 Such Technology Blending Centres should
 primarily aim to upgrade the productive
 role of women. Such a focus will
 help both men and women, while the
 reverse approach ~~will~~^{may} ~~not~~ lead
 to women being by-passed by technological
 innovations.

Secondly, we need a dynamic
 programmes for Training Rural Women
in Skilled Employment. The
 training methods used should
 be adjusted to the level of
 literacy and the domestic obligations
 of the trainees.

Let this Conference lead to
relevant equitable
more technology, more development
and less gender discrimination
