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Phones: (91-11) 24100475/
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Fax: (91-11) 24672045/26115937

E-mail: aardohq@nde.vsnl.net.in

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ROLE OF WOMEN LEADERS IN RURAL WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Archana Sinha

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes in the past. Importance of rural women's role towards social equality and socio-economic development is well acknowledged. Rural women the world over are an integral and vital force in the development processes that are the key to socio-economic progress. Without their effective participation neither democracy nor development can be sustained. The undervaluing of rural women's contribution to development and their under-representation in decision-making has increased their marginalization. There is a need to investigate factors which influence their limited participation in the development process in rural areas. The focus on rural women in this paper is a concern; it implies that they have certain consciousness about their position as rural women, although there are no strategies developed to affect change on them. Hence, this paper investigates the nature and extent of rural women's empowerment and factors influencing it. The paper further outlines a strategic framework for enhancing rural women's empowerment through leadership of women. The paper also aims to promote the integration of women's concerns in rural development policy agenda, particularly of developing India. The paper also aims to give a stronger voice and policy influence role to grassroots women building their capacity to express themselves, choose leaders appropriately and hold them accountable; by expanding the presence of women leaders in rural organization at all levels and developing their leadership skills. The paper will be useful in supporting capacity building of women from the grassroots to the national level, and to promote their representation and inclusiveness in strategic policy dialogues and negotiation arena at the national, regional and local levels.

For full text of the paper please subscribe

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH MICRO-ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT : THE ROLE OF WOMEN LEADERS

*Dr Husna Sulaiman**, Ms Jariah Masud and Ms Zumillah*

The main purpose of this paper is to share the role and the experiences of women leaders in advancing the status of rural women at grass root, province, national and international levels. Women leaders are present at every level of the society and they have special leadership qualities, characteristics and styles that are different from men. Only recently their transformational leadership style has been acknowledged as effective and attuned to the needs of contemporary organisations. This paper focuses on the role of prominent women leaders whose work have transformed the lives of rural women, empower them and lift their families out of poverty. A specific example will be show-cased on earlier work done by a group of extension education women leaders from rural development agencies in Malaysia who brought about the evolution of development programmes for rural women, from the traditional British-based “domestic-science” in 1960s to “Home Economics” in 1970’s and the transformation of such programme into strategic income-generating programmes as measures to reduce poverty in 1980’s. In 1990’s till to date, the evolution continues into micro-enterprise development programmes, ranging from livelihood enterprise (for the poor) to growth-oriented microenterprise for women entrepreneurs, with the ultimate goal of scaling-up to small-scale industry. The paper also high-lights the complementary roles of women-led Malaysia’s micro finance organisation (the Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia, the first successful replicator of Grameen Bank) that facilitate micro credit and the technical assistance provided by agriculture and rural development agencies to enhance rural women’s enterprise. From lessons learned through past experiences working in gender bias environment, it is imperative that women leaders should be visionary, competent, gender responsive and equipped with the 21st century skills if they are to advance the economic and social empowerment of rural women. To this end, women leaders are encouraged to promote, initiate and provide input into microenterprise development strategies for gender-sensitive, integrated and holistic packages, to meet the strategic needs of different targets of rural women, thereby achieve economic and social empowerment.

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THE ROLE OF AFRICAN AND ASIAN WOMEN LEADERS IN EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES*

Dr. Amna Ahmed Rahama

Women make half of the world's population but earn less than men for equal work. Though, a remarkable progress has been achieved in some of the development indicators but still gender disparity exists throughout the world. The paper highlights the contribution of women and their conditions with reference to health, education, food insecurity and political representation. Women across the globe are not enjoying and exercising their full and fundamental freedom and human rights on equal basis despite universal declaration of human rights. There is a need for different covenants for women rights such as political covenant, international economic, social and cultural rights and convention to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, convention of the right of child, etc.

Stressing on the leadership of women, the paper quotes examples of Indonesia, India, Japan and Sudan where women have been very powerful in decision-making at different levels. Women have been fundamental for guaranteeing food security and household maintenance but they are vulnerable, particularly in rural areas, to food insecurity during crisis period. Thus, there is a need for strategies, policies and programmes interventions that are needed to refocus attention on the situation of rural women in agricultural development.

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UTILIZATION OF ECO-SAN FERTILIZERS FOR CAULIFLOWER PRODUCTION

Dr. Mashudul Hoq Chowdhury and Dr. Shishir Kumar Munshi

The experiment was conducted at farmer's field of Raicho village, Comilla Sadar upazila, Comilla from October 2008 to February 2009. Few studies are available on the effectiveness of Eco-San fertilizers on vegetable production in Bangladesh. The objectives of the study were : i) to find out the effect of human excreta on the growth and yield of cauliflower and ii) to analyze the economic potentials of human excreta for cauliflower production. Cauliflower was used as a test crop. The field experimental design was a split plot in a randomised complete block with three replications. There were two nitrogenous fertilizers treatments and one non-N control as main plots, and various nutrients management applied at rates of 0, 134 kg K, 10 t cowdung, 10 t human faeces and 15 t human faeces ha⁻¹ as subplots. Full dose of potash fertilizer, cowdung, and human faeces were applied during final land preparation and mixed with the soil. Urea and urine were applied in three splits. One-third of urea and urine were applied 15 days after transplanting, and one-third of urea and urine were applied 35 days after transplanting and the rest urea and urine were applied 45 days after transplanting. Yields of cauliflower significantly increased due to different treatments. The highest yields of cauliflower were recorded with the application of urine that was comparable to urea treatment. For the use of various nutrients managements, the plots that received 15 t ha⁻¹ human faeces produced the maximum yields of cauliflower. The integrated application of nitrogenous fertilizers plus human faeces further enhanced the yields. Hence, the application of nitrogenous fertilizers plus human faeces showed superior cauliflower production performance than their individual dose. The highest yield of cauliflower was recorded with the incorporation of 15 t ha⁻¹ human faeces plus urine. Application of urine along with 15 t ha⁻¹ human faeces is more profitable in terms of gross return, gross margin and BCR for cauliflower cultivation. A clear indication of application of urine and human faeces was explicated as the economically viable option for cauliflower farming.

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THE ROLE OF WOMEN LEADERS IN EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES IN AFRO-ASIAN REGION

Ms. Patience Opoku

Leadership plays very important role in championing the cause of rural women. The paper focuses on the role of leadership at different levels such as parliamentary, government department, professionals, corporate, district and local levels, etc., and defined their roles and responsibilities. It also highlights the present status of rural women in Ghana and their contribution in the economy. A number of international conventions, treaties and protocols that address women issues lay emphasis on eradication of poverty. The Millennium Development Goals that aim to reduce poverty, hunger, maternal and child death, disease, inadequate shelter, gender inequality and environmental degradation cannot be achieved without full and equal participation of rural women. There is a need to provide support at both policy and programme level to remove the constraints that hamper women efforts in achieving MGDs as well as improving their standard of living.

The paper also emphasises on women's economic empowerment that entails factors such as physical resources and access to market. Economic empowerment has to be placed in the larger framework that define the way where men and women live together within the social and cultural environment. Besides economic empowerment, health and ICT related policies, policy on participation in decision-making, empowerment through legislation, etc., have been stressed. Government and other development agencies support the women's initiatives. The government will also need to work with different stake-holders in the society, faith-based organisations, tradition leaders, NGOs, etc., to share their experiences and undertake advocacy for the cause of rural women.

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