

## Empowerment of rural women in developing countries

<sup>1</sup>Mehran Bozorgmanesh and <sup>2</sup>Mojtaba Sadighi

1, 2 Damavand Branch, Islamic Azad University, Damavand, Iran

\*Corresponding author: [mehran11070@yahoo.com](mailto:mehran11070@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** In the development countries, rural societies which are poverty for geographic reasons such as being far from urban societies or because of mountainous of zone and also as the roads are impassable and some other reason, they became deprived of many human development programs. Unfortunately these societies are suffering of mortality because of poverty but what is clear here is that we can't attribute such privation to geography and nature of the zone. Every country is trying to solve such critical conditions by applying depoverity policies. However rural women play major role to produce food at all over the world, but rarely enjoy of extension services. Wherever, rural women as producers of food productions and family supervisor, have little contact with extension services organizations, so their problems and needs would reflect at extensional information feedback, rarely. Therefore agricultural research institutions wouldn't be able to create and develop technology, suitable for their needs. Global surveys show that about 5% of total extension resources, at all over the world dedicated to programs for female farmers, but women form just 15% of extension personnel of world. Some extensional issues that traditionally belong to women, such as economy of family, are supported very little that receive just about 1% of total extension resources of agriculture.

[Mehran Bozorgmanesh and Mojtaba Sadighi. **Empowerment of rural women in developing countries**. Report and Opinion 2011;3(6):6-10]. (ISSN: 1553-9873). <http://www.sciencepub.net>.

**Keywords:** empowerment, rural women, developing countries

### Introduction:

Rural women constitute% 50 of the workforce and they participate in the production of half of the foods in the agriculture section. As an example the rural women constitute about 70 to% 80 of agriculture workforce in sub-Saharan Africa, %65 in Asia, %45 in Latin American & Caribbean, %80 in Nigeria & Tunisia and %80 in India, but their role in production system is the men's supplements roles and this causes a big responsibility inside their mother & wife duties and it takes a great time and energy of them. Studies in this field show that women spend about two thirds of their time for production, management & organize of their house as the men spend only one third of their time for such things. (Varzegar & Azizi 1367).

Poverty spreading in village is a global issue. According to the Fao finding about % 75 of world's poor people that are more than 1 milliard people are living in rural zone and more than % 70 of this poverty people are women. As the most of the people who are poor are living in village and are women is the reason for insufficiency of rural development programs.

One of the other basic barriers in development of rural women is their independent inaccessibility to get credits for investment in their job. Although their illiteracy is the big barrier to use of bank credits, but this view that women are dependent people that their husband should decide about their financial decisions is the other reason that rural women couldn't access

to official credits. Maybe these barriers are the reason why rural women are happy about applying micro-credit thought in village. (Najafi, 2007).

Having investment (capital) independency enforce people to think about economic from different angles. He should study the ways for using capital, he must consult with authority and experienced people and he will investigate about relevant markets. Such things will help him to be authoritative & independent. But how rural women can get such independency? Are the women created inherently for housekeeping, parenting and working or is there any opportunity for rural women to show their skills in economic & social development?

It seems that experiences which are obtained from performing financial programs in some villages in the developing countries could answer clearly to such questions.

A glimpse to previous planning about rural development in the world shows that from 1950 many developing countries understood that the main reason for making their economic growth (development) slowly in their countries is the weakness of investment in the agriculture part. Although many countries by patterning from developed societies have proceeded to improve & develop their industrial agriculture part and by this action not only had irreparable damages to many traditional farmers but also the main problem (the lack of capital sources) is also remained in the rural regions. (Rahimi, 2001).

The empowerment is equality that women for financial self-reliance and self-sufficiency can obtain by controlling their emotional decisions. The empowerment can be defined as an evolution and development of activity through private organizations that guides empowerment in the society toward economic improvement.

Empowerment is a process through which people can do activities to conquest on development obstacles that enable them to assign their destiny.

The word empowerment is not the meaning of overcome to main in equalities so it is different with the word self-reliance. (Ruhailamin, 2010).

Empowerment enable person to overcome any difficulties by a suitable management. Finally we can say empowerment provide energy to conquest on mental problems & outer difficulties.

On conclusion we can give a suitable definition to women's empowerment as this: the process of realization of women about themselves (and also the men's realization about them) for the thing they want or have to do.

It should be reminded that the main point should be attended in women's ability is the omission of subjective & social problems and providing economic & social communion for women in all aspects. The mean of women communion is their presence in all of village affairs such as making decision, presence in organization & councils that includes their communion in all economic & social aspects. (Araghzadeh, 2002).

If rural women could provide a job for them by getting credits, loan and other financial convenience, through their income they can get self-reliance or financial independency and we will see social, cultural & economic change in village. The question here is that if these changes have positive or negative aspects in the village? It's natural that every change in social phenomenon has both positive and negative aspect, but which is Important here is that which aspect is more than the other and it depends to different condition in various societies. In our rural society there is an especial social & cultural kind that it's outcome maybe different and in some case inconsistent. With these actions rural women could be in idealistic economic condition and they could live with out dependency to their husband's income. In most of the villages in Iran there is patriarchy in the families which is not acceptable for the most of the rural people and groups. When rural women became financially independent, it's acceptable to see its cultural & social outcomes.

Giving the right that women make decision, independency to their family, increasing the cultural knowledge among them& making relation with new institutions, having independency in making decision

about marriage, occupation, migration & something like this are the right that women have got it.

Women by getting these rights can make change in the rural cultural & social issues which make disfunction & crudity in their family's relation. However, rural women's self-reliance has caused improvement in the economic, social & cultural issues. For solving women's self-reliance problems we can do these activities:

- Giving promotional services for increasing rural women's skills in various fields.
- Giving promotional instructions to men for believing their women's economic role & their women opportunity to participate in all economic, authority & ... aspects.
- Increasing rural women's knowledge in all social, political, cultural & economic fields.
- Making use of micro-credits programs to motivate & support women for doing economic affairs better & finally to make women self-reliance.

#### **Criteria of empowering women:**

Enabling as a theory of policy making for women, in it present five criteria: Welfare, access, Concientisation, participation and control.

#### **1- welfare criteria :**

In this criteria, men and women as human resources of development should enjoy of desirable welfare conditions and equality (Paknazar, 2000). Most of timing developmental programs, have worked on base of women's welfare. They have considered and provided some services for women who were passive recipient of these services. But these services were limited to physical needs and mostly were considered to revive their role of productivity, again. sometimes , it has been said that this approach has begun at colonial era and has considered women from poor country and intended services for them that dose not exceed from that poverty level . Agricultural and industrial projects were designed for men and social programs for women and children. Most of welfare programs were inadequate or its success was limited. Considerable point in this criteria is that men and women as human resources of development should enjoy equality and desirable welfare conditions. At this stage, women's material welfare and their enjoyment of welfare programs, compared to men (nutrition, death rate and ...) were considered. And women's role as producer to supply their own needs isn't very important.

**2- access criteria :**

Lack of access or limited access for women to sources including (fields, job, capital and training) cause that their functions at production is less than men (Paknazar 2000). Access to facilities, sources, designed program and projects for women and access to schools and ... are in this part. Just whenever most of other legal, cultural and social issues being solved, men and women would equally access to sources and facilities. Concept of enabling at this stage is that women have equal right to access to sources at family and greater society.

**3- Concientisation criteria**

Women should know that their problems aren't due to their individual inefficiency and shortage but it has emerged by social system in which discriminations has become formal and acceptable issue. (Araghzadeh, 2002). This stage is more critical and important than other stages. Because women can participate at development activities not just be passive users. Women have real equality at development, just when be aware. Concientisation will help to increase women's ability to equality at participation at society. At this stage, women face with critical analysis with society and will find that what has been considered natural and unchangeable reality, is changeable. (Bakhshoodeh, 2005).

**4- Participation criteria**

One the most important items that this criteria has considered , is men and women's equal participation at decision making process of affairs of family at society (Paknazar 2000) . Men and women both should participate at process of assessment needs, designing, performing and evaluation of projects and development programs (UNICEF, 1998). In summary, this criterion means women's participation at all stages of surveying needs, detecting problems, planning, management, performing and valuation.

**5- Control criteria**

This criterion emphasize on this point that in addition to equal access of men and women to development sources , they must have adequate control on these sources that this issue is balance criterion , between men and women so that no one exceed other one (Paknazar 2000) . Women should have opportunities for decision making at workplace and home. If woman is producer, should be shared with part of her interest and wage. Women like men, should be able to choose her individual and social field and able to make decision and also development activities should be facilitator of these processes.

FAO (food and agricultural organization) addresses these three purposes as strategic goals while enabling women:

- 1- equality between men and women to access production sources
- 2- women's participation at policy and decision making
- 3- decreasing rural women's workload and increasing job opportunity and income for them (Paknazar 2000 )

within theoretical framework of enabling women , having control on sources is presented as highest stage at women's participation process on development , but existing data at most developing countries , indicates that not only rural women haven't any control on financial resources of family but even they were deprived to access to sources and credits , specially through formal credits system (Shaditalab, 2002) .

The question that arises here is that what relation is there between enabling women and micro-credits programs? Nowadays, micro-credits are considered as effective mechanism to eradicate poverty for women. Interests of micro-credits further increasing women's income, include:

- improving women's role in family
- Increasing women's confidence, not only through obtain financial success through business activity, but through increasing women's access to social services and communication with other women.
- Changing at social level (social class) at perspective of women's role.

**Discussion and conclusion:**

Fiona Steele and etal (2008) in researches that conducted as called " influences of credits programs on empowering women at Bangladesh , found that women who joined to credits programs , have participated in more educational programs and have married with more educated men and also they have saved more and they had more cash .

Ellen and her colleagues (2009) used approach called it "credits and education at Bolivia, Ghana, Honduras, Mali and Thailand". This approach looks for empowering women through financial services with education. In this approach, women get familiar with importance of credits through education and extension and also familiar with ways to access it through establishing different groups.

Shahnaj and chaudhury(2009) in research as "credits and its role on empowering women " concluded that there is meaningful relation between attending in credits programs and empowering women , at economical dimensions .

Ruhal amin and others (2010) found that those who joined credit funds had more ability rather than those who didn't.

Jameela (2010) presented that credit programs has shown lot of affects on empowering women so that has increased their social, politic and economic ability.

Thus it is obvious that credits programs and its educational and empowering programs can be affective on social, humane and economic development or rural society, if it be associated with proper and gradual practices and base on reciprocal communications principles and apply opinion of local society.

Maybe the main challenges that threaten credits associations , is lack of necessary emphasizes on social dimensions and on reinforcing their basics , that practically cause that this social foundations lose its efficiency soon and practically changed to unsuccessful institution .

In order to overcoming dominant consideration, experts believe that we should consider following in protection process of these social institutions.

- establishing and reinforcing through supporting without ant direct government involvement
- evaluating and constant modifying of financial management mechanisms
- improving organization effectiveness
- establishing constant relation and interaction with similar and equal systems.
- establishing local , regional and national networks
- establishing support and cover systems in order to decrease risk
- establishing balance and interaction with financial systems greater decision making include: capital market (local, regional, national) and governmental.

also following suggestions have been offered:

- helping to marketing and establishing many exhibitions for member's productions, credit programs, guiding and training them in line with group and workshop activity, can assist them on economic empowerment.
- since women have pointed to education deficiency as major barrier for empowering them , thus educating rural women at the field of exploiting different credits and channels of receiving credits , and also various educations , is so that lead to enabling them , that contain considerable importance.
- providing extension educations for men in order to believe economic role of their women ,

and give them chance of corporation on all economic , credits fields

- Since that base of credit association, forms base on People Corporation, so it's good chance to use these communities to expand extension-education activities. so it is better to consider special programs on different extensional filed such as agriculture , ranching , family health , housekeeping economy and other fields accordance to condition of region and rural women's needs .

- it is suggested that vast and exact programming happens at following fields:
  - a- extending insurance, facilities for amenities
  - b- educating women about awareness of their own individual and social rights
  - c- persuading rural women about importance of participating at cooperatives and other educational institutes
  - d- educating women about job management and income management

#### \*Corresponding Author:

Mehran Bozorgmanesh  
Damavand Branch, Islamic Azad University,  
Damavand, Iran

\*Corresponding author: mehran11070@yahoo.com

#### References:

1. Araghzadeh, M. institutions active in the field of providing financial services to rural women. Conference Proceedings rural women micro-credit. (Volume II), 2002. 167-153.
2. Bakhshoodeh M. and Habibullah Salami. Article "The role of agricultural banks in reducing poverty with emphasis on micro-credit." Conference on rural development and poverty reduction, agricultural banks, Tehran, 2005.
3. 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.
4. Banihashem, F. Rural women, education, association and participation. Jihad Journal village, 14 years, No. 310, 1999, p. 21.
5. 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.
6. Ellen Vor der Bruegge, Maureen Plas, Christopher Dunford and Kathleen E. Stack. Credit with education: a self-financing way to empower women, 2009.
  7. Fakhraee, S. Economic and social effects of their financial reliance of women in rural communities, 2002.
  8. 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.
  9. Fiona Steele, Sajeda Amin and Ruchira T. Naved. The Impact of an Integrated Micro-credit Program on Women's Empowerment and Fertility Behavior in Rural Bangladesh, 2008.
  10. Ghaffari, GH. The role of women and social development. Women's Magazine, 2000, No. 10, p. 15.
  11. Goetz, A. and Rina Sengupta, R. "Who Takes the Credit? Gender, Power, and Control over Loan Use in Rural Credit Programs in Bangladesh." *World Development* 24 (1), 2003, 45-63.
  12. Jameela v. a. Micro credit, empowerment and diversion of loan use, 2010.
  13. Lahsaeizadeh, A. Sociology of rural development. Tehran: Publication Days, 2000, p. 58.
  14. Moazami, M, Rahimi A. and Azam tayefe Heidari. "Coverage and sustainability of micro-credit programs, case study of rural women micro-credit fund" Research Center for Rural Women and Rural Affairs Ministry of Agriculture, 2005.
  15. Najafi. M (2006). Participatory evaluation of rural women micro-credit fund scheme, the organization promoting education and agricultural research.
  16. Nanda. P. (2004). Women's participation in rural credit programs in Bangladesh and their demand for formal health care: is there a positive impact? Center for Health and Gender Equity. USA.
  17. Navab 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.
  18. Rahmani Andalibi. S. "Need, principles, mechanisms and advantages of micro-credit programs in small business development and improvement of rural women." Conference Proceedings Volume II of rural women micro-credit and promoting people's participation Deputy Ministry of Agriculture - Bureau of Women Affairs in collaboration with Al-Zahra University, Agricultural Bank, Tehran, 2001.
  19. Rahimi, A. Review of micro-credit properties. Conference Proceedings Volume II of rural women micro-credit and promoting people's participation Deputy Ministry of Agriculture - Bureau of Women Affairs in collaboration with Al-Zahra University, Agricultural Bank, Tehran, 2001.
  20. Ruhail Amin, yipping li and ashrad u. Ahmad. Women's credit programs and family planning in rural Bangladesh, 2010.
  21. Saadi. H, Arab Mazar A. Paper "role in accelerating the process of micro-credit in rural development: comparing two perspectives." Conference on rural development and poverty reduction, agricultural banks, Tehran, 2005.
  22. Samadi Afshar, S. Factors affecting rural women's participation in training programs and extension services in agriculture in West Azerbaijan Province 82-81. MSc thesis, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research, 2004.
  23. Shahnaj Praveen and Sajedur Rahman Chaudhury. Micro-credit intervention and its effects on empowerment of rural women: the brac experience, 2009.
  24. 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.

5/22/2011