



WOMAN'S VITAL ROLE in rural development

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Today, women in India are recognised as an underprivileged group in society. Even more so women living in rural areas, who constitute a large percentage of the female population of India. The majority of women in rural areas live in abject poverty, without any opportunity for improving their living conditions. Constitutional rights and guarantees have no meaning for them when they cannot even feed and clothe their children properly, nor provide them with an opportunity to cross the threshold of school. An attempt has been made in this book to highlight the problems of such women, and the approach and strategy required to tackle their problems with a view to achieving the objective of their development.

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Secretary to the Government of India



INTRODUCTION

The disadvantages experienced by women in rural areas, and their handicaps in becoming equal partners in development, have emerged as critical issues in all countries of the world today. This assumes greater significance in the developing countries, including India, where a vast majority of women are in the rural areas and are employed in agriculture, the primary sector of the economy. But their contribution as members of the labour force is considered less productive. They are paid low wages on the grounds that they are less efficient than men and that their attendance at work is irregular. This is attributed to their child-rearing and household responsibilities.

Rural development programmes launched in India during the post-independent era have not taken enough notice of this fact and women have by and large remained on the periphery of developmental efforts. Whatever little has been attempted in the past in the name of women's programmes reflects

an inadequate appreciation of their actual role and participation in the development process.

The last decade did, however, witness an improvement in the situation, when a little more attention was focused on the problems of women. The report of the committee on the status of women in India released in 1975, which coincided with the International Women's Year (IWY), threw much light on the position of women. The report was examined by a group of social scientists and a number of important issues were identified for consideration by the organizations concerned. A national plan of action was also prepared in pursuance of the recommendations of the World Conference held in Mexico for the International Women's Year. Employment, health and education were identified as major areas of concern, warranting concerted action on the part of the national government in improving the status of women. As a follow up of these recommendations, a number of working groups were set up by the Planning Commission and various Ministries of the Government of India to suggest sectoral plans and action to ensure women's participation in the process of development.

These developments are a good sign of the increasing awareness of the problems of women and their status in society, but we are still far from a true and full recognition of the vital role that women in rural areas have to play in the economic and social progress of our country. The following observation of the National Commission on Agriculture is significant :

"It is not true that the issues relating to rural women have been totally ignored. But a sense of half-heartedness and lack of interest are noticeable in the execution of most of the programmes meant for them."

An attempt has been made in this book to make a critical appraisal of programmes for women in rural areas and to suggest certain approaches to the task of involving rural women in the dynamics of development.



RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

India is a country of villages, where 80% of the population live in the countryside and nearly 74% are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Agriculture forms the main base of the country's economy and is the major source of rural employment.

The first five year plan (1951-56) rightly placed emphasis on increasing food production in order to meet the demands created by partition in 1947. The Grow More Food Campaign, introduced in 1944, worked on a planned basis, from 1947-48, to increase the food output. But in 1952 it was observed by an Expert Committee¹ that the Grow More Food Campaign could not succeed because it ignored the aspect of people's participation. This observation led to the launching of the community development programme in October 1952. The programme had a multi-dimensional approach and aimed at a process of socio-economic transformation of village life and mobilisation of both community and governmental resources for rural development.²

The basic approach of the community development programme was to stimulate and seek the participation of people for the development of the area in which they lived. The first five year plan document stated that the basis of economic development depends on a variety of factors which constitute the psychological and sociological setting within which the economy operates. Further, the plan was based on the assumption that co-existence of unutilised or under-utilised man-power on the one hand, and of unexploited natural resources on the other is due to certain inhibiting socio-economic factors which prevented the more dynamic forces in the economy from asserting themselves. Social change was thus desired for the success of the plan and public co-operation was sought as its main instrument. The major objective of the community development programme was to develop self-reliance in the individual and initiative in the community towards achieving general welfare, including appreciable increase in agricultural production. The national extension service was envisaged as the main agency for bringing about the desired economic and social change. All the villages in the country were brought under the programme by 1973-74.

In 1957 the community development programme was studied to assess the extent to which the programme had been successful in utilising local initiative and credit institutions to ensure continuity in the process of improving economic and social conditions in the rural areas. The study team³ appointed for the purpose suggested two broad directions—administrative decentralisation for effective implementation of the development programmes and democratic decentralisation under the elected bodies. As a result of these recommendations, panchayati raj institutions emerged in some parts of the country during the second plan period. These, to an extent, ensured people's participation in the development process. In view of the serious food shortage which prevailed at that time, special programmes known

as intensive agricultural district programme (IADP) and intensive agricultural area programme (IAAP) were launched during the closing years of the second five year plan. The intensive approach acquired a new dimension with the introduction of high-yielding varieties of seeds. The 'high-yielding variety programme' was launched in 1966-67. It was also realised at that time that the availability of inputs alone was not enough to ensure increased agricultural production. The most essential requirement was the development of human resources. A programme for transferring new technology was therefore introduced almost simultaneously and 100

farmers' training centres were established in selected districts. The number was later increased to 115. The farmers' training programme had three components—training farmers in improved agricultural technology through institutional as well as peripatetic training camps, functional literacy and media support through All India Radio.

During the fourth and fifth plan periods, the overall strategy for rural development consisted of special programmes for under-privileged target groups and backward areas. The important programmes taken up were small and



marginal farmers and agricultural labourers development agency programmes (SFDA/MFAL), drought prone areas programme (DPAP), command area development programme (CDAP), pilot projects for hill and tribal areas, animal husbandry programmes for small farmers, integrated tribal development programme (ITDP), desert development programme (DDP) and sub-plans for hill areas. The special rural development programmes can be grouped into two categories, namely the beneficiary-oriented programmes and area development programmes. Consistent with the national policy to increase employment opportunities and income levels of families below the poverty line, the integrated rural development programme (IRDP) was launched during the year 1978-79. The intention was that, in all the blocks in the country implementing any one of the special programmes, IRDP would replace them in a phased manner. IRDP represents a synthesis of the best features of the beneficiary-oriented special programmes. It has been extended to cover rural artisans and non-agricultural labourers, who could not be assisted under earlier programmes of SFDA/MFAL. IRDP now covers all the blocks in the country.

Meanwhile, in 1977-78 another important programme known as the Food for Work Programme (FWP) was launched. Under this programme the Government of India supplied free food-grains to the States and Union Territories, to be used as wages for labourers engaged in the construction of durable community assets. FWP has now been replaced by the national rural employment programme (NREP) which, while retaining the good features of FWP, provides for a material component to ensure the durability of the assets created.

The basic objectives of rural development programmes in India can be summed up as improvement of the quality of life of the rural population in general and achievement of social and economic justice for all. These are being attained through increased agricultural production and diversification of the

rural economy, promoting people's participation and co-operation in rural development activities, both to stimulate growth with self-reliance and to strengthen the democratic base. *

The major steps taken during the plan periods have been to promote the credit and inputs supply system, to modernise agriculture, to develop the infrastructure for delivering essential services and supplies to the rural community and specific programmes of diversification and generation of employment opportunities through dairying, animal husbandry, fisheries, rural handicrafts, etc.



WOMEN'S PROGRAMMES AS PART OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

In 1954-55 it was observed that women's lack of participation in the community development programme was to a considerable extent responsible for the programme not making the necessary impact.² Hence women, for the first time, were included in the programme's target group.

As a result of this observation it was recommended that two women village-level workers (gram sevikas) should be appointed in each community development block. The first plan document stated that "the objective of social welfare is the attainment of social health which implies the realisation of such objectives as adequate living standards, the assurance of social justice, opportunities for cultural development through self-expression and

re-adjustment of human relations leading to social harmony". Provision of social services to women was visualised so that they might be helped to fulfil their legitimate role in the family and in the community. Women social education organisers (mukhya sevikas) were appointed to provide social education to women and to promote community participation. The Central Social Welfare Board also started welfare extension projects from 1954-55, which covered activities like social education, maternity and child care, utilisation of leisure time and recreation programmes. Before that, women workers of the Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust started activities amongst women.

Women's programmes forming part of the community development programme recognised that the home is the basic unit of the community. This was based on the conviction that woman, in her role as home-maker, could save and supplement the family resources through proper management and preservation and could profit by utilising her leisure time for some creative activities. She could decide the course of community participation in development efforts by building up a strong and healthy family. With this in mind, women village-level workers were trained in home science, which included family resource management, mother and child care and extension and proper utilisation of leisure time. Training was organised in the home science wings set up in the gram sevak training centres all over the country.

In keeping with the approach of the community development programme, i.e. ensuring people's participation in community development activities, co-operation of women was sought to be realised through institutions like mahila mandals. In the blocks, gram sevikas and mukhya sevikas made house to house visits and tried to bring about changes in the life style of the families by talking and demonstrating to women how to take care of their health and that of their children, how to improve environmental sanitation, how to raise kitchen gardens, etc. They

showed them how they could utilise their leisure time more profitably by producing household utility articles and encouraged them to take up activities which would save the family resources and supplement the food intake of the family. Simultaneously, efforts were made to organise women into groups so that they could solve their problems and meet their needs through co-operative and group action. These groups, known as mahila mandals, were developed as forums for women's activities in community development areas. Mahila mandals were to promote women's programmes such as training in group activities, home management, adult literacy, cultural and recreational activities, with the main objective of assisting village women to develop and understand their role and responsibilities as individuals, as members of a family and as members of the community. To attract women to these forums, activities like *bhajans* and *hari kathas* were also organised. Occasionally, religious places were used for holding meetings to encourage women to participate in the activities.

During the third plan period a programme of applied nutrition (ANP) was introduced with assistance from UNICEF. The major thrust of this programme was the promotion of nutrition education to improve the nutritional level of rural families. This was planned to be achieved through production of protective food, training producers of such food, extension workers, village leaders, members of village youth clubs and mahila mandals, who could be engaged in the implementation of the programme at different levels, and demonstration feeding of the vulnerable groups, i.e. expectant and nursing mothers and pre-school children. The programme relied, to a large extent, on the support of mahila mandals. Mahila mandals have been involved by and large both in production and feeding programmes. Out of 5,011 blocks in the country, nearly 1700 blocks were covered under ANP by the end of the fifth plan. Mahila

mandals in non-ANP blocks continued with their other activities for rural women.

During the fourth plan period a composite programme for women and pre-school children was started with the components of demonstration feeding and training of associate women workers. Demonstration feeding was to be conducted by the mahila mandals for pre-school children. The training of associate women workers, i.e. potential women leaders of the village, who were in many cases the office bearers of mahila mandals, was designed to develop their skills and competence to mobilise rural women and assist the gram sevikas and mukhya sevikas in carrying out their tasks. The scheme was also meant to prepare the non-ANP blocks for absorption of ANP at a later date.

During the fifth plan period, demonstration feeding was discontinued and a scheme of incentive awards to mahila mandals was introduced. Under the scheme, an award of Rs. 1000 was given to the mahila mandal adjudged the best, Rs. 600 to the second best and Rs. 400 to the third best in each State. A new central sector scheme to promote and strengthen mahila mandals was introduced during the same plan period. Under this scheme mahila mandals were registered under the Societies Registration Act and were made eligible for administrative grants. Assistance was however limited to a very small number of them. It is estimated that there are nearly 60,000 mahila mandals in the country, of which only some are registered bodies and the rest continue to function as informal groups.

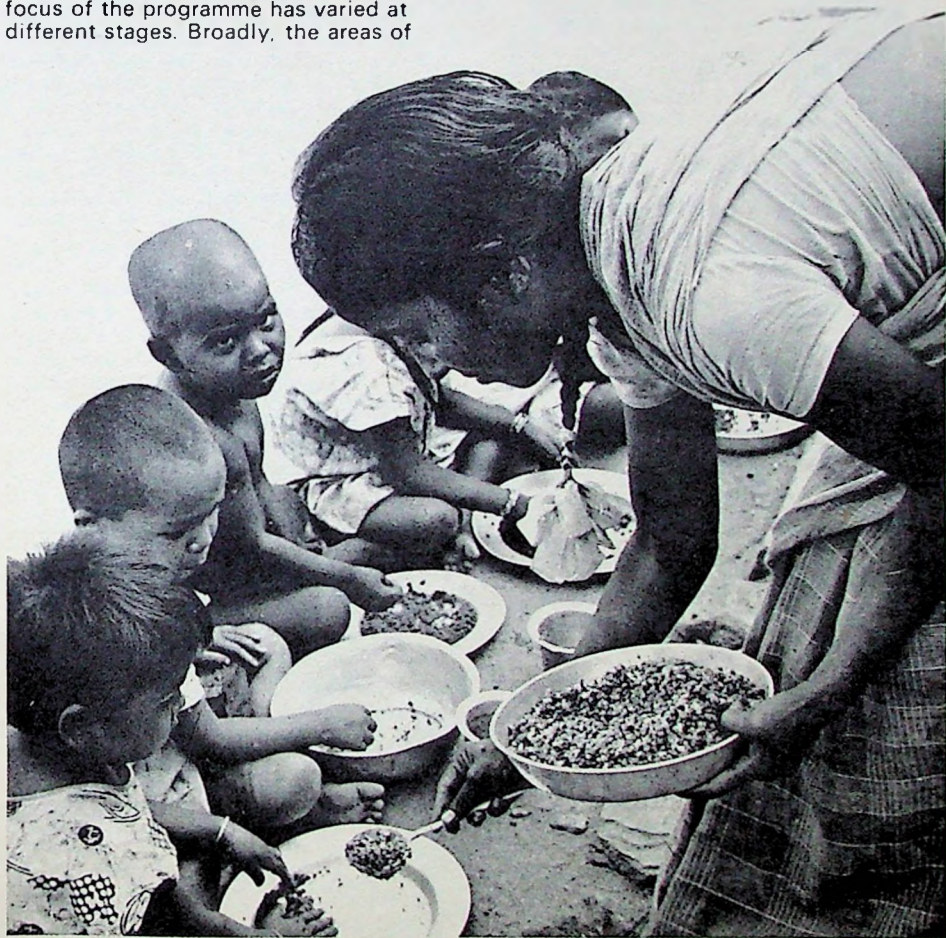
The introduction of panchayati raj has added another dimension to the role of women in rural areas. The State panchayat acts have, in many cases, provided for the reservation of seats for women in panchayats from the village to the zila parishad levels. The committee on panchayati raj institutions (1978) noted the value of women's contribution in this field and the need for their development. It suggested greater representation of

women in panchayati raj bodies, and their participation in the electoral process, which would influence both the directional and implementation levels. Such representation would also ensure better attention from panchayats to various aspects of the development of women in rural areas.

Women's programmes have so far formed only a very small segment of rural development efforts in India. Started and carried out on a very small scale, the focus of the programme has varied at different stages. Broadly, the areas of

concentration have been to improve the status of women in rural areas as home-maker, to promote nutrition education, to develop local leadership and to promote women's participation in the development of women and children through the organization of mahila mandals.

There are some other programmes for women and children which are being implemented in rural areas by the





Ministries of Social Welfare and Health. The Ministry of Social Welfare is implementing a programme of integrated child development services in 200 development blocks. The scheme was initiated during the fifth plan period with the objective of delivering the services of nutrition, health, immunisation, pre-school education and non-formal education to the vulnerable target population in selected blocks. Each project is placed under a child development project officer appointed by the Social Welfare Department of the State Government. The health inputs of the programme are supplied through the infrastructure of the Health Department from State to district to block level. At the block level, the medical officer of the primary health centre is responsible for the supply of health inputs. The king-pin of the pre-school education and functional literacy programmes for mothers has been a cadre known as angan wadi workers. Originally this cadre was to be composed of girls in the local areas but this has not been possible in many cases. Mostly school-educated girls from nearby towns have come forward to take up this job. The advantage in recruiting anganwadi workers from local areas is that they can easily identify themselves with the local people, which is not as easy for workers from outside. However, the programme is closely monitored and evaluated and some of the earlier shortcomings are gradually being removed. But such services are available only in limited areas and the backward areas are still outside the reach of the programme.

In the sphere of health and family welfare, some innovative programmes are being tried out, such as schemes of community health workers, multi-purpose workers, training of local dais, etc. The idea of community health workers (now community health volunteers) is to train workers selected from the community itself and to equip them properly so that they can render primary health services to the rural people and provide referral services.

The scheme of multi-purpose workers reflects a new direction in the para-medical training programme. These workers are trained in the multi-purpose approach so that they can be more effective in the delivery of services. In both cases, efforts have been made to recruit as many women workers as possible to facilitate reach to the target population. The ratio between male and female workers varies from 60 : 40 to 80 : 20. ^a

In rural areas, local midwives usually attend to delivery cases. The training of these midwives is of paramount importance in reducing infant and maternal mortality, which occurs mainly due to ignorance and crude handling. Since the coverage of primary health centres is very limited, there is a need for qualitative improvement and optimisation of the services of local midwives. Women in rural areas will have to depend on their services for many years to come, until maternal and child care services are available through more organised and improved health services.

Though a number of schemes are being implemented to improve health and maternal child care services in rural areas, the services now available are far short of requirements.



LIMITATIONS OF THE EXISTING PROGRAMMES

Programmes for women in rural areas initiated during 1954-55 and conceived as an integral part of the community development programme did not grow during the subsequent plan period either in dimension or in coverage. It stagnated with the shift in emphasis of the community development programme towards agriculture. The most serious drawback to this strategy was the lack of appreciation of the role of rural woman. Her status in the programme was only that of a beneficiary and not of a participant. Little attention was paid to her as an economic being, which she very much is, especially in a rural family. That a rural woman, besides being a home-maker, is also a partner in food production efforts and that in poor rural families, the woman has to play an economic role as well, as her earnings are essential even for maintaining the subsistence level of living,

were ignored. At least these ideas were not incorporated in the plans for increasing food production. When the emphasis of the programmes shifted to agriculture, the multi purpose village-level worker (gram sevak) became virtually uni-purpose to give more attention to agriculture. While the number of gram sevaks was increased in the areas of intensive agricultural development, the number of gram sevikas per block was reduced from two to one and in some States the programme was completely wound up, retaining the services of the gram sevikas only for ANP blocks.

It should be mentioned here that in recognition of the fact that women play a decision-making role in families, that they determine their consumption pattern and are largely responsible for the improvement of their nutritional status, the scheme of farmers' training and education implemented in 1965-66 did include a component for the training of farm women. The training programme included recipes based on cereals and millets grown with the newly released varieties to promote consumer acceptance, information about the high-yielding variety programme, its importance in terms of the economy and nutrition, etc. Later on training was also imparted in storage of foodgrains at home, in view of the role played by women in the storage and preservation of grains.

But the training programme seems to have treated women as only consumers and preservers of resources. Training in improvement of technology for agricultural production was by and large confined to men. In spite of this a large number of women participated in the training programme wherever efforts were made. This is indicative of the fact that women are interested in the training programmes and are keen to improve their knowledge and understanding.

ANP, which had considerable potential, did not make the desired degree of impact. Evaluation studies of the programme disclosed certain inadequacies which accounted for the programme not making any substantial impact. It evoked very

little people's participation, which was meant to be the main base of the programme. The linkages between the various components of the programme — production of protective food, training and demonstration feeding for vulnerable groups — could not be properly established. Nutrition education, the major objective of the programme, did not take concrete shape. Demonstration feeding in most cases became a routine activity and figured mostly as charity feeding. The programme also suffered from lack of staff, supervision, technical guidance and concurrent monitoring and evaluation. Insufficient policy support and provision of adequate inputs was also noticed. Another major gap identified in the programme was the lack of an economic component; it did not provide for any income-generating activities through mahila mandals, which might have been an incentive for women to participate.

The programme for women included in the community development programme also suffered from some in-built shortcomings. For example, it was based on the assumption that women in rural areas form a homogenous group, which is not quite correct. Their traditional roles are not identical in all stratas of society. The role of women in the upper strata of the community is usually confined to the home, whereas women in the lower strata have more physical mobility and play a direct role along with men in the economic activities of the families such as agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry, processing and marketing of agricultural and forest products, etc. As a result, the rural women's programme, which dealt mainly with home science, did not have much appeal for women of the weaker sections of the community. Nor did the activities of the mahila mandals, which were organised in the sphere of literacy, health and hygiene, removal of social disabilities, beautifying homes and cultural and recreational activities in different areas. Various evaluation studies highlighted the non-representative character of these organizations, and the lack of definite

programmes, infrastructural facilities, personnel, resources and linkages with local representative bodies. It was also observed that poor people would have been attracted only to such occupations which were remunerative in the long run and they had no interest in activities like knitting, tailoring, etc., which hardly had any economic prospects. The Balwant Rai Mehta Study Team (1957) also suggested that the rural women's programme should focus on economic and child care activities.

The lack of understanding and inadequate appreciation of the programme was apparent from the way the programme was operated in some of the States. The infrastructure provided for the programme was insufficient. Two gram sevikas and one mukhya sevika per block, with their limited mobility, could hardly be expected to cover half the adult population of a block. A development block usually covers 100 villages with a population of approximately 1,00,000. The arrangement to assign them to a limited area to work for a fixed period and then to move to another area after adequate local initiative and leadership had been generated did not work either for obvious reasons. The minimum educational qualification for gram sevikas, earlier prescribed as matriculation or equivalent, was relaxed to middle standard to get recruitment mainly from among rural girls. The type of leadership and imagination required for this programme could not be expected from such functionaries. Also, they could not work successfully without constant supervision and guidance and without a system of constant flow of information and feed-back. In most cases there was no single-line hierarchical structure for providing necessary direction, guidance and supervision to the programme, and there was no uniformity in the administrative structure. Administration of the functionaries was in general vested in more than one department, e.g. gram sevikas came under the rural development department and lady social education organisers or mukhya sevikas under the education department, creating a lot of

administrative and management problems. In some States uncertainty prevailed for quite some time about the location of the programme. With the changed emphasis of community development on agriculture, and in the absence of any role being perceived for gram sevikas in agriculture and rural development, the State agriculture and rural development departments, in most cases, were not considered the legitimate place for these functionaries. The need for an appropriate parent department was therefore felt and the department of social welfare/women's welfare was considered the right location for the women's programme. Therefore in many States the programme was transferred to these departments and thus got further isolated from the mainstream of rural development.

The experiment of involving primary school teachers in extension services for women and children, tried out in the State of Rajasthan, did not prove successful either. The posts of gram sevikas and mukhya sevikas were abolished by the State Government in the late fifties, almost immediately after the inception of the programme, and the extension services for rural women were entrusted to rural lady primary school teachers. This was done to solve the problem of accommodation for functionaries in rural areas, their lack of mobility and, being outsiders, their low acceptance by the local community. It was felt that teachers, who had a respected position in the community and were well accepted, would be in a better position to deliver the goods, if they had the time and the resources. But this experiment did not seem to make much impact. The schools may have participated in specific activities successfully, like organization of literacy and family welfare camps, health campaigns, immunisation programmes, school feeding, etc., but school teachers could not do full justice to extension services during the few hours that they could spare from their school duties. Moreover there was the problem of coordinating the work, when the resources for the programme and its administration were vested in a department other than

the education department, to which the teachers belonged.

Thus, the programme for rural women did not take deeper root in the rural development strategy. The original concept of the programme as part of community development efforts was also modified mid-way without adequate time being given to judge the validity of the concept and the potentialities of the programme. Allocation for the programme in the State sector was too meagre to generate any meaningful activities. The programme became synonymous with the organisation of mahila mandals and nutrition activities, did not become central to the development process and remained only peripheral.





were 963 and 845 and in 1901, 979 and 910 respectively. All India figures, according to the 1981 census provisional data, is 935 females to 1000 males. It indicates a slight improvement but the imbalance still exists. (Comparable data for rural and urban areas in 1981 are not yet available). Table 1 shows the State-wise position. It can be seen that the States of Bihar, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya and Maharashtra have registered a higher ratio of female to male, but the figures show a declining trend except in Bihar and Meghalaya. In Meghalaya, it can be explained by the higher status given to women in general. In Bihar as well as in other States it can perhaps be attributed to male migration from the rural areas. In Haryana, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, the ratio of female to male is very low, particularly in Punjab and Haryana. The all India trend for this declining sex ratio is attributed to poor environmental conditions, inadequate services for maternal care, preference for the male child and discrimination against the female child, repeated pregnancies and malnutrition, resulting in high maternal mortality, poverty and an excessive work load for women. These characteristics are obviously more predominant in the lower socio-economic strata. No doubt, due to improved health services, life expectancy for both males and females has improved, but the gap between male and female death rates below the age of 40 has been increasing for all groups (Table II).

Death rates amongst women have increased from 37.61% in 1971 to 47.1% in 1977. The major causes^a for high maternal deaths are given below :

Bleeding	20.6%
Anaemia	15.9%
Puerperal Sepsis	18.8%
Abortion	8.2%
Toxaemia	11.2%
Mal-position	9.4%
Unclassified	15.9%

The status of women, neglect of their health and nutritional needs, inadequate provision of health care services, high parity, poor environment and lack of

A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The whole question of women's development and their integration in the development process requires careful scrutiny. A situational analysis of their role and status, on the basis of the statistical profile, will help in identifying the critical gaps in the programme and suggesting the required strategy for the future.

Rural women constitute 80.92% of the female population and 38.99% of the total population. The most significant aspect of the population trend in the country as indicated by social scientists and demographers is the imbalance in the sex ratio.

According to the 1971 census the all India sex ratio is 930 females to 1000 males. In the rural areas the ratio is 949 to 1000 and in the urban areas it is 859 to 1000. Corresponding figures in 1961

knowledge about pre-natal and post-natal care explain the imbalance in the sex ratio between men and women.

There are also some social norms which contribute to this demographic trend, such as early marriage for girls, value attached to the male child, lack of education and health care services and the death rate in general amongst the female population in the age group of 0-4 (Table II), which is higher than that of male children. This confirms the belief that the female child gets less attention than the male child, which is also substantiated by the fact that the death rate among women is higher in spite of the biological fact that the female life-span is higher than that of the male.

Child marriage has been identified as another social evil responsible for the slow progress of women. The problem is largely confined to rural India and it is particularly high in the states of Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and U.P. It is low in the north-eastern States, and in the rest of the States the age of marriage nearly corresponds to the national average, which was 15.69 in 1961 and 16.67 in 1971 (Table III). The situation is closely interlinked with the level of education and social attitudes. Rural society frowns upon the practice of older girls going to school, particularly to co-educational institutions. Parents also consider it a waste to spend on the education and maintenance of girls for long since they have to spend on their marriage and dowry.

Child marriage in India is also dictated by economic considerations. Girls in the rural areas have to work from an early age and the community often prescribes that only married girls should be permitted to work outside the home.⁹ Thus the practice has its roots in economic and social problems. Efforts were made to check this evil and, as a result, the Child Marriage Registration Act was passed in 1921. Over the years there has been a gradual rise in the legal marriageable age of girls from 12 to 18 as a result of legislative measures. One of these was an Act passed in 1975, as a follow up of



the recommendations made in the report of the committee on the status of women in India, raising the marriageable age from 15 to 18. A declining trend is also noticeable in girls being married at below 15 years in rural areas. From 9% in 1961 it came down to 6% in 1971.

Census figures give a dismal picture regarding the literacy rate amongst women. Though the percentage of literate women has almost trebled during the three decades between 1951-81, from 8.01% in 1951 to 18.69% in 1971 and 25% in 1981, there has been an increase in illiteracy in absolute number from 158.70 million females in 1951 to 214.74 million in 1971.¹⁰ The high incidence of illiteracy is confined to the rural areas. In 1971, out of the 264 million female population, 214 million were in rural areas. Among the 50 million urban females, 41.9% are literate, whereas in rural areas only 12.9% are literate. The corresponding figures amongst men are 69.83% in urban areas and 39.55% in rural areas (comparable figures for 1981 are not yet available). This indicates less opportunities for girls to be educated both in rural and urban areas. Table IV gives the percentage of children attending

school by single year, age and sex during 1978, for rural and urban areas separately.

The literacy rate among rural women in Kerala is as high as 52.63%. It is lowest in the States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, U.P., J&K and Haryana, where the literacy rate ranges between 3 to 10% (Table V). According to the 1971 census, the female literacy rate among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes was 5.06% and 4.36% respectively. Illiteracy is most widespread among the poorer sections of rural women and scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The functional literacy programmes introduced during the fifth five year plan has not been quite successful in reaching these women. Statistics show that efforts made under this programme were largely concentrated in urban areas.

Illiteracy is the greatest handicap for rural woman in benefitting from the development process. It has a direct correlation with the employment status. It restricts her participation in development efforts and limits her earning capacity in the traditional sectors. Being illiterate, she cannot join the organised sector and is also not in a position to bargain for fair wages in the unorganised sector. It limits her capacity to absorb technological information to improve her skills and efficiency and in the process she gets trapped in the vicious circle of inefficient labour low productivity, low wages, inadequate food and low level of nutrition. Recent data also indicate that the infant mortality rate among children of illiterate rural mothers is more than double (132) than in the case of mothers who have had education above primary level (64).¹¹

Rural women used to play a vital role in the country's economy but with the decline of rural industries their employment status received a set-back, resulting in adverse consequences on their social status. It is also feared that women are gradually being dislodged from their original employment status in the field of agriculture due to the process of modernisation, which has tended to neglect women. There has been a

perceptible decline in the employment status of women between 1961-1971 in other spheres also (Table VI).

The work participation rate of men and women in rural areas has declined. In the age group 5-14 it fell from 16.61% in 1961 to 11.41% in 1971 in males, and in females it fell from 12.29% to 4.61%. In the case of boys it is regarded as an indication of the improvement in school enrolment at primary and secondary stages. But the decline in the case of girls cannot be explained in the same way.

The total work force participation in rural areas was estimated to be 228 million in 1977-78, i.e. 46% of the total rural population, of which 83 million are women, constituting 36% of the total labour force. But this does not give a real



picture of the work participation rate for women. The labour force participation data for women does not include the majority of rural women who spend a considerable amount of time and labour in the collection of fuel, fodder, fish, vegetables, etc., which are either for direct consumption by the family or are sold to meet the family's other needs. It also ignores women who help in family occupations like dairying, poultry-rearing, raising and maintenance of kitchen gardens, orchards, sewing, weaving, etc. This contribution is very crucial, particularly subsistence-level occupations. The total number of rural women in the age group 15-59 engaged in only domestic

work was estimated at 43.8 million, and those engaged in domestic duties as well as in free collection of goods and services was estimated at 26.6 million during 1977-78.¹² In a recent study it was found that the average hours of unpaid work done by married women outside the home varied from 6.13 to 7.53 hours per day, a small percentage reported that they were working more than 10 hours per day on an average.¹³ Another study showed that apart from domestic chores, women engaged in agricultural operations worked for an average of about 12 hours on the farm and in taking care of the cattle at home.¹⁴



As paid workers women are engaged in agriculture in large numbers. According to the 1971 census, 36.43% of women workers, other than scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, are cultivators. 48.37% are engaged as agricultural labourers, 2.28% are in animal husbandry and the rest are engaged in other services. Participation of scheduled caste women in agricultural activities is 90.65%, of which 14.02% are cultivators. In the scheduled tribes participation of women as agricultural labourers is approximately 50%, and 42.98% are cultivators.

Participation of women of scheduled tribes in manufacturing industries, both household and non-household, as well as in other services, is much lower at 3%, whereas in the case of scheduled caste women, it is nearly 7%, and in the case of women other than scheduled castes and scheduled tribes the percentage is a little over 10%. A correlation may be established between the employment status of women and their literacy level. The literacy rate of women other than scheduled castes and scheduled tribes is 15% and in scheduled castes and scheduled tribes it is 4.76% and 4.31% respectively, with a correspondingly lower percentage of entry in services and other occupations (Table VII). The female participation rate in rural areas also decreases with the increase in literacy, as a large number of educated rural women prefer to seek employment in urban areas.

Correlation between literacy and employment outside the primary sector is also evident from the literacy rate and service occupation in some States. In U.P., where the literacy rate for rural women is 7%, service occupations engage only 2.2% of rural women. Corresponding rates in Bihar are 6.4% and 1.4%, in Madhya Pradesh 6.1% and 2.4% and in Kerala 53.1% and 18.0%. Nearly 95% of women workers in the agricultural sector and 84% in household industries are illiterate and a very small percentage in this group (hardly 2%) has crossed the middle school level. This, besides limiting the scope of employment for women, is a great handicap in acquiring

and using new knowledge for advancement in their existing occupations, particularly in the primary sector. A vast majority of rural women are either cultivators or agricultural labourers. Unless they are well informed and capable of taking advantage of technological applications in the field of agriculture and animal husbandry they will be losing the battle for survival. Due to their ignorance, they get exposed to the hazards of poisonous chemicals used as fertilizers, pesticides, etc. For these women literacy and non-formal education are essential to enable them to take advantage of technological changes and modernisation in their existing occupations.



perceive women in a broader perspective, keeping in view the multifarious roles she has to perform as bread-earner for the family and manager of the farm and household resources.

To take agriculture as an example, women's contribution in this sector has been quite significant. They participate in all agricultural occupations except ploughing. In animal husbandry and dairying most of the activities are carried out by women. If rural women had been adequately trained in agriculture and animal husbandry the gains in terms of their contribution to the developmental process would have been substantial.¹⁵

Not only have women not benefited from technological advances made in the wake of the green revolution and dairy development, their position has in fact deteriorated with the increased workload and a restricted role in decision-making. Excluding women from the efforts aimed at the transfer of technology not only results in under-utilisation of potential manpower but reduces the impact of technological advancement, as women still continue to do some of their traditional activities without the advantage of new knowledge and new skills. While man attends to mechanical operations like driving tractors and running electrical threshers, woman still applies manure manually and carries head-loads of cow-dung, fuel and fodder. She works with old tools in unhygienic and insanitary conditions, which adversely affect her efficiency, health and energy and consequently her child-bearing and rearing capacities. Even where entire farming operations have been mechanised, women continue to cook in a smoky kitchen and walk miles to fetch water for the family. In hilly and forest areas, women's time is spent mostly in collecting fuel and fodder and in carrying headloads of them either to the market for sale or to the home to meet the needs of the family. A fisher-woman in Kerala walks miles and spends hours selling fish, to earn a couple of rupees, neglecting her family.

Not much thought has been given to improving working conditions for women

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

The objective of any planned development is to develop human resources to their fullest utilisation. From a statistical analysis of the situation of rural women, and from the review of the earlier programme, it is clear that considerable ground is yet to be covered in the matter of rural women's programmes. Their role in and contribution to production, processing and distribution of agricultural products, animal husbandry and household industries have been largely by-passed in the plans for rural development. The time has now come to

through the development and application of appropriate technology and better child care facilities. The Plan's objective of growth with justice urgently calls for measures that will give women access to better jobs, that will diminish the arduous tasks that hundreds of millions of them face in their domestic and agricultural occupations; and that will distribute opportunities for creative work and economic advancement more fairly between the sexes.¹⁶ This is the requirement of the majority of women in India who live in the countryside and who toil round the clock to earn a livelihood.

A change in the rural economy, especially the rising cost of living, declining village industries and changes in the market structure have led to a situation where, under economic pressure, women have to involve themselves in occupations which require hard labour, with a proportionately lower income. This is also evident from the rate of their participation in the Maharashtra Government's employment guarantee scheme and the erstwhile food for work programme and the current national rural employment programme of the Government of India. Women have participated in these programmes in large numbers despite the long distances they have to travel to the places of work and the arduousness of the jobs offered. According to a recent evaluation of the employment guarantee scheme conducted by the Planning Commission, nearly 43% of the workers are women.

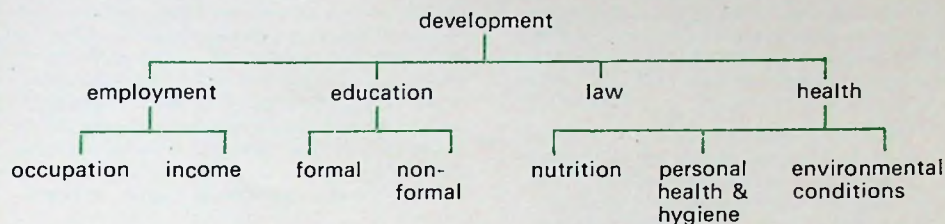
Most of the problems of poor women in rural areas emanate from poverty, which makes them accept any kind of job and live their lives in drudgery. The most essential requirement for them is, therefore, that they must earn and be involved in the productive process while taking care of the children and household. Opportunities for upgrading their existing skills and acquiring new ones, which would help them retain their existing jobs or seek new ones, will go a long way to improving the status of women as well as their families. Various studies have also substantiated that women's incomes

among the rural wage-earning population are vital for the survival of the family. It is usually spent on food and other essentials. The improved employment status of a mother with a regular income promotes school enrolment of children, and women in employment tend to have smaller families than unemployed women in the same income group. It is true that a woman, when she can afford it, likes to see her child better fed, better clothed and sent to a school. In many cases children, particularly girls, are deprived of schooling as they have to look after their younger brothers and sisters, relieving the mother to go for work.

In addition to the role a woman has to play as bread-winner, she also has to look after the household and children. The problem in her case is how to adjust to her multifarious role with greater ease and competence.

The problems of rural women, such as employment, education, health, environment and even laws, are a matter of inter-sectoral concern. That the problems are interlinked has to be recognised to ensure that the benefits of action taken in these different areas are fully realised. For example, efforts to improve women's economic status may be counter-productive if sufficient attention is not given to facilitating her domestic tasks by providing labour-saving devices, child care facilities, etc. Many health problems like high maternal and infant mortality, mortality in children, malnutrition and low life expectancy are linked with the acute problems of poverty and poor environmental conditions. Education and training, both formal and non-formal, are other variables that determine women's involvement in development. Though the law provides for equal access to education for both boys and girls, opportunities for girls to go to school are far less due to existing family priorities and social norms. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the issues involved in the development of women in all these areas. There are a number of problems in each area which need to be understood, along with their basic causes.

In the following chart an attempt has been made to explain how these are interlinked and the specific areas requiring action :



AREAS

BASIC PROBLEMS

BASIC CAUSES

income :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —inadequate income —no decision-making power —large families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —poverty —lack of proper employment conditions and opportunities —lack of services —lack of information/education
occupation :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —unemployment —under-employment —limited avenues of employment —exploitation of child labour, low wage jobs and drudgery 	
education :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —illiteracy —low decision-making —lack of knowledge and skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —poverty —lack of facilities for schooling of girls —social attitude negative to educating girls —lack of child care facilities.
law :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —inadequate legal measures to ensure and protect the interest of women in organised sector —non-implementation of existing laws —inadequate legal provision to ensure women's title to property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —lack of knowledge/awareness —social attitude, hurdles and resistance —lack of skills to demand a fair deal in the organised sector
health and nutrition :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —high rate of maternal mortality —high rate of infant mortality —illness —repeated pregnancy —malnutrition —low working capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —lack of awareness —low purchasing power —inadequate diet —social preference for male child. —lack of access to health services —inadequacy of services
environment :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —unhealthy environment —diseases —inadequate impact of health and nutrition programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —lack of pure drinking water —lack of proper waste disposal —inadequate housing conditions —lack of awareness

Employment has been divided into two sectors—occupation and income. This division is necessary to understand why women wage-earners get lower wages than men, the lack of opportunities for suitable jobs, the limited scope of entry into certain occupations and why certain occupations are rendered unsuitable for women.

From an analysis of the whole gamut of problems, it is clear that most of the problems are interlinked and casually related. Take the example of large sized families. They have an adverse effect on family food consumption, shelter and clothing, which results in malnutrition, ill-health and inadequate education, with an ultimate effect on production and the economic level. The rate at which the population is growing has been a matter of great concern to planners, economists, social scientists and demographers. It is becoming increasingly difficult to contain the population's growth rate within the rate of the country's economic growth.

Planners are very concerned with the problem and accordingly the national programme of family planning has been given priority by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. But the programme does not appeal enough to the target group of the poor population, to whom a child born is an addition to the number of working hands, in a situation where they are not sure of their children's survival. Motivation to reduce the size of the family can be brought about only by making them aware of the implications of a large family in relation to income, distribution of food, nutritional status, maternal health and child mortality. Advice on nutrition would also be meaningless to them unless adequate food is made available to them at prices which they can afford, or their purchasing power is increased, or they are shown how to produce more food.

There are other factors involved in the problem of nutrition. Cultural beliefs and taboos interfere with the food consumption pattern of the community. In many communities preparation of food also encourages waste. Poor housing and

environmental conditions, lack of pure drinking water and non-immunisation of children have also been identified as factors which act against nutrition intervention programmes. Measures for improving nutrition in children and mothers and nutrition feeding are likely to prove futile unless they have first been protected against diarrhoea and other communicable diseases. All these factors, therefore, have to be part of a package to improve the nutritional status of the community.

Women are also handicapped due to insufficient provisions and the non-implementation of laws ensuring protection against social and economic exploitation. Inadequacies are more apparent in the implementation of many legislations rather than in the provision of legal rights. The crux of the problem is the lack of awareness of basic rights among women themselves.

The programme for rural women will, therefore, have to rely more on non-formal education and functional literacy, which should aim at creating awareness among them and imparting necessary knowledge and information for improving their income-earning abilities, nutrition, health, environment, family planning, etc. An atmosphere has also to be created for the promotion of formal education for younger children. Through a formal system of education the children should, from their early childhood, be made to understand their surroundings and should acquire knowledge about nutrition and health, environment, population control and their implications in determining their life style. Upgrading the level of education and knowledge and awareness of women in rural areas is basic to the solution of their problems.

The programme should, therefore, have an integrated approach to take care of women's complex problems and needs. Table VIII shows the percentage of children by age, sex and child care when the rural mother goes out to work. It is apparent that the onus of child care rests largely on the mothers. So either the working mother has to take the child with

her or leave the child with very little care and security. It is observed that in many cases where efforts have been made to expand the opportunities for participation of women in the labour market, it has created more stress and strain for them, with more demand on their time, energy and labour, resulting in the neglect of children and the household. This has an adverse effect on their health and working status. Therefore provision should be made for certain basic social inputs like creches and balwadis. Appropriate technology for minimising labour in the household is also necessary for enhancing their participation in economic activities.

Examples can again be given of women participants in the Maharashtra employment guarantee scheme and the national rural employment programme. Provision of creches and supply of cooked food at the work site would considerably help women in reducing their drudgery and in earning a full wage.

There are various programmes being implemented by different Ministries of the Government of India as well as by non-governmental agencies in the fields of nutrition, family planning, health, appropriate technology, etc., but isolated



implementation of these programmes has been to a large extent responsible for their inadequate impact. It is necessary to work out a system for integrated delivery of various services to women in rural areas. This can be made possible by having an adequately trained agency close to the clientele to help them build up their awareness and to facilitate the convergence of the services they need. Earlier, gram sevikas and mukhya sevikas were expected to perform this function, but these efforts also suffered due to reduction in their strength as well as the absence of a clear focus on a women's programme. There is a need to strengthen and revitalise this machinery to work as a two-way channel between the people and the source of inputs and services.

To ensure that development services reach the target population, it is necessary to strengthen the receiving end also. It has been stated earlier that the success of any programme meant for rural people is linked to the extent of the people participating in it. The mahila mandals have been visualised as a means for securing women's participation in the development process. Past experience has also shown that the nutrition feeding programme, adult literacy, health care, child care, pre-school education, family planning, etc. could be effectively delivered through mahila mandals.

Most of the constraints experienced by women in availing of these services could be overcome through organised groups and collective action. In a tradition bound rural society, where people live in contiguous areas, they look for the sanction of the community in adopting any change from tradition, whether it is regarding food habits, moving out of a traditional employment to a new one or sending a grown-up girl to school. It is difficult for an individual woman to overcome the social pressure, but it becomes easier when it is a group decision. When the group is convinced, individual acceptance is easier. Moreover, these organizations can be used as forums for convergence and delivery of services meant for women in rural areas.



Organizations of rural women registered under the Societies Registration Act have succeeded in facilitating members' access to credit and bank loans to enable them to start income-generating activities. In Kerala, rural mahila mandals have proved their capacity for undertaking not only to implement but to monitor programmes for rural women and children through their active involvement in a structured programme known as the 'composite programme for rural women and children'. That mahila mandals can be entrusted with this responsibility has been shown in other States as well. Activities like organization of balwadis, feeding of vulnerable groups, arrangement for the supply of inputs, credit etc. for the identified beneficiaries are organised by mahila mandals, besides participation in income-generating activities either as individuals or as a group. Even the family planning programme is reported to have been well received where mahila mandals were motivated and became interested in the programme.

The response to literacy efforts has also been higher where the local organization has taken the interest and initiative. Experience shows that these organizations have proved more effective in the delivery of services when they had a community centre to be used freely by members for their activities. Absence of a community centre or a common meeting place has been identified as a major constraint for rural women's organizations not being active in many cases.

A working group, appointed by the erstwhile rural development department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (1976), to examine programmes for women in rural areas and to suggest a new strategy, brought out the need to strengthen the grass root level organization as a measure to develop the programme and to set it on a strong footing. The working group suggested promotion of such an organization, with the following objectives:

- to draw rural women into the mainstream of development;
- to function as instruments of social change by enabling them to undertake programmes in which they will have a stake or a sustained interest, such as improving their income, productivity or employment;
- to promote self-reliance and collective action;
- to provide forums to enable women, especially from the poorer/weaker sections, to participate freely and fully in decisions that affect their lives and that of the community; and
- to enable women to have full access to development of resources and services.

The working group also felt that one type of organization might not be suitable for all categories of rural women, nor in all situations. Different types of organizations should be promoted, keeping in view the role and needs of rural women. In some cases these could be promoted as co-operatives and in others they could be formed as labour

unions to strengthen their bargaining power.

The desired change in the situation of women cannot be expected unless they can participate effectively in decisions which concern their development. They should be represented in decision-making bodies. Representation of only two women members in panchayats, often as co-opted members, does not enable them to be effective in the decision-making bodies. They are not in a position to express their independent views. Participation in mahila mandals may pave the way for members



to be effective in panchayats. Mahila mandals can serve as a base for women to learn about democratic procedures and decision-making processes, and help them in developing confidence in their strength and abilities.

The committee on panchayati raj institutions (1978) in recognition of the fact that women contribute largely to the country's economic development, has recommended a larger role for women in panchayats and their enhanced participation in decisions concerning the welfare of women and children. It has also suggested that the new programme for women should recognise and strengthen their constructive decision-making and managerial roles, so as to enable them to have full access to the development of resources and services.

One of the lessons learnt from past experience is that the mahila mandals did not have the right kind of leadership and direction and that the institution became an end in itself. They should be organised with the clear-cut objective of using them for development purposes both for their members as well as for the community, and to function as links between the service agencies and the beneficiaries. For this, proper direction, resources and infrastructural support should be provided. These organizations need to be developed as a buttress for the development process. If the programme being implemented is one aimed at economic development, these organizations can be involved in the identification of beneficiaries and in procuring the inputs as well as in disposal of the products. Similarly, they can be involved in the provision of basic services by being associated with the selection of areas, beneficiaries and the type of basic services required on a priority basis. Involvement of local organizations can also help in minimising undesirable interference and ensuring that the services reach the really deserving areas and beneficiaries, for it is often found that the benefits meant for a particular group or area get diverted to another due to pressure from the local power structures.

The need to strengthen grass root level organizations of women to ensure that the benefits of development flow to women in rural areas, as well as to promote participatory development, has been endorsed by various committees and there is acceptance of this idea at the international level also. Promotion and strengthening of this infrastructure should, therefore, find an appropriate place in the future strategy for rural woman's programmes.

Mass illiteracy and lack of communication are at the core of all the problems that rural women face. To help them out of their present situation, it is necessary to establish primary contacts with them. It is not feasible for professionals with a limited scope for mass communication to establish this contact. It can be facilitated if a cadre of local workers is created from the local women themselves and trained for the purpose. These workers can strengthen the support system, functioning as a link between the rural women and extension and input supply agencies. They can also function as catalysts in organizing rural women and in building up their organization to create an institutional base for their development.

Community workers can be more effective as they are much nearer the people and have an intimate understanding of their problems and needs. Such workers should be identified and selected by the community so that they can enjoy their trust and confidence. This will also promote community participation and involvement in planning, resource mobilisation and implementation of the programme as per the needs of the local population.

As stated earlier, a scheme for training and use of associate workers was implemented by the Government of India under the community development programme. The objective of the programme was to identify local women with leadership qualities and train and deploy them as community workers. The programme was not, however, tried widely. There are, of course, examples of successful

experiments of working with such identified community workers in many developing countries, including ours, both by governmental and non-governmental agencies.

One such successful experiment is a project in the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. The project started in 1970 as an experiment in primary health care services in 30 villages, covering a population of 40,000. It trained female village workers and brought ayurvedic doctors, traditional midwives and healers into the system for delivery of health care services. In course of time these workers felt that the priorities of the villagers had changed from health services to agriculture, food production, access to roads, electricity, provision of irrigation, drinking water, housing, etc. As a result the project is responding to these needs also.

Working with community workers does not, however, minimise the need for strengthening the professional infrastructure. Community workers also need constant guidance, technical information and supervision, which calls for strengthening of the supervisory levels

and a single-line hierarchy connecting various levels of supervision from national to State to district to block and village levels to facilitate this.

One of the major weaknesses in the implementation of programmes for rural women and children has been the inadequate attention given to training of functionaries at various levels. Training is necessary for orientation of the functionaries, to bring about a change in their outlook, to help in comprehension of the problems and needs, proper perception of the programme, understanding of the system and the mode of working in co-operation and co-ordination with others. Training is also necessary in programme planning, programme contents and priorities, in skills and knowledge in subject matters, techniques of supervision, etc. However, the scope and contents of training will vary according to the role and functions of various categories of personnel. Training and orientation can be arranged through institutional training/seminars/workshops, etc. In the case of rural women it is, however, felt that training should be organized close to their homes as far as possible.





activities suitable for particular geographical locations. The Khadi and Village Industries Commission and the Small Scale Industries Service Institutes are also promoting various income-generating activities with suitable arrangements for training, which can be very profitably availed of by rural women. A scheme for training of rural youth for self-employment, popularly known as TRYSEM, has also been launched. Under it concerted efforts are being made to train and equip the youth of the target group of small and marginal farmers, landless labourers, rural artisans and other rural poor with the necessary knowledge, skills and technology relating to various facets of economic activities in the rural areas, particularly in agriculture and allied sectors. The main thrust of the scheme is to enable young boys and girls in rural areas to seek self-employment. Rural women can be trained under TRYSEM to enable them to start self-employment projects.

INTEGRATING WOMEN'S PROGRAMMES IN THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Rural women's programmes do not necessarily need to be built upon a separate platform. They can well be integrated with the overall rural development programme (implemented by the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction) provided specific attention is paid to the needs peculiar to women, to strengthen their existing role and to promote their participation in development activities. IRDP offers various schemes in activities with which women are already familiar and in which they can be better deployed with the provision of training and supply of necessary inputs like raw materials and institutional credit facilities.

Supply of storage bins, distribution of milch animals, bee-keeping, sericulture, farm forestry, fisheries, horticulture, rural industries and artisans programmes are being promoted under IRDP. Women can be gainfully employed in all these activities, with identification of the

Keeping in view the occupations women are now engaged in and the roles in which they have the potential to develop their skills and which are income-generating, the following areas could probably be thought of for training of women in self-employment :

raising of nurseries; vegetable and fruit production; mushroom production; raising forest nurseries; poultry rearing; piggyery; sheep rearing; sericulture; bee-keeping; dairying; fisheries; handicrafts; carding, spinning, weaving of cotton, silk work, etc.; tailoring, stitching, embroidery and knitting; dyeing and printing; hand made paper; soap from inedible oil; cottage match-making; bidi making; cane and bamboo work; coir and other fibre industry; toy and curio making; doll making; processing of foodgrains, spices, fruit and vegetables; drying of grains, vegetables, fruit and fish; bakery; utilisation of agricultural by-products for cattle and poultry feeds; watch, radio repairing and assembly; nursing; veterinary services; sale of eatables; etc.

The role of rural woman is not confined only to the economic sphere. She is the

one who has to provide meals for the family, do the storing, processing and preservation of food, normally arrange for fuel for cooking and is fully responsible for looking after the children. Her working conditions, her motivation and her awareness are significant for shaping the future of the children. But traditional social norms and the economic system are against women. These do not consider woman's role in child development and home-making of any consequence, nor do they accord her economic contribution much significance. As a result, in India a child is born in deprivation, which continues throughout his life. Child mortality and morbidity rates in India are still one of the highest, due to inadequate attention paid to mothers' health, lack of proper child care facilities and essential services, like the supply of pure drinking water, primary health care services and services that could improve the working conditions of rural women. Similarly, women have hardly any scope for improving their economic status.

It is now well recognised that basic to all development programmes is the development of human resources, which means ensuring a greater survival rate for children, creating conditions for their ideal growth and developing the awareness, understanding and skills of adults and the youth who could contribute to the development process.

Women constitute nearly half the manpower of the country. The need to integrate them in the development process and also to assess and analyse the issues related to their participation is now well accepted. Past experience with rural women's programmes can provide the necessary direction for required changes in future strategy to achieve this goal. The most significant lesson learnt from past experience is that the women's programme has to be built on a proper perception of their role, which is multifarious in nature, and that their roles vary significantly in different local groups. It is also necessary to understand the relevance of their contribution to the rural development strategy, and the need

for special infrastructural support to release women's time and energy for deployment in more constructive activities, which will be more beneficial, both socially and economically. The programme has to be a synthesis of measures to develop their economic status on the one hand and the provision of basic services to ensure their effective participation in the development process on the other.



TABLES

Table 1
Sex Ratio (Number of Females per 1000 Males)

1901-1971 (State-wise) Rural only.

STATES	1971	1961	1951	1941	1931	1921	1911	1901
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. INDIA	949	963	965	965	966	970	975	979
2. ANDHRA PRADESH	983	988	985	981	989	994	991	983
3. ASSAM	912	887	878	886	885	906	923	929
4. BIHAR	971	1012	1001	1006	1003	1023	1048	1057
5. GUJARAT	951	956	964	954	948	947	943	951
6. HARYANA	870	874	877	879	851	848	834	861
7. HIMACHAL PRADESH	976	961	932	907	915	908	905	899
8. JAMMU & KASHMIR	882	884	882	881	876	879	886	888
9. KERALA	1020	1027	1033	1033	1028	1016	1012	1008
10. MADHYA PRADESH	956	970	975	980	983	982	991	995
11. MAHARASHTRA	985	995	1000	989	987	994	1000	1003
12. MANIPUR	980	1018	1039	1044	1048	1029	1023	1039
13. MEGHALAYA	958	971	969	991	989	1009	1024	1047
14. MYSORE	971	973	974	965	972	975	984	984
15. NAGALAND	928	953	1005	1000	1005	999	1006	997
16. ORISSA	1002	1015	1029	1058	1071	1089	1058	1039
17. PUNJAB	868	865	854	855	832	808	785	836
18. RAJASTHAN	919	913	919	907	908	896	904	898
19. SIKKIM	884	911	912	920	967	970	951	916
20. TAMILNADU	990	1003	1014	1017	1034	1033	1044	1043
21. TRIPURA	944	936	909	891	889	888	894	887
22. UTTAR PRADESH	889	924	925	923	917	909	922	940
23. WEST BENGAL	942	943	939	945	961	971	982	994
UNION TERRITORIES								
1. ANDAMAN & NICOBAR	671	630	654	574	495	303	352	318
2. ARUNACHAL PRADESH	881	894	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
3. CHANDIGARH	683	715	781	763	751	743	720	771
4. DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	1007	963	946	925	911	940	967	960
5. DELHI	825	847	937	946	960	945	969	916
6. GOA, DAMAN & DIU	1030	1084	1143	1083	1088	1122	1103	1085
7. LAKSHADWEEP	978	1020	1043	1018	994	1027	987	1063
8. PONDICHERRY	984	1001	1031	.	.	1053	1058	.
9. MIZORAM	947	1017	1049	1069	1102	1109	1120	1113

* Reproduced from 'Country Review and Analysis prepared by a National Level Committee, 1980—unpublished.

Table II

Age-wise death rates in India (Rural) during 1971 & 1976

Age Group	Male		Female		Total	
	1971	1976	1971	1976	1971	1976
0—4	53.2	54.2	59.3	55.9	56.2	55.2
5—9	5.0	4.8	5.4	5.4	5.2	5.2
10—14	2.2	2.6	2.3	2.6	2.2	2.6
15—19	2.4	2.7	3.3	3.1	2.7	2.9
20—24	3.4	3.0	4.7	4.4	4.0	3.7
25—29	3.2	3.5	4.7	5.0	4.0	4.3
30—34	4.2	4.7	5.7	5.1	5.0	5.0
35—39	5.7	4.8	6.4	5.3	6.0	5.1
40—44	7.7	10.1	6.3	4.9	7.0	7.4
45—49	11.0	12.5	8.8	8.1	9.0	9.7
50—54	19.8	20.5	15.0	12.7	17.5	16.6
55—59	24.9	29.8	18.0	18.7	21.6	24.1
60—64	37.4	52.6	33.9	35.0	35.7	42.8
65—69	54.5	59.1	44.4	47.3	40.5	53.0
70 & ABOVE	113.4	119.6	112.4	85.7	112.8	101.6
ALL AGES	16.0	16.0	16.8	16.6	16.4	16.3

Table III

Mean age at marriage by sex in States/Union Territories (rural) 1961 and 1971

Sl. No.	State/Union Territories	1961 Male	1961 Female	1971 Male	1971 Female
1	2	3	4	5	6
	INDIA	20.80	15.69	21.56	16.67
STATES					
1.	ANDHRA PRADESH	21.67	15.12	22.11	15.94
2.	ASSAM	24.87	18.52	24.87	18.21
3.	BIHAR	18.35	14.54	19.48	15.34
4.	GUJARAT	20.64	16.77	21.27	17.86
5.	HIMACHAL PRADESH	21.13	15.63	22.24	17.24
6.	JAMMU & KASHMIR	21.74	15.89	22.79	17.25
7.	KARNATAKA	23.75	16.01	24.25	17.33
8.	KERALA	25.59	19.99	26.11	20.74
9.	MADHYA PRADESH	17.82	14.01	18.40	14.66
10.	MAHARASHTRA	21.17	15.10	22.37	16.56
11.	MANIPUR	24.22	19.83	24.86	20.82
12.	ORISSA	21.52	16.45	22.46	17.15
13.	PUNJAB	21.11	17.21	21.82	18.33
14.	RAJASTHAN	18.97	14.41	19.05	15.02
15.	TAMIL NADU	24.46	18.23	25.17	19.32
16.	TRIPURA	23.39	16.13	24.69	18.12
17.	UTTAR PRADESH	18.16	14.46	18.76	15.09
18.	WEST BENGAL	22.84	15.20	23.64	17.78
UNION TERRITORIES					
19.	DELHI	19.09	16.00	20.69	17.16
20.	GOA, DAMAN & DIU	25.89	20.35	25.97	20.82

Table IV

Per Cent children attending school by single year, age and sex, 1978

Age (years)	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5
4	10.97	7.85	26.27	23.75
5	28.41	22.24	51.71	49.31
6	42.50	31.37	71.75	67.75
7	55.90	40.26	83.55	76.32
8	63.82	43.93	86.05	80.55
9	67.20	44.64	87.79	80.09
10	68.74	43.29	86.96	80.26
11	66.94	40.83	86.43	77.25
12	65.33	37.45	84.15	73.93
13	61.69	31.58	81.33	72.28
14	55.52	27.02	77.25	65.94

Table V

Rural Female literacy rates in State and Union Territories, 1971

Sl.No.	State/U.Ts.	Literacy Rates	Sl.No.	State/U.Ts.	Literacy Rates
1.	KERALA	52.63	17.	MANIPUR	16.00
2.	LAKSHADWEEP	30.36	18.	WEST BENGAL	14.63
3.	GOA, DAMAN & DIU	30.25	19.	MYSORE	14.37
4.	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	25.57	20.	ORISSA	11.94
5.	PONDICHERRY	23.49	21.	ANDHRA PRADESH	10.88
6.	DELHI	20.00	22.	HARYANA	9.00
7.	PUNJAB	19.78	23.	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	7.77
8.	TAMIL NADU	18.87	24.	U.P.	6.59
9.	MEGHALAYA	18.59	25.	BIHAR	6.06
10.	HIMACHAL PRADESH	17.93	26.	MADHYA PRADESH	6.00
11.	MAHARASHTRA	17.49	27.	J & K	4.74
12.	CHANDIGARH	17.47	28.	RAJASTHAN	3.85
13.	TRIPURA	17.43	29.	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2.86
14.	GUJARAT	17.07	30.	ALL INDIA	12.92
15.	NAGALAND	16.74	<i>According to 1971 census, literate females in the total rural female population is approximately 13%.</i>		
16.	ASSAM	16.26			

Table VI

Decline in Work Participation Rate for Female in
Rural India aged 15-59. 1961-71.

	Work partici- pation rate 1961	Work partici- pation rate 1971
CULTIVATOR	30.02	7.13
AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS	30.72	11.80
HOUSEHOLD INDUSTRY	3.42	0.77
MANUFACTURING	0.37	0.34
PLANTATION, ETC.	12.60	11.80
CONSTRUCTION	0.13	0.09
TRADE AND COMMERCE	0.51	0.22
OTHER SERVICES	0.78	0.77

Table VII

Employment of Working Women

Activities	Percentage in different activities		
	SCs	STs	Others
CULTIVATORS	14.02	42.98	36.43
AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS	76.63	50.10	48.37
ANIMAL HUSBANDRY	1.52	2.47	2.28
MINING AND QUARRYING	0.25	0.48	0.28
MANUFACTURING (HOUSEHOLD INDUSTRY)	2.73	1.36	4.24
MAUFACTURING (OTHER THAN HOUSEHOLD)	1.36	0.74	1.91
CONSTRUCTION	0.31	0.16	0.41
TRADE AND COMMERCE	0.38	0.34	1.31
TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION	0.09	0.07	0.09
OTHER SERVICES	2.64	1.26	4.17
	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table VIII

Per cent children by present age, sex and type of child care when rural mother goes to work.

Item 1	Sex 2	Present Age						
		Below 1 year 3	1 year 4	2 years 5	3 years 6	4 years 7	5 years 8	6 years 9
MOTHER	MALE	64.78	56.14	52.74	53.00	55.02	48.74	48.34
HERSELF	FEMALE	65.57	60.14	53.21	53.01	53.30	45.17	50.40
GRAND	MALE	16.26	18.35	18.59	15.21	14.24	14.64	12.43
PARENTS	FEMALE	15.96	17.24	16.60	16.90	13.52	18.17	11.56
OTHER PERSONS	MALE	14.54	18.02	19.31	21.50	19.82	22.54	19.49
IN THE HOUSEHOLD	FEMALE	13.84	17.64	22.47	19.40	21.38	20.23	19.52
SERVANTS	MALE	0.15	0.45	0.41	0.17	0.17	0.20	0.13
	FEMALE	0.13	0.22	0.14	0.22	0.08	0.32	0.19
OTHER PERSONS	MALE	2.89	3.16	4.19	3.86	3.35	3.36	2.24
NOT RELATED	FEMALE	3.10	2.52	3.03	3.33	3.45	3.18	3.36
NONE	MALE	1.38	3.88	4.73	6.25	7.40	10.53	17.36
	FEMALE	1.40	3.24	4.55	7.14	8.28	11.54	14.97
ALL CLASSES	MALE	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
	FEMALE	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

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It is not true that the issues relating to rural women have been totally ignored. But a sense of half-heartedness and lack of interest are noticeable in the execution of most of the programmes meant for them.

