Rural Woman in Agricultural Extension Training

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Abstract: Women form half of the world and rural area population. Therefore, this indicates that half of the production is done by women and they have a considerable contribution to production. Some indicators reveal that women have a considerably significant share; however, it is also known that they can’t benefit from agricultural services sufficiently. One of these services is agricultural extension training. Women, particularly in developing countries, profit from only a small part of extension sources or time. In this study, the handicaps preventing the agricultural extension services from reaching women were investigated and some proposals were developed in order to eliminate those barriers. It is indicated that there are four basic problems causing women not to make use of those services: they are insufficient time, lack of training, social structure, and poverty. If these problems are to be eliminated, it can be said that the efficiency of extension training directed towards women will increase. It is necessary that social attitude and standard of judgement should change, women should be supported with education, extension programs should be carried out in integrity, the dimensions of sexual discrimination should be reduced to minimum, and the role of women at home and in agricultural production should be stated with tangible values so that rural women can benefit from agricultural extension training more.

Key words: Rural Woman, Agricultural Extension, Extension Approach

INTRODUCTION

Both economic and social process of change follow the conditions of world that change rapidly. The improvement in technology, increasing transportation possibilities, widespread and efficient use of mass media means, organic and sustainable farming, and such changes influence rural women. The need for training together with this change has increased. The training will ensure the improvement in human resources, the use of technology more rational along with a faster adaptation to changing life conditions. Therefore, it is necessary that women have part in extension training and they should not be neglected.

Women labor forms an important part of agricultural work force in underdeveloped and developing countries. In addition, they also carry some responsibilities related to family life at home. Therefore, the intensity of her labor is not only high in agricultural production but also high in household jobs. While women have an important share in agricultural production, they have exceedingly been deprived of agricultural services. Even in regions where agricultural activities are completely carried out by women, agricultural extension services are turned towards only men. Yet, women must have a more active role in food security, sustainable farming and rural development. This can only be achieved through supplying rural women with more qualified, reliable and convenient information continuously and quickly. Agricultural extension services are generally interested in farmers (usually assumed men), and the use of farm sources and various problems in farm management. It has been known that all farmers can not profit from these extension services equally. The literature review indicates that 58 per cent of total sources of extension organizations are reserved for commercial farms which have a market directed production and have no resource restrictions. On the other hand, farms working for a living, woman farmers, and farmers who don’t have farming lands make use of only 34 percent or a bit more of extension sources. Among these groups, women can only profit from 5 per cent of source and time of extension activities, and this proportion reveals that they can not share these services equally. An important fact supporting this case is that agricultural extension programmes carried out traditionally assume those working in rural areas are men. This approach undervalues the fact that the women taking part in production in rural areas, especially in developing
countries, are the basic power keeping the rural economy alive[11]. This result expresses an important contradiction when one considers women’s participation and contribution to production activities.

It is possible to say that there is sexual discrimination in many countries when we examine the current data, and this, as an important fact, prevents women from making use of agricultural extension training sufficiently.

Woman-man inequality has caused rural women to lose control over their own labor and living sources by spoiling the traditional balances during development interventions spread out from man dominant and formal market institutions[9]. It is necessary that the effects of settled social attitudes connected with these sexual roles should be abolished so that women can profit from agricultural extension services sufficiently.

According to the results of a profit-cost analysis carried out by World Bank, the gains of investments in women in developing countries through training are much higher than any other investment type[11]. It is possible to see women as farmers seeking for information, questioning, seeking for solution, and using the sources effectively as a result of extension training directed towards them. When we consider their share in agricultural production, it is necessary to emphasize that rural women should gain such a formation. Yet, it has already been known that they are still deprived of extension activities.

According to 1996-2001 action plan of FAO for women on the agenda of development, it is stated that

- The formal data related with women’s participation to agricultural activities for food production is not adequate yet.
- Women’s participation to labor in rural areas is not statistically considered as an economic factor, but a part of family work force,
- Therefore, a full integration of women in extension activities hasn’t been achieved and the reasons for the situation have been brought up for consideration[11].

It is necessary that women should profit from the time and sources of agricultural extension more. To fulfill this goal, it is compulsory that both socioeconomic and cultural factors of women should be examined and hindrances be abolished, and negative sides in extension system and approach be removed.

**Difficulties Faced While Conducting Agricultural Extension Services for Woman Farmers:** The social structure which women live in is an influential factor to form their social statutes. This social statute effects every type of their activities. Therefore, it is important that the statute of women in society and the view point of individuals towards women should change, and traditional value of judgment should be left. Giving more importance to women’s training will make significant contributions to this statute change. It is known that 600 million out of one billion uneducated people is constituted by women and girls, and a big part of this population lives in rural areas. The lack of education restricts women’s activities in every field. Being unable to join agricultural extension programmes is only one of these restricted activities. Consequently, women are abstracted from a volunteer training system. The factors preventing women from making use of agricultural extension services are a chain of problems supporting one another. While there are some restrictions caused by the society, there are also some other limitations arising from extension approaches.

Table 1 presents the restrictions related with the effectiveness of some extension approaches in reaching woman farmers. As seen in the table, these restrictions consist of rural women’s roles in agricultural production and at home, sexual roles, family relations, and societal attitudes. Apart from these, the philosophy applied in extension approaches supports those restrictions.

Woman farmers have always been on the background in extension systems, and extension services have always been directed towards man farmers. A work plan in extension programmes focused on women has been neglected. Women have generally been trained by home economists instead of woman extension staff on subjects such as nourishment, health, child care, and handicrafts. And these are applications directed towards developing the rural women’s family roles. However, their roles in agricultural production are as important as their family roles. It presents an importance that the farming side of rural woman should be given preference to, her role in agricultural production should be developed, and she should be given an extension training together with man farmers as a whole body.

In addition, it is known that the restrictions related with women’s participation in agricultural extension programmes have individual and societal dimensions. They are four basic problems.

**Lack of Time:** Women have almost no time to participate in extension activities because of the variety and number of jobs they do in rural area. In addition, that men move to urban areas to work means an extra work burden for women.

**Lack of Education:** Women in rural areas are deprived of some knowledge and skills because they have little or almost no education. Therefore, women stay out of
extension system because they don’t have reading, writing and calculating skills which are required by the extension activities.

**Social Structure:** The family role, rural community role, and national role of women is limited by traditional approaches. That women are primarily responsible for things related with the continuity of family life, and that their participation in agricultural production is evaluated as the extended part of this responsibility make their making use of extension services difficult.

**Poverty:** Women also face a serious poverty caused by all these restrictions. Their chance to make money is limited with home production or production done for a living.

These four basic problems can only be solved when social attitudes, standard of judgment, and social structure change and the roles of women at home, in family and in agricultural production are brought out into open. It is necessary that women’s full and real participation in society be ensured, extension programmes have an integral approach without man-woman discrimination, and women have a right in the process of decision.

### Table 1: The restrictions related with the effectiveness of some extension approaches in reaching woman farmers.

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<th>Extension Approach</th>
<th>The restrictions related with the effectiveness of extension services</th>
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| The general agricultural extension approach | - Multi-roles of women in agricultural production are not sufficient to let her benefit from technology and join the training.  
- Settled societal attitudes related with sexual roles |
| The commodity specialised approach | - Women are not accepted as a group making production directed towards market economy.  
- The state of women as free family labor |
| The training and visit approach | - The man joining agricultural extension training is supposed to transfer information to his wife.  
- Rural family is not considered as a whole system reflecting a life style based on corporation and family entrepreneurship. |
| The project approach | - Agricultural extension training in various types has been given in the scope of short-term project activities.  
- The training doesn’t continue as the project ends. |
| The participatory agricultural extension approach | - Women are an active system when chosen as the target group.  
- However, expected effect can not be obtained since women are required to finance the training cost, be organised, and be volunteer to join the training. |
| The extension based on the expertise field | - The agricultural training for men is dependent upon home economy training for women.  
- The activity is restricted with the extension specialist’s expertise field. Women’s family roles take up programme’s time more than their roles in agriculture. |
| The privatisation of extension services | - It is a kind of information transfer based on the presentation of new input by waqfs or private sector institutions.  
- Women who carry out activities as free family labor apart from market economy can not be reached. |

Source: Axinn[3], FAO, Guide to Alternative Extension Approaches. Human Resources Institutions and Agrarian Reform Division (ESH), Rome.

### Some Proposals to Help Agricultural Extension Services Reach Women:

The proposals cover including rural women in extension services and having them benefit from these services as much as possible. Therefore, it seems possible that production and productivity in agriculture will increase, living standards will advance, and society will have more conscious families. That is because women is the most effective individual in the societal development of family. The following proverb reflects the importance of women in family and society: "If you educate a man, you educate an individual. If you educate a woman, you educate a family." Therefore, including women in agricultural extension training has a great importance.

It is possible to provide a more effective service by eliminating some deficiencies met in the application of agricultural extension services directed towards women. To do this, the following points must be taken into consideration.

- Extension services should have social sex sensitive and woman focused approaches.
- Women’s full and equal participation in extension services must be provided.
- Extension policies should be prepared taking...
women’s needs, interests and problems into consideration.

- Women should participate in decision making process during policy making stage so that they can join extension programmes actively.

- Information about women’s roles in agricultural production in addition to their roles at home should be provided. That is, the extension subjects directed to women should be increased in number, and their activities and roles in agricultural production should be developed in order to give preference to production characteristic of women.

- Agricultural extension methods should be selected convenient to women, and messages which will be conveyed to women should be formed carefully.

- Women groups are generally trained by woman extension staff. However, there are only a few woman extension staff in the world. Therefore, the number of woman extension staff should be increased.

- However, such an application will contribute to the abstraction of woman farmer groups. Therefore, man extension staff should also train woman farmers in order to prevent this contradiction.

- A separate source of finance should be supplied for extension activities directed towards women.

- A whole extension approach aimed at having both men and women gain skills to manage agricultural activities, home and family responsibilities –without man-woman farmer discrimination – should be considered\(^2\).

- It should be significantly considered that woman extension staff not be assigned to any other duties except for extension training.

- Time and place for training woman farmers should be selected carefully.

- Transportation and audio-visual material should be facilitated.

- Women farmers should be trained in the same reference group.

- Convenient programmes and chances for woman farmers should be prepared consciously.

**Result:** It has been found out that the time and sources reserved for woman farmers in relation to presenting agricultural extension services are limited and low. The restrictions about it have already been known. The extension services directed towards woman farmers should be rearranged by considering those deficiencies. The more woman farmers have part in extension works, the more productive the information men have will be.

Men and women have a role in agricultural activities together. Therefore, putting women’s labor in the background, and leaving them uneducated will cause agricultural productivity to decrease. Agricultural extension programmes should be planned and applied without sex discrimination.

Women’s social status has a great importance in making use of agricultural extension services. They are required to have some gains such as developing their social status, maintaining their rights, providing family democracy, participating in the decision-making process, and accepting the value of their roles both at home and in agricultural production. They should also gain some behavioral forms such as questioning, solving and managing which are expected from an individual under extension training. The feeling of “self-help”, the basic philosophy of agricultural extension training, should also be given to women. They should be provided with the awareness that they can stand on their own two feet without help from men.

It is compulsory that problems of rural women arising both from substructure and social structure in rural areas should be eliminated.

It should be an inevitable goal for a democratic rural society that rural women share responsibilities as well as men and they have equal share from the services.

**REFERENCES**