



ENHANCING RURAL WOMEN'S VOICE IN AGRICULTURAL POLICY FORMULATION

BY THE ASIAN PARTNERSHIP FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN
RESOURCES IN RURAL ASIA (ASIADHRRA)

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Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (AsiaDHRRA)

Abstract:

This paper raises some of the key issues that concern rural women and affect their meaningful participation in rural development. It takes a look at the barriers for women participation in the various aspects of agricultural development as well as the initiatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Asia, particularly of the Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (AsiaDHRRA), and their partner farmers' organizations, in breaking the barriers to women's participation. The aim is to encourage and inspire those responsible in policy making and in the implementation of rural development programs to take into account the needs and interests of women in the rural areas and their basic right to be recognized as active participants in the development process.

key words: women farmer in Asia, agriculture issues of women, empowering rural women

I. Introduction

The Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia or AsiaDHRRA is a regional partnership of eleven (11) social development networks and organizations from ten (10) Asian nations - Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, South Korea, Taiwan-ROC, and Japan. All members are involved in the development of human resources in rural areas which accounts for its DHRRA names.

AsiaDHRRA envisions Asian rural communities that are just, free, prosperous, living in peace and working in solidarity towards self-reliance. To contribute to this long term vision, it aims to play the role of a promoter and catalysts of relationships with various partners through the people to people dialogue and exchange approach; of a mobilizer of resources for human resource development in the rural areas; and of facilitator of processes and opportunities for the strengthening of solidarity and kinship among Asian rural communities.

To realize the vision of the network, AsiaDHRRA recognizes the need of ensuring that women and men have equal opportunity to development . It is both an imperative and a practical necessity for the viability and sustainability of rural development. To maximize human resources in maintaining the social fabric of rural communities and revitalizing local economies, the full involvement of women is crucial. This means that opportunities must be systematically integrated in the design and implementation of rural development programs and projects, to ensure that women and men can participate and benefit on equal terms. A better balance has to be achieved between women and men in making decisions that affect the life and economy of rural society, through the active encouragement and involvement of women's associations and networks and the promotion of women in all stages of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation as well as in all aspects of development – socio-cultural, economic, and political.

2. Situation of Women in Agriculture in Asia

An old Proverbs says of a virtuous woman, “...she works with eager hands...She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family...She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night. In her hand she holds the stuff and grasps the spindle with her fingers... She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.”

A poignant and accurate picture of a woman farmer. She is usually the first one to get up in the morning and the last to bed at night. She works 18-hour days. She cooks, cleans, washes and mends the clothing. Among her duties she produces, stores and preserves the food. She also markets and sells any surplus products. And, she replenishes the farm labor through the children she bears. Her life is hard, but she seldom complains, only searches for ways to better use what she has and to be better at what she does.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), rural women are responsible for half of the world's food production and have a prominent role in agriculture at all levels. They produce between 60 and 80 percent of the food in most developing countries and are also the main producers of the world's staple crops - rice, wheat, maize - which provide up to 90 percent of the rural poor's food intake. Women contribute significantly to secondary crop production, such as legumes and vegetables, which provide essential nutrients for their families and are often the only food available during the lean seasons or in case the main crop fails. Women are fundamental for guaranteeing food security and household maintenance not only for their own families, but also for their community in general.

Women have extensive work loads with dual responsibility for farm and household production. They are mostly responsible for the education and care of children and elders,yet they represent the highest percentage of illiteracy at the global level. In most Asian countries women's control and use of land is determined by

their relationship to males in terms of marriage, divorce or widowhood, which also has an impact on their social security.

The International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN) paper “Incorporating Gender Considerations for the Designation of Special Products in WTO Agriculture Negotiations” says that notwithstanding women’s contribution to global food security, women farmers are commonly under estimated and ignored in development strategies and trade negotiations processes. They have experienced few concrete benefits and in several cases have even been adversely affected in their living and development conditions as result of the implementation of trade liberalization processes. There is a general idea among politicians, trade officials and negotiators that trade liberalization will reduce poverty equally for men and women. It is also believed that market access will promote development and improve the conditions of men and women evenly. Accordingly, the design and implementation of trade policies at national and multilateral level are gender-blind in their orientation; but not gender-neutral in their effects.

3. Barriers to Meaningful Women’s Participation in Agricultural Development

There is a growing recognition of the role of women farmers as producers of food, traders, and family caretakers. They play important roles in their communities as well as in national economies. However, they are not able to unleash their full potentials due to various constraints. FAO, based on their various consultations and studies, and as attested by the experiences of many CSOs, has clearly articulated the following issues and concerns faced by rural women in the areas of rural financing and marketing, agricultural research and technology development, agricultural education and extension, rural organization and communications:

3.1 Agricultural Credit

Rural women's efforts to initiate or expand income-generating activities are constrained by their limited access to credit and other financial services such as savings and deposits. In Asia as in most developing countries, women farmers receive only a minor share of the total agricultural credit - even in countries where they play a predominant role in food production. Although women may be better credit risks than men (generally higher rates of repayment), banks and other formal lending institutions are reluctant to extend credit to them since the loans are usually small and women tend to be inexperienced borrowers often unable to meet collateral requirements such as land title since land titles are usually in the name of the husband only.

Women's lack of access to credit is part of a larger problem of inadequate credit availability for small farmers. Many factors limit women's access to credit: they are usually not involved in development projects; extension programs are oriented mainly to men; and they are often incapable of following application procedures due to lack of knowledge of institutional credit and widespread illiteracy. Women's limited participation in farmers' associations and cooperatives also restricts their access to credit since membership in such organizations provides both loans and credit information.

3.2 Agricultural Marketing

In Asia, women traders handle 60 to 90 per cent of domestic produce from farm to consumer. Although women play a predominant role in marketing, little has been done to assist their activities through improved transportation or better market facilities which inhibits their efforts to expand the volume of their income-generating activities. Though they traditionally have important roles in the wholesale trading of agricultural goods, illiteracy or restrictions on women's independent legal capacity prevent them from meeting the procedural requirements of formal service institutions. Few women have had access to training in marketing, accounting and management.

3.3 Agricultural Research and Technology Development

Agricultural technology development has largely ignored the needs and priorities of women. Although rural women are knowledgeable and use traditional technology, they have little access to modern technology that could benefit them in their productive and reproductive activities. This is due to their lack of participation in setting research priorities or in enhancing and disseminating conventional technologies and local knowledge. As a result, women are often subjected to the unintended side-effects of modern technologies introduced for the benefit of others. This can have a devastating impact on their access to resources, income-generating activities, and on their control over their own labor.

Research and agricultural technology development are also required for post-harvest activities, many of which are carried out by women. Where post-harvest losses are high, farmers often must cultivate the land more intensively to obtain the same yield. This places additional stress on the environment. Providing rural women with the information and technologies needed to reduce post-harvest losses is an important means of increasing available food supplies, reducing women's time and labor constraints, and easing environmental stress.

3.4 Agricultural Education and Extension

A 1989 FAO global survey showed that women received only five per cent of all agricultural extension services worldwide. Such lack of access to information undermines women's ability to maintain environmental quality and the sustainable use of resources.

Agricultural extension services are not adequately reaching rural women. For the most part, extension policies do not specifically identify women as an integral part of the target audience. This is often due to misconceptions about, and prejudices against, the actual and ideal roles of women. Traditional extension methodologies may not be appropriate for working with rural women.

Existing extension services tend to focus on a few “progressive” farmers while neglecting many resource-poor farmers and the landless, including women. In some attempts to reach rural women, special women’s units have been created, but these are often separated or have staff without sufficient backgrounds or funds to implement technical agricultural projects.

3.5 Rural Organizations

In many Asian countries, women have limited access to rural organizations. While there may not be laws prohibiting women from becoming members, they are generally excluded because membership is based on land ownership or ‘head of household’ criterion. Even in countries where membership is open to all, women do not always benefit to the same extent as men nor are they able to participate equally in decision-making and policy directions. The lack of services to reduce domestic work and childcare leaves little free time for women to participate. Under present circumstances, women who decide to join these organizations take on responsibilities that may expand their working day.

Policy recommendations on the above mentioned issues already abound as noted in the annexes (see annex1: RIMISP paper and annex 2:FAO). Thus, the next part of this paper will not focus on the specific policy recommendation but on various efforts to strengthen women farmers meaningful participation in agricultural policy formulation processes.

4. Breaking the Barriers to Participation: Empowering Women

To break the barriers to women’s participation and realize their potentials as they meaningfully participate in agriculture/ sustainable rural development, AsiaDHRRA member NGOs and partner farmers organizations particularly in the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia have pursued various gender responsive community initiatives.

- 1. In the Philippines, PhilDHRRA, a national network composed of 75 member NGOs provides services to rural communities in 71 provinces nationwide. Most of its NGO members integrate gender and development in their community-based projects. An example of this initiative is the conduct of various Gender Sensitivity and Leadership Development trainings for women designed to address the gaps in women's participation in leadership. In addition to this, skills training on cooperative management, financial management as well as agri-product processing are also implemented. Conscious efforts are also undertaken to ensure that mechanisms and systems that recognize and promote the significant role of women farmers are in place within the farmers organization, at all levels.

In line with this, PAKISAMA, a national farmer federation and a strategic partner of PhilDHRRA, has instituted a gender policy which provides that 30% of its leaders are women at all levels. PAKISAMA also created its women's arm called LAKAMBINI. Through LAKAMBINI and its various representation in government bodies concerned with agrarian reform, sustainable agriculture, food sovereignty and farmers' rights, PAKISAMA was able to strongly put forward the voice of women farmers.

LAKAMBINI is linked with a broader coalition of rural women, the Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK). Through this broader platform, LAKAMBINI gained more confidence in pushing for their sectoral agenda to various government agencies. PKKK took active role in the monitoring of government's compliance to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), especially in 2006, the 30th anniversary of CEDAW. PKKK geared its advocacy work on asserting rural women's rights in the midst of massive liberalization in agriculture and fisheries using the CEDAW commitments as benchmark in measuring how liberalization in agriculture and fisheries has actually affected the plight of rural women.

PAKISAMA participated in various campaigns related to women's entitlement (implementation of Memorandum Circular 18 related to right of women to be included in the land title) and the implementation of the Law on Domestic Violence, Anti-Violence Against Women and Children.

PAKISAMA is also a member of a multi-sectoral party list which recently won (again) a seat in the congress. Through the party-list, PAKISAMA is able to propose legislations supportive of sustainable agricultural development as well as guard against legislations that are contrary to the interest of small farmers.

PhilDHRRA and PAKISAMA together with the broader civil society groups have also drafted a development agenda which becomes basis for their lobby in Congress not only during election time but also in public hearings and other consultations in aid of legislation

- 2. In Indonesia, InDHRRA has intensive community organizing work both with the fishers and farmers sector. In North Sumatera region, women fisher groups have been established in February 2006. To address the rising school fees, the women's group decided to build a kindergarten for the fishers' children. The community organizer (CO) and other women fishers capable of teaching assumed teaching roles. In South Sumatera, they facilitated the organizing of six (6) additional rural women's groups. The CO has intensively assisted eight (8) cadres by using household economy issues as entry point. In Jember (East Java region), in Pasrujambe village, the CO motivated the rural women to establish a women's group through discussions of reproductive health issues especially because reproductive health is not given attention by policy makers. They embarked on developing alternative health practices such as using traditional herbs to take care of their reproductive health needs. These are small but crucial steps towards making rural women more active in the community.
- 3. In Malaysia, DHRRA Malaysia established ten (10) Women Community Centers for the empowerment of Indian women. It is a project initiated in May 2003 which focuses on addressing the invisibility and statelessness of Indian women in Malaysia. Through the services offered by the community centers e.g. psychological and legal counseling, legal education, and skills trainings, women are provided with information on their rights as well as opportunities for more productive living. The center also provide business training to prepare them to venture into small scale industry. Some of the centers have facilitated the implementation of Small income generating projects on knitting and weaving rattan baskets. They also conduct awareness programs where talks on health issues, parenting skills, and social issues are held.

An important service of the center is the legal documentation support such as the registration of marriages and birth of children. With proper legal documentation they are able to secure identification cards which will allow them access to health and education services. More importantly this will allow them to vote thus making their voices heard more institutionally by policy makers.

■ 4. In Vietnam, VietDHRRA, a network composed of NGOs, government and mass organizations focusing on human resource development, has implemented various agricultural training programs both for women and men at the commune level. They implement a “learning by doing” approach where farmer extension workers are utilized to provide agricultural extension to fellow farmers. They also produce manuals on crop and livestock production based on their on-ground piloting/demo farm experiences. VietDHRRA organized and strengthen agricultural cooperatives as a necessary socio-economic infrastructure for community production and marketing efforts at the commune and district level. Gender and development is a conscious component of their work at the village level, given VietDHRRA’s long cooperation with the Asian Women for Cooperative Development Forum (AWCF) which is concerned with promoting gender concerns in the cooperative movement.

One active member of VietDHRRA is the Vietnam Farmers’ Union (VNFU), a mass organization composed of more than nine (9) million farmers. To ensure meaningful women participation in VNFU, a gender policy was instituted which provides that at least 10 % of its Executive Committee at all levels are women. As of 2006, 22% of the Central Executive Committee are women, 3 out of 23 (13%) are in the Standing Committee. There are 31 out of 121 (26%) women heading central level departments and sections. At the Secretariat level, the central organ, 48% (160 our of 330) are women. VNFU’s annual plan has specific action programs for women and a regular budget earmarked which goes to specific activities like conferences, training activities, information dissemination, and publication in aid of gender and development

The efforts of AsiaDHRRA members and its partner farmers organization can be summarized into eight major interventions :

1. Awareness raising, leadership capacity building, and skills development

- a. gender sensitivity sessions involving discussions regarding gender issues, ontological and historical bases of gender and its manifestations in both personal and social dimensions, and the visioning from the awareness-raising component which is a basic step in gender and development efforts. Without an internalization of these issues, it is impossible to have strong advocates and activists for gender and development. Gender sensitivity usually consists of personal testimonies of gender bias, structured learning exercises (SLEs), films, poems, case discussions, theater and other pedagogical methods of consciousness raising.
- b. leadership trainings are designed to equip women farmers with basic knowledge, skills and orientation on leadership. Through this type of training, potential women farmer leaders gain confidence to take on initial tasks for the organization such as a committee head, then later after being tasked-tested, becomes more confident to assume bigger roles and responsibilities in the organization and the community.
- c. skills training refers to specialized trainings aimed at developing skills of women farmer in various areas of work e.g. organizational and cooperative management, financial management, documentation, agri-food processing, etc.

2. Creating platforms or mechanisms for women participation

- a. In undertaking community organizing work, special attention is given to the creation of a platform or mechanism for women's participation. This mechanism can take several forms. Some DHRAs facilitate the formation of Gender Support Group (GSG) or women's committee within farmers' organizations. Other DHRAs see the need to create a separate organization for women for them to have a venue to exercise leadership apart from the usually male-dominated farmer organization. Having a separate organization allows women to deepen their sense of fellowship while building their confidence to take on greater leadership role in the farmer organization.

b. In most cases, the DHRRAs facilitate the linkage of community-based rural women groups to the broader women's movement through networking and coalition building. They also facilitate the linkage of rural women groups to various government agencies for claim-making initiatives.

3. Instituting organizational policies for women's participation within farmers' organizations

Aside from the creation of mechanisms for women's participation, organizational policies to institutionalize the participation have to be promoted and installed. The DHRRAs intervention to its partner farmers groups include facilitating processes leading to the review of their organizational policies and systems with the end in mind of making it more sensitive and responsive of the issues of both women and men. An simple example of this policy is the provision for a guaranteed slot for women in trainings and livelihood opportunities or an assured seat for women in the leadership post.

4. Facilitating women's participation in local governance

a. In countries like the Philippines and Indonesia where there exist a legal framework for decentralization thus allowing participation of civil society in local governance, the DHRRAs have included in their community organizing agenda efforts to building capacity of farmers groups to capture opportunities for participation, particularly in areas of local development planning and budgeting, and local legislations (e.g. village or municipal ordinances related to gender, sustainable agriculture etc.). Towards this end, the DHRRAs have extended technical assistance to their partner farmers organizations in complying with the accreditation of women's groups at the local development councils and local special bodies.

b. Being an accredited member of local development councils provides women farmers the political power to take part in the basic task of formulating agricultural development plans for the community. Membership also allows women farmers in the Philippines to demand for the implementation of the 5% GAD budget towards relevant and responsive projects for women farmers.

5. Mobilization towards effective participation in electoral processes and influencing national legislations

Along side the participation in local legislation, the DHRRAs together with their partner farmer organization also engage in electoral processes through party lists focusing on women's rights, particularly in areas where a progressive party list exists (e.g. AKBAYAN, ABANSE-PINAY, GABRIELA). Developing women's legislative agenda in Congress is also commonly pursued. This legislative agenda serves as basis for selecting potential candidates running for legislative positons. It becomes a tool for pressuring candidates to adopt pro-small farmer and gender sensitive agricultural policies.

6. Advocacy and Campaigns

- a. Campaigns. The DHRRAs and partner farmers group have been active in various campaigns focusing on the promotion of women's right to own land and have access to agricultural support services, health and other social services.
- b. Public Discussion on Gender Issues. The DHRRA members make use of mainstream radio programs as well as community-based radio programs as a means to popularize rural development issues among the grassroots and the middle class. They usually include in their radio program gender and rural women along side other issues in sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, trade issues, etc.
- c. Conducting case studies/researches in aid of gender sensitive policy advocacy. As part of their experienced-based advocacy, some DHRRA members and other NGOs undertake case studies to capture the innovative practices on-ground towards eventual mainstreaming. Process documentation efforts are undertaken to ensure that relevant experiences are captured into useful manuals which can be popularized. However, this clearly remains an area for development by the civil society sector in general.

d. Monitoring government projects and compliance to international commitments related to women e.g. Beijing Action Plan, Millennium Development Goals. Together with the broader civil society groups, the DHRRAs and partner farmer groups participate in coming up with shadow report or score cards which monitor the status of implementation of government projects particularly along their commitments to progressive international treaties (which are also products of international lobby work of the civil society).

7. Gender Tools development

- a. gender disaggregation of data (community profile, baseline data, project reports,etc). There is clearly more consciousness and discipline in disaggregating data by CSOs these days. It is clear that gender-disaggregated information have serious implication on the the quality of whole cycle of project planning and implementation.
- b. Gender analysis and planning is being done to identify specific aspects of culture, division of labor, and access to and control of resources for the purpose of understanding their implications in the design and implementation of development project.

8. Credit and livelihood support project for women

- a. Facilitating the formation of rotating savings and credit associations (traditional financing mechanisms established largely by women, and for women, such as the “arisan” in Indonesia or the “paluwagan” system in the Philippines). However these informal credit initiatives are not always dependable because of their limited capitalization. As a result, women’s businesses tend to be smaller. They are more likely to be home-based and to be in sectors that are technologically unsophisticated and overcrowded to the point of market saturation.
- b. Provision of technical and financial support for off-farm income-generating projects like agri-food processing (banana chips, cassava chips, nilam oil processing, etc).

5. Lessons, Insights and Recommendation

Based on the field experiences of the DHRRAs and our regional advocacy efforts, the following are some lessons and insights to offer:

- a. Efforts to widen the role and participation of women without addressing the gender stereotyping will lead to multiple burden for women. Along side any effort to enhance women participation is the creation of mechanisms that will release them from the ties that bind them from their traditional work at home such as child rearing. An example of this mechanism is the creation of daycare centers and the conduct of gender sensitivity trainings for couples to ensure shared responsibility in the transformation process .
- b. Massive and continuous organizing of agricultural cooperatives or farmers organizations, with a strong mechanism and enabling policy for women farmer participation, is crucial to strengthen the voice of small farmers in agricultural policy formulation supportive of sustainable rural development. Agricultural cooperatives and farmers' organizations serve many purposes: they permit economies of scale for their members to access services; provide an institutional means for integrating the small holder sector into the national economy; enable the increased exchange of goods and services between traditional and other sectors of the economy; and they allow members to benefit from technology transfer. In their ideal form they adapt to many economic activities. They often operate at the grassroots level among people who know each other and for this reason they are well suited to providing financial services to rural people. In addition, cooperatives and farmers association provides solid mass base for advocacy.

- c. Support initiatives on developing and/or strengthening existing financing systems designed to address the restricted access of women to formal credit and free them from dependence on informal sources such as family, friends and traditional moneylenders. While informal credit access is possible in some instances, it does not link women to the mainstream financial system and perpetuates the marginalization of their economic activities. It is therefore recommended that gender-based credit programs be carefully designed to ensure viability and sustainability.
- d. In the preparation of this paper we found difficulty in getting enough documents capturing the on-ground initiatives of both our members and partner farmer groups. There are available researches but most of them are already abstractions, lacking the details of the concrete practices undertaken at the ground level. In line with this, there is a need to invest more in documenting on ground initiatives of rural women, especially on the agricultural productivity side. The documentation should focus on the detailed description of the strategies, processes, policies and mechanisms so as to serve as useful guide for field workers and women leaders as they innovate and explore better ways of ensuring women's participation not only in policy making but also in implementation of development projects responsive to their needs..
- e. Finally, CSOs in general should continue to put premium on the facilitation of processes and the strengthening of social infrastructures, policies and mechanisms of participation. The institutionalization of processes, policies and mechanisms at all levels is crucial since it is through these that women farmers can continually define and articulate their issues. The continuing development and innovations at the farming and technology side can only be captured by the majority of rural women if they are as empowered to claim these opportunities, especially in the given context in Asia where these opportunities for socio-economic growth are more within the reach of the bigger farmers and capitalists, and the framework and commitments of many governments towards women empowerment are yet to be concretely seen.

ANNEXES

Annex 1:

Susana Lastarria-Cornhiel, (Recommendations in her paper to RIMISP, Feminization of Agriculture)

1. Access to productive resources

Development policy should address the persistent problem of improving women's access to productive resources: land, credit, and labor. Women face constraints as effective producers in the rural economy. As more women become the principal supporters of their households, these constraints not only prejudice women's physical and emotional health, they also have impact on household welfare. Privatization and commercialization of community landed resources such as communal land, forests, and water sources are also prejudicial to subsistence agriculture and smallholder households. Women who are unable to leave rural areas are particularly impacted by loss of community natural resources.

2. Agricultural support services

Women do not have the same access to agricultural services and resources (such as agricultural extension, input suppliers, product markets, and credit institutions) as men. Policies are needed to ensure that women participate in and benefit from the dissemination of technology and knowledge needed for commercial agriculture and food production.

3. Delivery of health and education services to rural areas

Persistent and increasing rural poverty has been exacerbated by neo-liberal policies that cut state support for health and education. Education and health policies should address the needs of women and children in rural areas who often are not as mobile and educated as men, and who often lack basic documentation to be eligible for these services. Related to health, greater regulation on the use and handling of chemical inputs, particularly in the non-traditional agricultural export industry is needed to protect women's and men's health. Also needed is greater education and awareness among agricultural workers and producers about exposure to chemicals.

4. Reduction of women's domestic work load

As women take on more responsibility for agricultural production, policy makers should explore how to provide services and innovations that reduce the time and work involved in domestic tasks. Development policy and programs should also address the rigid gender division of labor. Greater awareness of women's domestic and reproductive workload and their increasing participation in market economy activities is a first step in creating a climate for modifying gender roles.

5. Gender-disaggregated data collection

Gender-disaggregated data is sorely needed to understand intra-household labor and resource allocation and control. As already pointed out, lack of how men and women allocate labor and resources within the household has made it difficult to determine women's overall participation in agricultural production. Data is needed not only on women's and men's productive labor, but also on the levels of labor invested in the reproduction of the household and rural labor force. Decisions made within the household determine who (women, men, female children, and male children) benefits from the allocation decisions.

Annex 2: **FAO Recommendations**

Relative to the issues and concerns identified by FAO, the following are some of the strategies and actions they have outlined which can also be pursued by government agencies towards enhancing the role of women in agricultural development:

1. Rural finance and marketing services

- Prepare training materials and programs on savings, credit, and the management of economic activities in order to improve the capacity of rural women to negotiate with formal rural finance structures.
- Publish a study of key gender issues in marketing to be used as a training manual for project designers, planners and executing officers.

2. Agricultural research and technology development

Develop a database on national research and technology development institutions that incorporate gender-disaggregated data.

- Strong research programs are still needed on food crops and animals, usually the domain of women, especially indigenous local crops, poultry and small ruminants.
- Develop gender-sensitive guidelines on better ways to address the technological needs and priorities of rural women farmers and on the role of local knowledge systems in technology development policy.
- Carry out field studies on gender issues in agricultural engineering.
- Undertake research on the role of women in post-harvest systems and on the design of food processing equipment appropriate for women.
- Develop studies on the role, experience and knowledge of women in management of genetic resources and biodiversity.
- Upgrade and broaden information on different aspects of women in agriculture and rural development

3. Agricultural education and extension

- Prepare a guide for developing curricula for agro-ecological study and training programmes that specifically addresses gender issues.
- Train extension workers in ways to integrate gender concerns, environmental and population education, into agricultural training programs.
- Prepare a guide on Incorporating the Needs and Interests of Rural Women into Extension Messages.
- Develop training materials to train young rural women in leadership skills.

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