

ALU – WOMEN’S STUDIES E. NEWS LETTER

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Theme- **Women in Rural India**

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Editor’s Desk

You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.

- Jawaharlal Nehru

Rural women produce much of the world's food, care for the environment and help reduce the risk of disaster in their communities. Yet they continue to face disadvantages and discrimination that prevent them from realizing their potential. For too many rural women, their daily reality is one in which they do not own the land they farm, are denied the financial services that could lift them out of poverty, and live without the guarantee of basic nutrition, health services and amenities such as clean water and sanitation. Unpaid care work imposes a heavy burden and prevents their access to decent wage employment. Empowering rural women is crucial for ending hunger and poverty. By denying women rights and opportunities, we deny their children and societies a better future. When food and nutrition security are improved, rural women have more opportunities to find decent work and provide for the education and health of their children. With equal access to land, credit and productive resources, rural women can increase their productivity and sell their goods. As equal members of society, rural women can raise their voices as decision-makers and propel sustainable development.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN - 15th OCTOBER

Background



The first International Day of Rural Women was observed on October 15, 2008. This day recognizes the role of rural women, including indigenous women, in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty.

The idea of honoring rural women with a special day was put forward at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995. It was suggested that October 15 be celebrated as “World Rural Women’s Day,” which is the eve of World Food Day, to highlight rural women’s role in food production and food security. “World Rural Women’s Day” was previously celebrated across the world for more than a decade before it was officially a UN observance.

The invaluable contribution of rural women to development

The crucial role that women and girls play in ensuring the sustainability of rural households and communities, improving rural livelihoods and overall wellbeing, has been increasingly recognized. Women account for a substantial proportion of the agricultural labour force, including informal work, and perform the bulk of unpaid care and domestic work within families and households in rural areas. They make significant contributions to agricultural production, food security and nutrition, land and natural resource management, and building climate resilience.

Even so, women and girls in rural areas suffer disproportionately from multi-dimensional poverty. While extreme poverty has declined globally, the world’s 1 billion people who continue to live in unacceptable conditions of poverty are heavily concentrated in rural areas. Poverty

rates in rural areas across most regions are higher than those in urban areas. Women farmers may be as productive and enterprising as their male counterparts, but are less able to access land, credit, agricultural inputs, markets and high-value agri food chains and obtain lower prices for their crops.

Structural barriers and discriminatory social norms continue to constrain women's decision-making power and political participation in rural households and communities. Women and girls in rural areas lack equal access to productive resources and assets, public services, such as education and health care, and infrastructure, including water and sanitation, while much of their labour remains invisible and unpaid, even as their workloads become increasingly heavy due to the out-migration of men. Globally, with few exceptions, every gender and development indicator for which data are available reveals that rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women, and that they disproportionately experience poverty, exclusion and the effects of climate change.

2017 Theme: *'Challenges and opportunities in climate-resilient agriculture for gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls'*

The impact of climate change, including on access to productive and natural resources, amplify existing gender inequalities in rural areas. Climate change affects women's and men's assets and well-being differently in terms of agricultural production, food security, health, water and energy resources, climate-induced migration and conflict, and climate-related natural disasters.

In agriculture, climate change exacerbates the existing barriers to gender equality faced by women farmers. Globally, women comprise 43 per cent of the agricultural workforce and play a critical role in supporting household and community food security. However, due to discriminatory policy frameworks or inequitable social norms, women farmers have less access than men to secure land tenure, agricultural inputs, financing, water and energy, appropriate infrastructure, technologies, and extension services.

According to some estimates, closing the gender gap in access to land and other productive assets could increase agricultural outputs by up to 20 per cent. It would also enable women farmers to adopt climate-resilient agricultural approaches at the same rate as men, as key initiatives that address these gender gaps such as secured land tenure, greater financial inclusion and access to information are also essential to accelerate the adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices. In essence, providing equal access to women and men farmers to land and

other productive resources can provide a “triple dividend” of gender equality, food security and climate management, thereby offering a cost-effective and transformative approach to the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals.

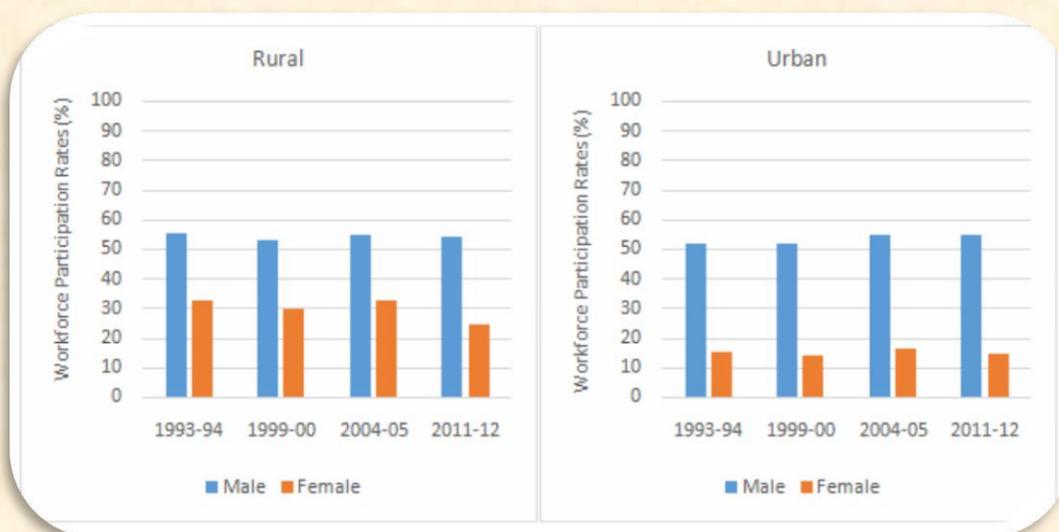
A changing climate means that there is a shrinking window of opportunity to close gender gaps in agriculture. Climate change aggravates existing barriers, limiting women farmers’ access to long-term affordable finance and agricultural extension services, and increasing their unpaid care work burden as water and fuel become scarce. Women farmers are at risk of being trapped in a downward spiral in the absence of concerted efforts to close these gender gaps.

Therefore, it is a priority to foster women’s empowerment through climate-resilient agriculture approaches such as:

- engendering climate-resilient agricultural policies;
- increasing women’s land tenure security;
- facilitating women farmers’ access to finance to invest in climate-resilient and time-saving assets;
- enhancing women farmers’ access to climate-resilient information; and
- expanding opportunities for women farmers to participate in and move up the climate-resilient agricultural value chain.

Women are powerful change agents to address climate change at scale. They are key actors in building community resilience and responding to climate-related disasters. Women tend to make decisions about resource use and investments in the interest and welfare of their children, families, and communities. Women as economic and political actors can influence policies and institutions towards greater provision of public goods, such as energy, water and sanitation, and social infrastructure, which tend to matter more to women and support climate resilience and disaster preparedness.

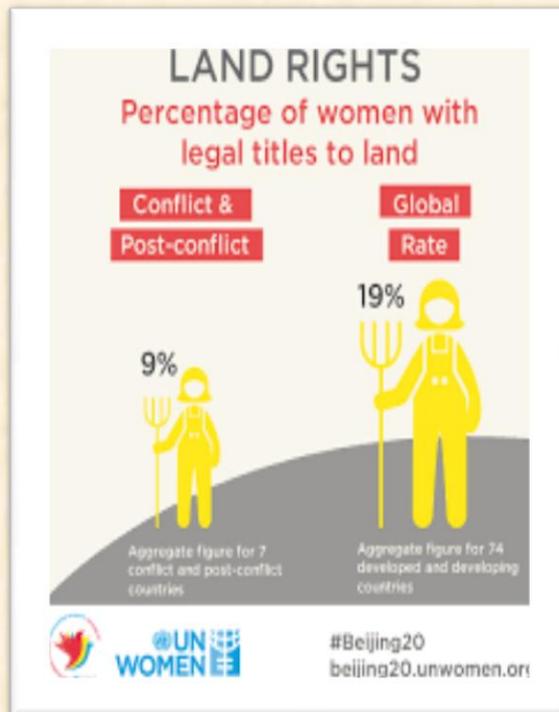
Systematically addressing gender gaps in responding to climate change is one of the most effective mechanisms to build the climate resilience of households, communities and nations. The growing recognition of the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and girls has been matched in recent years by the rising awareness of their roles as change agents and the tremendous value of gender equality and women’s empowerment for producing social, economic, and climate resilience benefits.



Labour Force Participation Rate by sex

Country	For Persons Aged 15-24				For Persons Aged 15+			
	Year	Female	Male	Both	Year	Female	Male	Both
SAARC Countries								
Bangladesh	2010	35.3	60.5	47.6	2010	36.0	82.5	59.3
Bhutan	2012	35.9	28.3	32.4	2013	58.9	72.1	65.3
India	2012	17.5	49.5	34.3	2014	25.8	74.4	52.5
Maldives	2010	38.1	46.1	41.9	2010	38.2	68.2	52.2
Nepal	2008	75.4	75.6	75.5	2013	77.5	85.6	81.1
Pakistan	2010	21.3	66.2	44.8	2013	24.3	81.1	53.1
Sri Lanka	2013	26.6	44.5	35.2	2014	34.7	74.3	53.1
Other than SAARC Countries								
Argentina	2014	30.2	46.7	38.7	2014	47.8	72.6	59.6
Australia	2014	66.2	66.9	66.6	2014	58.6	71.0	64.7
Brazil	2013	48.9	65	57.1	2014	48.2	65.2	56
Canada	2014	64.6	63.8	64.2	2014	61.6	70.6	66.0
France	2014	33.4	39.8	36.6	2014	51.8	61.1	56.2
Germany	2014	47.7	52	49.9	2014	54.8	66.3	60.4
Japan	2014	43.4	42.7	43.0	2014	49.2	70.4	59.5
Mexico	2014	32.2	58.8	45.6	2014	43.3	78.2	59.9
Russian Federation	2014	34.3	43.0	38.7	2014	63.3	75.1	68.9
South Africa	2014	22.8	27.7	25.3	2014	46.4	60.8	53.3
United Kingdom	2014	56.1	59.6	57.9	2014	57.0	68.6	62.7
United States	2014	53.6	56.4	55	2014	57	69.2	62.9

Source: Women and Men in India- 2016, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India.



Gender divide		
	(Daily wage in Rs)	
Job	Male	Female
Ploughing	212	123
Sowing	185	148
Harvesting	179	149
Well-Digging	254	145
Unskilled Non-Agricultural Work	179	135

*April 2013
Source: Labour Bureau

A BETTER WORLD

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS



PROSPEROUS

Women with strong property and inheritance rights earn up to **3.8 times more income**



NOURISHED

Children whose mothers own land are up to **33% less likely to be severely underweight**



EDUCATED

Families where women own more land devote **more of their budget to education**



SAFER

Women who own land are up to **8 times less likely to experience domestic violence**



RESILIENT

Where women's property and inheritance rights are stronger, women's **individual savings are up to 35 percent greater**



HEALTHY

Children in households where women own land are up to **10% less likely to be sick**



PROSPEROUS and RESILIENT data points: Peterman, A. (2011). Women's Property Rights and Gendered Policies: Implications for Women's Long-term Welfare in Rural Tanzania. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 47(1), 1-30.
EDUCATED data point: Doss, C. (2006). The effects of Intra-household property ownership on expenditure patterns in Ghana. *Journal of African Economies*, 15(1), 149-180.

NOURISHED data point: Allendorf, K. (2007). Do Women's Land Rights Promote Empowerment and Child Health in Nepal? *World Development*, 35(11), 1975-1999. Chicago

SAFER data point: Agarwal, B., & Panda, P. (2007). India. Toward freedom from domestic violence: the neglected obvious. *Journal of Human Development*, 8(3), 359-388.

HEALTHY data point: Menon, N., van der Meulen Rodgers, Y., & Nguyen, H. (2014). Women's Land Rights and Children's Human Capital in Vietnam. *World Development*, 54, 19-31.

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GENDER EQUALITY & FOOD SECURITY: WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AS A TOOL AGAINST HUNGER

Persistent gender inequalities that prevail in the Asia-Pacific region constrain women's potential for contributing more effectively to agriculture, rural development, food and nutrition security, which undermine the region's goal of long-term food security.

60% OF THE UNDERNOURISHED
GLOBALLY
ARE WOMEN OR GIRLS

- UN estimates



GENDER EQUALITY CAN MAKE A
SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO A
COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC GROWTH,
AND IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT
DETERMINANT OF FOOD SECURITY

AGRICULTURAL GENDER GAPS



gender inequities in access to rural resources, services, labor market opportunities



undervaluation of women's roles and contributions



gender neutral policies



lack of gender specific data

IMPROVING WOMEN FOOD PRODUCERS' PRODUCTIVITY

A Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) study estimates that closing the gender gap in access to productive resources such as land, credit, machinery, or chemicals could...



eliminate yield gaps of
20% - 30%
among men & women



increase domestic agricultural output by
2.5% - 4%



100 million
fewer people living in hunger

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEMS

A new report, *Gender Equality and Food Security - Women's Empowerment as a Tool against Hunger*, prepared jointly by the Asian Development Bank and the FAO, recommends the following to policymakers.



Tackle laws and regulations which discriminate against women,
PARTICULARLY IN LAND OWNERSHIP



Initiate programs to
BOOST GENDER EQUALITY
in agriculture and the labor market



UPDATE EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT POLICIES
to make them more gender sensitive



DEVELOP FOOD SECURITY STRATEGIES
to improve women's access to childcare, farmer support mechanisms, and credit & agricultural services



FINE-TUNE SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS
such as active labor market programs with targets for women's employment

SOURCE

* Asian Development Bank (2013). *Gender Equality and Food Security - Women's Empowerment as a Tool against Hunger*

ADB Asian Development Bank
FIGHTING POVERTY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
WWW.ADB.ORG

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) related to Rural Women

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. Article 14 focus on rural women and recommends the:

Article 14 (Rural Women)

1. State Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.

2. State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:

- (a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;
- (b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;
- (c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;
- (d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;
- (e) To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self employment;
- (f) To participate in all community activities;
- (g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;

(h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

Gender in agriculture

Understanding rural social life through agriculture becomes very important in India because conditions of social life can undermine or boost economic sphere. This is the case in India also. There is a remarkable presence of female agriculture labor in agriculture or feminization of labor but there is invisibility of women farmers. Agriculture policy with a focus on women farmers is the need of the hour. There exist gender biasness in farming .There is societal and institutional restrictions on women in agriculture. There exist a huge gap and inequalities between man and women farmers and women farmers are never talked of or discussed. Rural women are engaged in double burden and responsibility as producers in the farm and in home as caregivers, thus the actual potential as producer gets subdued. Women has a major role of in farming and non-farming responsibilities especially in post harvest operations, homestead gardening, livestock and poultry rearing, selling labor etc. They are primarily responsible for the production of vegetables whether in small kitchen gardens or in fields which are often the only source of nutrition available to their families. Women farmers are very committed in their agricultural activity despite lots of struggles and hindrances unfortunately in spite of their involvement; their voice is unheard in decision making.

Problem faced by women farmers in India.

- Lack of access and control over productive resources such as land and credit facilities which deprives them of opportunities of income generation in farming.
- Lack of opportunities for their own capacity building and an improved quality of life.
- Policy and programme under recognize female farmers which is undermining the potential of women farmers and thus resulting in invisibility of women farmers.
- Existences of gender biasness in media as women agriculturist are rarely discussed about in media.
- Existence of conservatism in some states of India regarding women in agriculture like if women plough the field, there will be a drought in the village. Another belief in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar is that if a drought occurs then women should help plough the fields— at night and in nude, which shows the sexism in agriculture.

- Majority women in rural areas work on land that belongs to their husbands or to other land owners who contract their services as laborers in the fields and not on the land registered in their name.

A rational family management system, supported by society and an appropriate technology to ease their work stress and to improve their productivity along with an increase in economic opportunities for women by a genuine capacity enhancement facility is required in order to achieve a remarkable development in agriculture

Some of the programmes for the welfare of women

- The Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana (SGSY)
- The Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY)
- The Indira Awas Yojana (IAY)
- The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)
- Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP)
- Rashtriya Mahilakosh (RMK)
- Development of women and children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)
- Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)
- Training for Rural Youth and Self Employment (TRYSEM)
- Swawlamban Programme

Special provisions for women farmers in national schemes

- National Mission on Agricultural Extension & Technology (NMAET) – Sub-Mission on Agricultural Extension (SAME)
- Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA)
- Agri-Clinics & Agri-Business Centers (ACABC)
- Mass Media Support to Agricultural Extension
- Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)
- National Mission on Oilseeds & Oil Palm (NMOOP)
- Integrated Scheme for Agricultural Marketing (ISAM)
- National Food Security Mission (NFSM)
- National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)
- Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM)

- Agricultural Insurance
- National Research Centre for Women in Agriculture

Recommendations for the Development of Women Farmers

The Government of India should also prioritize women in agriculture by acknowledging gender differences within households, society and in sphere of production. Policy-makers and planners in India formulate institutional and structural support system to encourage women farmers. This can be done by:

- Statistically examining the presences of women farmers regionally and the benefits accessible and availed by them in comparison to male cultivators and reform those which are gender biased in nature. .
- Developing a rural technology and training agenda to assist rural women to improve their productivity in agriculture.
- Integrating gender into all aspects of programmes and projects of government;
- Reformation of land policy and provision of secure ownership in favour of women farmers.
- Formulation of gender sensitive policies and plans which balances the performance of gender roles in house and at field.
- Gender mapping and considering rural women's needs in agricultural programmes.
- Increasing women's access to credit, training; and other support in the marketing activities and agricultural production.
- Improving transportation, processing, packaging techniques and storage facilities.
- Strengthening self help groups in agricultural skill and strategies.
- Institutional changes in terms of narrow mindset towards women in agriculture.

If women are well integrated into agricultural scenario of our country with gender neutral skill enhancement facilities, the economic development will be all-round and a renewed agriculture growth of India can be expected.
