

**Role of rural women in rural economy**<sup>1</sup> Ali Badragheh, <sup>2</sup> Mohammad Abedi<sup>1,2</sup> Department of Agricultural Extension and Education, Varamin Branch, Islamic Azad University, Varamin, Iran

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**Abstract:** rural women are great part of workforce, needed for agriculture and rural societies. In 1966, according to F.A.O reports to food security congress, women doing 50% of productions in agriculture part averagely and this issue in developing country has very special importance. in African desert area about 70-80%, Asia 65%, in Latin America 45% and Caribbean and in Tunes 89% of workforces are women (Varzgar 2001:217) and in Iran more than 50% of agriculture workforce are women . Most rural women's service work, pertain to out of house. For example: rural women not only traditionally strive for environmental protection, they also take part in maintaining forest, plant cultivation and weeding in rural regions.

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**Introduction**

Women's agriculture activities in villages of Iran in three sections of recent history of rural improvement have been affected by developmental factors. Before land reforms (1962), according to conventional laws in Iran, women were kept apart from having farm lands. According to customs, if farmer was farming in farm system and also if he had large farms so he must used his family workforce (especially woman workforce), but if it was small, he used to work at other's fields for wage. In many cases, women had to work at other parts. Before land reforms and because of being traditional of instruments and production tools, using women's roles was often in conservation and harvesting. While cultivating, most of picking cotton, was done by women, exclusively. In same period (before 1962), women roles was remarkable in cultivating rice. While plowing and preparing fields, they took part in third time trowel, also they had significant role in preparing natural fertilizer (Changizi, 2003).

Preparing seed and preparing them for transferring to storage, were done by women. Transplanting (most important stage in cultivating rice) and weeding were done by them, completely. And finally we should remark, their roles in cultivating wheat, before land reforms. Land reform (1962) was a breaking factor for traditional capitalism relations, and it was facilitator way for renewing agriculture and making investment relations at agriculture section. Although no land was considered for women (indeed by this, major proportions of agriculture workforces was deprived from having production instruments that they work on) but, it has affected on women's roles in agriculture activity. ( Banihashem, 1999)

By the way, lord-vassal relation was broken approximately, and peasant's production relation and capitalist exploitation systems were established. In peasant production, (at fertile lands) farmer's wife had to work on family land with other family members .at peasants lands; women were working out of their family farms. In capitalist exploitation systems, women workforce was considered as cheap workforce at farms. Generally, land reforms caused those women workforce is used as secondary (balali, 2005).

After Islamic revolution, although exploitation systems haven't changed lot, but developing agriculture processes on women's roles weren't affectless. in cultivating, time consuming productions (e.g. rice and tobacco) women's production roles, has remained significant and even at farms that has changed their usage to business purposes and products cash productions , women workforce is used as a cheap workforce source (as laborer). But in cultivating productions (e.g. wheat) because of using agriculture machinery in capitalist exploitation systems, we have faced with decreasing in using women workforce (same source).

**Rural women's roles in economy of rural**

Most women, especially in developing countries are working three shifts in a day indeed, but, instead for their exhausting activities, they receive: less health care, less literacy and fewer wages. Compensation for them is vast sex discrimination that exists all over the worlds in various forms. For example in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, about 1million girls die, due to lack of proper health care.

World Health Organization estimated that women work 2 times more than men averagely (Bahar, 2001). In United Nation researches, except Australia, Canada and US, women in all countries work more hours than men. But major problem here is that, work means everything that leading to financial income. So, in government statistics, women are considered as unemployed and few of female employees are counted as productive and employed forces.

In India, in one survey, and according to this perspective (Financial income) this result emerged that only 34% of women (compare to 63% of men) is counted as workforces of society. While if we also consider doing services and home productions and preparing family needs, as productive activities (without leading to Financial income), we would find different results and value of this deprived group of society, will be clear to us. By considering work and home productions in India, these results emerged: 75% of women compared with 64% of men are working (compared to 34% versus 64% of pervious statistics). (Balali, 2005)

Also in another survey in Nepal villages and according to financial income criterion, just 20% of women are working, while by considering home production criterion, women's share of workforce, reached to 53% (Bahar, 2001). By the way researches show that women have basic role in economics of family.

About rural women in agriculture productions, some researches is done by some scholars such (Shauver, Saches, Adams and Alston) that all believe that women in activities such as cultivating (seeding) conservation (weeding, spading and sifting) and harvest (cut sugarcane branches) and they also participate in activities like doing pastoralist and caring animals, milking, nurturing poultry, gardening, fixing yard, snow removal, repairing building, handicrafts and etc (Navabakbar 1997).

So rural women, doing major part of affairs in services and doing services inside and outside the house, isn't with any risk for them. They aren't secure while cleaning stall, milking, nurturing livestock and other activities. And they are at risk of common diseases between human and livestock. In fact they haven't security against any risk of work conditions (Emadi, 2001).

Summaries of woman service activities include housekeeping duties and also service activities out. So it's necessary to revise definition and classification service activities by women. Thus, according to rural women's basic role in productive activities and even rural developing, importance of rural women's role isn't considered properly. Maybe the reason of this inattention is that rural women's productions are used

inside the family. This inattention caused that no changes happen for decreasing exhausting rural women's activities, in spite of development of technology and using various new tools that leads to remarkable decrease in using human resources. In so many developing countries yet, women use traditional cultivating tools that have little efficiency and demand more activities. Further, their agriculture activities accompanied by housekeeping duties that force them excessive efforts. One of the reasons is that rural women's role, remained unknown in economical productions. Because objective evidences at all over the world, especially in developing countries (particularly in our country) show that lost work or intangible activities is done by women that finally isn't considered as their efforts. Other reasons are: role of rural women and different productive activities remained unknown; and even lack of varying their position at different activities of village (Saadi, 2005).

### Credits and its importance

One of important factor for production and occupation is capital. In developing societies that most of their exploiters are novice, lending and credit projects is suitable tool for accessing purposes such as increasing efficiency and obliterating deprivation from rural society. But at on side, we need credits to make technological changes in productive activities and at the other hand we need suitable technical technologies to use credits with optimum efficiency. (Fani, 1999)

So credits beside technology and skills of technical production, is complementary for each other. In order to invested credits being effective in productive activities and gain acceptable efficiency, suitable technology in that productions or activity should be provided accordant to economic and societal conditions of villagers. So from the development perspective, not only credits are used but they call it as credit program. credit program isn't just receiving and paying money but this program contains several stages in order that finally, exploiter and farmer stand in one inclusive program in this process, And educational needs, marketing services and production distribution, input and credit supply and loan be considered.

Among purposes of credit programs, it can mention to increasing efficiency in activity, job, stabilizing occupation which faced financial crisis, increasing level of income and exploiters life's level, empowering villagers and novice exploiters and also breaking deprivation cycle at society and rural families. (Rahmani 2001).

So if credits, is used as a coherent and inclusive program framework and is considered base on need,

power and reinforcing its proficiency level, so we can access to aforementioned purposes and also we can prepare suitable technology of production and activity with demanded credit. Finally, production and service efficiency will place at acceptable level. This systematic approach can save exploiter from deprivation and poverty cycle. conducted researches at countries like Pakistan, India and Iran showed that invested credits for productive activities was suitable if it is used with suitable technology. So credits wouldn't be effective if it is provided for exploiter exclusively and without considering his/her skill needs (Amiri, 2000).

Its result is that, exploiter can't access to desirable condition of production efficiency at first. Secondly, he would incapable for loan repayment. Third, his activity doesn't contain consistency. Fourth, remarkable part of provided credits would exit from production cycle due to exploiter's incapability and lack of skill in exploiter. His technical and occupation skill would improve, if credit is being provided for exploiter as a credit program. and he knows and can applies loan properly and well timed for production and activity, so condition of production and level of income, level of life and ... would improve (Rahmani, 2001).

### **Conclusion and discussion:**

no inclusive studies conducted About Iranian rural women's role in production and about how they participate in production process and surveying real value of their workforce, but theoretical surveys has shown their part at agriculture about 40% that proportion of their activities partly depend on cultural, social, different kind of exploiting and even kind of production and activity (farming, gardening and ranching), culture diversity and climate condition on different regions of Iran. Nature of these activities is base on gender and social work dividing. They have complementary roles at production system.

Women largely are active at micro exploiter units and they work at larger units as form of salaried employee or receive wage.

They have not desirable conventional condition about their accessing to productive factors and sources, because of some customs and common traditions and also common norms. their limitation to access to field, bank facilities, education services, education-applied science, mechanization, modern technology and formal associations has kept their direct and independent access to production services and decision to use production sources and factors at minimum level. Women's literate proportion is less than rural men and urban men so we can explore main reason at cultural beliefs, dominant social

conditions on rural society, low education scope for girls and women and lack of training importance for them (Fami, 2001).

Fortunately in two recent decades considerable efforts have been done to eradicate illiteracy that it was more remarkable about rural women so that percent of rural women literacy from 17.3% on 1355 increased to 62.4% on 1996. But 37.6% of rural women remained illiterate yet (Statistical center of Iran 2006).

Thus, what is concluded from this debate is that generally, women's economic, cultural and social conditions improved compare to past but hasn't take affective steps toward better improvement, properly. And now they aren't at proper place that they have right to be. rural women have responsibility of maternal, wife and home management in addition to associate in production and helping agriculture workforce so that they spend two third of their times to production, home management and organization, while this, reduced to one third about men (Varzgar, 2001).

But consider that aforementioned subjects, based on researches that has conducted at north of Iran that in these regions women have more active contribution from social, economic and cultural perspective.

Point that true about most of villages of Iran is that more active women economic contribution that leads to more income for family, cause that women be at higher rank for family decision making (Same source, 1997)

In spite of that, by conducted researches, rural women's roles has been surveyed very low, but another study has shown that at villages of Iran, women, especially elder, has specific dignity and have important roles at decision making. Women Corporation would increase in decision making. (Planning and research institute of agricultural economics 1997).

Woroniuk and Schalkwyk (1998) at their conducted research believe that now, micro credits, micro finance sources and small business units are most effective mechanism to decrease poverty.

Plitt and others, conducted research as they called it "do credits programs, can empower women"? Results showed that corporation at credits programs helps empowering women. Goetz Sengupta (2003), presented negative image of credits effects on empowering women. They concluded that most women have minimum control on their loans. And when repayment period is short, this shortage of control has devastating effects on women welfare. Hashemi and others (2004) found that joining to Gramin Bank, has meaningful positive effects on controlling women, and helps to family income.

In researches that conducted by Nanda (2004) became clear that women participation in credits programs had positive effects on their demand about health care. Fiona Steele and etal (2008) in researches that conducted as called " influences of credits programs on empowering women at Bangladesh , found that women who joined to credits programs , have participated in more educational programs and have married with more educated men and also they have saved more and they had more cash . Shahnaj and chaudhury(2009) in research as "credits and its role on empowering women " concluded that there is meaningful relation between attending in credits programs and empowering women , at economical dimensions .Ruhail amin and others (2010) found that those who joined credit funds had more ability rather than those who didn't. Jameela (2010) presented that credit programs has shown lot of affects on empowering women so that has increased their social, politic and economic ability. Thus it is obvious that credits programs and its educational and empowering programs can be affective on social, humane and economic development or rural society, if it be associated with proper and gradual practices and base on reciprocal communications principles and apply opinion of local society. Maybe the main challenges that threaten credits associations , is lack of necessary emphasizes on social dimensions and on reinforcing their basics , that practically cause that this social foundations lose its efficiency soon and practically changed to unsuccessful institution .

Also following suggestions has been offered:

- providing extension educations for men in order to believe economic role of their women , and give them chance of corporation on all economic , credits fields
- Since that base of credit association, forms base on People Corporation, so it's good chance to use these communities to expand extension-education activities. so it is better to consider special programs on different extensional filed such as agriculture , ranching, family health, housekeeping economy and other fields accordance to condition of region and rural women's needs.

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