

# RURAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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Rural development is the most important problem that our country faces today. It covers the whole area of economic and social development which includes production, employment, health, education, political and social tensions and so on. This article covers the situation in respect of rural women, surveys the welfare services provided for them in the last 30 years, and suggests ways of involving rural women in development.

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## I. DEMOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

### *The Sex Ratio*

The sex ratio of a population is not a purely biological phenomenon but is a result of biological and social factors which cannot be easily separated. Biological phenomena do not vary much from one country to another. But the sex ratio in advanced countries is significantly different from that of the developed countries, i.e.

women tend to outnumber men in advanced countries whereas in the less developed world there are more men than women. When compared to the sex ratio of the advanced European countries, it is noticed that the sex ratio is low. Even within India with the exception of Kerala the sex ratio shows variations which are related to the development of each state in the country. The Sex ratio of rural and urban population is as follows:

TABLE 1

SEX RATIO RURAL URBAN	RELIGIONWISE SEX RATIO	SOME OTHER COUNTRIES
Rural — 949	Buddhists — 962	U.K. — 1060
Urban — 858	Jains — 940	Germany — 1056
All India — 932	Christians — 930	U.S.A. — 1054
	Hindus — 930	U.S.S.R. — 1170
	Muslims — 922	Pakistan — 900

(Census of India 1971)

(1971 Census)

(Women in the World)

It is observed that from the 1921 Census onwards the number of women per 1000 men is decreasing in the last 30 years.

the male and female is increasing.

TABLE 2  
EXPECTATION OF LIFE AT BIRTH

1921	1931	1941	1951	1961
945	950	945	942	932

	Male	Female
1921-31	26.9	26.6
1931-41	32.1	31.4
1941-51	32.4	31.7
1951-61	41.9	40.6
1961-71	47.1	45.6

### *Expectation of life at birth*

Expectation of life at birth shows improvement for females but the gap between

(Source: Various Census Reports)

When we consider the expectation of life at different ages for the period 1951-61, we find that at all ages below 40, the expectation of life is lower for females. This is probably due to the high maternal mortality rate and infant mortality rate in rural area. According to SRS data for the rural areas of 12 states of India as a whole, the infant mortality rates for females was 148 per 1000 live births compared to 132 for males. The neo-natal mortality rate, according to SRS data of 1969, was 74 per 1000 males and 76 per 1000 female. While post-neo-natal mortality was 59 for males and 72 for females. It is a safe generalization that the infant mortality rate is higher among females in rural India as a whole. In the five yearly age groups from 0-4 to 30-34 the female death rate is generally higher. Various reasons are attributed, such as general dislike for girls in early age, early marriage, early and repeated child birth etc.

#### Age at Marriage

The average age at marriage for boys is 22.2 while for girls it is 17.2. The 1961 Census shows that in more than one-third of the total districts in India, the age of marriage for girls is less than 15. Most of these districts are in the States of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

TABLE 3

No. OF DISTRICTS IN EACH STATE WHERE THE AVERAGE AGE AT MARRIAGE FOR FEMALES IS LESS THAN 15 YEARS

State	Total Districts	Total Districts where age of marriage is 15	%
Madhya Pradesh	43	33	77
Bihar	17	12	71
Rajasthan	26	17	65
Uttar Pradesh	54	26	48
Andhra Pradesh	20	7	35

(Towards equality: Committee on Status of Women in India).

It is observed that most of these states form the heart land of the country. Marriage is the common lot of rural women. A case of a woman remaining unmarried after 30 is usually unheard of in rural areas. With early marriage, compulsory marriage, child birth and family responsibility women in rural areas have to suffer a large number of handicaps in terms of their health and employment opportunities.

TABLE 4

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE POPULATION AGED 10 YEARS AND ABOVE BY MARITAL STATUS (1961-71)

Marital Status	Years	Rural	Urban	Total
Unmarried	1961	15.8	24.2	17.2
	1971	20.2	29.2	22.0
Married	1961	67.5	61.1	66.5
	1971	66.3	59.3	64.9
Widowed	1961	15.8	14.0	15.5
	1971	12.9	11.0	12.5
Divorced or separated	1961	0.8	0.6	0.7
	1971	0.5	0.4	0.5
Unspecified	1961	0.1	0.1	0.1
	1971	0.1	0.1	0.1

(Towards Equality: Committee on Status of Women in India)

It is to be noted that the percentage of the divorced and separated is practically negligible. Most of the women marry young which increases the reproductive span of life and as a result our birth rate is very high in the rural areas.

TABLE 5

BIRTH RATE RURAL AND URBAN

Year	Rural	Urban	Total
1969	38.8	32.6	37.6
1970	38.9	29.7	36.8
1971	38.9	30.1	36.9
1972	38.4	<b>30.5</b>	36.6

The SRS data indicate rural urban

differences in the birth rates. Some of it may be due to the spread of family planning in urban areas. According to SRS data, in rural areas of India (1969) the average number of children born alive to mothers in the age group 40-44 was 6.4. This gives an idea of completed family size in rural area. By the time a woman is 35, she has roughly 5 children

TABLE 6

AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN ALIVE TO CURRENT MOTHERS BY AGE GROUPS IN RURAL INDIA, 1969

Age Group	Average number of children
15-19	1.3
20-24	2.1
25-29	3.5
30-34	4.8
35-39	5.8
40-44	6.4

(Towards Equality: Committee on Status of Women in India)

A review of some of the latest studies of differential fertility carried out in different parts of the country indicates that generally the levels of education and fertility are inversely related. The attitude towards family planning which involves the attitude of the couples towards family size, need for a son, spacing, approval and birth control methods has been closely associated with the educational attainment of the couples in almost all major surveys undertaken in India. In spite of the differences in the size and characteristics of the samples used in different surveys and different levels of education used by them as the basis of analysis education plays a very important role.

#### *Literacy Rates and Education*

The 1971 Census shows higher literacy rates in the younger generation. Kerala has the highest literacy rate in rural and urban

India, while Rajasthan has the lowest rate. A detailed study based on the district data reveals that out of 352 districts in India, in 83 districts the female literacy rate is less than 5 per cent and there are another 113 districts where female literacy rate is between 5 to 10 per cent.

TABLE 7

FEMALE LITERACY RATE IN RURAL & URBAN INDIA, 1971 CENSUS

State	Rural	Urban	Total
All India	13.2	42.3	18.7
Andhra Pradesh	10.9	36.3	15.8
Assam	16.5	50.9	19.3
Bihar	6.4	31.9	8.7
Gujarat	17.2	44.8	24.8
Haryana	9.2	41.5	14.9
Himachal Pradesh	18.2	52.2	20.2
Jammu & Kashmir	5.2	28.4	9.3
Kerala	53.1	60.6	54.3
Madhya Pradesh	6.1	37.0	10.9
Maharashtra	17.8	47.3	26.4
Manipur	16.4	40.4	19.5
Meghalaya	18.9	59.7	24.6
Karnataka	14.5	41.6	21.0
Nagaland	16.4	49.5	18.7
Orissa	12.1	36.1	13.9
Punjab	19.9	45.4	25.9
Rajasthan	4.0	29.7	8.5
Tamil Nadu	19.4	45.4	26.9
Tripura	17.3	55.0	21.2
Uttar Pradesh	7.0	34.4	10.7
West Bengal	15.0	47.8	22.4

(Source: Census of India, 1971)

In the light of the available data, it is important to discuss women's education in India. A substantial advance in women's education as also in other spheres of education came out only after independence. This is seen in various reports published by the government. The figures show remarkable expansion of women's education both in absolute terms as well as relatively

to the educational advance amongst men during the last twenty-five years after independence. In spite of this expansion enrolment of girls at all stages lags behind that of boys.

TABLE 8

LITERACY RATES BY AGE GROUPS INDIA, 1971

Age Group	Males	Females	Total
5-9	26.7	18.5	22.8
10-14	60.3	37.4	49.7
15-19	63.0	36.9	50.8
20-24	59.8	27.9	43.8
25-34	49.3	18.8	33.9
34+	37.0	10.4	24.5
Total:	39.5	18.7	29.5

One out of every three girls in the age group 6-11 is out of school. The proportion of enrolment of girls to the female population in the corresponding age groups rapidly decreases as one goes on to the higher stages of education. Since very few rural women are involved in higher education, we need not see in detail the proportion of girls in higher education and can safely generalise that the gains of higher education do not reach rural women.

The rate of school drop-outs is also high at the primary stage where out of every 100 girls enrolled in Class I, only about 30 reach Class V, and almost half of those who drop out of the school leave school in Class I itself. This has serious consequences for female literacy which has inched from 7.93 per cent in 1951 to 18.44 per cent in 1971. The National Committee on Women's Education in its report submitted in 1959 had expressed great dis-

satisfaction at the slow progress of women's education in the first decade of independence and its very first recommendation asked the government to regard "the education of women as a major and special problem in education for a good many years to come and urged the government to close the existing gap between the education of men and women in as short a time as possible" (Committee on Women's Education, 1959). Accordingly, special efforts were made from 1960 as a result of which enrolment of girls improved substantially in the subsequent years. One of the special measures adopted was to start separate educational institutions for girls particularly in those areas where social prejudices inhibited enrolment of girls in co-educational schools. Another factor which contributed to expansion of female education was the recruitment of female teachers at all levels particularly so in rural backward pockets.

Considerable amount of thinking has gone into the question of women's education in India during the post-independence period. A number of committees and commissions appointed to consider the problems of education at various stages, as well as the education commission 1964-66 which considered almost every aspect of education have stressed the urgent need of paying special attention to women's education. Every Plan document has also emphasised the importance of women's education for India's rapid social and economic development. It will be worthwhile to see some of the drawbacks in women's education because it is through proper education alone women can participate in development.

On primary education and literacy, the constitution of India had stipulated by a directive principle that compulsory elementary education of eight years be provided to all children of age group 6-14 by

1960. Not only does this promise remain unfulfilled today but it has been found impossible to enrol in schools even the lower elementary age group or 6-11 (Class I to V) in full. The serious shortfall is largely due to low enrolment among the weaker sections of society namely women in general and boys in scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other depressed sections. Girls' enrolment from the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes is very low. In fact, in certain backward areas education of girls has hardly made any beginning in last 30 years after independence. It has been noted earlier that one-third of the age group 6-11 do not enter the school and those who enter drop out in the first standard. This means that more than half of the younger generation of girls go into life without literacy. This along with the slow rise in female literacy, the total number of illiterate women is also increasing from decade to decade, for instance from 18,5 crores in 1961 to 21,5 crores in 1971. Further, in spite of the large number of women covered by adult literacy programmes, it has had no impact on total literacy. This means that another constitutional commitment of removal of illiteracy remains unfulfilled. Whatever progress has been achieved in girls' education is extremely uneven. "There are serious imbalances as between different states, different regions in a state, urban and rural areas and socio economic strata. A vast continuous geographical stretch of India and particularly the heart land of India is completely backward in all stages of female education" (Kamat, 1977). The Table below from 1971 Census shows the rural urban imbalances as well as the extremely depressed position of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes both with respect to absolute magnitude of female literacy and male-female differentials..

TABLE 9  
LITERACY IN INDIA

	All Population		Scheduled Castes		Scheduled Tribes	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Total</b>	89.5	18.4	22.2	6.9	17.4	4.8
<b>Rural</b>	33.1	19.9	19.8	4.8	16.7	4.3
<b>Urban</b>	61.0	41.5	39.1	16.0	37.0	19.1

"A number of social surveys of rural and urban population have tried to relate educational progress and other progress with important socio-economic factors such as caste, income, land holding, and occupation". The gains of female education, in fact, of most education, have gone to the urban population, advanced and middle castes, and economically more affluent sections of population while rural, backward caste and poorer sections are trailing far behind (Kamat, 1977). The education of girls has made little headway among low castes as well as among Muslims and other economically deprived sections like poor peasants and agricultural labourers. All social investigations show that backwardness of female education is in general closely associated with social, economic and cultural deprivation.

"The girls who do not join the school stream at all largely belong to the lowliest and poor and those who drop out also belong to the next layer of the poor. This means that the process of social selection starts from the very first stage of education. A similar relentless sifting process goes on working on those few who survive in the educational channel in its successive higher stages (Kamat, 1977).

So far we have not touched the contents of female education in rural areas. But one can very well generalise that vocational training for girls is almost absent in rural

area. The only available occupation for them is to work as construction labour, or agricultural labour on farms. But the objective of female education has been to equip them (if at all they study) with bare literacy and some contents of child care, health and hygiene. While poverty is an all India phenomenon, we get state level variation in the economic condition of people. Since women and children become major sufferers of poverty, we will have to see that poor women also get the benefits of education.

### *Female Work Participation*

The main characteristic of economic development is the progress towards an increasingly intricate pattern of labour specialisation. In communities at the rural level both men and women contribute to the family economy because most of the job opportunities involve rudimentary skills. It is the economic compulsion, more than any other consideration which motivates women in rural areas to seek employment for wages. Such women are drawn from the poorest strata of the rural society comprising mostly of the landless agricultural labour force. Although the employment in agriculture is in itself seasonal, the employment of women is all the more sporadic as they are generally tied to child-bearing and child-rearing functions and the other domestic chores. The Rural Labour Enquiry Committee estimated that there were about 11 million landless agricultural labour households in 1964-65 which constituted 37.6 per cent of the total agricultural labourers from such households. The only opportunity of work in rural area is agricultural work and agro-based small scale industries. It will be worthwhile to see female work participation in India.

While women in all the countries of the

world are generally confronted with a discriminatory attitude in varying degree on grounds of sex in matters of employment opportunities, wages paid and working conditions, it is more true of the developing countries. The problem of finding adequate employment avenues for women has acquired international importance. There is a wide range of difference amongst the various countries of the world. Differences exist between agricultural and non-agricultural countries. From the data available, it is also observed that there exists a relationship between the political system of a country and female work participation. In communist or centrally planned economies more women are absorbed in the total labour force. In general, European countries have more participation of women than those in Asia and Muslim part of Africa. Within African countries, countries where there is more tribal population have more females in work compared to those with Islamic population.

Below 10%	- Islamic countries. Iraq, Iran. Pakistan. Algeria.
Between 10 to 20%	— latin America. Srilanka. India.
Between 20 to 30%	South East Asian countries
30% +	— Tribal Africa, Europe, U.S.A.

In the first group come most of the Islamic countries where women observe purdah system. The Islamic tradition keeps women away from work participation. In South East Asian countries there is a tradition of women playing an active role in agriculture because of the cultivation of rice.

In the light of International work participation rates, it will be worthwhile to see

female work participation within India. Economic and cultural factors play a very important part in drawing women to work in the Indian situation. From the Table 10 we will see that the largest number of women are employed in agriculture in rural areas most of whom are landless labourers.

TABLE 10  
EMPLOYMENT IN VARIOUS FIELDS  
(figures in millions)

	Male	Female
<b>A.</b>		
I. Cultivating	68.9 (46.21)	9.2 (29.71)
II. Live stock, fishing, hunting, plantation	3.5 (2.35)	0.8 (2.55)
III. Agricultural labourer	31.8 (21.26)	15.8 (50.48)
IV. Mining & Quarrying	0.8 (0.54)	0.1 (0.32)
V. Household Industry		
(a) Household	5.0 (3.36)	1.4 (4.47)
(b) Other than household	9.9 (6.64)	0.8 (2.56)
VI. Construction	2.0 (1.34)	0.2 (0.64)
VII. Trade & Commerce	9.5 (6.37)	0.5 (1.60)
VIII. Transport Communi- cation	4.3 (2.88)	0.1 (0.32)
IX. Other services	13.5 (9.05)	2.6 (7.35)
	149.1 (100.00)	31.3 (100.00)
<b>B. Non-working</b>	<b>134.8</b>	<b>232.7</b>
<b>Total: (A+B)</b>	<b>283.9</b>	<b>264.0</b>

(Figures in brackets show %)

The single largest group of women

works as landless labourers. Some of the reasons given for more work participation of women as landless labourers can be explained in terms of (a) most agricultural operations are simple and do not require skills, (b) female employment in agriculture is of seasonal nature and women are not required to be away from homes, (c) since the wages paid to female workers are low, employers find it economical to employ them, (d) in agriculture women could be made to work for extra hours.

Within India statewide female participation shows a wide range of difference among the 17 major states. The lowest is that of Punjab and the highest is that of Andhra Pradesh. Within this wide range of differences one can see most of the patterns found to prevail in the under-developed agricultural countries. The northern states of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, are somewhat similar to the Muslim countries in their cultural way of life. It has an effect on female participation. On an individual level, as the job opportunities for male members improve, family income goes up and women may withdraw from labour market as the work for them is not attractive.

In terms of per capita income, Punjab and Haryana are quite ahead of other states. In both these states the total participation rates of women are 1.67% (Punjab) and 3.1% (Haryana) respectively. Even the states like Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa, where the per capita income is low the participation rates also are low. D'Souza, who had undertaken empirical analysis of female work participation in a city of Punjab observed, 'why most of the women work is because of the low income of their men folk. When the husbands income is not adequate enough to support the family, the wife is also compelled to work. This hypothesis agrees with the fact that the vast majority

of women are employed at lower occupational prestige level jobs and it can be argued that their husbands' also are employed on lower prestige jobs with very low income. This hypothesis is further corroborated by the data pertaining to rural agricultural labour families which show that the higher the wage rate for men, the lower is the number of women per family in the working-force. It has been observed that the nature of the crop grown has a direct relation with female work participation. For cultivation of rice, women are specially suited for certain kinds of activities, for cultivation of wheat heavy masculine skills for ploughing etc., are required. It has been observed that out of rice-growing states, only Andhra and Tamil Nadu have high participation rates. Even Kerala where 99 per cent of the land is under rice cultivation, only 14.29 per cent women are in agriculture. In wheat growing areas also there is great variation. On the one hand, there are Punjab and Haryana with the lowest female participation rate and Himachal Pradesh with the highest participation rate.

*Rural Labour Inquiries* (1950-51, 1956-57, 1964-65) throw some light on the economic conditions of women workers employed in agriculture. Women belonging to agricultural labour households had work for about 180 days during 1964-65. Thus, almost for half the year they were out of employment. Out of these 180 days, wage paid days were only 141. The daily wages varied from region to region and were not more than 85 N.P. in 1964-65.

The productivity of female labour — "A major difference between productivity of female and male labour begins to develop when men become specialised producers of some non-agricultural goods or services while females continue to produce goods for family consumption only (Boserup, 1970). As long as the

specialised worker in agriculture or crafts is trained within the family, the difference in male and female productivity remains small. But the gap in productivity between the two sexes widens considerably at the stage when boys get systematic training in schools or workshops while girls continue to be taught only by their mothers. "Employment in the modern days requires not only formal education but also a certain attitude to work which may best be described as the capacity to work regularly and attentively. This attitude is not easily acquired by people who are accustomed to come and go, to work and rest as they like. Those who work within the confines of the family are not likely to acquire this attitude unless their condition is so precarious that they will be forced into working longer and harder in order to survive" (Boserup, 1970). It is well known that people who are accustomed to hard work in intensive agriculture are more able to adapt themselves to other types of work than are people accustomed to the more leisurely rhythm of work in shifting cultivation. "Labour productivity of women in developing countries is inferior to that of male workers from the same community because women have lower level of education and training" (Boserup, 1970).

## II. *Programme for Womens' Welfare* (covering Rural Women)

So far we saw some of the characteristics of women in India, their situation as regards education and employment particularly. In 1950, when the constitution was adopted, women were recognised as the weaker section of society. After launching of the C. D. programme, special projects have been undertaken from time to time for the welfare of women and children. Most of the rural projects do not have separate programmes for women and

children. So it is difficult to separate the sphere of activity. Nutrition programme is for the child as well as for the expectant mother.

In 1952, the Community Development projects were launched in the rural area for the economic and social uplift of people. The programmes relied on participation of the rural community. In 1953, the Central Social Welfare Board was established to promote activities for women and children in both rural and urban areas. The main tasks the Board undertook were of starting welfare projects in rural areas and giving grant-in-aid to welfare agencies which were mostly established in urban areas then. The policies and the specific programmes in the last five plans have been changing their emphasis scope, area of work, and budget outlay from plan to plan. However, the programmes are generally aimed at providing pre-school education, supplementary nutrition, and immunisation to the children, pre and post-maternity services, supplementary nutrition and health education to the young mothers. The CSWB set up in 1953 a number of Welfare Extension Projects in the areas not

covered by the national extension service projects to provide basic welfare services for women and children in rural and backward areas. As these were first started in the series of welfare programmes, these came to be known as Welfare Extension Projects original pattern. Later in 1957, in order to ensure a co-ordinated approach in the provision of welfare services, WEP were opened in CD. block areas with a co-ordination committee and were called WEP (CD.). In 1961-62, the activities were handed over to the local organisations called Mahila Mandals (common name used for all voluntary organisations which have taken over the activities). The border area projects were started to ensure assimilation of border people in the mainland. In 1969, Family and Child Welfare Projects were started with help from UNICEF. From the Fifth Plan onwards the scheme of Integrated Child Development has been started. It is expected that if the scheme proved successful, it will be extended all over India. The tables given below will show the total number of projects started by the Board under various nomenclatures and their present position.

TABLE 11  
DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL PROGRAMMES UNDER CSWB

	Ist Plan	IInd Plan	IIIrd Plan	66-69	IVth Plan	1974-75
<i>W.E.P. (OP)</i>						
(a) No. of Projects	292	420	8	8	4	4
(b) No. of Centres	1150	2004	40	40	20	20
<i>W.E.P. (CD)</i>						
(a) No. of Projects	—	324	264	157	44	44
(b) No. of Centres	—	2829	2342	1472	288	333
<i>Border Area Projects</i>						
(a) No. of Projects	—	—	17	17	23	98
(b) No. of Centres	—	—	58	63	92	118
<i>Family and Child Welfare</i>						
(a) No. of Projects	—	—	—	117	281	281
(b) No. of Centres	—	—	—	920	1713	1713
<i>Handed over to Mahila Mandals</i>						
(a) No. of Projects	—	—	624	541	444	433
(b) No. of Centres	—	—	1629	1472	1114	1165

(Source: Central Social Welfare Board, 1953-1975)

The nature of the programmes will show that in the last 20 years shift has been changing more and more to child welfare services as a result of Women's Welfare Services getting secondary position under CSWB.

TABLE 12  
TABLE SHOWING CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF CSWB

	No. of Projects.	No. of Centres	No. of Villages
W.E.P. (OP)	4	21	183
W.E.P. (CD)	44	333	3474
Mahila Mandal	433	1165	5118
Border Area Projects	28	188	297
<b>Total:</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>1707</b>	<b>8872</b>

(Source: Central Social Welfare Board. Report on the Working Group on the Programmes of the Board, 1977)

TABLE 13

TABLE SHOWING THE DIFFERENCES IN VARIOUS PROJECTS

	Population coverage	Activities	Budget	Staff
W.E.P. (OP)	25,000 5 Centres with one main centre	(i) Balwadi (ii) Craft Trg. (iii) Maternity services (iv) Social education	25,000 (yearly)	1 Mukhya Sevika 5 Gram Sevikas 1 Account Clerk 1 Mid-wife 1 Craft Tr.
W.E.P. (CD)	60,000 10 centres with one main centre	(i) Balwadi (ii) Craft trg. (iii) Maternity services (iv) Social education	1,84,000 (I Stage of 5 years) 1,64,00 (II Stage of 5 years)	2 Mukhya Sevi-kas 10 Gram Sevikas 1 Account Clerk
F.C.W. Projects	60,000	(i) Balwadi (ii) Griha Kalyan Kendra to train women to be better house- wives and mothers (iii) Immunisation of children below 14. (v) Recreation	1,50,00 for 5 years	2 Mukhya Sevikas 2 Griha Sevikas 10 Bal Sevikas

It will be thus observed that emphasis has been given to child welfare programmes. It seems that there is no lobby of rural workers who have paid enough attention to these facts. Table 2 will show that the total number of villages covered are only 8,872 as against nearly 6 lakhs of villages in the country. We do not know whether even 1% of the total female population is covered by these programmes.

#### *The Condensed Course for Adult Women*

The condensed courses for education of adult women were started by the Board with the aim to educate adult women to acquire certain standards and levels of education. The programme envisaged the establishment of a band of women workers required to provide female personnel for development projects. Under the

scheme, the C.S.W.B. gives financial assistance to voluntary organisations for running courses through which deserving and needy women candidates in age group 18-30 years, who have left schooling midway, are enabled to appear for middle and secondary levels of examination. The scope is recently expanded to conduct vocational training programmes of one year duration. Currently, the Board runs 134 programmes with 4021 women candidates. This was a good programme for rural women when middle school preparation was allowed. But currently the Board insists on running S.S.C. Examination courses. In the rural area, we have already seen there are hardly any women who have left middle school education and can appear for S.S.C. within two years duration. The average needy woman in the rural area is far less educated and needs encouragement to complete the vernacular examination first. Thus, this programme also is throwing rural women out who need the programme most.

### *Socio-Economic Programme*

One needs to understand the philosophy behind running socio-economic programmes. We have already seen that many poor people in rural areas require financial support for their family. If women are provided work, their family income can go up. In socio-economic programmes, there is an effort to realise social gains through industry or economic productivity. Effort is made to enable the various groups mentioned above to improve their economic condition by providing them an opportunity for gainful work. In running an industry, profit-making is considered as gain. If the industry does not make profits, the industry is eventually closed. When industries are run as a part of socio-economic programmes, they are

considered as an instrument to help the needy and the handicapped people - an instrument to realise some social gains. Sheer profit making is not the objective. When it is used in the context of helping the poor, it is not a charity. There is an element of industrial organisation, capital organisation, pooling the resources in terms of human skills, producing economically marketable goods and gaining profits. Added to these goals, social uplift of the needy sections of society would be an additional goal if the industry comes under a socio-economic programme.

It is realised by many welfare agencies working for women that there is a need for providing gainful employment to women. In 1954, the Central Social Welfare Board sponsored a scheme for organising part-time employment for women in co-operation with the Ministry of Commerce and Industries. The first attempt of the Board was to start match-box factories at Delhi, Poona, Hyderabad and Vijaywada. Somehow the schemes were not successful. Though the official document of the Board says, "The success of this scheme depended on the effective co-ordination between the CSWB and the state governments, the results achieved so far not so good because of the lack of co-operation from state governments" (Chari, 1966). Though the Board has various types of schemes very few schemes are meant for rural women because the rural area does not have the necessary leadership of voluntary and state agencies to start these programmes. As a result, only the programme of dairies is likely to help rural women. The scheme envisages that rural women will look after one milch cattle and earn at least Rs. 3 daily. The various schemes for the Board are meant for urban and rural women. But one difficulty is that rural women do not possess the necessary skills.

TABLE 14

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROGRAMMES OF THE C.S.W.B.

State/Union Territory	Small Scale Industry	Dairy Unit	Handicraft Unit	Handloom Unit	Ancillary Unit	Self-employment Units	Industrial Co-op.	Total Unit Approved	Units closed
Andhra Pradesh	22	7	—	2	—	1	2	31	3 (2 SSI HL)
Assam	7	27	—	3	—	6	—	43	2 (HL)
Bihar	4	4	3	1	—	—	—	12	—
Gujarat	32	16	3	—	—	—	—	51	—
Haryana	8	3	—	2	—	1	—	14	1
Himachal Pradesh	4	19	1	—	—	—	—	24	—
Jammu & Kashmir	3	4	1	1	—	—	—	9	1
Karnataka	9	11	2	1	2	—	—	25	2
Kerala	29	18	3	2	—	—	—	52	1
Madhya Pradesh	15	3	2	1	1	—	—	22	1
Maharashtra	9	19	1	1	1	—	1	32	1
Manipur	1	2	—	2	—	3	—	8	—
Meghalaya	1	2	—	1	—	—	—	4	—
Nagaland	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Orissa	11	8	1	—	—	—	—	20	1
Punjab	7	9	—	—	—	—	—	16	—
Rajasthan	5	4	2	1	—	—	—	12	1
Tamil Nadu	25	15	1	3	—	—	—	44	1
Tripura	—	1	1	3	—	—	—	5	1
Uttar Pradesh	20	5	3	2	—	—	—	30	2
West Bengal	27	10	4	2	1	1	—	45	1
Arunachal	—	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chandigarh	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Delhi	11	3	1	—	1	—	—	16	—
Goa, Diu, Daman	5	3	1	—	1	—	—	16	—
Pondichery	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	—

(Source : Report of the Working Group on the Programmes of the C. S. W. B., 1977).

TABLE 15

TABLE SHOWING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

1. <i>Khadi</i>				
Cotton	...	...	...	70%
Woolen	...	...	...	40%
Silk	...	...	...	60%
2. <i>Village Industries</i>				
(a) Processing of pulses	...	...	}	80%
(b) Ghani oil whole family works	...	...		
3. <i>Village leather</i>				
(a) Tanning	...	...	...	10%
(b) Preparing fine goods	...	...	...	10%
4. <i>Cottage match making</i>	...	...	...	48%
5. <i>Palm Gur products</i>	...	...	...	35%
6. <i>Soap making</i>				
(a) Collection of seeds	...	...	...	75%
(b) Soap making	...	...	...	10%
7. <i>Handmade Paper</i>	...	...	...	10%
8. <i>Village Pottery</i>				
Clay Red	...	...	...	60%
Glazed	...	...	...	20%
9. <i>Lime Manufacture</i>	...	...	...	40%
10. <i>Gums, Rasins, Katha collection process</i>	...	...	...	50%

(Oza.G. —Khadi &amp; Village Industries, 1975).

### *Opportunities under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission.*

Opportunities for self-employment for women labourers are very few. Some of them are created by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission in rural areas. Khadi and gramodyoga had been an integral part of our freedom movement. Khadi Board's programme aims at giving gainful employment to village citizens who are not employed throughout the year. The available data from Khadi and Village Industries Commission are inadequate. They do not give figures of absolute numbers but indicate female participation percentages. But it seems that women are the single largest group to receive benefits from KGVl Programmes.

It will be observed that Khadi and Village Industries will provide better opportunities to rural women.

III. Based on discussion above, certain conclusions can be drawn regarding rural women, their problems and lacuna in their services. We may sum up as follows:

1. Female population faces risk at every stage of life as the infant and maternal mortality rates are very high in rural area.

2. Female population is illiterate and does not possess much skills.

3. Most of the women work as landless labourers. They do not possess specialised skills which will bring them better wages.

4. Women play an important role in agro-based industries (Sugar, tea, coffee). As the wages of male workers go up, females in rural area tend to remain at home and do not participate in work.

5. With Green Revolution and increased mechanisation, employment opportunities for women are likely to be reduced.

6. The welfare services have not touched women population at large.

The above factors involve some basic discussion about women's role in National Development. Economists have noted that development perpetuates inequality in the sense that the gap between the rich and the poor increases. Does that mean that with development there will be more inequality for women? While one has to keep this in mind, efforts will have to be made to enable women to participate fully in economic and social development of the country.

To do this, some institutional changes would be necessary. While some of the changes are immediate, some would take many years. Some of the changes visualised would be as follows:

1. *Women and Family*: Woman's role as mother and home maker has been recognised in India. Her primary responsibility is to do domestic work, bear and rear

children. Only if it is absolutely necessary, out of economic need, women work in rural areas. Society at large does not think that women too are the citizens of India and they too have responsibility in India's development. Socialist thinkers have given considerable thought to women's place in the family. They feel that the institution of family is responsible for the exploitation of women. Marx argued that "first division of labour was between man and woman for propagation of children. The first class struggle in history coincides with the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriages and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female by the male. The modern family contains in germs not only slavery (servitus) but also serfdom. Since right from the beginning it is related to the agricultural services. It contains in miniature all the contradictions which later extended throughout society and the state. Together with slavery and private property the modern family has flourished by exploitation of women in family and society" (Marx, 1948). Engels visualises that, "In a socialist society, women also will be working and will be economically independent." What Marx and Engels observed of the 19th Century labour class family of Europe is true of the Indian rural family today. It is very difficult to totally change the family. But some of the functions of the family can be reduced. Marx said, "With transfer of the means of production into the common ownership, the single family also will change. . . Private house keeping changes into a social industry".

While it is difficult to predict whether the ownership of private property will be changed in India, it is possible to consider child care as a community and state responsibility. There is absolute necessity to provide creches to enable rural women to go to work without much worry.

Another important factor which is likely to change women's position is woman's right to voluntary motherhood. "Caught in the vicious circle of reproduction, tyrannies on earth have perpetuated observed Margaret Sanger. Right to voluntary motherhood is woman's fundamental right. Birth control is the means by which woman attains basic freedom." So it is the means by which she must and will uproot the evil she has wrought through her submission, as she has unconsciously and ignorantly brought about the social disaster. One of the basic difficulties with birth control in India is the fact that most of the women are illiterate. They do not play an important part in decision making in Indian families. Contraceptive technology is absolutely necessary for rural families and it should be given due place equivalent to modern technology which brings in the green revolution.

Dowry is an important aspect of marriage in India. When women play an important part as wage earners, the dowry system does not have the same connotation. In poorer sections of society where wife is earning, dowry does not exist.

2. *Women and Political Parties*: Second institutional change is necessary in the working of political parties. Today the government has to play an important role in deciding the policies of rural development. If we observe the policies of political parties and the types of people who are our politicians, we can say that most of the political parties are not committed to rural welfare in general and women's welfare in particular. Only a party which has cadres at rural level, workers who are hard task masters will alone be able to change our rural scenes. Leaving development work to government agencies alone is likely to repeat the same failure lessons.

3. *Autonomous Rural Development Agency*: The third institutional change is

necessary at the government level. Today rural development work is left to enormous government agencies. It is expected that voluntary agencies also play an important role. There is need to have an autonomous Rural Development Agency which will also look after women's problems. One of the long-term tasks of that agency should be to create a new cadre of voluntary leadership amongst women in the area.

Most developing countries have undertaken multiple programmes for rural development. Recently the scheme of Integrated Rural Development has been initiated on experimental basis in neglected areas of each state. Integrated rural development means a strategy to improve the economic and social life of the rural poor and the rural work in the overall spectrum of development and growth. The emphasis is also on the factor of equitable distribution because the fruits of development should also reach the rural poor. Development for what? The ultimate purpose of all development activities is to provide increasing opportunities to all people for a better life, bring about a more equitable distribution of income and wealth, achieve a greater degree of economic security, expand and improve facilities for education, health, nutrition, housing and social

welfare" (Sharma, 1978). The integrated development programme has to achieve enhanced rural production and productivity and greater socio-economic equality. It also involves broad based community participation. We have so far seen that women also need to play an important role in economic development of rural areas. The programme developed at the international level suggests that the women's roles in the rural sector are determined by (a) Types of agricultural activity, such as (i) subsistence farming with high female labour participation and complementary with men, (ii) labour intensive cash crops where women have to work harder but have little control over earnings, (iii) mechanised cash cropping, where men operate the equipment and take charge of cash income while women occupy increasingly subordinate position; (b) Availability and ownership of land; (c) Changing social relations resulting from different kinds of innovations such as land reform, resettlement schemes, new agricultural technologies, wider markets through improved communications, impinge on women's role positively or negatively". The assumption that any development will benefit both men and women has often resulted in women being pushed out of the type of work in which they used to be heavily involved and has denied them the access to modern education.

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