

Unit 1

Assessing Women's Work Patterns



General Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to help participants in your training session to assess the varying roles of rural women.

Specific Objectives

This Training Unit will help you to enable trainees to:

- Assess the work being performed by rural women;
- Describe roles of women in the economy of the country;
- Identify areas of work for the poor women in rural areas;
- Identify the need to mobilize resources for attaining economic empowerment; and
- Identify ways to overcome the gender inequalities.

Planning

- Time** : Three hours
- Training Methodology** : Group exercises, participatory discussions, games.
- Training Materials** : Chart papers, markers, flip charts.
- Trainer's Preparation** : Familiarization with the roles women have in various sectors of the economy.
- Preparation of charts listing out the sectors and percentages of work being done by women in each of them.

Background Material

Introduction

'Men receive the lion's share of income and recognition for their economic contribution while most of women's work remains unpaid, unrecognized and undervalued. In industrial countries, 2/3 of men's work is paid as is 1/3 of women's and in developing countries, 1/4 of men's work was paid in comparison to 1/3 of women's work (UN Report). However, women's work status can be presented as in the following table:

Indicators	Men	Women
Population	50%	50%
Hours of work	25%	75%
Cash income	90%	10%
Ownership of assets	99%	01%

The Status of Women in India

Women are a vital part of the Indian economy, constituting one-third of the national labour force and they are major contributors to the survival of the family. The poorer the family, the greater its dependence on women's income. Despite progress in several key indicators, a gender analysis of most social and economic data demonstrates that women in India continue to be relatively disadvantaged in matters of survival, health, nutrition, literacy, and productivity.

More than 90 percent of rural women in India are unskilled, restricting them to low-paid occupations. Women generally have no control over land and other productive assets, which largely excludes them from access to institutional credit forcing them to be dependent on informal sources of credit, which are available at high cost.

Women form the backbone of agriculture, comprising the majority of agricultural labourers. Gender divisions in agriculture are stark, with all activities involving manual labour assigned to women, while all operations involving machinery and drought animals are generally performed by men. Female agricultural labourers are among the poorest sections of Indian society. Agricultural wages for women are on the average 30-50 percent less than those for men.

However, the definition of a woman worker has been changing. Women's work should not be viewed only in "social terms". Planning interventions for the development of women needs to be at all levels like political, economic, cultural and social.

Areas of Work for the Poor

There are different ways in which the poor earn a livelihood. The various activities they are engaged in providing them returns in cash or kind. When the poor offer their labour in agriculture, mining or construction the returns are in the form of wages i.e. cash. However, when they are engaged in agricultural activities on their own land, the returns may be in the form of certain vegetables, crops, or fish from ponds, or milk from the dairy, eggs/ broilers when engaged in poultry rearing. These, however, may be converted into cash when sold in the market.

We can thus conclude that the poor have the following ways to earn a basic livelihood:

- Selling manual labour for agriculture, mining, construction;
- Farming on own land (usually very small fields);
- Collection of non-timber forest produce (NTFP) and sale of NTFP;
- Trading in goods – like grocery store, vegetable vending;
- Raising livestock, dairy animals, goatery, poultry;

- Fishing;
- Manufacture and sale of small items from local produce like papad, mangori, pickles etc.;
- Craft work – embroidery, baskets, brooms, mats etc. ;
- Providing services like tea stalls, pan stalls, vending.

All the above activities are neither regular nor secure. Hence the income available from them is low and not continuous.

Poor Women's Work

The state of the 'poor workers' has been described earlier. The condition of women among the poor is even poorer. Women have to perform multiple roles of wife, mother, homemaker, worker and citizen. However, the social and cultural constraints within which a woman is confined does not facilitate her to be recognized as a worker or citizen. Poor women are engaged in multiple occupations and have to earn a livelihood – howsoever small – to provide for their families. Their work can be seen in the following categories:

- Service – she provides facilities to support production, trade for a wage.
- Trade – she provides goods at a certain place and time for a certain price.
- Production – she transforms certain inputs into outputs.

Key Facts

FAO has compiled key facts about India's women.

- In rural India, agriculture and allied industrial sectors employ as much as 89.5% of the total female labour.
- Women have extensive work loads with dual responsibility for farm and household production.
- Women's work is getting harder and more time consuming due to ecological degradation and changing agricultural technologies and practices.
- Women have an active role and extensive involvement in livestock production, forest resource use and fishery processing.
- Women contribute considerably to household income through farm and non-farm activities as well as through work as landless agricultural labourers.
- Women's work as family labour is underestimated.
- There are high degrees of inter-state and intra-state variations in gender roles in agriculture, environment and rural production.

General Profile

Statistics drawn from Census of India, FAO, UNDP, reveal insights on women's status and quality of life.

Population

India's estimated population is over 1000 million. Rural population accounts for 73.2%. Women constitute 48.1% of the population. Approximately 9.2% of the households are female-headed. The sex ratio in India is 933 women to 1000 men. This situation of a strongly male-biased sex ratio is attributable to

infanticide or neglect of girl children. The excess of men in the urban population is attributable to higher male migration to urban areas.

Education

The adult literacy rate is 65.38%. Women have 54.28% literacy, whereas men have 35.9%. Both male and female literacy rates are substantially lower in rural areas than in urban areas. This rural-urban difference is more pronounced in the case of women. The difference between male and female literacy rates is much higher in rural areas compared to urban areas. Both gender and residential differentials in the literacy rate vary considerably across the states.

Labour

The work force participation rate is 39.3%. The rate for women is 25.7%, which is less than half the rate of 51.9% for men. The pattern of women's participation in the labour force varies across the country depending upon geographic region, caste, socio-economic class and formal and informal sectors. The rural female participation rate is 31%, nearly thrice as much as the urban female participation. In rural areas 89.5% of the total women employed are engaged in the agricultural and allied industrial sector. In urban areas manufacturing, processing, servicing and repair, when it is in the household, absorbs larger proportions of the total female employment compared to men. The reverse is true when it is other than household work. Industries which employ more women than men are bidi and match manufacturing, cotton textiles, cotton spinning, cashewnut processing, tobacco stemming and redrying, canning, preserving and fish processing.

The Human Development Index (HDI) rank of India was 127th out of 146 countries, indicating low life expectancy at birth, low educational attainment and low income. The Gender-Related Index (GDI) rank of India was also 103rd out of 146 countries. This illustrates that the human development gap was further aggravated by substantial gender disparities.

Agriculture

Women are extensively involved in agricultural activities. However, the nature and extent of their involvement differs with the variations in agro-production systems. The mode of female participation in agricultural production varies with the land-owning status of farm households. Their roles range from managers to landless labourers. In the Himalayas a pair of bullocks works 1064 hours, a man 1212 hours and a woman 3485 hours in a year on a one-hectare farm, illustrating women's significant contribution to agricultural production. Women provide one half of the labour in rice cultivation. In the plantation sector women are the crucial labourers. Depending on the region and crops, women's contributions vary but they provide labour from planting to harvesting and post-harvest operations.

Crop production

India has a variety of crops grown in irrigated and rainfed areas. Rice, wheat, jowar, maize and bajra are the major foodgrains. Oilseeds, sugarcane, cotton and jute are the important cash crops. Likewise, tea and coffee are important plantation crops. India's agricultural production systems also include a wide range of horticultural crops. Rice is widely grown in Southern, Eastern and North-eastern states. Wheat is mainly grown in Punjab and Haryana. Jowar and bajra are important foodgrains in dryland areas. Assam and West Bengal are famous for tea, whereas Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala are coffee and coconut producing states. In the highly diversified Indian context, no simple gender division of labour exists with regard to crop production. In certain areas

women play a key role as seed selectors and in seedling production. Their knowledge on seeds and seed storage contribute to the viability of agricultural diversity and production. Women also play a role in removing weeds and thus contribute to crop management. Women prepare and apply green and farmyard manure. As technology and modern management practices are introduced, it is expected that women's work will increase due to more labour-intensive activities.

Livestock

Livestock plays a multi-faceted role in providing manure for crops, energy for cooking and food for household consumption as well as the market. In animal husbandry women have a multiple role. With regional differences, women take care of animal production. Their activities vary widely ranging from care of animals, grazing, fodder collection, cleaning of animal sheds to processing milk and livestock products. In livestock management, indoor jobs like milking, feeding, cleaning, etc. are done by women in 90% of families while management of male animals and fodder production is carried out by men. Women account for 93% of total employment in dairy production. Depending upon the economic status, women perform the tasks of collecting fodder, collecting and processing dung. Dung composting and carrying to the fields is undertaken by women. Women also prepare cooking fuel by mixing dung with twigs and crop residues. Though women play a significant role in livestock management and production, women's control over livestock and its products is negligible.

Forestry

The Indian population, particularly the rural, is highly dependent upon forests. Fuelwood contributes 84% of the total household energy consumption. There are 66.5 million tribals in India and with few exceptions, the majority of them are forest dwellers. Unfortunately, forests are deteriorating fast due to encroachment by agricultural production, mining, construction of dams, industrial and railway demand. The country has been losing 1.5 million hectares of forest cover annually. Gender roles in using forest resources vary depending upon the region as well as socio-economic class and tribal affiliation. Rural women's interface with the forests is varying – gathering, wage employment, production in farm forestry and management of afforested areas in the community plantations. Women are the major gatherers and users of a much more diverse range of forest products than men. Depending upon the sociocultural variations among different communities, primarily Non-timber Forest Products (NTFP) are collected by women and timber by men. In several parts of the country, large proportions of the population depend on NTFP as their main source of livelihood. Apart from fodder and fuel, women collect food, medicinal plants, building materials, material for household items and farm implements. Sal and Tendu leaves are collected by women. As women are the ones who have traditionally been collecting forest products, they possess the knowledge of properties and potential uses of these products.

Fisheries

India is among the top ten fish producing countries in the world. About 5 million people in the coastal areas carry out fishing and allied activities for their livelihood. The nature and extent of women's participation in fishery varies across the states. Fish drying/curing, marketing, and hand braiding and net mending are the main areas of women's involvement in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. Women are also involved in shrimp processing in these states. In addition, in Andhra Pradesh, women are engaged in shell collection

on a seasonal basis. However, marine fish capture is a men's domain. Among the mangroves on the Orissa coast, both women and men fish in the fresh water estuarine areas. Men cast nets while women and children catch fish with their hands. But fishing by boat in the flood tides is exclusively performed by men. In contrast, women's participation in small-scale fisheries is very limited in West Bengal. In the fishing villages, fish drying/curing is performed by both women and men who do not belong to the fishing community.

Environment

Sharp decline in common/real estate property land on one hand and the deterioration of the remaining land have jointly contributed to hardship for the rural community, particularly for women of the poor households. Deforestation has increased time and distance involved in grazing and collection of fuel and food. Distance to forests or other sources of fuel, have increased time ranging from 45 minutes to 5 hours in women's work time. Moreover, it has also threatened income-generating opportunities for women by affecting livestock rearing and collection of NTFP. Reduced or non-availability of NTFP has shifted women from self-employment to wage employment. In areas where traditionally men also collected fuelwood, deforestation resulted in decrease in men's participation, as it was no longer possible to collect fuelwood in bulk. Women play a key role in both land use and management. Women have headed movements for forest protection such as Chipko and Appiko. Women have also been the source of knowledge relating to conserving and maintaining the quality of water. Women remain the principal collectors of water. Depleting water resources have impacted women severely in terms of longer walks in search of water and more work in drawing water as the water levels sink lower. Nonetheless women in different states have varying degree of involvement in water collection.

Rural production

Women in rural India generate income in various ways. Women are highly involved in processing of the NTFP, particularly in small-scale enterprises. This includes basket, broom, rope making, tasar silk cocoon rearing, lac cultivation, oil extraction, and bamboo works, etc. Women constitute 51% of the total employed in forest-based small-scale enterprises. However, this does not mean that men do not have any role in these activities. Among the scheduled-caste weavers in Orissa, men collect grass for basket making while women cure it and make the baskets.

Food security

Food security as a national objective in India was placed on the policy agenda much earlier than in other developed and developing countries. With the Green Revolution technology, India has achieved self-sufficiency in foodgrains. However, India has a share of 40% of all those people in the world that were regarded as being below the poverty line. Women head approximately 35% of the households below the poverty line. Women have a share of only 25.7% in earned income. The proportion of pregnant women (aged 15-49) with anaemia is as high as 88%.

Women's key role in the production of major grains and minor millets illustrates their invaluable contribution to the food security. In addition, women play a crucial role in ensuring supply of food as food vendors and post-harvest processors of livestock and fishery products. As major buyers of family food and meal-makers, women ensure adequate food security. As primary providers of nutrition to the young children, women are the major decision-makers in ensuring nutrition for the next generation.

The economic crisis in several Asian countries could result in many more workers entering the sector because of job losses in the formal sector. Urgent action is needed to ensure that these workers do not fall below the poverty line. Job opportunities should be made available in the rural and urban informal sectors, and a social safety net should be provided for workers not covered by social protection.

Work Plan for Your Training Session

Group Activity 1

Multiple Roles Women Play

As a trainer, you make a picture of a woman. Participants in your training session fill in the various roles performed by her.

Processing

Participants fill out the various roles performed by rural women. As the trainer, you discuss the roles and help them to assess the work being done by women. This:

- Emphasizes the multiplicity of roles performed by women;
- Breaks the myth that women do not do much work;
- Highlights the skills women have in performing the various roles;

Group Activity 2

As the trainer, you ask the participants to individually list out the characteristics they have which would facilitate them in initiating some economic activity. They also list out the resources they have, and those that need to be enhanced.

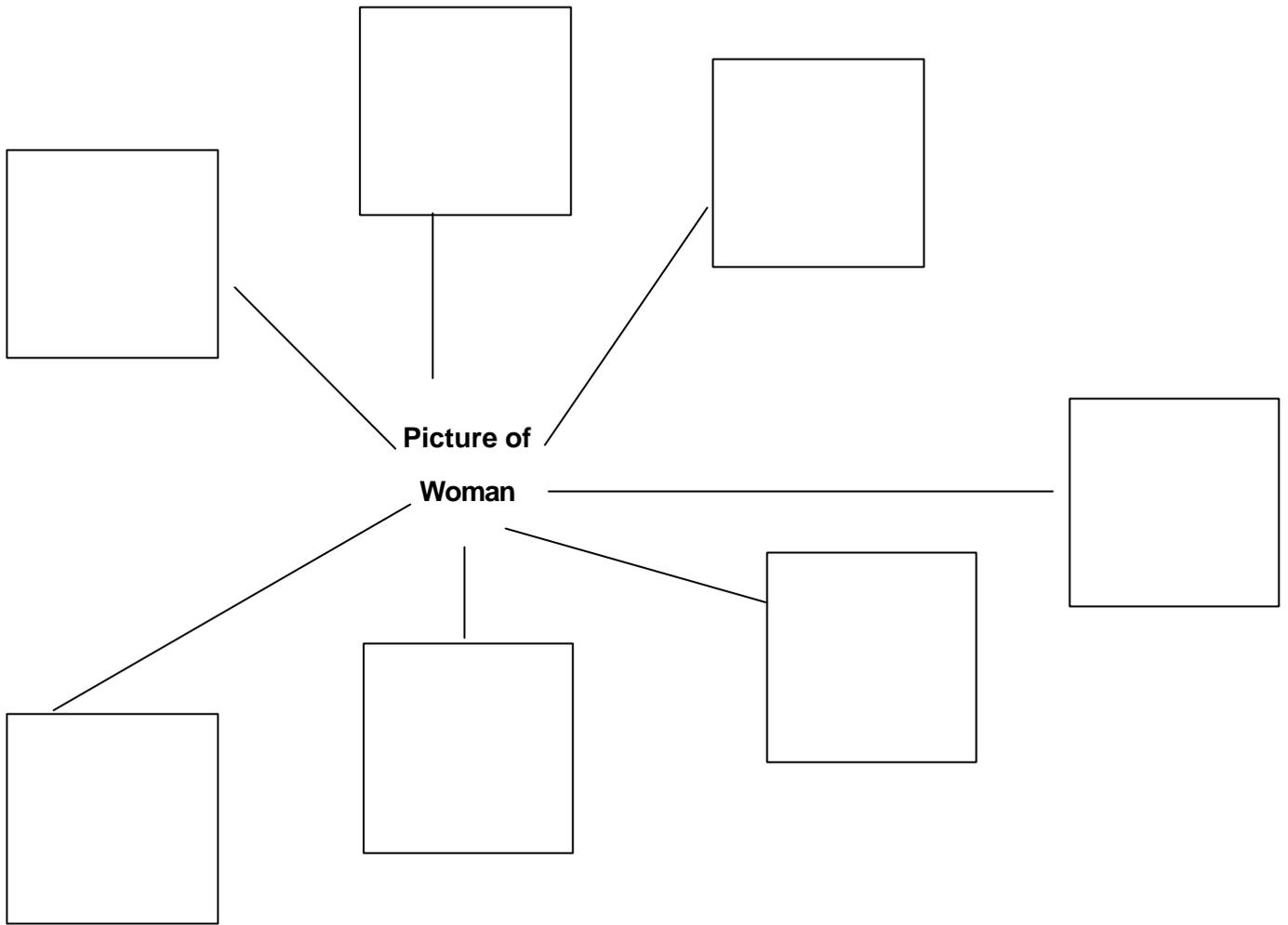
You then bring to the bigger group the general listing of issues identified individually.

Processing

You can highlight in the discussions the characteristics which women possess. For example, women are often good home and farm managers. You could also highlight the various roles women have to play in meeting the household needs. This is an assessment of women's work too. A format like this one can be used and the group can fill in the details or paste pictures highlighting women performing different roles – inside the home and outside it.



Women's Work and Productivity



(Format for Chart to be Made by Participants)



**INCOME GENERATION PROJECTS
WITH WOMEN**