

Role of Comprehensive Village Development Programme for the Development of Rural Women

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b) Objectives

The objectives of the study were as follows;

- i. To study the socio-economic background of rural women enrolled in the CVDP society;
- ii. To explore the reasons why some of the women had not joined the CVDP society;
- iii. To examine the nature of involvement of women who were enrolled in the society;
- iv. To assess the support and services received by the women from CVDP; and
- v. To observe the participation of women in various types of activities.

Executive summary

Introduction

- 1.1 Comprehensive Village Development Programme (CVDP), a cooperative-based action research project of the Rural Development Academy, Bogra aims at overall development of all segments of population of a village including women by organizing them into a more innovative and effective cooperative-based organizational framework. Towards the achievement of objectives the project has

given preference to training on cooperative management, accounts keeping, health and nutrition, mother and child care, family planning and different types of income generating activities (IGAs). The project has also provided credit facilities for undertaking IGAs. All these efforts through CVDP are expected to generate some avenues for self-employment opportunities leading to their socio-economic upliftment.

- 1.2 The project is under implementation since 1991. The present study is an attempt towards assessing the role of CVDP for the development of women mainly in terms of their participation in project activities, their involvement in income generating activities and their capability of receiving support-services from the project.
- 1.3 The study was conducted following the survey method. Data for the study was mainly collected from 120 women cooperators from eight villages. Apart from this, five non-members were selected randomly from each selected villages to get their opinion for not joining the CVDP society. Separate structured questionnaires were administered for collecting necessary data from both the members and non-members. In addition to that, group discussions were made both with the members and the non-members. The study was conducted in July, 1997.

2. Findings

2.1 General Information of CVDP Members and Non-members

- 2.1.1 The age of the members ranged from 20 to 61 years and majority of them belonged to 31-40 age group. Regarding education, 14.17% were completely illiterate among the members and 42.50% among the non-members. They were engaged in various types of activities such as: household chores, studies, farming, selling labor, tailoring, milch cow rearing, maid servancy, bamboo and cane work. The members and the non-members were a mixed group of landless, small, medium and large size farmers.

2.2 Reasons for Non-affiliation to the CVDP

- 2.2.1 The non-members mentioned several reasons for none joining the CVDP society. The Important ones were: Financial constraints, husbands' opposition, inconvenience to attend the meeting, already a member of another society and religious barrier.

3. Meetings and Savings

- 3.1 Out of 90 respondents, 77 (85.56%) were in favor of joint weekly meeting and the rest 13 (14.44%) were in favor of separate meeting (only for women). Those who were in favor of joint weekly meeting

- 3.1 expressed several reasons: more participatory discussion (62.34%), all the members could know the activities of other group (25.97%), easy to take any decision (15.58%), easy to know the accounts (3.99%), decisions of male members were more reasonable (3.90%). On the other hand, the women cooperators supporting separate weekly meeting put forward the following reasons: many issues could not be expressed in front of male members (69.23%), domination of male members (38.46%), women's opinion got less importance (30.77%), and leadership quality could not be developed (23.04%).
- 3.2 Majority of the respondents 59 (65.56%) expressed that they were regular and the rest 31 (34.44%) were irregular in attending the meetings. The reasons for irregular attendance were: too much busy with their professions (51.61%), shyness to attend the meeting (16.13%), more than one member from one household (9.68%).
- 3.3 Out of 120 respondents, 101 (84.17%) were regular and the rest of 19 (15.83%) were irregular in depositing their savings. The irregular depositors mentioned two reasons: (i) poverty and (ii) irregular attendance in the meeting. The sources of savings were: sale proceeds of poultry, eggs, milk, handful of rice, money from their husbands and guardians, money from their income generating activities, sale proceeds of fruits, vegetables and sale proceeds of bamboo and betel nut.
- 3.4 Of the total respondents, 102 (85%) had savings up to Tk. 500.00 and 16 (13.33%) had savings between Tk. 1251.00 to 1500.00. Regarding the amount of shares of the respondents, 93 women (77.50%) had shares up to Tk. 500.00, 11 of them (9.16%) had shares between Tk. 501.00 to 1000.00 and 13 of them (10.84%) had shares between Tk. 1501.00 to 2,000.00.

4. Training

- 4.1 Out of 120 respondents, 41 (34.17%) attended different training courses and the rest 79 (65.83%) had not participated in any training course. Training were provided in a wide range of subjects like mid-wifery and family planning, primary health care and nutrition, leadership development, vegetables and fruits production, tailoring, poultry rearing and primary treatment, nursery development and improved even making. The duration of the training courses varied from 6 days to 3 months. Most of the training courses were held at the Rural Development Academy, Bogra.

- 4.2 Out of 41 respondents, 30 of them (73.17%) were making use of the knowledge and skills acquired from training and earning income and 11 of them (26.83%) could not utilize their training experience due to two reasons: minimum or no remuneration and insufficient knowledge.
- 4.3 In all 30 respondents earned monthly income ranging from Tk. 100.00-1000.00. The highest amount of income worth Tk. 751-1000.00 came from nursery and nursery development and the second highest worth Tk. 501.00-750.00 came from poultry rearing and primary treatment.
- 4.4 The respondents suggested some points for the improvement of the course in future: duration of the course should be 10 days to four weeks, training courses should be more practical oriented, and some leaflets with pictures should be supplied in the training courses.

d) Observations and Recommendations

The present study was conducted in the CVDP villages where an action research project of the Academy was in operation. Apart from that, non CVDP members were also interviewed to know the reasons for not joining the CVDP societies. However, on the basis of the information obtained from the study, the following observations can be made:

1. CVDP created awareness among the rural women. The members were aware of the importance of saving deposits. Data showed that majority of the respondents deposited their savings in the weekly meeting and participated in the discussion, only the members of Mirpur Thana had not participated in the meeting because of their shyness but they realized the importance of savings. The women members of Mirpur Thana expressed their views in favor of separate meeting i.e. only for the women. In this situation, necessary steps should be taken for holding separate meeting. Hopefully, this arrangement can help to change their outlook.
2. Training is one of the main objectives of this action research project, to fulfill this specific objective, selection of the trainees and their interests should make priority. Regarding these issues, managing committee members and project personnel at the Thana level could play vital roles. They could sit together in the weekly meeting, discuss those issues and select the trainees as per requirement. Moreover, each of the interested members could get the opportunity for attending the training enabling mutual understanding and trust among the members.

3. Among the debtor members, no defaulter was found. The important thing is that they need more capital for performing their activities in a better way. Unless they are provided with sufficient capital for undertaking income generating activities, they would not be able to cross the poverty line. It was observed that the members were using their own fund (i.e. group savings and shares) according to their necessity. Emphasis should be given on more use of their own funds than bank loans. Therefore, group pressure could play vital role for sustaining the project. It was also found that no uniform rate of interest was being practiced by the societies in case of own funds. Presently, each society has its own rate of interest. It is true that realization procedure can vary from profession to profession. But, one uniform rule regarding rate of interest should be prepared centrally thus each society could follow the same rule.
4. There were 85 eligible couples among the respondents. Out of them 58 (68.24%) were using different types of contraceptives. This figure was higher than the national figure (45%). But there is no scope for contentment. Still there is enough scope for increasing the number of users. It is hoped that continuous motivation work could bring an expected figure i.e. 100% in near future. Another important thing is that most of the users were female; 52 (89.66%) and the remaining 6 (10.34%) were male. We should think of increasing the number of male users as well. It might be possible through non-formal education as it deals with short-term learning needs of individuals and communities.
5. It was also observed that tubectomy and vasectomy caused pain in the operated areas. It requires follow up programmes. There is a government order about follow up programme for the operated cases, but it is not working in the study areas. In this situation, CVDP Thana project personnel could play their role as a catalytic agent so that necessary supports and services can be reached to the specific persons.
6. Traditional cooking process and food habits were still being practiced by 93.33% respondents. They had not received any training on the specific topic. Necessary arrangements for imparting training would help the members to change their cooking process and food habit.
7. Use of safe drinking water was at a quite satisfactory level. But for household purposes, 13.33% of the respondents were using water from river, ponds and wells which can have negative impacts on health situation of the entire village. These respondents should be motivated for using tube well water.

8. It was found that 15.83% of the respondents had sanitary latrines and 56.67% of them had water sealed latrines, 6.67% were using ditches, 1.67% hanging latrines and 19.7% had no latrines at all. They were using open fields or jungles for defecation. Using ditches, hanging latrines and open fields or jungles are not suitable for health as some diseases like Diarrhea, Dysentery and Hook Worm originates from these places. Therefore, the cooperators should be motivated properly for purchasing water-sealed latrines on priority basis.
9. It is advised that training for income generating activities should be based on those skills which they already have so that they can perform these activities in an efficient way. This will save time and expenditure on the one hand and increase production on the other hand.
10. Out of 8 societies, 3 societies had women representative in the Managing Committee. It is encouraging to attract the women folk to the cooperative activities. Inclusion of at least one women member in all the Managing Committee could play a vital role for convincing the non-member women to join the CVDP society.
11. Among the non-members financial constraints, husbands' opposition and uneasy feeling to attend the meeting were the causes for not joining the CVDP society. The Managing committee members tried to convince women to join them in the society as members. The important point is that, if women members could realize the positive aspects of the society the non-members also would realize the positive aspects of the society and the non-members would certainly give second thought on it. In fact, it needs patience and frequent conversation which in turn, create positive atmosphere to be a member of the society. The project personnel and society leaders should take these points into consideration.

Finally, it can be concluded that development is a continuous process and development worker must have a sense of empathy with the community or society and ability to promote responsible local organizations so that the community or society can participate actively in the different types of activities based on the actual needs of each community or society.