

a) Researcher's Identity

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b) Objectives

- i. To study about the women's participation in social forestry;
- ii. To identify the problems faced by women in social forestry project; and
- iii. To make recommendation for further improvement of the project.

c) Executive summary

In view of fulfilling the requirements of the Terms of Reference of the Consultancy Assignment on Involvement of Women in Community Forestry Activities under the Community Forestry Project, the 12 sets of observations and recommendations are given as below.

1. Observation

In Bangladesh, more than 80% of the women population is illiterate. Motivation is the only possible means to involve them in any community development activities. But, motivation of the women alone will not guarantee their involvement in the community forestry activities because under the present social and religious set up, the rural women can not be involved in any activities without positive consent of their guardians who are either their husbands or other male members of their families. But, how can this be done? Because, motivating this great majority of the population by the Forest Department alone is utterly impossible.

- 1.1 A topic on "Necessity of Community Forestry and Role of Women" must be included in all training programs organized by the institutions like the RDA Bogra, BARD Comilla, RDTI Sylhet,

PATC Dhaka and the UTDCs of all the Upazila Parishads in order to disseminate the concept of community forestry among the government officials and public representatives who are presently responsible for executing different rural development programs in the country.

- 1.2 A topic on "Community Forestry and Role of Women" should also be included in the regular curriculum of the schools at the primary and secondary level. In addition to this the students should be invited to participate in essay completion on Community Forestry and similar other co-curriculum activities. This would help to develop familiarity with the forestry related activities from early childhood. It can be mentioned here that a topic on "Population Control" has already been included in the curriculum by the government.
- 1.3 Public information campaign through mass media like radio, television and newspapers should be launched. In the Farmer's Program of the Radio Bangladesh and Bangladesh Television, there must be a topic for disseminating the concept of involving the rural women in community forestry activities on a regular basis.

Film scripts should be developed and folk songs composed for exhibition and performance in the project area. The Forest Department in collaboration with District Public Relations Office should form a Folklore Team which will move from one project village to another, perform the folk songs and display different materials on Community Forestry. The rural market places (Hats and Bazars) and community centres should be used as the focal points for this purpose.

Traditionally, the rural women have little involvement in forestry related activities. Even their eagerness in tree plantation is very low. A recent baseline survey conducted by the RDA, Bogra under this project shows that only 8.9% women are interested in tree plantation activities. The concept of Community Forestry is quite new to these rural women. To introduce a new idea in a rural society where most of the women are illiterate and quite conservative is really a difficult task. It requires vigorous motivational work as well as training both theoretical and practical.

2. Recommendations

Therefore, it is recommended that the rural women under the project should be motivated and trained properly. This should be done accordingly as follows:

- 2.1 Female Forest Extension Workers (FFEWs) should be recruited under this project. For every 3 villages there should be one FFEW and she should be responsible for motivating the women also be responsible for introducing the community forestry activities among the members of the village based women's societies.
- 2.2 Organization can play a vital role in motivating the rural women. It can be used as a focal point for disseminating the idea on community development/forestry activities. The FFEWs should be assigned the responsibility of organizing informal groups/societies for the women in these selected villages.
- 2.3 Training should be organized on nursery establishment, tree plantation, conservation, protection and organizing production oriented women's societies for the selected rural women who would provide leadership in near future. The time scale of forestry activities is a constraint to contend with in comparison with many other productive activities traditionally known to them and much constraint can not be able to provide enough incentives to attract and keep them in this work.

Therefore, training on nursery and plantation techniques as well as identifying, organizing and profitable quick income generating activities should also be given to them.

- 2.4 The availability of working capital is a precondition for undertaking any income-generating activity. The current situation has been aggravated by the fact that the rural women are usually involved in unpaid household work/activities. Therefore, it is recommended that the Forest Department should make necessary arrangements to get this working capital as agricultural loan from the scheduled/commercial banks. It should be mentioned here that the consultant has already tried this idea through an action-research project in selected villages of Bogra district. As yet, the result has been quite encouraging and measures are being taken to undertake this project on a pilot basis in all Upazilas of Bogra district.

