

UPLIFT AND EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN (FARMERS WIFE)

INTRODUCTION

In the rural areas of the province of Punjab, the largest in Pakistan, barely 25% of women are literate; we have to consider that 65% of the population is living in the rural area (72 million).

The NGO BUNYAD LITERACY COMMUNITY COUNCIL in Lahore, Pakistan, meaning "foundation" believing in Gender equity felt the *'first step to development was literacy'*.

Zeroing down on the problem we realized that very few girls/women over the age of 12 years were literate. They were totally dependant on others: male family members or older women of the family.

With this high level of illiteracy there was a horrific number of births, largest in South Asia, again leading on to continued poverty. In a disadvantaged district Bunyad took on 50 villages to make them understand the benefits of Literacy. Domestic violence and crime against women were rampant here as women had no access to money and to police protection.

Personally I launched the program by visiting each of the 50 villages, introduced by local social workers. Sat and dialogued with the community, especially with the orthodox i.e. the clergies, explained that religion was no bar for women. I recruited the latter daughters, amongst others. Centers started in an area which was said to be more than 'difficult'. Slowly communities observed the benefits that women of the farmer's family could improve their own, their families and their communities life equipped with learning.

Special tools were developed for them relating to horticulture, livestock, fish-farming, health, clean water and so forth. Coupled with above knowledge after 5 years we gave some women micro-credit, giving them another reason to improve their life with learning via knowledge.

We started with hundred women and 8 years later have few hundred thousands moving from darkness to light, improving their rural lives.

1. BUNYAD LITERACY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The Bunyad Literacy Community Council is an NGO, that works at Provincial level aiming at improving literacy, especially among women, in order to develop the quality of life of the downtrodden, particularly women and children. Bunyad as an NGO has a vast experience in the field of Literacy, but it has expanded its operational activities also in other fields.

The poor situation of education in Pakistan has lead to the under development of the country, pushing people into illiteracy and poverty. To overcome this terrible situation it is imperative to address the issue on a priority basis. BLCC since its beginning has been emphasizing on reducing illiteracy especially among children and women of rural areas which are the most neglected segment of our society.

Aiming at improving the quality of life through literacy and economic empowerment is the main objective of BLCC. In literacy Bunyad has formal Education

which includes Bunyad School system, UTC and UPE with the new component ECCD (Early Childhood Care Development) to meet the EFA Goals. Non-Formal Education includes programmes supported by different donors for establishment of Non-Formal Education Centers.

Bunyad is also working for social development and awareness rising of communities through Multi Sectorial approaches which include establishment of community learning centers/BERTI, teachers training, establishment of Institute Community Education (ICE), material development, distribution of Bunya's News Letters, establishment of libraries in learning centers, sanitation programmes training of pit latrine construction etc. Women empowerment is one of the major concerns of Bunyad as women are the marginalized group with rampant, illiteracy resulting into their extreme poverty and un-acknowledgement of their whole contribution in society.

To address the need of poverty alleviation Bunyad introduced programmes for skill development/ improvement followed by micro-financing and linkages development for marketing for the women groups established in more than 1000 villages of 14 districts of Punjab.

Bunyad has also programmes for capacity building of women and has evolved material for their specific learning needs, which may help improve their learning skills and also enable them to utilize it in order to improve their economic conditions.

The organization has a special emphasis on promoting child rights through awareness raising programmes along with an objective to eliminate hazardous child labour with the help of NFE centers for the laboring children; Bunyad is running various projects for eliminating child labour from Soccer Ball, Surgical and Carpet Industry. More than 75 percent of children involved in the labour work in the above industries were females.

Bunyad emphasizes on quality education through innovative teaching methodologies, supplementary materials and training programmes which include teachers training, material development trainings, capacity building training, awareness raising, skill enhancement trainings, etc.

Bunyad plans to promote literacy to achieve EFA Goals by targeting the poorest of the poor and marginalized group especially children and women. Bunyad has the mission to empower rural women through literacy, skill enhancement and micro-credit.

Bunyad has made 1,00,000 children and adults (including 25000 females of more than 14 years of age) literate through the establishment of 3000 literacy centers in 2000 villages of 14 districts of Punjab with the help of its network of NGOs and CBOs.

The achievement of BLCC have not only met with recognition of its model of Non Formal Education within the country but also international. It is probably the only NGO in the World, which has received two UNESCO awards for outstanding work in the field of literacy & Non Formal education. BLCC's Director and founder Shaheen Atteeq ur Rehman was awarded the *Comenius Medal* in 1998 and recently Bunyad has been given *UNESCO International Prize 1966-2002 (King Sejong Literacy Prize)* for exceptional work in Non Formal education. The Programme aims to help women & children working in Carpet and Soccer industries to become more independent and to increase their social security protection.

2. CONTEXT
INDICATORS FOR PAKISTAN

Indicator	Estimate	Year	Source
Social Indicators			
Population (millions)	145	2001	UNFPA
School age Population (million)	45	2000	Economic Survey 2001-02
People below poverty line (%)	40	2000	Human Development Report 2002
Infant Mortality rate (per 1000)	85	2000	Human development report 2002
Economic Indicators			
Average growth rate of	2.2	2000	Economic Survey 2001-02
GDP per capita (in \$)	1860	2001	Economic Survey 2001-02
Education Indicators			
Primary Completion Rates,			
Overall Literacy rate	45.0	1999	Economic Survey 2001-02
Male literacy rate (%)	58.9	1999	Economic Survey 2001-02
Literacy rate Females (%)	32.0	1999	Economic Survey 2001-02
Urban/ Rural Literacy ratio (%)	63/33.6	1999	Economic Survey 2001-02
Ethnic groups	-	-	-
Gross Enrollment Ratios (% of school-age population)			
Primary total	66	1997	Economic Survey 2000-01
Primary female	50	1997	Economic Survey 2000-01
Secondary total	26	1997	Economic Survey 2000-01
Student/teacher ratio			
Overall	48.43/1	1999	Economic Survey 2000-01
Drop-out rates (% per year)			
Primary (by grade level, if available)	50	1995-99	Economic Survey 2000-01
Primary Female	56	1995-99	Economic Survey 2000-01
Quality indicators (any data relating to the assessment of learning outcomes)			
Education Expenditure			
Public expenditure as % of GDP	2.7	2000	Economic Survey 2001-02
Share of MoE recurrent budget			
Population Growth (1991 – 2001)	2.1	2001	Statistical Profile 2002
Population Density (per sq. km)	174.9	1999	WDI Database – 2000
Male / Female Ratio	51.9/48.1	2001-01	Economic Survey of Pakistan

Crude birth rate (per 1000 population)	30.2	1999	Pakistan Demographic Survey
Crude Death rate	8.3	1999	Pakistan Demographic Survey
Total Fertility rate	4.8	2000-01	Pakistan Reproductive Health & Family Planning Survey 2001-02
Maternal Mortality rate	340	1997	Human dev. In S.E. Asia report
Life expectance	60	2000	Human Development Report 2002

Most of the South Asians earn their livings from agriculture. Women's labour and knowledge of the agri-economic system plays a key role in almost every aspect of agriculture, barring only those that utilize machinery and sophisticated technologies. Women involvement in agriculture is extensive both in terms of labour input and farm management decisions. The 66.4 percent of Pakistani women in the labour force earns a living in the rural economy.

The already heavy workload of women in the agriculture sector is increasing as women become responsible to a greater degree for agricultural production in addition to household work. Rural women participate in farming crops, livestock husbandry and off-farm activities. Seasonal and long-term migration of working age males leave women responsible for much of the labour input necessary to meet subsistence needs. Unfortunately, most of their work is not recognized.

A complex set of conditions interacts to exclude most women from the benefits accruing from rural economics. Even in the rarer cases where they till and cultivate lands tenants on their account, women are not counted as agricultural workers. Patriarchal social structures determine that men control women labour. Without a legal share in ownership of the means of production, women are excluded from decision-making on the allocation of material and economic resources.

More women are undertaking waged employment in the agricultural sector. Women spend a great amount of time looking after livestock. Most of the work is related rearing and protecting animals, finding and carrying fodder and water, milking, collecting eggs, ensuring the health of animals and poultry, etc.

3. PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN

- Low Literacy Rate
- Low Status Of Women
- Gender Disparity In Food Distribution, Education, Health And Employment/ Economy
- Restricted Mobility
- Lack Of Control Over Resources
- Limited Autonomy And Decision-Making
- Low Level Of Awareness Of Their Civic/ Human Rights
- Women Are Into Low-Return Economic Activities

4. ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE ECONOMIC SECTOR

- Largely Unseen And Unaccounted For
- Invisible And Unpaid Labour
- Major Contributor To Household Income
- No Documentation On Female Labour
- Highly Engaged In Rural Economy

5. METHODOLOGY ADAPTED BY BUNYAD FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Objectives

1. To identify women and to initiate literacy programmes.
2. To form women groups for the provision of training skills.
3. To empower women by raising their income, earning capacity, self-employment and skill development.
4. To create leadership among rural women by linking them with training, access to information and micro credit agencies and line departments of the government.
5. To initiate the process where by women participation in decision-making, exposure to ideas and participation in civil society may lead to a greater respect and status in the community.
6. To create a self reliant and sustainable credit programme for rural women.

Technique of Empowerment

Functional Literacy & Integrated Farming System (IFS) Development for Women Empowerment

- By providing basic literacy including numeracy
- By raising their income-earning capacities via self-employment & leadership skills.
- By imparting training in Integrated Farming System (IFS)(as more than 45% population own less than 4 acre of land)
- By creating a sustainable credit program for them
- By initiating a process leading to greater awareness, regarding gender issues and women's equality/equity.
- By creating leadership among the women by linking education and information with training and income-generation programs.
- By providing Advocacy-Legal/Human Rights/ Democracy/ Population Control Health & Population Awareness
- By making role models for replicating in other areas

6. THE EXPERIENCE OF WEPA

- Literacy programmes are integrated with credit and income generating activities, community development and community participation, the response of the local communities is positive.
- Mobilizing women to tap their existing skills and knowledge collecting
- Aimed at raising the status of women
- Change of attitude and sensitization through action and involvement
- Subsequent confidence in their income-earning abilities

7. IMPACTS

- Greater Access to Training and Information
- Greater Interaction with Official of Government Departments
- Development of Self Confidence and Self Esteem
- A Positive Change in Their Position in Household i.e. of Participation in Decision Making Consultation
- Improved Sanitation in Household and Girls Schools
- Change in attitude Towards Women Education
- More Positive View and Recognition of Women's Economic Contribution

8. LESSONS LEARNT

- Community-Specific Integrated Approach Has Been Found Effective In Empowering Women To Identify And Assess Their Needs.
- All the Participants Can Now Write Their Name, Do Simple Sums, Read Signboards and Bills of Electricity Etc. And Keep the Accounts of Transaction.
- Integrated, Holistic Approach To Women's Development
- Group Formation Is A Pre-Requisite For Successful Micro-Credit Programme
- Need For Up-gradation Of Skills From Traditional To More Remunerative
- Need To Include Marketing Training
- Two Way Component Communication And Regular Monitoring To Ensure Project Movement
- Pre-Action Survey Is Necessary To Establish Base-Line
- Need To Foster And Support Local Institution And Grass Root Organization Through Capacity Building
- Need For Government-NGO Partnership

