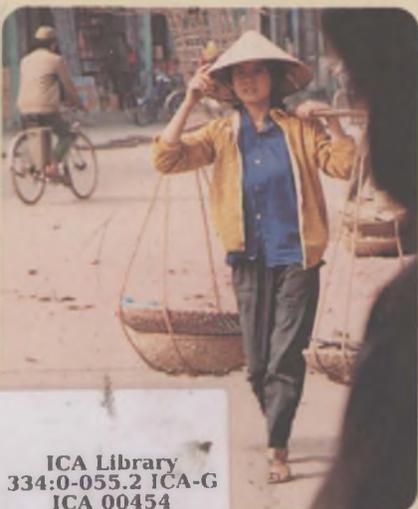


# GENDER INTEGRATION IN COOPERATIVES

AFGHANISTAN



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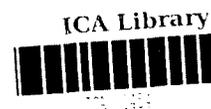
**Gender Integration and  
Women in Co-operative Development  
Country Study of Afghanistan**

By  
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## PREFACE

The ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (earlier called South-East Asia) launched a special women's programme during the Women's Decade (1975-1985). This programme, headed by a woman specialist, had been able to create an awareness and conditions for enhancing women's participation in co-operatives.

The programme in particular achieved success in the areas of influencing co-operative authorities to provide positive legal environment for women's participation in co-operative leadership and business. Many co-operative movements established women's committees at various levels and also incorporated representatives in their management committees. Many training activities were organised at the national and regional levels by the Women's Section of the ICA ROEC.

However, due to the financial constraints faced by the ICA during mid-eighties, the regional women's programme as well as many other programmes had to be curtailed. After completion of the restructuring process, we are now in a position to look back and start rethinking on the gender issues with a new outlook.

The concept of Women in Development (WID) has undergone substantial changes during the eighties. When the feminist movement was the subject of reassessment, many new WID approaches have emerged. Approach of gender planning has become popular at present with a broader concept of gender. This change is also due to the result of evaluation on the women's position in the society, after the UN Women's Decade. Many have felt that the approaches introduced during this period have become obsolete or have not shown results as expected in the process of global socio-economic changes. Therefore, UN agencies as well

as many international NGOs have revived their WID programmes, keeping gender issues in mind. As for the co-operative movement in the region, the same situation is visible. Many co-operative movements continue to adopt the WID strategies introduced in the seventies. Therefore, it has become vital to assess the current WID situation in co-operatives in terms of concepts, strategies and the cost benefits of the existing programmes. Any future planning of the WID programmes or gender planning mechanisms in co-operatives should be based on such an evaluation.

The Human Resource Development project, established in 1990 by the ICA, incorporated gender issues as a priority. With a view to launch an effective programme in the future, a study has been undertaken covering 14 countries in the Asia and the Pacific, which are representative of developed and developing economies. The studies have been carried out by specialists on gender issues on a common format and guidelines provided by the ICA ROAP. These country studies would provide a macro-level situation analysis in the representative countries.

The country studies will form an important basis for future planning for the ICA ROAP and for the respective countries. I am happy that we are able to share the findings of the country studies with those who are concerned with gender issues in co-operatives. The ultimate hope we have is that the gender integration in co-operatives would bring about more productivity and strength to them by utilizing human resources to the optimum.

I would like to thank the country researchers, co-operative movements and the staff of the HRD project at the ICA ROAP for undertaking the ground work for future gender programmes in co-operatives.

New Delhi  
August 18, 1992

G.K.Sharma  
Regional Director

## FOREWORD

This publication series of country studies on Gender Integration and Women in Co-operative Development cover 14 developed and developing countries in Asia and the Pacific. On the other hand, the studies are representative of open, mixed and centrally planned economies.

The country research had the following objectives:

- to assess as to what extent the gender integration has taken place in economic and social development as well as activities of the co-operatives of the given country,
- to assess the level of participation of women on political, social and economic decision making and productivity,
- to assess the level of participation of women in decision making and activities in co-operatives,
- to compare the level of socio-economic developments of a given country with gender situation,
- to identify the socio-cultural and economic factors hindering gender integration in development with special emphasis on co-operatives,
- to identify critical areas for future strategies for promoting gender awareness and gender participation, resulting in gender integration in co-operative development,
- to create awareness among the authorities and all concerned in gender issues on the level of development a given country has shown and the gap which exists in co-operatives.

The ICA ROAP engaged the services of competent and independent researchers through the national co-operative unions and some of them through other sources. A format was designed and used in order to ensure the conformity to the set of objectives laid down and to facilitate the data processing process. The methodology consisted of data from primary sources, authoritative documents and interviews by random samples.

We have tried to analyse the data collected through country reports and identify common features as well as special features in the region in the field of gender integration in co-operatives. We have also attempted to highlight the common and contradictory conclusions made by the researchers. A Regional Overview of gender integration has been published separately embodying these summaries.

Our sincere expectation from the publication of the country studies and the overview is to create an awareness of all co-operative movements and governmental and inter-governmental agencies to assess the present gender strategies in co-operatives and improve upon their planning mechanism for ensuring the equal participation of gender in co-operative development.

I would like to thank all country researchers who undertook the task within a short time and with limited resources and sources of information. National level co-operative organisations and the ILO Co-operative Project in Indonesia supported the project through consultation and their resources. We appreciate their common interest for the cause.

Mr.P.Nair, Desk Top Publisher and Secretary of the HRD Project, did the computer-based DTP work. Mr. S.S.Kukkal, a renowned artist in Delhi prepared the cover page. Document Press made the printing job very attractive. I would like to note our appreciation to them for their devoted work.

New Delhi  
August, 1992

W U Herath  
Advisor-Human Resource Development

**SURVEY REPORT ON GENDER INTEGRATION  
AND WOMEN IN CO-OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT  
AFGHANISTAN**

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# **Gender Integration and Women in Co-operative Development Report of the Country Survey of Afghanistan**

## **I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

During the last two decades, the major support from the foreign sources for the underdeveloped countries has been provided through specialized development projects for the promotion of socio-economic activities. This envisaged the augmentation of national production and establishing a reserve for the enhancement of effectiveness of investments from the awarded projects. This support too was aimed at developing an excessive national resources for future investment. However, due to the difficulties and problems faced by the underdeveloped countries, a speedy socio-economic development is yet to be achieved.

On observation of the late results and experiments, the strategies used for socio-economic development and solving the problems are considered as unsuccessful-for example, the progressive unemployment and also unequitable distribution of national income among different levels of the community. Especially, in the agricultural societies, the distribution of national resources and unemployment are common and constant problems. The effectiveness of economic strategies is justifiable. Solution of socio-economic problems in the third world depends on the active participation of rural population in the developmental process.

The difficulties mentioned above will not be removed unless the opportunities of working is available, various institutions of work are established and various groups of labourers and farmers are served.

For the purpose of safeguarding work opportunities, different craftsmen and workers should be mobilised in cities and provinces.

In this effort, the co-operative infrastructure is the best means for preparing people for establishing development projects using social and intellectual competencies and enhancing the knowledge of the learners. Half of the world's population consists of women, who actively collaborate in building the society and socio-economic life of a country. Now if we refer to the past, the past centuries also show the equality of women's rights and their active co-operation with men. Discovery and preservation of ancient monuments proved that due the very necessity of the human society, the women's role was obvious and evident, but the human life is not remaining constant. So, in our era, for the political and socio-economic rights in the end and on behalf of the people of Afghanistan, especially on behalf of the brave and conscious Afghan women, I can precisely say that there is nothing important than peace. The Afghan people, with the power of peace, can achieve their goals, and can reach their ideals and can lead their society to a better humanitarian one.

## II

### BRIEF INFORMATION ON GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan has a land area of 652,090 sq. kms. It is located in the Asian continent, at a latitude of 34° and a longitude of 65°. Afghanistan is situated in the high pressure area, having a mountainous altitudes with hot and dry deserts. It has a variety of temperature zones with humidity and intense rains. Blowing winds cause a multifarious weather. In some of the climatically difficult environments, the life is very harsh. Some of high areas like Pamir high tips that are permanently covered with snow are alien to the life of animals, livestock and plants.

### III

#### POLITICAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND JUDICIAL SYSTEM IN AFGHANISTAN

The Parliament is the highest legislative authority in the Republic of Afghanistan. The Parliament is composed of two organisations; first is the People's House and the other is the Senate. Representatives in the People's House are elected by general elections through secret ballot. The term of the Parliament is five years, in accordance with the law. The Senate members are selected and nominated as below:

1. From each province two persons are nominated for a period of five years.
2. From among the council members of each province, two persons will be selected for a period of three years.
3. The rest of the senators are prominent personalities, like intellectuals, scientists and other well known people, who are selected for a period of four years.

The following authorities can propound, amend and repeal the laws for each one of the houses of Parliament:

- \* President,
- \* Permanent Council of Parliament Houses,
- \* Ministers' Council,
- \* High Courts, and
- \* Supreme Court.

The High Court is the main and single judicial organisation of government in Afghanistan. All matters are solved only in accordance with the law. Judicial power is the highest organ of justice, which is leading all judicial institutions of the country. All judges and deputy judges of the high court are acting as per law. In maintaining the equality of law to the judiciary, high courts are independent in their actions. Crimes are judged as per articles of the Constitution and other laws through judicial authority in Afghanistan.

## IV

### FOUNDATION OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS AND REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION

The Republic of Afghanistan is an independent, united and indivisible state having sovereignty over the whole of its territory. National sovereignty in Afghanistan belongs to the people. The people exercise national sovereignty through Loya Jirgah, national assembly and local councils.

Islam is the main religion of Afghanistan. No law shall run counter to the principles of Islam and other values enshrined in the Constitution. The republic of Afghanistan is a non-aligned country which does not join any military block and does not allow establishment of foreign military bases in its territory. The defence of independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity are the fundamental duties of the state. The state ensures the security and defence capability of the country and equips the armed forces. In the republic of Afghanistan, political parties are allowed to be formed, provided their platforms, charter and activities are not opposed to the provisions of the Constitution and the laws of the country. A party formed in accordance with the provisions of law cannot be dissolved without legal cause.

The national form of the republic of Afghanistan as the broadest Socio-political organisation unites political parties, social organisations and individual members included in its ranks for their active participation in the social, political and state spheres on the basis of a common programme. Trade unions and social organisations are allowed to be formed in the republic of Afghanistan in accordance with the law. The state assists in

promoting the role of trade unions, peasant co-operatives, youth, women's and other social organisations in all spheres of social, political, economic and cultural life of the country and ensures the co-operation and mutual relations of state organs with them.

Pashtu and Dari are official languages among the national languages of the country.

The state emblem of the Republic of Afghanistan consists of a rising sun, adytum and pulpit with a green background, ensconced in two shaves of wheat and wheel and with a tri-colour ribber in black, red and green. The state flag of Afghanistan is a tri-colour divided into three horizontal equal parts in black, red and green stripes. The emblem shall be placed on both sides of the upper quarter of the flag, close to the mast, the length of the flag shall be double of its width. The capital of Afghanistan is Kabul.

The state encourages and protects the activities of individual craftsmen and their voluntary participation in trade unions and co-operatives, renders all-round assistance for upgrading their professional skills, ensuring the supply of raw materials to them and sale of their output. The state guarantees the right of ownership of land of the peasants and other land owners in accordance with the law.

The state shall adopt necessary measures for implementation of democratic changes in agriculture keeping in view the interests of peasants and other land owners.

The state encourages the establishment of big agricultural and mechanized state, with mixed and private farms and helps the reclamation of virgin lands.

The state guarantees by law the use of pastures by nomads and livestock breeders. The state also assists in the creation of proper conditions for the growth of animal husbandry, sale of live stock products and improvement of economic, social and living standards of nomads and livestock breeders.

The state guarantees the security of private investment for the growth of national economy and protects and encourages the participation of private sector entrepreneurs in the development of industry, commerce,

construction, transport, agriculture and service industries, in accordance with the law. The state should expand all round and beneficial relations with private entrepreneurs and protect the private sector against competition of foreign capital. The state takes in to account the interests of private sector, in accordance with the law, while working out the financial credit, customs and price policies in Afghanistan. Domestic and foreign trade are directed and regulated by the state, observing the people's interests.

The state encourages the activities of the private entrepreneurs in the expansion of export and import of goods and development of wholesale and retail trade and undertakes the fixing and controlling of prices.

The state encourages the augmentation of production and raising of the quality of export goods and protects them against competition from foreign capital and monopolies. For the growth of the national economy, the state permits foreign investment in the republic of Afghanistan and regulates it in accordance with the law.

In the republic of Afghanistan, no foreign citizen shall enjoy the right to own immovable properties. Subject to the approval of the government, immovable property may be sold to diplomatic missions and foreign governments on a reciprocal basis and also to international organizations in which the Republic of Afghanistan is a member.

The inheritance rights to property shall be guaranteed by law on the basis of the Islamic Shariat.

Expropriation is allowed only in public interest and against just and prior compensation in accordance with the law.

Confiscation of property is not allowed, without the sanction of the law and the decision of a court.

The state adopts and implements necessary measures for the protection of nature, natural wealth and reasonable utilization of natural resources, improvement of living environment, prevention of pollution of water and air, and conservation and survival of animals and plants.

## **Citizenship, Basic Rights, Freedom and Duties of Citizens**

The citizenship of the Republic of Afghanistan is equal and uniform to all citizens. Acquisition and loss of citizenship and other matters related to it are regulated by law.

Every individual, having citizenship of Afghanistan in accordance with the law, shall be called an Afghan.

No citizen of Afghanistan shall be exiled inside or outside the country. No citizen of Afghanistan shall be extradited to a foreign state or country. The citizens living abroad enjoy the protection of the state. The state shall defend their rights and legal interests, strengthen the relations of Afghans living abroad with the country and help their safe return to their homeland.

Citizens of Afghanistan, both men and women, have equal rights and duties in the eyes of the law irrespective of their national, racial, linguistic, tribal, education and social status, religion, creed, political conviction and occupation.

## V

### FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL WELFARE

The Republic of Afghanistan is a multi-racial country. The state follows the policy of all round growth, understanding, friendship and co-operation among all races, clans and tribes of the country for ensuring political, economic, social and cultural equality and rapid growth and development of regions which are socially, economically and culturally backward. The state would gradually prepare grounds for the creation of administrative units based on national characteristics. The state would also adopt necessary measures for the growth of culture, language and literature of the people of Afghanistan, as well as preserve and develop the cultural, traditional, linguistic, literary and folk traditions of all races, clans and tribes. In the Republic of Afghanistan, family constitutes the basic unit of the society.

The state adopts necessary measures for ensuring the health of mothers and children and for healthy up-bringing of children.

The state takes care of the young generation and provides necessary opportunities for their education, employment, recreation, rest, spiritual and physical growth and helps the blossoming of the talents of the youth.

The state promotes construction to provide state and co-operative housing and helps in the construction of private houses. The state implements the economic policy aimed at mobilisation and utilization of the country's resources for removing backwardness, raising the living standards of the people and development of socio-economic structure of

the society. Towards this end, the state would formulate and put into practice, socio-economic development plans. In the Republic of Afghanistan, mixed, co-operative, trust and private property as well as properties of political and social organizations exist.

The state protects all forms of legal properties.

Mineral resources, forests, pastures and other natural wealth, basic energy resources, historic relics, banks, insurance institutions, means of communication, radio and television, major dams, ports, main means of production in heavy industry, transport ways and air transport are state property.

The state assists in strengthening and expansion of co-operatives and encourages the voluntary participation of people to this end.

For this purpose of extending agricultural aid and sub-agricultural aid, peasants and land ownerships have been considered. For founding of agricultural farms and mechanized farm operations, development of fertile and virgin lands are considered, for ensuring of special investment to extend national economy. The state protects and encourages industries, trade, construction, transport, agriculture and other public services according to the law.

In all spheres of trade, mutual relations among national traders are considered and they would be protected against foreign investment, by the Government of Afghanistan.

The administrative system of Afghanistan is based on central and local administration units, in accordance with the law. As for the local administration is concerned, there are provinces, districts, cities and villages. These are guided by governor and district, municipal, local heads.

In every province and district, there are provincial and district councils organised by law.

Provinces and district councils select their chairmen and managers from among the members. The rotation of the authority of provincial council is for three years. For administration of cities and municipalities, councils are founded by the law.

# VI

## THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ECONOMY OF AFGHANISTAN

### 6.1 Agricultural Sector

Agriculture is the backbone of Afghanistan's economy. About 80% of the population of our country directly and indirectly are engaged in agriculture.

Over fifty per cent of the GDP is derived from this sector. Maintaining of export markets and maintaining of industrial functions are based on agriculture and depend somehow on the production quality and quantity of this sector. In the past years, our country was self-sufficient in food and other agricultural products. But during the last decade of the undeclared war, most of our different production lines are vanished and harshly defected.

In Afghanistan, agriculture is divided in to four categories:

Grains, fruits, vegetables and industrial plants. The following data are of 1989:

*Grains:* The land for cultivation is 1143.2 ha. and the production is 1229.77 tonnes.

*Fruits:* The land for cultivation is 1446.7 ha. and the production figure is not available.

*Vegetables:* The land for cultivation 72.3 ha. and the production is 206 tonnes.

*Industrial plants:* The land for utilisation is 177.6 ha. and the production figure is not available.

In the above spheres, professional and non-professional persons, both men and women, officially and unofficially are functioning.

In this sphere, till now, no proper data has been taken. It must be noticed that women of Afghanistan participate more in agriculture than men especially in districts and villages of the country. There activities can be ploughing, clearing the grasses, watering, collecting fruits and spraying insecticides, etc.

## 6.2 Industrial Sector

More than 265,000 persons are employed in the industrial sector.

In the Republic of Afghanistan, firstly with the establishment and extension of industrial institutions and secondly by promoting a network of mine excavations, electric and energy products, not only have exceeded in volume and capacity of production but also made available the possibility of consumer and non-consumer goods production more than in the past. We can also say that, the promotion of the industry, mining, energy and hydro-electricity has helped the other fields like agriculture. As mentioned before, mining is the foremost and important resource of the country, although we do not have enough information about the variety of mine resources in Afghanistan.

However, the preliminary survey shows that our country is not poor in mine resources but a complete survey and the basic productivity of these deposits take a long time and extra investment. In spite of that some of the country's mines are already in production. Their productivity for the year 1989 is as under:

Natural gas	:	16,668 million cubic meters
Salt	:	28,000 tonnes
Coal	:	7,977,000 tonnes
Fertilizer	:	8,068,000 tonnes

In Afghanistan, three types of electric power are generated, which is used for heating, lighting and for industrial purposes:

Hydro-electricity	:	54,806 KW
Disel electricity	:	732 KW
Solar	:	448 KW

## VII

### COMMERCE

There are 413,000 people engaged in commercial business. Commerce is not only the important factor of balance of payment but also an important and major resource of Afghan state and its people.

Afghan commerce is divided into exports and imports. The general exports of the country, their production and value in the year 1989 are shown as under:

#### *Fresh Fruits*

Production	:	1,400,000 tonnes
Value	:	1.5 million dollars

#### *Dried Fruits*

Production	:	46,300,000 tonnes
Value	:	81.1 million dollars

#### *Rugs and carpets*

Production	:	650,000 sq. mtrs.
Value	:	28.9 million dollars

#### *Garagual skins*

Production	:	380,000 pieces
Value	:	4 million dollars

Imports are done in the following forms:

- Imports through merchants
- Imports through project loans and subsidized support (collaboration)
- Imports by way of loans in the form of consumer goods.
- Imports through grants.

The items and articles imported into Afghanistan are petroleum, wheat, sugar, electricity, textile, metals, iron sheets, fertilizer, etc. The total value of the above imported items through private, joint and state sectors, for the year 1989 has been 48,252 million dollars.

## VIII

### NATIONAL PRODUCTION IN AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL SECTORS

In Afghanistan, per capita income for the year 1989 was 142 dollars. In the year 1989, the gross national production growth rate was further increased to 6.6%.

Foreign input in Afghanistan are in the form of:

- \* Foreign exchange assistance from International Monetary Fund
- \* Other foreign exchange assistance,
- \* Special Drawing Rights (SDR)

The total of all the above amounts to US\$ 254 million. In public sector, the external loans for the year 1989 was shown at 69.3 million US dollars. The share of agricultural production was 54.2% and handicrafts 25.8%. Price of consumer goods increased by 57.8%. In some segments, correct data is not collected due to the backwardness and situation emanating from the continuous war situation in the country.

## IX

### CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

The co-operative movement in Afghanistan has no deep roots. Being peasants and pasturers for many centuries, the common people have carried on with the socio-economic and political affairs together, such as planting seeds and collecting crops, building construction, digging of wells and participation in social occasions like wedding ceremony, mourning ceremony, delivery of children and so on. Although the organisation of councils for farmers and other community affairs are broadened, all are not well organised and remain in the traditional way still.

The co-operative movement in its new concept of today has been started later in our country. Generally they are not based on adopted laws and regulations on co-operatives.

The foundation of co-operatives in Afghanistan is seen in the middle of 20th Century (1953). For the first time, thirteen (13) agricultural co-operatives were organised by 'Karakul' and 'Silk Worm' factories. And in 1963, through the help of three experts, five co-operatives were organised successfully. Later on, a team of experts promoted co-operatives based on another organisation named Project for Credit and Co-operatives (PACCA) with the financial help from Sweden through FAD. Thereafter, co-operative movement in Afghanistan started functioning. After that, the movement of co-operatives of Afghanistan progressed

because almost all people of Afghanistan are peasants. On the other hand, the process of formation of co-operatives could organise our peasants together.

In 1980, for the first time, a co-operative conference was held in Kabul wherein 650 representatives from different parts of the country participated. Its aim and objectives were to organise and improve the peasants, workers and other consumers around co-operatives and to direct and lead the movement of Peasants' Co-operatives of Afghanistan on the basis of socio-economic leadership under the guidance of Central Council of the Peasants Co-operative Union. There are four types of co-operatives in Afghanistan, such as agricultural co-operatives, consumer co-operatives, handicraft co-operatives and construction co-operatives. They function for common people and for the prosperity of peasants and to maintain link between districts and cities.

Due to the expansion of co-operatives in Afghanistan, specialized institutions have emerged for developing specialists for further expansion of co-operatives. They are: the Department of Co-operatives, Union of Farmers' Co-operatives of the Republic of Afghanistan, Faculty of Co-operatives, Agricultural faculty, technical training section of agricultural department and other schools and centres for agricultural training in the capital and provinces, where the special subjects are taught.

In 1988, the Council of Cooperatives has obtained the membership of the International Co-operative Alliance. Now, our co-operatives are progressing well and have better image in the national and international levels. The number of members and share capital have been considerably improved. Thus, the number of members increased from 2790 persons in 1980 to 147,131 persons in 1991 and capital rose from 613,500 Fags in 1980 to 119,264,892 Fags in 1990.

Our co-operatives have 425 stores for consumer goods in the capital of Afghanistan, provinces and districts through which all goods are distributed among people at reasonable prices.

# X

## WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

The success of the nation through the evolution of society determines the role and stability of women. These two factors have an undenied relationship.

Today, no one can determine and decide the future of human beings without women. Of course in different countries, the level of evolution of economic and social roles of women differ, but we can say in the present era, responsibility of women is much more than the previous times and women have developed new problems too.

However, in Afghanistan, the rights and responsibilities of women have not been changed much from early traditions. Though women of Afghanistan have struggled a lot during the last centuries, there were restrictions for their movement in social, economic, political and cultural affairs. But history has witnessed the struggle and movement of Afghan women and this struggle shall be remembered in the heart for centuries.

For the first time since the foundation of girls' schools and women associations have been organised, attempts have been made to bring up the level of education of Afghan women from 1991. At present women can work in factories such a match factories, socks factories, button factories, etc. Recently, the first special publication of women named 'Irshad Niswan' has been issued. In 1990, the women started functioning as government officials. At present, women are ready for higher education. In 1964, participation of women started in politics and social affairs. In

1965, voting rights were given to women by constitution and also since the same year, women could be selected into the People's House and the Senate. In 1967, they joined the Cabinet and in the judiciary. Afghan women started developing in other aspects also on the basis of struggle by some women. The government established courses for literacy because of the awakening of women and held conferences to create awareness of women in the political struggle.

The Women's Organisation joined the International Democratic Federation of Women for participation of women to achieve their rights, democracy and independence. During the last decade, the role of women has been extended and they can take part in all difficult affairs of life. It means that they take part in home affairs and children's training and they also take active part in schools, hospitals, factories, etc. Even our women have participated in the confrontation against anarchism. Even our women during 13 years of scuffling and undeclared war in Afghanistan carried heavy responsibilities on their shoulders.

Afghan women have lost and sacrificed their children, husbands and close relatives to bring peace and solidarity in Afghanistan. Whatever we say, this created a generation of struggle and try to create a new generation for maintaining stability and economic betterment. Until now our women have not been given the rights and independence adequately.

In our urban areas and districts, women have not been encouraged. Though they are the most skillful producers of local handicrafts, their handicrafts are not exported. Any how, we hope that some day our women will be like women in other developed countries in socio-economic activities, arts and political affairs.

# XI

## WOMEN IN CO-OPERATIVES

First of all, we must discuss about the way of working and the objectives of the co-operatives of Afghanistan. Co-operatives are the socio-economic organisations of peasants, workers and other toiling masses of the cities and districts, who have united voluntarily. Though the principles of working of all co-operatives have been accepted the same all over the world, the systems and practices in different countries differ from each other.

The accepted principles as observed in Afghanistan are as follows:

- i. Voluntary membership
- ii. Democratic control of all organisms and leadership of co-operatives,
- iii. Restrictions on interest on the capital of the members of co-operatives.
- iv. Education for co-operators
- v. Equal distribution of credit and working results of members of co-operatives.
- vi. Unification between co-operatives at the national and international levels.

The Centre of Co-operatives of Afghanistan is in Kabul. Co-operatives are functioning as per the laws and guidelines which are given by the State.

Women are participating equally as women in agriculture, crafts and trade, etc. They have different levels of education like B.A., B.Sc. and Master's degrees. Some women are illiterate. There are courses to educate women for improving the standard of the co-operatives. In the area of literacy of women, long-term and short-term courses are held by the government.

The functions of women of our country are too wide, from the farm to home and to manual work such as carpet weaving, etc.

The co-operatives and government take an active interest, due to which the women are helped and organised around the co-operatives. For example, we can form co-operatives for tailoring, shawl knitting, carpet weaving, etc. They are active in about 10-12 provinces. In addition, women are active in socio-economic and cultural affairs. The Central Committee of Women in Afghanistan has organised them collectively and voluntarily through encouraging workers and employees. They are also found in productive institutions which are under men's domination. The efforts of women shall not be left restricted by expanding to other aspects such as teaching of illiterate voluntarily between families of peasants in their own local areas and explanation of objectives of co-operatives to organise them into co-operatives.

Now-a-days, there are questions emerging on the privileges and functions of women in co-operatives, which need to be discussed. Therefore, because of the importance of women in co-operatives, government and the leading authorities of co-operatives try to employ many women. They try to popularize co-operatives among women by organising competitions during training, creation of agricultural schools and colleges, meetings, film shows which contain the objectives of co-operatives, etc. and help them to participate and to take interest in the development of co-operatives.

The sensible women leaders of co-operatives are drawing the attention of government on the role of women in development, because of encouragement they have gained due to the literacy programmes and specialized co-operative training. They have talents and skills in keeping with the traditions of the country, such as maintaining of relationship between

women at home and participation in co-operatives in the fields of handicrafts and agriculture. They also could improve organised working for the benefit of co-operatives in order to improve personal finance and support their cultural life and the life in their homes.

The rights of women in co-operatives are equal to men on the basis of democratic principles. Women also have the right of election and voting in the administrative organs of the co-operatives, participation in meetings, presenting their ideas on all related matters in co-operatives, making use of facilities of the co-operatives such as supply of consumer goods, selling of products and buying of products through the co-operatives.

The women members have the right to draw services from the co-operatives, share the benefits of results and joining and withdrawing as members at their will. It is necessary to mention that the salaries and other payments of the women in the co-operatives are same as men. There is no discrimination between them. The only thing which is considered is the duration of working, based on the skills, talents and level of knowledge and the experience.

The method of paying salaries and allowances in Afghanistan are not based on monthly or weekly basis but on the basis of work done by them. This type of wage structure prevail especially in handicrafts and small industries. Amongst our women's co-operatives of Afghanistan, many talents can be found. As an example, one of the leading members works in carpet industry co-operative (Day Yakchi) of Jozjan province. When interviewed, she briefed me about her activities. Her name is Zahra, member of carpet industry co-operative of Day Yakchi. She lives in Sheberghan city of Jozjan province. She has six children and her husband is martyred because of thirteen years of bloody war in Afghanistan. She was very young, as young as five years, when she became skillful in handicraft work. She learnt the work from her father and mother and for some time, she was working at home with a small craft of carpet. Thereafter, due to the encouragement from other women who were busy working in co-operatives, she obtained the membership of carpet industry co-operative. She has the membership of this co-operative for about

five years. Other than carpet weaving, she knows weaving of mats and designing them, cooking and also agriculture. She describes her daily routine. From eight in the morning till five in the evening she works on carpet making. Daily she makes about one square meter carpet only. One hour from 12.00-1.00 (noon) she takes rest and has her lunch. She is paid according to the work done by her, daily and monthly, as she has to look after her family. She works at home at night too. She has the equipments for weaving of carpets. Her children too help her.

For the past few years, she worked in the co-operative. She has woven about 410 sq.meters of carpet and has trained many students in the craft, who have become active members of the co-operative. She has been commended by the co-operative thrice. She adds that at the beginning she has been illiterate but since she joined the co-operative, she learnt writing and reading through literacy courses. When she was questioned regarding obtaining of specialized experience such as, has the co-operative any programme to realize ultimate objectives, she responded saying that their co-operative has limited area of operation and a limited investment. The co-operative could not provide better facilities for training but lately government and the Co-operative Council have planned to provide some educative films on the profession and the functioning of the co-operatives, combined with travels to some of the other provinces.

We have these types of women leaders in other co-operatives like agricultural co-operatives and consumer co-operatives.

In order to develop co-operatives in agriculture and handicrafts, marketing is very important. Women engaged in these co-operatives numbered about 14,644 in 1989. Out of this, 386 are engaged in handicraft and 14,258 are in consumer co-operatives. The data on women in agricultural co-operatives are not available.



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