

GENDER INTEGRATION IN COOPERATIVES

SRI LANKA



ICA Library
334:3-055.2(5487)
ICA 00787



ROAP

679

117 00485

Gender Integration in Co-operatives

Report of the Country Survey

SRI LANKA

By
Chandra Rupasinghe

117 00485 (2/1987)
SRI LANKA



ICA Regional Office for Asia & the Pacific
New Delhi, India

ICA Library



ICA 00787

Human Resource Development Project international Cooperative Alliance

Head Office :

15 Route des Morillons
CH-1218, Grand Saconnex
Geneva, Switzerland
Tel : (41)22-7984121
Fax : (41)22-7984122
Tlx : (45)415620 ICA CH

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

43, Friends Colony (East)
New Delhi- 110065, India.
Tel : (91)11-6835123
Fax : (91)11-6835568
Tlx : (81)31-75025 DICA IN

September, 1992 (600)

Edited by W.U.Herath, Advisor-Human Resource Development, Typeset by P. Nair at the ICA Regional Office for Asia & the Pacific and printed at Document Press, H.S.14, Kailash Colony Market, New Delhi-110048.

CONTENTS

PREFACE				v
FOREWORD				vii
Introduction	...	...	...	1
General Features of the Country	...	...	...	4
Economic Policy and Status	...	...	...	8
Demography	...	...	...	11
Health	...	...	...	14
Literacy and Education	...	...	...	27
Housing	...	...	...	20
Employment	...	...	...	21
Gender Participation in Politics	...	...	...	24
Legal Environment for Gender Issues	...	...	...	27
Socio-Cultural Environment and Gender Issues	...	...	...	29
Institutions Dealing with Gender Issues	...	...	...	32
Women in Cooperatives	...	...	...	38
Decision-making in Cooperatives	...	...	...	50
Employment in Cooperatives	...	...	...	57
Conclusions	...	...	...	59
Bibliography	...	...	...	62

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 Women 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 cooperative authorities to provide positive legal environment for women's participation in cooperative 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 the 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 re-thinking 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 subject to re-assessment, 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 results 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 either 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 movements in the Region, the same situation is visible. Many co-operative movements continue to adopt the WID strategies introduced in nineteen 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 for 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 field. With a view to launch an effective programme in the future, a study has been undertaken covering 14 countries in 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 in the respective countries.

The country study will form an important basis for future planning for the ICA ROAP and for 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 cooperatives. The ultimate hope we have is that the gender integration in cooperatives would bring about more productivity and strength to them by utilising human resources to the optimum.

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

New Delhi
August 18, 1992

G.K.Sharma
Regional Director

FOREWORD

This publication series of country studies on Gender Integration and Women in Cooperatives covers 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 for economic and social development and the activities of cooperatives of the country given,
- 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

Introduction

The Gender Integration is a very recent phenomenon. It has become one of the most visible and talked about gender issue in recent times. The role of women in economic and social development covers many aspects. The issue of women and gender integration has aroused wide interest in Sri Lanka today, partly due to the global concern for the women and also because of the rapid changes which are taking place in the lives of women.

This report examines the economic and social role of women in Sri Lanka highlighting some major constraints they face particularly in the Co-operative Movement. It is more important to increase awareness of these issues among co-operatives, in order to accelerate various co-operative programmes.

It is found, in Sri Lanka the co-operative movement has shown interest on women only after 1978. However, this report will provide some insight into complexities of the multiple roles and problems of women. The decade of the '80s saw a significant increase in the participation of women which had a considerable influence on national development. In fact, there is an urgent need to explore and assess the needs and problems of women in the co-operative movement and measures should be taken to remedy the shortcomings in the interest of both co-operative development and national development.

This survey has been carried out on the request of the international Co-operative Alliance, ROAP, and, it is hoped that the findings in this report will be a guide to evolve the future country strategies and regional strategies for gender integration in co-operative development.

OBJECTIVES

According to the guidelines provided by the International Co-operative Alliance, Regional Office (ROAP), the objectives of this Gender Survey are classified in two aspects:-

(a) General Objectives

- To assess to what extent the gender integration has taken place for economic and social development activities of Sri Lanka.
- To assess the level of participation of women in political, social and economic decision making and productive activities.
- To assess the level of participation of women in decision making activities in cooperatives.
- To relate the level of socio-economic development of Sri Lanka with gender situation.
- To identify the socio-cultural and economic factors hindering gender integration in development with special emphasis on cooperatives.

(b) Special Objectives

- To identify critical areas for future strategies for promoting gender awareness and gender participation resulting in greater gender integration in co-operative development.
- To create awareness among authorities and all concerned on gender issues, particularly in relation to cooperatives, given the current development status in the country.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The findings and the recommendations in this report are based on a survey undertaken in Sri Lanka from October 1991 to December 1991.

For data collection appropriate primary and secondary sources were referred. Though women represent approximately half the total population in Sri Lanka, only few islandwide surveys have been conducted on gender situation and integration. In Sri Lanka, the Central Bank and the Census and Statistics Department are the main institutions which conduct islandwide surveys. Censuses are taken once in ten years and detailed statistics regarding gender can be found to some extent only in these Census reports. The last census was in 1981. Therefore most of the Demographic data for current period is based on estimated figures.

In this survey, an attempt was made to study a random sample of co-operative employees in order to assess gender issues and gender integration. Another sample was taken to assess the women member's perception about co-operative activities. This sample consisted both single and married women. Since this

sample was limited to five districts some bias is to be expected.

Interviews were the chief means of data gathering and followed both structured and free associational formats. Structured interviews were conducted to obtain the information from co-operative societies. Free associational interviews were also conducted specially in rural areas, and these interviews were mainly with women members, committee members and housewives etc. At the institutional level, Assistant Commissioners of Co-operative Development, and women officers working in other womens societies, government and non-government organisations were interviewed. By these methods informations was gathered from nearly five hundred people. General information about the country and gender integration was obtained from a study of relevant literature. A Bibliography of documents consulted is given at the end of the report.

However, the role of women in relation to their social and domestic functions particularly the main theme in cooperative development explored in this report.

General Features of the Country

1.1 Geographical Area and Territorial Waters

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Formerly known as Ceylon) comprises one large island and several islets, lying east of the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent. The maximum length of the island, which (including adjacent small islands) covers a land area of 64,454 sq km, (24,886 sq miles), is 435 km, and its greatest width is 225 km.

The Bay of Bengal lies to its North and East and the Arabian sea to its West. Sri Lanka is separated from India by the Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Strait, between which there lies in very shallow water, a chain of small islands linking Sri Lanka and India. Sri Lanka extends from 5° 80' N and from 79° 42' to 80° 53' E.

1.2 Physiography

Sri Lanka consists almost entirely of hard ancient crystalline rocks. Unaltered sedimentary rocks occupies only the Jaffna Peninsula (a raised coral reef) in the North and a strip down the North West coast. There are some coastal lagoons specially on the East coast.

The highest land in Sri Lanka occupies the South centre of the country and rises to more than 1500 m above sea level. The highest point is Pidiruthalagala (22524 m). From the upcountry the land falls for a series of steps to rolling coastal plain. The plain is narrow in the West and South West, and broadest in the North. The rivers apart from the longest, the Mahaweli ganga, which has a complicated course are generally short and run outwards from the upcountry.

1.3 Climate

Sri Lanka has high temperatures due to its near equatorial position, modified by altitude in the centre hills. In Colombo at sea level, mean monthly temperatures fluctuate only between 25° C in January and 28° C in May. At Nuwaraeliya, at an abration of 1889 m, temperatures range between 14° C in

January and 16° C in May.

A fundamental division in Sri Lanka, so far as rainfall and therefore agriculture are concerned, is that between the wet and dry zones. The wet zone occupies the South Western quadrant of the island and normally receives rain from both the South West and North East monsoons. Colombo, has a mean rain fall of 2,365 mm; it receives 69 mm in February the driest month, and 371 mm in May, the Wettest. The dry Zone covering the low lands of the North and East and extending in modified form into the Eastern upcountry has a period of severe drought in the south west monsoon and most of its rain comes from North East, Trincomalee, (a city in the Eastern Province) for example, with a mean annual rainfall of 1,648 mm receives an average only 69 mm, 28 mm, and 51 mm in May, June and July respectively. Commercial crops like tea and rubber are almostly confined to the wet zone.

1.4 Political System and Parliamentary System

The present constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka was adopted by the Parliament in 1978. It guarantees the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens including freedom of thought, conscience and worship and equal entitlement before the law. The Constitution of Sri Lanka declares that "No citizen otherwise qualified for appointment in the Central Government, Local Government, State Corporation Services and the like, shall be discriminated against in respect of any such appointment on the ground of race, religion, caste or sex."

The President is the executive Head of State and is directly elected by the people for a term of six years. The Parliament is the legislative arm of the government and consists of representatives of the people. Judicial power is vested in courts, tribunals and institutions established by law.

1.5 Judicial System

The Judicial System consists of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, the High Court, District Courts, Magistrate Courts and Primary Courts. There are Labour Tribunals to decide labour disputes.

1.6 Land Area

Most of the wet zone and upcountry are not very fertile, but grow tree crops and give a high response to fertilizers. Young soils are found on steeper slopes. Over a large part of the dry zone especially the North Centre and South-East require careful handling but are more fertile than is normal in the tropics. In the

Jaffna peninsula soils are also largely, through human exertion, relatively fertile, but elsewhere in the dry zone soils are generally infertile.

The wet zone has been covered with wet evergreen forest akin to tropical rain forest, passing into drier forest on the lowland dry zone boundary.

1.6.1 Cultivated Land

In Sri Lanka about 2.14 m ha: (33% of the total land area) have been cultivated. Of this amount 52% of cultivated land are under plantation crops. It is estimated that in 1989 about 220,000 ha: were cultivated with tea, 200,000 ha: with rubber, and 420,000 ha: with coconut. The minor export crops (mainly spice crops) together account for about 50,000 ha:.

Paddy providing the staple food in Sri Lanka, is the main crop in peasant agriculture. The area of land usage for paddy cultivation is about 727,000 ha:.

1.6.2 Forests

The Climax vegetation in most parts of Sri Lanka is the forest. About 2.39 million ha: or 37% of the land area has been classified as forest. Of this an extend of about 12% are forest reserves. Planted or enriched forests account for about 2.2%.

The island's wet zone has tropical evergreen forests in the low lands and sub tropical evergreen forests in some of it's elevated areas. The lowering temperature of which accompanies the increase of elevation in the interior of the island induces changes in species of the forest flora.

The extensive clearing of forests for settlement, agriculture and extraction of forest resources over a long period of time has reduced the climax forest vegetation of Sri Lanka to a small fraction of what it would originally have been. The "Sinharaja forest" of the South Western interior represent the only substantial remnants of the original evergreen forests of the wet zone. A diminishing propotion of the lowland dryzone is still covered with dry mixed evergreen forest which is probably, secondary, the result of shifting cultivation. These forests produce valuable timbers such as ebony and satinwood.

In the drier North West and South East these forests passes into thorn scrub; while in the Eastern dry zone are patches of savannah-like grassland thought to be due to periodic burning.

1.7 Communication

The basic mass media which include Newspapers, magazines, radio and

television performs an important role in communicating information to the public. Newspapers are the most popular mass medium within the country. With respect to Sinhala newspapers there are 4 daily papers, 18 weekly papers, 18 monthly papers and two bi-monthly papers and some weekly newspapers specially for women.

Postal services are available throughout the country. Existing telecommunication network provides an extended and reliable service to the public locally and internationally.

Economic Policy and Status

2.1 Main Features of Economy

Sri Lanka has many of the features that characterize a 'Developing Economy'. In 1990 income per head was US \$ 400. About one half of those who were gainfully employed were in agriculture. Earnings from the export of three primary products, i.e. tea, rubber and coconut accounted for about 36% of total visible earnings and for 1/10th of the national income during 1988/89. The gross national product for 1989 has been estimated at US \$ 7,268 million.

Using GNP per head as the criterion, the World Bank classifies Sri Lanka among the poorest 36 countries in the world. However, the physical quality of life in the country, as reflected in indices such as adult literacy (males 79.97%, females 88.62%), life expectancy at birth (males 68 years, females 73 years) and infant mortality (23 per 1000 live births), is of a standard which is considerably higher than in most countries with comparable income, and puts Sri Lanka in the same category as many middle income countries having an income per head of US \$ 1,500 or more.

2.2 Agriculture

The Sri Lanka economy is dominated by agriculture. According to the 'Labour Force and Socio Economic Survey 1985/86' 41% of the labour force were employed in that sector. Normally Sri Lanka's agriculture is divided into two broad categories:-

- (a) export oriented plantation sector, specializing in cash crops.
- (b) A subsistence-oriented peasant sector specializing in food crops.

The bulk of the agricultural food crops is produced by peasant small farmers. In addition to three main export products (tea, rubber and coconut) Sri Lanka also cultivates a number of minor export crops such as cocoa, pepper, cloves, nutmeg, cardamon, cinnamon and citronella.

2.3 Industry

Industry including manufacturing, mining, construction and power, contributed 28.211 of G.N.P. and employed 18.8% of the working population. Sri Lanka's manufacturing sector accounted nearly 12% G.D.P. It covers a wide range of cottage industries, light consumer goods industries and to a limited extent producer good industries. The open economy strategy has generally benefited the manufacturing sector. Factory industries, as well as small and cottage industries generally recorded satisfactory growth rates after 1977. However import liberalization had adversely affected certain industries, such as handloom textiles and metal products. Export oriented industries have shown a remarkable rate of growth, particularly from the free-trade zones in the country.

2.4 Distribution of Income

Income distribution in Sri Lanka is characterised by a high degree of inequality. In 1989 approximately 10 per cent of all households had an income of less than Rs. 1,000 (US \$ 30) per month while around 12 percent had a total income exceeding Rs. 5,000 (US \$ 131.5).

Income levels were higher in the urban sector than in the rural sector. Only 6 percent earned an income less than Rs. 1,000 in the urban sector. The poorest 20 percent of income receivers in Sri Lanka earned only 3.5 percent of total income while the most affluent 20 percent earned almost 57 percent of the total income.

2.5 Expenditure

Food, the most fundamental of human needs, accounted for 52% of the average Sri Lanka's family budget. Housing and clothing each accounted for around 8 percent. However the provision of free educational services and medical facilities by the State probably account for the low expenditure on these items (2 percent on each).

Per capita food intake increases with income. In 1989, per capita calorie intake was 1,901 calories, for the bottom quartile while the corresponding figure for the top quartile was 2,453 calories. The required calorie intake for an average Sri Lankan is considered to be 2,200 calories. Around 45 percent of an average family's calorie intake came from rice, the staple food.

2.6 Exports and Imports

Exports and imports of Sri Lanka have increased over the past decade. The importance of agriculture to the Sri Lankan economy can be observed in the large share of agricultural exports. Tea continued to dominate agricultural

exports. The plantation crops -- tea, rubber, and coconuts, accounted for nearly 90 percent of all agricultural products. However, minor agricultural products also made a significant contribution.

Growth in industrial exports shows the diversification of the export structure. Sri Lanka's attempts to achieve a high growth of industrial export have been very successful with rapid growth in the exports of textiles and garments and petroleum products. A gradual growth is recorded in the export of gems. This industry has a high potential for increased production, and employment generation.

In order to broaden the country's export base, attempts were made in the 1980's to promote export diversification. Towards this objective, several incentives were given for production of export oriented products.

The major categories of imports are consumer-goods, intermediate goods and capital goods. Consumer goods, consisting mainly of food and beverages show a slow growth over the years compared to other categories of imports. Imports of intermediate goods and investment goods increased considerably after the liberalization of the economy in 1977. Intermediate goods are needed for growing local industries while investments goods are needed for longterm development projects.

As is common to many developing countries, Sri Lanka continues to have a trade deficit. These deficits are a result of the increased imports of investment goods. It has to be partly attributed to the country's inability to raise the volume of its exports. In 1989 the balance of payments deficit was 16 m SDR.

Demography

A census of population is conducted every ten years and at the last one taken on 1981; the population of the island was enumerated as 14,846,800 in 1981.

Of the total population 7,568,300 or 50.9% were males while 7,278,500 or 49.1% females. The sex ratio was 1039 males per 1000 females. At the previous census of 1971 the sex ratio was 1082 males per 1000 females.

The estimated current population is 16.8 million (1989 mid year) and approximately 49% of the population comprises of females. The female population form nearly half of the population as shown in the following table:-

Table 1 - Population Data 1978-89

Item	(in thousands)		
	1978	1987	1989
Mid year population	14,190	16,361	16,806
Male	7,296	8,339	8,566
Female	6,894	8,002	8,240

Source: Dept. of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

In terms of urban, rural classificatory it was estimated the rural population comprises 78% of the total population. However the proportion of rural to total population has been declining very slowly over the past few years. The main reason for this is rural to urban migration.

3.1 Growth of Population

The birth rates in the country were quite high, particularly up to 1963, and since then it has been falling. The average annual rate of growth of the population during the period 1971 to 1981 was 2.0% compared to 2.2% in the

period 1963 to 1971. The current annual growth rate is 1.3% (1989).

Infant and child mortality rate for both sexes have been declining with the better health care and preventing services. The current infant and child mortality rate is 19.4 per 1000 population. No records are available for the above according to gender.

The fall in the birth rate has been explained partly by a decline in the proportion of married female in the younger age groups and partly by changes in marital fertility. The mean age of marriage in Sri Lanka is quite high as seen in the table below:

Table 2: Mean Age At Marriage In Sri Lanka

<i>Year</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
1963	27.9	22.1
1971	28.0	23.5
1981	27.9	24.4

Source: Dept. of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

While both males and females show an increasing age at marriage, it is marginal in the case of males while it is marked among the females. Compared to a few decades ago when most women would have become housewives and/or unpaid family workers, currently most woman seek paid employment as an independent source of income. In both cases where they succeed in obtaining employment and where they fail to obtain employment and they keep on waiting for such employment, the tendency is to postpone marriage.

The females in the age group 30-34, belong to the “never married” category accounted nearly 38% of their total population. As explained earlier, this may be due to the tendency of rural females to migrate to urban areas or abroad in search of jobs and building up a career which results in delayed marriages.

3.2 Composition of Population

By Ethnicity

The people in Sri Lanka belong to various ethnic groups. The largest of these is the Sinhalese who number 74.0%. The balance is made up of Tamils, Muslims, Burghers and Malays. Systematic records are not to be found to analyse the gender structure of the above groups.

By Religion

The people of Sri Lanka also belong to different religions.

Population by religion is given in the following table:

Table 3: Population by Religion

Religion	Male	Female
Buddhist	524.8	504.0
Hindu	117.9	111.9
Muslim	57.3	54.9
Roman Catholic	51.6	51.2
Other Christian	52.4	54.4
Other	4.7	3.6

Source: Consumer Finance and Socio Economic Survey 1986/87

In all religions the female population comprises, proportionally lesser amount compared to male population. Buddhism has the foremost place among religions. The government assures every citizen the freedom to adopt the religion of their choice.

Health

Health programme assume an important role in accelerating social development and in improving the quality of life of the population in Sri Lanka. As long as a woman's health is poor she is unable to participate effectively in development. The physical and mental health of a woman is a crucial factor in performing her functions as "wife" and "mother" and in determining the economic and social achievements of the family. Thus, there is the need to ensure that the development process incorporate strategies aimed at improving the physical and mental health of the females.

The health status of women and children has tremendously improved during the last two decades as a result of Government's effort in expanding the health programmes and improving the accessibility of these services to the rural areas. During that period new hospitals were constructed and the facilities were improved and extended. These facilities have benefitted the rural population, especially expectant mothers and children.

4.1 Life Expectancy

Generally the female sex is considered to be biologically superior to the male from the point of view of resistance to disease. The life expectancy is also higher than that of males. In Sri Lanka the female life expectancy in 1940's (1945-47) was two years lower than that of males (Table 4). However, this position has now altered and in 1987 the female lie expectancy was higherly by 5 years.

Table 4: Life Expectancy At Birth-By Years

<i>Period</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
1945-47	46.8	44.7
1967-69	64.8	66.9
1981-82	67.8	71.7
1986-87	68.0	73.0

Source: Statistics Dept; Central Bank of Sri Lanka

There is a noticeable difference in the distribution of male and female life expectancy. In 1986/87 Sri Lanka's life expectancy was 73 for females and 68 for males. It was mainly due to lower female mortality particularly in the reproductive ages.

The allocation of substantial financial resources to social welfare programmes since the post-war-years, access to free health services and the effectiveness of health care programmes have contributed towards the high life expectancy levels in Sri Lanka.

4.2 Family Planning

In the urban sector family planning practices are more popular where large families tend to be a disadvantage. Contraceptive use has increased rapidly in Sri Lanka, the most popular methods being female sterilisation, followed by oral contraception. The use of Depro Provera (DMPA) the controversial injectable contraceptive has also increased by over 50 per cent during the last decade.

Family planning programmes were introduced in Sri Lanka as part of a wider programme of population policy and not with an appreciation of an individual woman's right to reproductive freedom. Most of the family planning programmes focus of women, even though some of these methods of contraception carry health hazards. The relative advantages and disadvantages of these methods have been discussed at length.

As a result of family planning the proportion of children below age 14 is significantly lower in urban sector than in rural sector.

The following table 5 shows the structure of population according to age and sex:

Table 5: Age and Sex Structural Population

(Below age 14 yrs)

Age Group	Urban %		Rural %	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0 - 4	8.0	7.1	9.6	8.3
5 - 9	11.3	9.1	12.5	12.0
10 - 14	10.8	8.8	10.1	9.7
	30.1	25.0	32.2	30.0

Source: *Labour Force and Socio-Economic Survey-1985/86*

In urban sector the population under age 14 years is 55.1% while in rural sector that is 62.2%. In the rural sector, particularly the proportion of children below age group 10 is notably high, signifying the lack of family planning and a desire for a large family. Another notable feature is that there are more male children than female in both sectors. In urban areas it was 30.1% and in rural area it was 32.3% of the total population.

However, in the age groups above 35 years, it is observed that in the urban and rural sectors the proportion of females exceeds males, possibly reflecting a higher mortality rate among males in the upper age groups as shown below:

Table 6: Age and Sex Structure of Population

(Above age 35 yrs)

Age Groups	Urban %		Rural %	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Above 35 years	33.0	42.0	34.0	40.0

Source: Labour Force and Socio-Economic Survey - 1985/86

Literacy and Education

5.1 Literacy

Literacy is defined as the 'ability to read and write' a simple message in any language. Sri Lanka is one of the countries with highest literacy rates of 87% in 1986. Between 1970 - 1985 literacy rose from 78 to 87 percent.

The overall literacy rate for males was 92.2%, while the rate for females was 85.2 percent. Agewise data indicate that the gap between male and female literacy widened with age, reflecting an increased emphasis on female education over the years. For the youngest age group (5-9 years), female literacy exceeded male literacy, while for the 10-13 age group, literacy rates for males and females were almost equal. In contrast, for the oldest age group (over 55 years) the gap between male and female literacy rates was very wide with males having a literacy rate of 87.8 percent and females having a literacy of only 59.5 percent.

5.2 Urban-Rural Sectorwise Literacy

Urban Women having better access to educational services and facilities, had a higher percentage (86.11) literacy than their rural counterpart, (80.74). It has been observed that in terms of educational opportunities between male and the female, males are generally given priority for study or to continue their studies while the females are engaged in the task of assisting their mothers in the home for domestic work, in the lower income segments.

5.3 Education

Education is given high priority in Sri Lanka as a strategy in reducing socio-economic inequalities, promoting individual mobility and meeting national development needs. Free education (since 1945) has had a greater impact of female literacy than on male literacy.

The gradual transition from a poor subsistence economy to a market economy and the emphasis on industrialisation have resulted not only in a shift of

population from rural to urban areas, but also in more members of the family having to contribute to the family budget. Therefore more girls are seeking education, particularly as a means of obtaining employment.

Statistics indicate that the greatest difference between the sexes education wise, is at level of the "no schooling group". This group includes largely of the older age groups which did not benefit from free education.

Table 7: Educational Level of Population By Sex 1985/86

	Males %	Females %
No Schooling	8.7	15.6
Primary	36.4	33.3
Secondary	54.0	50.0
Passed degree or above	0.9	1.1

Source: Labour and Socio Economic Survey 1985/86

The higher education, the number of female students currently exceed male students. The decline in the illiteracy rate for females reveals the increased participation of females in higher education.

One reason for this is the excess of females over males in the price age groups (20-30 years) as revealed in the population census of Sri Lanka in 1981. The other is that women, more than men, seem to look upon higher education as a means to gain employment. But to some extent women withdraw from the labour force after marriage.

The technological and management studies are generally male dominated. At the managerial and administrative level their level is particularly high. This situation prevails both in public sector as well as private sector. The same situation could be seen in the Co-operative Sector too.

Access to education by all children has to a great extent contributed towards rapid mobility in terms of socio-economic advancement. Education has been regarded as an economic asset by everyone especially the parents. The positive changes of the parent's attitudes towards education has contributed to the increase of student enrolment especially among the girls in the rural areas.

Government policies for education and training will continue to be geared towards fostering national unity and increasing participation of all women in national development as well as meeting the manpower requirement of the

nation. Therefore, high priority has been given to programmes such as free primary education and secondary education, text aid, free meals, foodstamps and scholarships for needy students.

Participation and attainment in education are highly conclated with income levels and education levels of the parents, than with gender differences.

5.3 Non-Formal Education

Over the last two decades, the significance of non-formal education, to meet other essential learning needs as well as to cater to the group who have passed by the formal schools have been recognised. Non-formal educations refers to an assortment of organised and semi organised educational activities operating outside the regular structure and routines of the formal system. These programmes include extra curricular activities provided by schools, voluntary organisations and government.

Adult Education Centres in each electorate provide a variety of courses in literacy training, family improvement education, education for civic participation as well as some aspects of vocational training.

The non-governmental programmes available for women have generally emphasized family welfare, child care and nutrition, family planning and home economics. At times they have sought to generate new economic activities such as batik printing, sewing or making handicrafts to increase earnings through self employment.

Housing

The lack of adequate housing facilities is a national problem which affects the poorer people both in the rural as well as in the urban areas of Sri Lanka. The rate of increase in population in the large cities already exceeds the growth rate of housing accommodation. This problem are bound to become even more acute with further organization.

In the early stages governments and planners have given only second place to housing. Top priority has been given to irrigation, agriculture, health and education. After 1977 the present government has realised the necessity of home for every citizen, and has prepared plans and programmes for development of housing schemes. In 1984 the first stage of constructing one million houses was launched by the National Housing Development Authority, a government organisation. After completing this, the second stage was set up in 1989 aiming 1.5 million houses.

It is expected to assign a greater role to the state for the construction of houses specially to cater to the need of groups who are unable to build houses on their own.

6.1 Housing Co-operatives in Sri Lanka

During the early stages of the movement the role of co-operatives in housing was not a significant one. The first co-operative housing project in Sri Lanka was registered in 1948 and had a membership of thirty. The main task of this organisation is to build good houses for its members.

It was felt that a Co-operative Housing Society could render assistance to those with a minimum level of income. It was further felt that in the case of non salaried low income groups, assistance from the government would be necessary if they are to provide themselves with houses through Co-operative Housing Societies.

Employment

In 1989 the estimated population of Sri Lanka stood at 16,806,000, while women comprise nearly half the population of the country. But only 25.19% of them participate in the labour force according to the Labour Force & Socio-Economic Survey 1985/86. Of the female population participating in the labour force approximately 12% were in the public (government) sector.

The economic activities of women follow a pattern in which half the rural labour force is engaged in low income peasant agriculture. Most women are employed as unskilled workers. Among all the occupational categories women form the highest percentage of the total in the unskilled category. On the whole, women employees are still mostly concentrated at the lower end of the occupational scale. About 350,000 women are employed, consisting slightly more than one third of the total number of employees, in all industries taken together. The largest number of women are employed in the two major sectors of agriculture and manufacturing. Women in 25-40 years age group have found employment opportunities in city based industries, especially in textile and garment manufacturing, packing and labelling.

There is a high rate of participation of women in the plantation sector of the economy (60%). A study conducted by the ARTI (Agriculture Research and Training Institute) in collaboration with the Farm Worker's Agricultural Extension Programme of the Department of Agriculture, reveals the percentage of female members engaged in family farm activities either on full time or part time basis in the rural areas is very high.

As mentioned earlier most of the female population prefer employment in the public sector. This underlines the compelling need for security. Some other reasons for preference by women for public sector are as follows:-

- (a) The absence of discrimination between the sexes in accessibility except in some fields where manual labour and technical work is involved (physically unsuited to women).

- (b) The absence of discrimination between the sexes in conditions of service, et. retirement, over-time, provident fund benefits etc.
- (c) Many of the popular professions function within the public sector.
- (d) The greater security, where the service is on a long term basis.
- (e) Prestige of government service which is a hang over from colonial times.
- (f) Existence of promotional prospects to the higher grades.
- (g) Fringe benefits of long term loan facilities, salary advances, travel facilities, leave entitlements etc. are in the public sector.

7.1 Self-Employment

Between the period 1985 and 1989 the structure of the unemployment status had changed notably. The proportion classified as "Employees" dropped from 67 percent to 58 percent while the proportion classified as "self employed" increased from 23 percent to 30 percent. This is a reflection of the increased opportunities for self employment and its profitability as well as the increase in facilities made available to the self employed in terms of loans at concessionary rates of interest. After introducing the Poverty Alleviation Programme, JANASAVIYA in 1989, there has been a rapid increase in self employment. A shift in the traditional line of thinking in respect of employment would also have occurred as a result of the profitability of self employment. Women workers are more prominent in self employment.

In addition to self employment, large number of women seek employment in Middle East countries working as housemaids.

7.2 Unemployment

Unemployment has been a major economic, social problem in Sri Lanka. In mid 1989 more than 1 million, 20% of the total labour force were unemployed. The figures of the labour force survey shows (1986) that while 60% of the unemployed were males, 40% were females. The highest number of unemployed were among those who had completed G.C.E. (O/L) and the next largest number of unemployed were those who had come upto the G.C.E. (O.L.). There were 1.1% female and 0.9% male unemployed graduates in 1986 in Sri Lanka.

These facts not only reveal that a large number of women are unemployed, but also that the greater proportion of them are educated but unemployed. The entry of a large number of females who are educated into the labour force every year and the excess of females over males in the prime age are attributed to the

high level of female unemployment.

Research into the subject of employment in Sri Lanka has shown that more and more women are being employed and that women have generally entered areas of employment formerly regarded as the exclusive preserve for men. Also, that Sri Lankan women desire to combine their family responsibilities with those of employment. Choosing a vocation for a woman depends or should depend to a large extent on her inherent talents, aptitude and skills, which should be identified early in life. Therefore school teachers play a great role in assisting and guiding their students in this field.

Gender Participation in Politics

The participation of women in active politics is related to their economic, social and domestic status. At the more effective levels of political activity, women have participated less than men. This disparity is visible in all types of representatives in politics.

8.1 The History of Women in Politics

The Donoughmore Commission was appointed in 1927 by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in the British government to consider proposals for the revision of the then existing constitution of Ceylon. It declared in its report, that the Commission had given serious consideration to the question of women's franchise. In 1931 universal franchise was granted to every citizen over the age of 21 years (extended in 1959 to every citizen over 18 years of age) which enabled the women in Sri Lanka to play an important and active role in the exercise of political power.

The achievements of women in the exercise of political powers in Sri Lanka reached its climax when Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranayake became the first woman Prime Minister of the country in 1960, and is the first woman in the world to hold to office of the Prime Minister. These achievements have stirred the political consciousness of the women of Sri Lanka and more and more women have begun to take an active interest in State and Local politics. Women continue play an increasing important role in political activities at all levels.

In every election the number of female candidates and women elected to Parliament has been very small. However, except in few years women candidates have achieved a higher success rate than men.

The following table shows the women candidates and women elected to Parliamentary general elections.

**Table 8: Women Candidates and Women Elected
at Parliamentary General Elections**

Elections	Candidates				Elected		
	Total	Men	Women	% of Women	Total Elected	Women	% of Women
1947	361	358	3	0.8	95	1	1.1
1952	303	294	9	3.0	95	2	2.2
1956	249	244	5	2.0	151	3	3.3
1960 Mar	899	883	16	1.8	151	3	2.0
1960 Jul	393	388	5	1.3	151	2	1.3
1965	495	483	12	2.4	151	4	2.7
1970	441	427	14	1.9	151	6	4.0
1977	756	742	14	1.9	168	4	2.6
1982	-	-	-	-	196	8	-
1989*							

Source: From Results of Parliamentary General Elections Dept. of Government Printing

** Not classified according to Gender*

The women candidates came mostly from families with a long history of political participation and especially from the urban sector. They were well educated. Often most of these women entered politics on behalf of, or as replacements for their politically successful husbands and/or male relatives.

The number of women participating at the highest level of the political executive in Sri Lanka has been pitifully low. Throughout 1947-1989 there have been 7 women Minister. There have been few women District Ministers and State Ministers. Overall, women have played a very minor role in the Parliament. However, there are some indications of a positive trend on women's role in active politics. For example, the present Cabinet included for the first time, three women Ministers. Such Cabinet positions have been confined to the Ministers traditionally preserved for women such as Health, Women's Affairs and Rural Development.

Today, young middle class women have become more politically conscious than their mothers. Although they do participate in the activities of political parties and other mass organisations, they generally do not have leadership roles and a major voice in policy determination.

Most women who have successfully entered politics have had the advantage of family as well as political and elite backgrounds. In general, people view politics as an activity which is inappropriate for women. However, many interviews with active women politicians reveal that such women have a better rapport with their constituents and are better able to understand the day-to-day problems of the ordinary person than their male counterparts. Moreover, they feel that they are better placed to cope with problems faced by women and children.

8.2 Future Prospects

There are two possible ways to improve the role of women in active politics. One option is support for 'community politics' starting from the local government 'Pradeshiys Saba', at village level. Such participation will permit women to gain experience and recognition in political life and also enable them to use as a stepping stone to national politics.

It is also important for women's groups to actively exert pressure on the leadership to enlist more women in party activities, particularly in nomination to office and leadership roles. The women's committees of the cooperative societies and the active roles played by the women members in these committees will be helpful to develop their leadership, in political activities.

Legal Environment for Gender Issues

In Sri Lanka there has been a progressive elimination of all forms of legal discrimination against women and it is possible to say that excepting a very few aspects their legal status is equal to that of men.

The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka expressly guarantees equality in respect of employment in the central government, local government and public corporation services. Membership of Juries, which was restricted to men in the past, was open to woman by the Administration of Justice Law No. 44 of 1973. Section 8(2) of the Minimum Wages Ordinance of 1927 and section 27 of the Wages Board Ordinance leaves room for the stipulation of different wages for men and women. Although there is no statutory provision to ensure equal payment for equal work, it appears that it is only amongst the plantation labourers that there is discrimination with regard to payment of wages.

A married woman had limited contractual capacity and could not sue or be sued in her own name. The Married Women's Property Ordinance restores to the married woman full contractual capacity and privilege of separate property.

The greatest discrimination in legal matters is the right of husband to give his consent to alienation of immovable property by the wife. It is an indication of his marital power (Governed by the Thesawalamai).

As regards the status of wife in a court of law, it is settled that she must be assisted by the husband if they are living together.

Punishment

Certain safeguards for women in respect of punishment have been incorporated in the Administration of Justice Law. That law provides that "where a woman convicted of an offence punishable with death is found to the satisfaction of the court to be pregnant, the court shall pronounce on her in lieu of the sentence of death, a sentence of imprisonment for life" [Section 237 (4)]. Further, it provided that no female shall in any case be punished with whipping.

Marriage

There are two forms of marriage. In one form, the wife leaves her parents' house and is conducted to the husband's home. She then resides there, adopting their house name and become a member of his family. In this form it was customary for married daughter to be given a dowry to take with her. In the other form of marriage, which is uncommon, the husband goes to reside his wife's parents house. The children of this marriage inherited the property of their mother's parents.

A marriage is purely a civil contract; but there are certain established rules/customs governing marriage, such as caste, dowry, etc. A practice of giving a dowry to a daughter still exists in Sri Lankan society. The dowry is considered as a gift for the daughter and the amount of the dowry depends on the economic circumstances of the wife's family. According to the traditional 'Sinhala Law' the dowry is envisaged as women's separate property. Hence, it is possible for a woman to take back what has been brought by her if the marriage is dissolved.

In traditional society the break-up of a marriage is not frowned upon and re-marriage did occur.

Socio-Cultural Environment and Gender Issues

10.1 Gender Roles in Family

In Sri Lanka the position of the family as a unit was respected and considered 'important'. The household or family was identified in association with its collectively, rather than with the respective individuals who formed part of it. All members of the household or family who lived in the family house had a right to a share in the produce.

Within the community close cooperation among the members or the individuals (male and female) was evident particularly during the harvest and religious and cultural festivals, and this further promoted goodwill and understanding among families.

10.2 Women's Role and Position

Social attitudes which determined the women's position both in the family and the society were moulded by diversity of social, religious and cultural values in association with beliefs. The view that the woman was 'secondary to a man' had gained general acceptance, though from the religious point of view, a woman was not considered inferior to man by the doctrine of Buddhism.

On the other hand, woman's great value as a social being was generally recognised. This was a result of the high position accorded to motherhood in eastern religious thought.

The woman's position in the household appears to have been respected, though she was treated as being secondary to her husband. In Sri Lanka 'the man' has recognised as the usual head of the family unit. The role of the male as a father and husband is clearly recognisable. The male's share of work comprised the provision of food, clothing, shelter and security to his family. Sometimes the husband left the home when he engaged in official work, the wife did some of these activities. Thus, the roles allocated to male and female (husband and wife) were complementary.

Women operated within narrower confines than men and were mostly home-

based. Very often her social functions were no more than maintaining good relations with the neighbourhood. However, she was free to move about in the village, the limited society in which she lived, though visits to her relatives, to temples with alms and offerings, pilgrimages to distant places are common.

In the social environment in Sri Lanka, though women generally play a leading role in house work and domestic matters, in the society at large it is the man who plays the dominant role. Sri Lankan society has its own cultural beliefs on the rightful place for the male and the proper place for the female. Women are assigned certain social positions and are expected to do certain things and not others. As in all other countries, a position centered on her role as 'a mother' and 'a home maker'. The role of woman as 'wife and mother' who is generally referred to as the home maker, is a realistic one based on the biological, psychological and other elements of the feminine personality.

In addition to household work, she assists her husband in the field or in his craft work. Thus contributing substantially to the economy of the family, her function as mother and homemaker, does not require a formal education. It was thought that the education she received at the hands of elders from childhood was sufficient. In Sri Lanka it was the duty of the woman in her traditional role of wife, mother and homemaker to serve her husband. And also, to bring up and train children to conform to traditional expectation of obedience and respect to parental authority. In addition, she has to perform household duties and help in unpaid family work such as sewing and harvesting in the fields. Women have been generally continued playing the traditional leadership roles in the domestic environment making decisions in regard to the household, children and generally controlling the household budget.

It is now a growing belief that if woman controls the household budget and if she is the one who decides purchases of consumer articles and one who expected to ensure family health in general, then she is best qualified to make a positive contribution to improve the quality of services of the cooperatives. This would be more effective in the Multipurpose Co-operatives where consumer supply is a dominant sector in their activities.

10.3 Women in Rural Areas

Women specially in the rural areas are traditionally occupied in cottage industries of various kinds and in the local trade of the output of such industries. In the rural areas farmers depend solely on agriculture as a source of income. With the introduction of co-operative concepts and modern technological techniques, women are also involved in all aspects in an effort to increase production and strengthen their economic standard.

Women in most villages have followed their traditional pattern of active participation in extra domestic economic activities. The availability of water for cultivation in both seasons has increased their field activities. A pilot study of 30 farm households in Mahaveli Settlement, found women are heavily involved in paddy cultivation. They reported that they were engaged in a wide range of activities and that they spent on average 12 hours a day on paddy cultivation, home gardening, animal husbandary, and housework.

It is clear from the findings of all studies that most women in traditional villages work extremely hard as unpaid family workers and as an exploited labour reserve and are dependent on their men, while their economic role is undervalued and overlooked by planners and administrators. Vocational training needs has to be prioritized, but no efforts have been made as yet to assess the skills of women.

10.4 Religious Activities

In religious activities women are playing an important role and are quite actively involved. About 70 per cent of the womens population are Buddhists and they involve in religious activities either personally or indirectly by assisting the religious committees. The Buddhist mother plays an important role in bringing up their children. In them, she has to inculcate the social virtues as enumerated in Buddhism. As a wife she is expected to maintain a good relationship both with her husband and neighbourhood.

In other religions, there is no discrimination between male and female. Christian, Catholic and Hindu women generally have equal rights as men in religious activities.

Institutions Dealing With Gender Issues (with special reference to women)

In Sri Lanka, awareness of the need for research on women, gained momentum after the International Women's Year in 1975, when several individuals and institutions began to undertake such studies. This was largely as a response to the activities initiated and resources made available by the various agencies of the United Nations and development assistance agencies based in western countries. Nevertheless, research on women is yet to be recognized as a major endeavour of the social sciences in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan development studies have been criticised on the grounds that do not take into account women's participation, contribution or role in development process. There have been no comprehensive studies of women even in agriculture, where women, from time immemorial have played a significant role.

Articles relating to women's employment continued to remain dominant in the first half of the seventies. Women's employment remained the dominant theme even after 1975 but a different emphasis emerged during this period. Articles highlighting different forms of discrimination, against women in employment appeared. Interest on 'health' and 'nutrition studies' had significantly increased. Some of these studies reflect the social, cultural, economic and political structures that keep women subordinate and the need for women to have their own identity and work for their rights.

11.1 Women's Organisations and Women's Studies

Many national women's organisations conducted seminars on women's issues ranging from family planning to the role of women in development. One of the institutions dealing with issues is Women's Bureau: (WB).

11.1.1 The Women's Bureau

The Women's Bureau was established in 1978 as a Division of the Ministry of Plan Implementation and later transferred to the Ministry of Women's Affairs. The Women's Bureau has been described as "the focal point for women's development

activities, responsible for formulating policies, projects and programmes for the integration it is expected that women will enjoy equal rights along with men, and develop their individual aptitudes and capacity to participate actively in development”.

Although the Bureau occasionally conducted brief surveys, a great effort in this direction was made only in November 1983 with the establishment of a research and data processing unit. One of the most important steps taken by the Women’s Bureau, which will have an impact on research is to explore ways and means of including women’s studies into the University curriculum. Of the several seminars organised by the Women’s Bureau, the national symposium on “New Dimensions in the Role of Women” in collaboration with UNICEF, had a research component. Three of the papers in the symposium covered areas such as ‘Single Parent Families’, ‘Aspirations of Young Women’ and ‘Women and Technology’.

Many of the early studies done by the Women’s Bureau were semi-popular, piecemeal in nature and did not provide an integrated view of the women’s problems. The “Status of Woman” was the first comprehensive study on woman, and it emphasised the active role of women in detail.

11.1.2 Lanka Mahila Samiti

The movement was initiated by a group of dedicated women in 1930. Its objectives remains the upliftment of the socio economic and moral standards of the rural women and children. The membership is estimated more than 200,000 women in 2500 registered Samitis (society) covering in the country. An average of 20 societies are registered each year. The projects organised by the association which involve rural women are classified as follows:-

1. Rural Development
2. Village Development
3. Establishment of women’s forums together with other women’s organisations.
4. Pre Schools

No specific information on the actual numbers involved in each of these programmes are available. The 1986 Annual Report of the Lanka Mahila Samiti indicates that 1975 societies were actively participating in the movement.

On the education and training side, the most notable achievements of the Mahila Samiti are the programmes for rural extension women workers; Courses included pre school training, vocational skills and leadership training. The training programmes obtain services of government officers such as agricultural extension officers

and Public Health Nurses. Trainees are expected to go back to the village associations and work for at least two years to further the development of their village.

No assessment of the actual impact of the Mahila Samiti Movement on rural women is available.

11.1.3 The Sarvodaya Sharmadana Movement

This movement is an indigenous effort by the people of Sri Lanka, particularly in rural areas to bring about self development. All Sarvodaya programmes are located at grassroot level and extend upwards with self reliance and cooperative effort. It is the largest non-governmental voluntary organisation in the country today, with emphasis on the human being, that is personality awakening, extending, village awakening, nation awakening and to world awakening.

During the first decade of the Sarvodaya Movement 1958-68 the main objectives centered around the aim of involving the under privileged rural masses and youth in a voluntary effort in village construction projects. In the second decade the activities of this movement developed to bring about greater changes in attitudes, methods and techniques in village development, under a more comprehensive framework.

In relation to women, the functions are referred to the "Mother's Group". This group is mainly assigned the tasks of improving child care, moral development, family welfare, home crafts and house management in the village setting. The formation of the "mother's group" according to the Sarvodaya thought will enable the elimination of all barriers confronting rural women to play an active role in the total development of the village community. Sarvodaya provides these services to the community through trained volunteers.

In a study done in 15 Sarvodaya Centres, out of 757 participants, 294 were females. Sri Lanka has 23,000 villages in all. The Sarvodaya village development programme covers 1000 socially and economically disadvantaged villages, geographically and culturally isolated and therefore deserving special attention.

11.1.4 Women's Development Centres of the Department of Rural Development

The Department of Rural Development initiated social education programmes since its inception in the early 1940's. These are extremely varied. They range from simple programmes such as growing more food, producing handicraft to activities that can provide employment.

The Women's Development Programme was launched in 1975 and covers the whole island, on an electoral basis. The duration of the training programme is usually one year in a particular area. The programme has been described as an action pro-

gramme. It gives rural women a greater opportunity for developing their knowledge, attitude and skills, so that they will be better equipped to integrate with the total development process of the country and also assist to build up their individual talents and personality to the fullest possible degree. The specific objectives of the women's programmes are listed as follows:-

1. To increase and improve food production through home garden cultivation by introducing appropriate technologies to rural women.
2. To teach women the rudiments of nutrition, the importance of balanced diet, the need for consumption of subsidiary food in place of rice when necessary, to prepare food in such a way as to retain the natural nutritive content in the food, new methods of preservation of food.
3. To teach rural woman dress making, lace making, correct method of laundering, so as to extend the life of the garments they wear.
4. To teach rural women the importance of planning their household economy to save on time, effort and money, the importance of saving and the need for all round cleanliness in the home, garden and the use of water and latrines.
5. To emphasise the duties of parents in order to bring about the all round development among the members of the younger generation as well as family planning.

11.1.5 Y.W.C.A. Young Women's and Children's Association

Objectives of this Association is to meet the needs of women and girls to help them to become fully developed personalities physically, mentally and spiritually and train them to be responsible citizens of their community, and country and the world.

11.1.6 Sri Lanka Federation of University Women

This was one of the women's organisations which ventured first into the field. The first study undertaken by them was a "A Study of Childcare Needs of Low Income Women", in three rural areas representing Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim ethnic groups. The second study focused on "The Increasing Unemployment of Women Arts Graduates".

11.1.7 The Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR)

This organisation was established in 1984. The objective of this context was to do more systematic women's research and do studies in depth. It was formed by a group of female academic and researchers who have been individually carrying out research on women's issues for several years.

The first activity of the CENWOR, a participatory workshop on research priorities was a significant event in the field research. In that the first attempt was to identify the areas for research studies undertaken by individuals, institutions and to provide basis for action programmes to improve the position of women.

11.1.8 Marga Institute

Marga Institute which probably has the highest visibility in and the most interaction with the outside world has paid considerable attention to women's issues. During the ten years 1975 to 1985, 3 studies have been undertaken by Marga on women.

- (a) a study on Discrimination Against Women in Employment.
- (b) a case study of the Role of Women in Post harvest Food Conservation.
- (c) a study of Women and the Law.

11.1.9 Agrarian Research and Training Institute

One study had been carried out, namely "a Study of Income Generating Activities for Farm Women" published in 1978.

11.1.10 Banks

The three research units of the Central Bank, Bank of Ceylon and People's Bank conduct surveys on women's activities. Specially the research unit of the People's Bank had shown a keen interest on the women's questions, in terms of research and publications. "A Survey of Women's Working and Living Conditions in Mahaweli Settlement Area, with special emphasis on household budget and household surplus".

11.1.11 Seva Vanitha

The government has also started the Seva Vanitha Movement. This movement organises the wives of officials in various government departments and officers in hierarchical group parallel to the status and position of the husbands, for example, the Minister's Wife is president of the Seva Vanitha in each Ministry.

The functions of the Seva Vanitha are linked to implementing government policies and organising various social events.

At the National level, Ministry of Women's Affairs is the highest body channelling issues pertaining to women.

According to the Action Plan of the Ministry of Women's Affairs its main

objectives are:-

- **To create conditions where the remaining prejudices and discriminatory attitudes against women will be rapidly eroded.**
- **To provide access for larger number of women to enter all key state services, backed by special programmes of training.**
- **To provide effective social security to households headed by women.**
- **To develop programmes for plantation women that will enable them to enter the mainstream of rural life.**
- **Develop programmes of savings and credit, to cater to the needs of women.**
- **Implement a policy to enable more active participation by women in community affairs at village levels.**
- **Sustain and improve specific programmes targetted to street children, young and juvenile offenders etc. to make them productive and useful to society and themselves.**
- **Mobilise non-governmental organisations to implement these programmes.**

Women in Co-operatives

12.1 History of the Co-operative Movement

The Cooperative Movement in Sri Lanka appears to have grown out of the need to meet the problem of rural indebtedness. The first phase of the cooperative movement in Sri Lanka which extended from 1911-1942 is regarded as the Credit Phase of the movement. In 1906 a Committee was appointed by the British government to study the question of rural indebtedness. One of the results of the work of this committee was the enactment of the Cooperative Credit Societies, Ordinance in 1911. It was not the intention of the colonial rulers to promote complete self reliance amongst the members. Hence, heavy reliance on the Registrar was build into the movement.

In this early phase cooperatives were primarily a means of helping the poor to improve their economic condition by providing them with credit. This phase also saw the beginnings of Consumer and Agricultural Marketing Societies. Other types of Coop. societies had also been formed. They are Marketing Cooperatives, Estate Cooperatives, Dairy Cooperatives, Producers' Co-ops., School Co-ops., and Labour Co-op. Societies. The thinking at that time was considered that the credit society was the most suitable for local conditions and that would help to alleviate rural indebtedness.

The second phase of the movement begins often the commencement of World War II. Between 1942-45, about 4000 Co-operative Stores Societies were set up. This campaign was started to meet an emergency need, namely distribution of essential foodstuffs and other scarce commodities. The Consumer Co-op. Movement in Sri Lanka was, then a product of the war. During 1942-1945 the membership increased from 17,500 to 101,570.

The success of the co-operatives in food distribution gave the government greater confidence in the Co-operative System. In 1947 Co-operative Agricultural Production and Sales Societies was formulated to cater the farmers' requirements. Fisheries Co-operatives, and Industrial Co-operatives also sponsored by the government at this time.

The emphasis on national development made the Cooperative Department, a key department. In 1949, the two posts of Commissioner of Cooperative Development and Registrar of Coop. Development were combined.

In 1957, following a government policy decision from the Ministry in charge, one Multipurpose Cooperative Society was established in every village. The share value of the MPCS was Rs. 50/-. At the district levels, unions were formed for wholesale trading functions. There was no appreciable change in policies of the other types of cooperative societies.

There had been a continued expansion of the movement in various forms of economic activity but without significant development in ideological and managerial aspects. The Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society was introduced as the principal type of society with the amalgamation of the Cooperative Stores Societies and Cooperative Agricultural and Production Societies. The Cooperative Banking structure was reorganised with the establishment of the People's Bank and the merger of the eleven Cooperative Banks, including the Co-operative Federal Bank.

In 1968, a Royal Commission was appointed to examine and suggest measures for strengthening and improving the entire cooperative movement. One of the major recommendations of this Commission was the creation of more viable cooperative organisation by a process of amalgamation. In the restructuring of the cooperatives that ensued in 1971. Following the recommendations, 5818 societies were formed.

A special law was passed in 1970, to give statutory powers to the Commissioner of Co-operative Development for the restructuring. In the process, the Commissioner cancelled the registration of nearly 1000 uneconomic and defunct cooperative societies and amalgamated the balance to form 372 large Multi Purpose Cooperative Societies. The independent small societies became branches of the large primary. To increase the membership and achieve greater participation the share value was reduced to one rupee from fifty rupees.

After these changes the MPCSS were expected to become more oriented toward the development role they were expected to play in the rural economy. But the increase in membership has not given rise to a comparable increase in the achievements of the objectives of the reorganisation. Members came to play a less active role in the affairs of the societies.

Looking back at the history of the Cooperatives in Sri Lanka a fact that comes into focus is, that the government which started as a guardian of the movement had ended up in firm control over what was intended to be a voluntary movement. Most cooperative societies had become virtually agencies for carrying out government policies. It is no wonder therefore, the active participation of women members which

is so essential to the development of cooperatives was not so freely forthcoming. All members came to play a lesser role in the active affairs of the societies.

12.2 The Present Structure of the Cooperative Movement

The present structure of the cooperative movement in Sri Lanka stands at three tier basis. Primary societies at village or local level, various middle tier organisations at a higher level, usually district and apex organisations at the national level. But some societies function as two tier organisations, i.e. Primary and national level. Primary level societies consists of individual members. Secondary level and Apex or National level organisations consists of the membership of registered societies.

The present cooperative movement is comparatively strong with a total membership of 4,118,600 and there were mainly 9545 societies at primary level in 1990. The number of registered Multi-Purpose Cooperative Societies (M.P.C.S.) throughout the island at present is 287. The membership in the Multi-Purpose Cooperative Societies is 2,533,500 which is about 62% of the total membership.

At the end of year 1980 there were 12 secondary and Apex level registered cooperative societies. Two primary cooperative societies are registered with the entire country as their area of operation, which are mainly belong to the category of institutional credit. These includes the Educational Employees' Thrift and Credit Cooperative Society, holding a membership of nearly one million and the Sri Lanka Transport Board Employees' Cooperative Welfare Society which has a membership of 30,000.

The list of Apex level cooperative societies in operation and its membership is given below:-

01. Sri Lanka National Cooperative Council Ltd.	33
02. Sri Lanka Co-operative Marketing Federation Ltd.	61
03. Sri Lanka Textile Co-operative Union Ltd.	27
04. Sri Lanka Rubber Co-operative Union Ltd.	76
05. Sri Lanka Coconut Producers' Co-operative Union Ltd.	11
06. Sri Lanka Fisheries Co-operative Federation Ltd.	71
07. Sri Lanka Industries Co-operative Federation Ltd.	158
08. Sri Lanka Thrift and Credit Co-operative Federation Ltd.	27
09. Sri Lanka National Youth Services Cooperative Union Ltd.	26
10. Sri Lanka Piggery Producers' Co-operative Union Ltd.	03
11. Sri Lanka Poultry Producers' Co-operative Union Ltd.	19
12. Sri Lanka Consumers' Co-operative Federation Ltd.	110

12.3 National Co-operative Council

The Apex organisation of the Co-operative movement is the National Co-operative Council (NCC) of Sri Lanka registered in 1972 as a successor to the Cooperative Federation of Ceylon. The Cooperative Federation was not able to provide the necessary leadership positively enough; and it was hoped that the Co-operative Council would fulfil this need. It's main responsibility is member education, and its supervision is entrusted to the education and training division of the Department of Cooperative Development.

The Department considers the guidance and assistance to the NCC for directing it's activities towards development and expansion of the movement, that should be fulfilled on behalf of the movement.

The National Cooperative Council has taken action to pay more attention to the women's activities. In recent years arrangements have been made to review the return on members of various extension and income generating activities conducted by the NCC jointly with the district and National Women's committees

12.4 Other Apex or Secondary Level Co-operative Organisations

The oldest cooperative organisations at the national level are the Sri Lanka Coconut Producers' Union registered in 1942. The Cooperative Fisheries Union in 1952; and the Rubber Producers' Union registered in 1957. Sri Lanka Cooperative Fisheries Union functioning as the national level institution of the fisheries primary level societies. This union has rendered a valuable service to the fishing industry. Training of members and employees engaged in the activities of fisheries cooperative have been trained.

12.5 Sri Lanka National Youth Services Cooperative Societies Union

This union has a very important place among cooperative unions existing in the cooperative movement of Sri Lanka. This union with its affiliated district unions are engaged in mobilising the youth to the main stream of national development through the cooperative movement. The Union has extended various assistance to district youth societies in the field of introducing self-employment projects, establishment of business organisations, trade fairs and organisations of training programmes on entrepreneurship.

The existence of strong secondary or apex cooperative organisations said to be a sign of maturity in the system of Cooperation but this is what the movement in Sri Lanka lacked. The situation at the secondary level of the movement has not been very satisfactory.

Besides these national level organisations there are also government or government-sponsored apex organisations. They are the Department of Cooperative Development, the Cooperative Wholesale Establishment and Sri Lanka Institute of Cooperative Management.

12.6 Thrift and Credit Cooperative Societies

Thrift and Credit Cooperative Societies are specialised organisations intended to achieve important social and economic objectives. Some of them are:

- Elimination of Chronic indebtedness and poverty in the Rural Sector.
- Encouragement of thrift and savings among the Rural Poor
- Strengthening the financial position of members by providing financial assistance.

TCCS are in a three-tier basis and there are about 6156 TCCS in primary level with a membership of 614,957. Out of this amount 371,240 are female members. The organisation of these societies have expanded both in the rural areas as well as the state institutions and private institutions in the Urban Sector. At Secondary Level, there are 27 TCC District Unions.

TCCS have a separate National Level Women's Committee which established in 1985. There are TCC Women's Committees at Primary Level, Regional Level (based on AGA division) and District Level.

12.7 Department of Cooperative Development

One aspect of the wider role of this Department is to perform the statutory functions, entrusted to the Registrar of Cooperative Societies. In addition, working as a friend, a philosopher and a guide for expansion and development of the movement by introducing various strategies.

The following functions are entrusted to meet the above objectives:-

- i) To assist and guide the efforts of members to develop expand and strengthen the cooperative movement.
- ii) To develop positive attitudes on cooperative concepts and cooperation among members and the public.
- iii) Improvement of management efficiency of cooperative societies.
- iv) To direct the cooperative movement to fulfil the important and responsible tasks in the national development process.

Majority of the functions of the Department were devolved to the Provincial

Councils in accordance with the provisions made under the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka in 1988.

12.8 History of the Women's Cooperatives in Sri Lanka

From the very inception of the cooperative movement in Sri Lanka, first decade of 20th century, women have been treated on an equal basis. They have acquired membership in various types of societies specially in Thrift and Credit Co-operative Societies (TCCS), and have derived various economic benefits from them and at times have taken on the major leadership roles of the societies. But, their role has been of little significance, except in the case of some special types of Co-operative societies which were traditionally accepted as societies meant primarily for women—such as textile weavers societies, certain types of handicrafts societies like mat weavers, basket weavers etc. At some stage in the development of Co-operatives women form Co-operative credit societies exclusively for themselves.

12.9 Women in Co-operatives

There are certain factors which are common to all the districts throughout the Island regarding women. The rising cost of living has made life hard for most of the people and women are increasingly searching for ways of supplementing their family income. Low level of skill education and high overall rates of unemployment make it very difficult to find jobs in some areas. Therefore, they turn to producer-type activities such as cottage industries handicraft, and those which undertake production of various types of goods and which enable them to earn supplemently incomes.

Another reason is women are very conscious of the need for effecting small savings, and being able to obtain short term loans on reasonable terms in times of emergency. Therefore, they show a keen interest in thrift and credit societies.

However, in the Multi-purpose Co-operative sector, after 1960, women in leadership positions though not totally absent were and still remain of very small proportion. They have not been represented in the elected bodies and management strata of the movement in numbers proportionate to their contributions. As a result the Co-operative movement has lost the benefit of additional human resources which women co-operators could provide in the successful promotion of social and economic objectives.

The greatest obstacle to women's participation is their lack of awareness about the cooperative principles and practices and this has consistently kept women at a disadvantage. It was universally accepted that co-operative education and training are open to both sexes. However, in practice, women in Sri Lanka have been granted only limited opportunities or have not availed themselves of existing facilities.

Attention was not to the recruitment of women in co-operative organisations including managerial and/or administrative posts.

12.10 Co-operative Women's Consumer Education Project

Though the participation of women in the co-operative movement existed from its beginning in a small way, a noteworthy change can be identified only after 1979. The Co-operative Women's Consumer Education project was introduced in that year, and it was the first effort to impart useful knowledge through Co-operatives to women, and thereby increase their involvement in the movement. This project had been launched with financial aid and advice of the National Co-operative Council of Sri Lanka, the Swedish Co-operative Centre, the Union of Co-operative Consumer Guilds in Sweden, the Swedish International Development Authority and the International Co-operative Alliance. The executing agency for the project was the National Co-operative Council of Sri Lanka.

The main objectives of the project were:-

- to supply consumer information to women,
- to educate women on nutrition and family health,
- to promote quality consciousness particularly of consumer goods,
- to create an awareness of consumer protection laws and,
- to educate women on the role that co-operatives could play in ensuring better living condition for them,

To achieve these objectives, the following programme of work had been undertaken:

1. Educational programmes for women in the following areas:
 - (a) Family Health and Nutrition
 - (b) Home economics
 - (c) General consumer knowledge and Consumer Protection
 - (d) Cooperation
2. Collection and dissemination of informative data on basic foods, nutrition and health;
3. Developing suitable methodologies for dissemination of consumer education and information;
4. Improving the working environment of house-wives.
5. Participation in the promotion of consumer activities and of consumer protection through cooperatives.

12.10.1 Project Direction Committee

There was a Project Direction Committee to review the project activities and to give advice on important matters. The President of the National Co-operative Council of Sri Lanka was the President of the Committee while the Project Director functioned as its Secretary. The Project Director was responsible for the overall management of the Project.

The general administration of the Project, training of project personnel, organising education programmes for women leaders and member families, preparing information leaflets for these groups, publication of newsletters and papers on co-operative know-how, distribution of these publications and the developments of work programmes, and the collection of consumer news were the primary functions of the Project Director.

In addition to the project director, the following persons were members of the Project Direction Committee.

- The General Secretary of the National Cooperative Council of Sri Lanka.
- The President, Women's Advisory Committee of the National Cooperative Council of Sri Lanka.
- Five members of the Women's Committees of Multi-purpose Cooperative Societies.
- The Commissioner of Cooperative Development or his representatives.
- The Principal, School of Cooperation, Polgolla
- A member of the Board of Directors of the National Cooperative Council of Sri Lanka (who should be a Director representing the Multi-purpose Co-operative Societies).
- A representative of the International Cooperation Alliance, Regional Office, New Delhi.

Meeting of the Project Direction Committee were held every two months. At these meetings the Committee monitors the progress of the Project and gave necessary guidance to the Project Director.

This project was completed its all stages in 1985 and it helped to motivate most of the women's activities in the cooperative movement and also created awareness on women's issues in cooperatives through various activities supported by the Swedish Cooperative Centre.

12.10.2 Present Status of Women in Cooperative Movement

According to the Statistical Handbook, published by the Department of Cooperative Development, the total number of Multi-Purpose Cooperative Societies were 287 at the end of 1990 with a total membership of 4,1186,00. In these societies nearly 35 per cent of the total membership were women. But only 620,000 women are committees at branch level. This accounted about for 25 per cent. There are 165 women's committees affiliated to the MPC Societies at society level.

In Thrift and Credit societies 304,168 women have the membership at primary level. That accounted nearly 49 per cent of the total membership and they represent 4530 women's committees. TCC has a separate National Women's Committee representing the above 4530 committees. In addition to the above categories, about 100,000 women members are to be found in other types of cooperative societies, i.e. Milk Producers', Animal Husbandary, Textile, Fisheries, and other types of cooperative societies.

At present the National Women's Committee is encouraging its women members to involve in various national development activities and projects. The urgent need for expansion into new activities is being realised by women's committees and also by the Department of Cooperative Development. Hopefully women cooperators in the rural sector where there is a more pressing need for organized cooperative effort carry out various projects and activities that will solve not only their everyday problems, but all other problems related to the rural development such as nutrition, sanitation, family planning, women leadership and environment protection.

12.11 Women's Cooperative Societies in the Fisheries Sector

The coastline in Sri Lanka is approximately 1,760 km. in length. There are about 400 fishery centres around coast. The population is nearly 250,000 who are engaged in fishing and allied occupations such as fish production, marketing of fish and fish processing (including in inland waters) but there are only 739 fisheries societies at primary level with a total membership of 75,544 and women members number 15,252.

The fisheries cooperative movement in Sri Lanka is trying to modernize their fishing industry and the fisheries cooperatives and women's fisheries committees work together to improve standards of living for the fishing communities.

The Sri Lanka Cooperative Fisheries Union Ltd. functioning as the national level institution of the fisheries cooperative societies, has rendered a valuable service to the fisheries cooperative sector and the fishing industry. This Union started a few women's cooperatives to work in support of the policies and programmes of the government and the fisheries cooperatives.

These women's fisheries cooperatives run pre-schools, and undertake lace making, and coir production to increase family incomes.

12.12 Participation in Special Projects

A number of rice processing projects were started as a cottage industry during last two years to enable women to get a supplementary income.

These projects are the most successful experience in cooperative sector among the rural projects. Rice processing projects take a prominent place under the Government Poverty Alleviation Programme and already about 260 such projects have been established. According to the information available about 1500 women are receiving benefits. Women engaged in these rice processing projects earns more than Rs. 1500 per head, for a month.

Aranayaka MPC Society in the Sabaragamuwa Province, Galewela MPC Society in the Central Province and Elahera MPC Society in the North Central Province are the cooperatives that achieved the most successful results through these projects. In many areas these projects have become a self employment programme for women.

12.13 Problems of Women's Cooperatives

In Sri Lanka most women are active in various types of cooperatives, such as consumers, fisheries, thrift and credit and agricultural societies, but still they have not been represented proportionate to their numbers. As a result, the Cooperative Movement has lost the benefit of additional resources which women cooperators could provide in the successful promotion of social and economic development.

In practice there have been some obstacles that women's cooperatives encountered in Sri Lanka. Some of the problems are mentioned below:-

- a) Lack of awareness about potentiality of cooperation among the women, owing to illiteracy,
- b) Lack of coordination and poor communication within the cooperatives and in between the women participants,
- c) Weakness of some cooperatives, especially the primaries in organisation and administration of women's programmes,
- d) Inadequacy of funds and poor financial arrangements,
- e) Lack of enlightened membership and leadership,
- f) Lack of motivation,
- h) Social systems, customs and traditional attitudes against women's participation,

- i) Lack of time to participate actively in the movement due to household responsibilities,
- j) Absence of adequate training facilities for the members at all levels,

12.13.1 Leadership problems

The most urgent need is the development of enlightened leadership from within the socio-economic environment itself. Then they could motivate their followers towards increasing participation and involvement in society and social activities. But there are some limitations in regard to the roles that can be played by these leaders because of various political social and other factors. Hence, the NCC has involved itself in promoting leadership training programmes, mostly to support and strengthen the village level leaders.

The practical problems faced by many leaders working at the field level were many. Some were because of their own limitations and some were because of the socio-economic environment in which they worked. Listed below are some of the problems in regard to women's leadership who are working at the field level:-

1. The leaders working in the committees were those elected by the women members. At the time of their election they were not fully aware of the exact role they would be to play.
2. Some leaders did not have the capacity to share the knowledge and experience gained at the training programmes.
3. Because of the socio-economic and political differences at the village level, some of the women leaders were themselves not directly involved.
4. Some showed interest in the cooperative activities in the initial stages because they thought that there would be personal economic and social benefits to them.
5. Disputes and disagreements between society officials and various organisations working at village and district levels.
6. The general attitude of the people to place less value on what women could do. The important place given to the 'man' as motivator or leader.
7. Obstructional activities by those who failed to get leadership were also not uncommon, thus preventing leaders from having effective cooperative activities.
8. Costs involved in field level activities and the unwillingness of some societies or committees to bear these costs.
9. Even among those who were interested and committed, there were some who could not spare the time for various field level activities.

However, the cooperative women leadership has had a commendable impact is not denied. Many women leaders involved in the programmes have been pleasantly surprised by growing awareness of the members, both male and female, and the changes in the attitudes of the member towards his society. The need, therefore is to maintain the focus and continue women's activities at all levels. This would necessarily depend on the availability of properly motivated leaders and also the availability of support for such leaders at field level.

Decision-Making in Cooperatives

In Sri Lanka women are regarded equal to men and they occupy the same position in a cooperative society as a member. It is rather encouraging to note that women in recent times have started joining the cooperative organisations with increased enthusiasm. Some of these cooperatives are found to be capable of rendering services to women in achieving their economic ends in view.

With the adoption of open membership, most of the women in Sri Lanka assume membership in multi-purpose cooperative societies. Besides, there is no bar on women becoming members of any cooperative society which promotes economic interests in the fields of thrift and credit, textile, fisheries, small scale industries or any society undertaken economic and welfare activities.

Data on women in cooperatives are very few and if available they are limited to the macro level. The general lack of information causes to the exclusion of women in the planning process specially in decision-making in cooperatives. This leads to under rating in the importance of women's power.

Women's Committees

It is found that women's committees have not ventured into new activities until 1978, in Sri Lanka. In almost 90 per cent of MPC Societies and TCC societies both in urban and rural areas the main activity is distributing goods and granting loans to their members.

In 1979 efforts have been made by women's project to encourage all the cooperative societies to set up in order to get more women to participate in the cooperative activities.

The women members have direct participation in co-operatives as employees and also as committee members. But the percentage of managerial level employees is still very low. A manpower study was conducted in 1981, but data was not classified according to gender.

The women employees are in supervisory level posts and only few women

general managers can be found in MPC Societies. Women have only recently began to take active interest in cooperative societies, but they are still reluctant to accept leading roles in a cooperative society where men had dominated by their long experience and extensive knowledge.

Traditionally men have been in the forefront of cooperative management, though there are no legal impediments to women's participation. At primary level a General Meeting is held every month to consider day to day issues in cooperative management and workout their plans of action. These general meetings provide very good opportunities for rural women to discuss and solve a wide variety of problems as they encounter in their daily living. Therefore the participation is quite high. Some of them are very active in holding meetings.

In 1989 an amendment was made to the by-laws of the cooperative societies and according to that at least two women members should be included in the Board of Directors. At present there are 63 women in Board of Directors in MPC Societies. Of them, 58 were elected and 5 were nominated.

12.5 Structure of the Cooperative Women's Committees in Sri Lanka

The National Cooperative Council of Sri Lanka (NCC) in collaboration with the Department of Cooperative Development has taken steps to set up women's consumer committees at the Multi-purpose Cooperative Society (MPCS) level and at the District and National Levels.

1. MPCS Society Level Women's Committee :

i) Branch Level:

The Branch Level women's committee is composed of 5 members elected at an Annual General Meeting of the women members of the branches of the MPCS. The President and the Secretary of the women's committees are also elected by the General Body from among the 5 members. The area of operation of this committee is limited to the area of operation of the branch. An average MPCS would have about 20 branches and there would be 20 branch women's committee in a society.

ii) Society Level:

Society Level women's committee also consists of 5 members elected at a general meeting of the branch women's committee members. The president and the secretary are also elected by the General Body from among the 5 elected to the committee. This committee is known as the Central Women's committee of the MPCS. In 1989 there were 165 women's committees at society level which represent 620,000 membership.

2. District Level Women's Committee

The Central Women's Committees of the MPCs in the district meet annually and elect the district women's committee which consists of 5 members. The president and the secretary are also elected by the general body from among the 5 members. The District secretary of the National Cooperative Council the activities at the district level. There are 25 districts in Sri Lanka and the total amount of some membership from district level is 125 (25x5).

3. National Level Women's Committee (NWC)

This was started in 1975 and the objects of the National Women's Committee are:

- (a) To enhance the participation of women in the cooperative movement,
- (b) To promote the economic, social and cultural status of women members,
- (c) To expand, promote and strengthen the cooperative movement in Sri Lanka.
- (d) To function in collaboration with the International Women's organisations.

The National level women's committee consists of 10 members of whom are elected at a meeting of the various district level women's committees. In Sri Lanka there are nine provinces. Elections to the committee are on the basis of one from each province. The tenth member is nominated by the Commissioner for Cooperative Development among the lady executives in his staff. The president and the vice-president of the NWC are also elected in this meeting. A lady secretary who is appointed by the NCC coordinates the activities of the National Women's Committee. The women's committee holds office for 3 years.

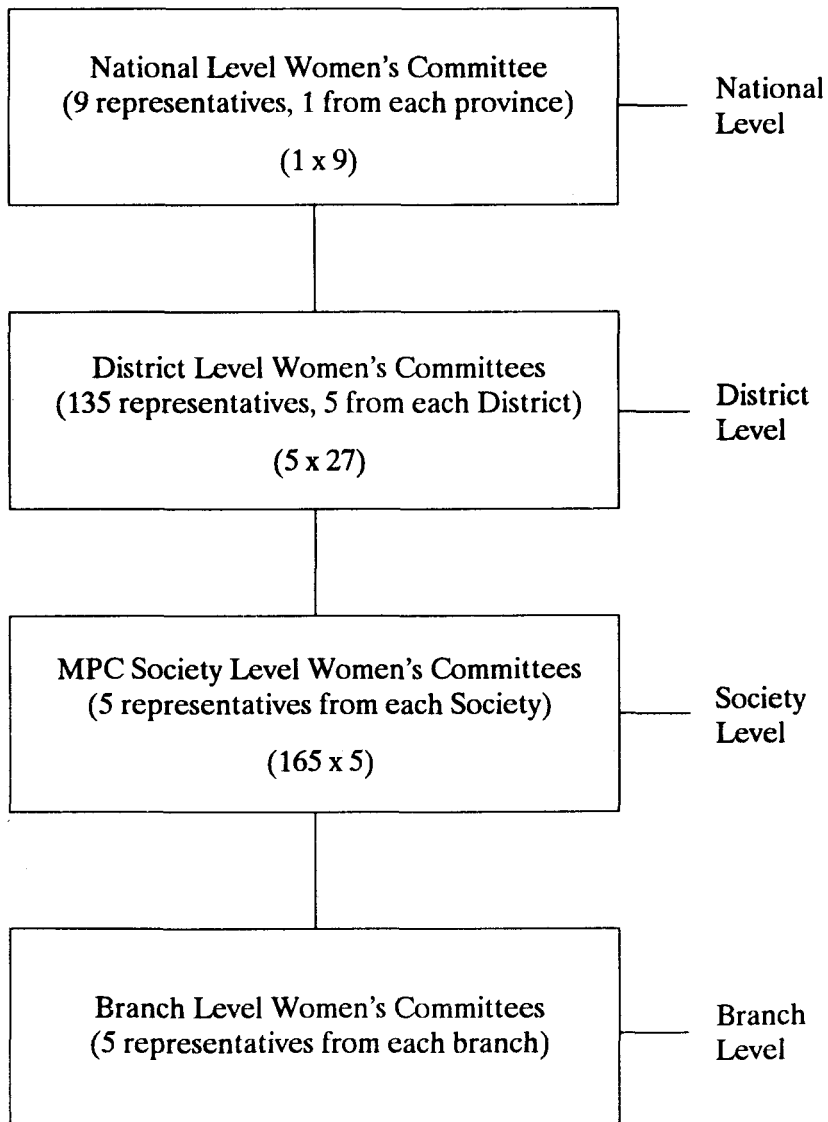
Earlier the Thrift & Credit Cooperative Union represented the National Level Women's Committee but after 1985 there is a separate Women's Committee for the T.C.C. Societies.

13.2 Women's Advisory Committees

There is no special Advisory Committee for women's organisations in the cooperative field. The women's committee itself functions as an advisory committee, at all levels.

The structure of the women's organisation in the society is very similar, with the important exceptions that as yet the women's branch committees and the central committee are not provided for in the by-laws of the society. As a result, the role of the women's committee is essentially advisory. Branch women's committee make

Structure of Co-operative Women's Committees in Sri Lanka



suggestions and proposals to the society's Branch committee and staff and the central committee functions similarly in regard to the Board of Directors; the General Manager and other executives. The effort always is to achieve the objectives through cordial discussions.

13.2.1 The Structure of the Advisory Committees

The branch women's advisory committee consists of five members who are elected by the Branch women members of the society at Branch level. The members of the various branch advisory committees meet at a General Meeting and elect a General Women's Advisory Committee consisting of five members who function at the society level. There is a president and a secretary to this committee. The main function of this central women's Advisory Committee is to represent the news of women members at the General Meeting.

The activities of this committees as advisory bodies are as follows:-

- i. Assist and advise regarding the promotion of cooperative activities.
- ii. Work towards the expansion of membership of the cooperative societies.
- iii. Enhance women's participation in cooperative activities from the village level to the national level.
- iv. Provide advice to regularise the supply and distribution of consumer goods and make joint efforts towards consumer protection.
- v. Find ways and means to promote the standard of living of the family members by introducing income generating projects e.g. cottage industries, animal husbandary, handicrafts and fisheries.
- vi. Providing training programmes to the members to increase their knowledge on nutrition, health, family planning and home management.
- vii. Provide raw materials, marketing facilities, and appropriate technology to the members with the collaboration of multipurpose cooperative society.
- viii. Assist for the promotion of cultural and community activities of the area.
- ix. Promote cooperative consciousness by imparting knowledge on cooperative principles and practice.

13.3 Women's Perception of Their Future in Co-operatives

The perception of women with regards to their future in co-operatives has been obtained through personal interviews taking a sample of 100 women who are the members of co-operative women's committees. In table 10 below is reflected the

views of members on whether their women's committees will be a success or failure in achieving their targets.

A total of 50% of women saw their future as bright and another 22% were not able perceive what the future would be. An almost equal proportion felt that their present situation would continue without any change. It is significant to note that only 5% of the women perceived that their situation would be worse.

Table 10: The Women's Perception of Their Future in Co-operatives

Answers	No. of Perception
1. Bright	50
2. No change	23
3. Worse	05
4. Not sure	22

Source: Findings of personal interview with women members

Co-operation as it exists today in Sri Lanka is still a fairly new experience for women than men. So if leadership is to be developed, co-operative education and training must be available for potential women leaders, knowledge about co-operative theory and practice, co-operative policy and trends, technical and financial assistance and many other factors will be needed. In many occasions policy makers have influenced and helped in modifying the cooperative training system with special reference to women's activities. The cooperative education and training system in Sri Lanka was in existence for a long time stretching from primary level to the national level. But there were some overlapping and under utilization of resources.

13.4 Education and Training of Women Members

It is very important that women members at primary societies elect committee members that are responsive to the needs of members. To ensure this the education of members must be stepped up so as to improve their knowledge of the cooperative ideals and inculcate in them a sense of ownership and responsibility for their societies.

Women member education programmes should include better living, income generating and also social and economic subjects which effect the family and community and serves the felt needs of the people.

Coordination should be established with national, district and primary level or-

ganisations operating training programmes for women. In addition, international agencies should be approached to supply experts and technical assistance for conducting women's education programmes and also providing books, audiovisual aids, transport and any other facilities necessary. Financial assistance also should be made available for women's training at all levels.

Employment

The total number of employees within the cooperative movement is over 40,000 and it is the largest single employment unit/category next to the government sector. The Multi-Purpose Cooperatives alone have 29,978 persons in their employment. Categories of employees vary widely, Management personnel, accountants, bank services of employees vary widely, Management personnel, accountants, bank services managers, clerical personnel, Technicians of various types and labourers etc. The only all island man power survey which had been carried out in 1981 reveals information about employees in detail.

Table 11: Managerial Level Employees
- according to sex

	MPCS			Other societies		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. General Manager	232	04	236	48	-	48
2. Deputy G. Manager	5	-	5	10	-	10
3. Finance Manager	2	-	2	-	-	-
4. Accountant	178	40	218	34	6	40
5. Asst. Accountant	5	1	6	1	-	1
6. Internal Auditor	76	39	115	12	5	17
7. Bank Services Mana.	147	62	209	-	-	-
8. Commercial Manager	83	5	88	4	0	4
9. Production Manager	14	-	14	35	2	37
10. Personnel Manager	33	13	46	6	1	7
11. Secretary	60	13	73	3	-	3
12. Manager	-	-	-	5	1	6
	835	177	1012	158	15	173

Source: Report of the study of Manpower needs and training requirements of Cooperatives in Sri Lanka.

In staff level category the large majority, about 62 per cent are in the 30-40 age group while only 29 per cent are over 55 years. Altogether 70 per cent of managerial level employees are below the age of 40. Table 11 shows that there are 993 males (83.8 per cent) and 192 females (16.2 per cent) in this category. The majority of females are in MPCs and hold posts of accountant internal auditor and bank services manager.

Out of the managerial level employees, 189 were graduates, 170 were G.C.E. Advanced Level and 826 were G.C.E.O. Level holders. G.C.E. Advanced Level holders had professional qualifications also. Out of the 1185 executives about 63% were found to be not adequately qualified for their posts, mainly due to lack of necessary professional qualifications.

According to the administrative reports in 1981, there were 40,785 employees alone in Multi-Purpose Co-operatives but in 1990 there were only 29,978 employees, a decline over 10,000.

There is no salary discrimination according to the gender on Co-operative sector, but the low salaries paid in this sector has been regarded a major obstacle in obtaining the service of competent Personnel. The societies have to face the challenge and increase-incomes to enable them to pay higher salaries without ill-effect to their operations.

The Regulations of the Co-operative Employees Commission provide the basic requirements of the personnel policy for the Co-operative sector. This Commission has the primary responsibility of giving legal status to the policies and ensuring their responsibilities.

Findings of the study of Manpower needs, clearly indicated the need and the urgency for comprehensive man power planning in the Co-operative sector.

During the last ten years several seminars, Workshops and conferences have been held, conducted where questions and personnel policies were discussed and recommendations were made. Action has been taken in some areas for improving personnel management and development.

Many Societies help their women employees to organise and maintain welfare activities. A few societies have concessionary loan schemes. Some distribute education materials free or at low costs to children of employees and members. Many scholarships for training abroad have been awarded to management level employees.

Co-operative face difficulties in recruiting employees both male and female due to various reasons. Reluctance of qualified people to serve in Co-operations is a major reason. Insecurity of service, the poor image of Co-operatives and whole range of other factors are responsible for this reluctance.

Recommendations & Conclusion

15.1 Government Policy and Strategies on Women's Activities

Understanding of the government's new economic policy and strategies will help in the identification of the areas and fields where women's role is crucial, necessary, useful and feasible. Further it will help to the economic sector, profession and hierarchy.

The new economic policy of Sri Lanka, adopted in 1977 was formulated, based on the needs of Sri Lankan society. Its main objective is the national development through,

- i) Reducing and eventually eradicating poverty by raising income levels and increasing employment opportunities for all Sri Lankans irrespective of sex,
- ii) Accelerating the process of production to correct the imbalance of economy.

Taking into consideration the above main objectives a slight deliberation of the strategies in women's affairs will highlight the potential areas of women's participation.

The government of Sri Lanka has no special policy or legislation on cooperatives with special reference to the role of women. But generally certain policy decisions are declared by the government for development of women, which included the following:

- (a) Establishment of a Ministry of Women's Affairs,
- (b) Provision for employment of women in administrative services in all government and semi-government departments/institutions,
- (c) Representation of women in armed forces and police department,
- (d) Representation of women in political parties and in local government bodies.

The extent to which the government recognises the role of women is reflected

the setting of the Ministry of Women's Affairs as the highest body for raising and channelling issues pertaining to women.

15.2 Need to Involve Women in Cooperatives

Women consist about half of the population in Sri Lanka, and it is logical to expect their membership will about 50% of the total or may be somewhat less or so. Although exact figures of women membership are not available, their membership is estimated around 30% of the total. Table 12 shows, the membership in MPCSSs of Seven Provinces according to Gender as at July 1991.

Table 12: Membership of MPCSSs-According to Sex

Sex	Western	Central	North West	North Central	Southern	Uva.	Sabara Gamuwa	Total*
Female	184645	69534	106027	76224	122340	45468	94033	698271
Male	503712	130848	201246	112678	217740	98578	133848	1398650

* *Due to ethnic disturbances data is not available in North and Eastern Provinces. In other provinces also out of 287 only 183 MPCSSs were responded to the questionnaire.*

Considering the above situation it is absolutely necessary to motivate the involvement of women in different types of Cooperatives Consumer, Thrift and Credit, Fisheries and Textiles etc. This will provide them with a number of facilities like consumer services employment and credit, further it will help to increase their family income.

It is found most women in village and town areas have to earn a living or supplement the income of their family. Therefore it is important for women to prepare themselves to expand income generating activities through women's Cooperatives.

Two types of income generating activities can be planned for women, agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandary for those who own land (including fishery) textile and handicraft for those who have no land.

Women's increasing involvement in Cooperative movement will have two-fold effect. One hand, the movement will get strengthened by increased women membership and on the other hand, women's social economic status would also be raised since they would be able to utilize various services by the Cooperatives.

15.3 Recommendations

It is realised that women must get into the mainstream of the cooperative movement in order to raise the socio economic status of women and living standards of the family and the community.

In consumer field the cooperative could help in aiding the women in improving her home management. The involvement of the training institutions in the education programmes for women would greatly enhance women's interest in leadership training and home management.

Women's cooperative societies cannot stand with a solid foundation, without funds. Therefore, it's financial support may be obtained in any of the followings:

- i) By share capital and savings from women membership.
- ii) Provide allocation from the annual budget of cooperative societies.
- iii) Raising a special fund for it's activities of the women's committee by allocating a certain percentage out of the profit.
- iv) Loans from banks and other assistance from the government.

To ensure effective participation of women in co-operatives the following recommendations should be considered:

- conduct islandwide survey to find out the needs of women cooperatives.
- Provide continuous training and workshops until the women community has recognised the importance and value of social participation in cooperatives.
- make provisions in cooperative by-laws for the presentation of women in policy/decision making bodies at all levels.
- ensure that voluntary participation of women in the mainstream of cooperative activity and not in exclusive isolated.

Bibliography

1. Administration Report - 1989, 1990
Department of Cooperative Development
2. Central Bank Report - 1989, 1990
3. Cooperation in Ceylon - M.G. Mehkri
4. Cooperation - Its Rise and Growth in Ceylon - G. Kurukulasuriya
5. Education & Income Generation for Women - Jessie B. Tellis-Nayak
6. Performance of the Cooperative Sector - 1991
Department of Cooperative Development
7. Readings in Cooperative Housing - I.C.A.
8. Socio-Economic Achievements of Sri Lanka - 1990
Central Bank of Sri Lanka
9. The Europa World Year Book - 1990 Volume II
10. U.N. Decade for Women Progress and Achievements of Women in Sri Lanka
Centre for Women's Research Sri Lanka
11. Women at the Cross Roads - Sirima Kiribamini
12. Women's Consumer Education Project through Cooperatives in Sri Lanka

Other Books in these Country Study Series . . .

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Afghanistan | Fahima Azizy |
| 2. Bangladesh | Fatema Kabir |
| 3. Fiji | M. Vuluvano |
| 4. India | Gurveen Rikhy |
| 5. Indonesia | Jutta Berninghausen |
| 6. Iran | Maryam K. Saleh |
| 7. Japan | Akiko Yamauchi |
| 8. Korea, DPR | Gang Jung OK |
| 9. Malaysia | Rahaiah bte Baهران |
| 10. Pakistan | Shahnaz Kazi |
| 11. Philippines | Teresita P. Jamias |
| 12. Sri Lanka | Chandra Rupasinghe |
| 13. Thailand | Pailin Supakitvilekagarn |
| <i>and</i> | |
| 14. Overview of Gender Integration in Cooperatives in Asia and the Pacific by W.U.Herath | |

ICA Library



ICA 00787