



BRAHMA KUMARIS WORLD SPIRITUAL UNIVERSITY

Statement

The fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women

The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges.

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“Leverage Rural Women’s Role in the New Climatically and Socially Intelligent Development Perspectives.”

Agricultural communities are facing critical situations due to environment and climate change issues in addition to the use of pesticides and inorganic fertilizers in some contexts, which have caused ecological damage, soil degradation, unsustainable use of resources and outbreak of plagues and diseases.

Over the past few years, the United Nations Fund For Food and Agriculture (FAO) has promoted a new climatically intelligent production system that would guarantee food security through the transformation of agriculture and the adoption of environmentally friendly practices with a sustainable development approach. Along these lines, a number of production systems are already used in agriculture to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to climate change and reduce vulnerability ¹.

Nevertheless, there are still knowledge gaps related to the customization and use of these production systems and practices. The existing knowledge, technologies and supplies have not yet reached agricultural people, particularly in developing countries.

Climatically and socially intelligent agriculture:

If we talk about agricultural production systems improvement, both rural men and women are indispensable actors in their application. For this reason, taking into account human factors in addition to environmental factors become an essential issue in the new development policies.

If we consider rural reality within a social and gender equity approach, we can see that in developing countries there are a higher percentage of women involved in the agricultural activity. As a result, women are the ones who suffer in a higher degree environmental

¹ FAO, 2011 <http://www.fao.org/climatechange/climatesmart/es/>

problems consequences such as droughts and floods, in addition to socio cultural problems resulting from gender discrimination.

Peasant women are usually clearly aware that actions from their own communities and even their own actions may cause local environment degradation²

Incrementing women resilience implies achieving gender equality in every life sphere and allowing women to enjoy freedom and the right to make decisions thus contributing to release their spiritual, social and economic potential.

Leverage agricultural women's role in environmental solutions:

Very few times has the world resourced to women as active actors in the resolution of the problems faced worldwide, which has been a significant mistake, since women have diverse strengths that could enrich the work developed, both from communities and political entities, to create and implement the new agricultural production strategies.

Life ethics: peace with the land and the community

Rural development models should take into account women as contributors of a life ethics where non-violent relationships are promoted, with nature, community, family and their own self, which is essential for communities to start implementing climatically and socially intelligent agricultural models.

Without peace we will not be able to continue the path to development; peace is a life quality or principle reflected in every field of action. In most cultures, women are the least involved in violent activities such as war fields and criminal acts statistics; this is the reason why, acknowledging women's value as peace keepers is essential for society.

Life ethics promoted from Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU) aims at leveraging the intrinsic values of each human being, allowing to overcome not only agricultural economic difficulties, but also those problems affecting many people devoted to agriculture, such as alcoholism and violence inside the family, as well as the resulting impact on the family unit.

Empowering a non-violent relationship with land aims also at fostering women's leadership role as contributors to that ethics both from inside their homes and in their role as community leaders.

Women instill values

In their role as holders of spiritual knowledge, women have been the ones responsible to instill values and principles in their families. Although this role is performed anonymously

² UNFPA, Report on the state of world population, 2009.

and so far without social recognition, it has been essential for the transmission of those values.

In order to achieve a spiritually strong community that lives according to principles of nonviolence we must give importance and visibility to values, since they allow human beings to open their hearts and transform their weaknesses so that life becomes plenty of compassion and humility.

In times of crisis, such as the current ones, acknowledging the importance of values as building blocks for a more pacific and equalitarian world is essential. Human souls sustain themselves based on their values, since those values provide them with independence and freedom, increase their capacity to be self-sufficient and release them from external influences.³

Consequently, rural women empowering implies breaking social conventions of discrimination by acknowledging the strength of their spirits. Empowered women contribute to family and communities health and productivity and, in general terms, to society integral development. The importance of gender equality stands out as one of the eight Millennium Development Goals and is recognized as a key issue to achieve the other seven Goals.⁴

Women in a climatically and socially intelligent agriculture

Since its creation, the Rural Development Area of the BKWSU has been interested in supporting agricultural people's work and environmentally friendly production methods.

Along these lines, the fact that agricultural people become aware of their values and their essential role in the community food security has become an obvious need. Over the past few years, BKWSU Rural Development Area in India has worked in the "yogi agriculture" project, where peasant women and men have carried out different experiments with organic fertilizers and with meditation about the plantations, and they have achieved striking results regarding both harvests improvement and agricultural people change of attitude.

Can thought power work as a new fertilizer that would improve food security? In a research project presently carried out in Gujarat, India, agricultural people use meditation as one of the key ingredients in every sowing stage, and the results have been remarkably. The initial research, carried out by SD Agricultural University (Gujarat) and AEMB Rural Development Area, suggests that combining meditation with organic agricultural methods, crops yield and nutritive quality may be incremented in a significant percentage. Another reported benefit has been the improvement of agricultural people welfare and emotional resilience.

"Yogi agriculture" stems from the premise that peace is created in the mind and the spirit. Each human being has such power in his/her thoughts that he/she can make anything

³ Living Values A Guidebook, Dadi Janki BKWSU World Coordinator.

⁴ www.nacionesunidas.or.cr

he/she wants to happen; thoughts can create a world. This is called the power of internal silence or meditation. Part of the success obtained through “yogi agriculture” has been that participants have decided to stop bad habits and free themselves from addictions. They have also shown changes in their behavior, interacting with greater respect and good attitudes.

Conclusion:

Women play an essential role in the implementation of a climatically and socially intelligent agriculture, since human factor must be taken into account when promoting the learning of the new production technologies.

Climatically intelligent agriculture also promotes a new ethics dealing with people relationship to land, which has been anonymously put into practice by women. Women are peacekeepers and if this leadership is promoted in the rural context, results will be achieved both in agricultural production and community interrelations improvement.

The new agricultural production strategies, such as “yogi agriculture”, complement FAO efforts for the promotion of alternatives facing climate change disruptions, and women play an essential role in the learning and application of those strategies, which benefits the whole family and the community.

Every human being has the responsibility for improving the relationship with nature and mitigating climate change effects, and this implies changing attitudes and promoting values that would impact individual and collective behavior. This is what encourages us to channel our knowledge and energy to contribute with rural women empowerment.

(Originally written in Spanish – translated into English)

Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University

The BKWSU is a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and in consultative status with UNICEF.

The University was founded in India in 1937 and has branches in over 100 countries worldwide.

It has been affiliated to the United Nations Department of Public Information since 1980.

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