

RECOGNIZING HIMALAYAN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO HOUSEHOLD AND ECONOMIC SECURITY: A STUDY OF QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTING STUDY TOOLS

NEHA ATRI

Abstract: This paper is related with, exploring how a gendered analysis can be integrated into the work and strengthen women's access to rights with dignity, by using qualitative data collection tools. Till now in many arena women's work in Himalayan region is unrecognized and formally unorganized, despite the fact that women's contributions to the family are vital. In Himalayan region women's mobility and visibility outside the household domain is very well seen. And to explore division of labour and measure the value of economic contribution, the qualitative tools like PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal), RRA (Rapid Rural Appraisal), Case conferences, Self Motivating Groups, Street plays etc may pave the way for a quality research. PRA is a short cut method of data collection and considered as a tool of action research. The qualitative study tools involve local people and outsiders as facilitators from different sectors. The paper focuses on these type of qualitative tools to examine the multitasking plethora attached with the Himalayan women.

Key words: PRA, RRA

Introduction: For a very long time we have been using traditional data collection tools such as questionnaire survey, case study method, projective methods etc in research, but approaches and methods in developing countries have been changing in recent years to reflect a new development paradigm that emphasizes sustainability and institutional change. An increasing number of project analyses have shown that participation by local people is one of the critical components of success in rural development, agriculture, irrigation, livestock, and water projects (Reij, 1988; Cernea & IBRD, 1991; Uphoff, 1992; Narayan, 1993; World Bank, 1994; Pretty et al., 1995; Pretty & Vodouhe, 1997). After a century of practice in the field of collection of socio economic data, it is time to reflect upon past approaches and practices and explore new ones. However, this should be analyzed in the context of an emerging development paradigm that emphasizes participatory learning processes and sustainable development. The Himalayan range is the most populous mountain range in the world. Besides its ethnic and cultural diversity the people of Himalayas face common difficulties. Here in Himalayas women are essential productive force in the economy of the region as they play several different roles as for eg; unpaid family labour, self employed, part time, casual work, house wife etc.

Condition of Himalayan Women: Himalayan women play a crucial role in socio economic development because their work's sustainability and productivity are directly linked to natural resources and their management. The traditional roles of transferring and disseminating work practices are proving insufficient in today's global context. Particularly in the last ten years, both socio and economic development programs have been subject

to scrutiny and questioning both within and without the field, in part because there has been a significant change in expression but little change in the practice of rural development (Chambers, 1994a, Roling & Pretty, 1997). Women's work leftovers unrecognized and formally unorganized despite the fact that women's contributions to the family are of the essence; in many cases women are the breadwinners and work longer hours than men (UNDP 1995). This irony reflects women's lower status in the family and locality; they have very little or no say in household decision-making.

Disparities in responsibilities and income share received satisfactory attention in the Human Development Report 1995 : "Men received the lion's share of income and recognition for their economic contribution while most women's work remains unpaid, unrecognized and undervalued" (UNDP 1995: 93). This is the result of a faulty concept of participation in the labor force that does not include household or domestic work as economic activity, mainly because of the focus on use value rather than exchange value (Donahoe 1999). This indicates a reason for the neglect of women's economic contributions to the household in particular and to society in general (Ironmonger 1999). Gender bias in intra-household allocation of resources, participation in decision-making, and time spent within and outside the house need to be studied further (Buvinic 1999). The most striking characteristic of household labor is that, whether employed or not, women continue to do most of the household work.

Need of incorporating Qualitative tools in gendered analysis: A participatory learning process needs to be incorporated where women and other development beneficiaries have real decision-making power and are part of the problem analysis and

solution Gender sensitive research is not research on women or on gender relationships; it is research that takes into account gender as a significant variable in environmental and socio-economic development studies. Men and women have different roles, which impact differently on the environment and development. Moreover, the power relations between men and women can greatly influence the perspective of men and women on environmental and development problems. Thus, gender sensitive research pays attention to the similarities and the differences between men and women's experiences and viewpoints, and gives equal value to each. Remembering that women constitute the other half of the population is important. Overlooking women's experiences and points of view leads to the wrong conclusions, or at least an incomplete picture of the problem.

In the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region, research on the environment and development seldom considers gender as a significant variable. Environmental research often pays little attention to the human and social dimensions. The impact of the population on the environment is examined in relation to 'population activities', but rarely taking into account the gender dimension: 'population' is treated as a homogenous group. Poverty assessment also bases its analysis on household incomes and expenditures; the differential experiences of poverty among household members is rarely analysed. Moreover, only productive paid work is taken into account and valued in economic analysis, while household and unpaid work – mainly performed by women – is overlooked, even if it makes up a large part of food security. Therefore, in traditional research, women's experiences and contributions remain invisible, and, consequently, important aspects of an issue remain undocumented and underestimated and, therefore, may be misunderstood.

Gender has only recently been considered a significant variable in research. However, although it is starting to be recognised in social sciences, it is seldom acknowledged and applied in natural sciences or economics. In research aiming to identify the vulnerabilities of mountain people to natural disasters, their economic and social development, a gender sensitive participatory approach helps men and women to understand the natural and social factors – beliefs, practices, behaviours – that put them at risk when a natural disaster occurs. It can also help them to understand that some social practices may increase women and children's vulnerabilities and that in order to reduce these risks they may have to modify their behaviour.

A gender sensitive methodology can also contribute to making visible and giving a value to women's contribution to biodiversity and natural resources

management. Eventually, this can contribute to raising awareness about women's capacities and to boosting their self-confidence. If unrecognized activities need to be accounted its effectiveness, usually measured by process of collecting data, its sustainability, completion of goals, and meeting needs of the local people. And in qualitative data collection tools people are involved in decision making during all stages of the project and the participation is interactive. The challenge is to find practical and applicable methods when working with communities that help move things towards interactive participation. This paper illustrates that the study of contribution of Himalayan women in household and economic security which cannot be done only by the questionnaire and secondary data analysis but an interactive participation of the rural community is also required. Some of qualitative tool methodologies are illustrated below.

The Qualitative tools for data collection to be incorporated in research on Himalayan Women:

Participatory Rural Appraisal: People's participation has become an essential tool for all development efforts as it ensures effective utilization of available resources. According to the views of Chambers (nd.), PRA has been recognized as an effective tool to collect data on social aspects. PRA can be defined as a semi structural process of learning from, with and by rural people about rural conditions. In other words it is a collection of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyze their knowledge on life and conditions to plan and act. It is basically a data collection cum community mobilization technique used in participatory planning and programme development under PRA method. The major advantage of PRA is its ability to generate information in a short time and with accuracy which can be used by development planners in framing policies for the development of an area. PRA provides outsiders an opportunity to learn and plan according to the preferences and requirements of the community. PRA facilitates collection and analysis of information by and for community members. Promoting research through PRA, its impact, effectiveness, diversity, use, and applicability, in order to gain greater insight and knowledge about participatory methods will pave the way for deep understanding in women's contribution. In the recent past, participatory rural appraisal (PRA) has been emerging as a data collection tool in socio- economic research. Initially, it has been used to draw strategic plan to develop an area by non-Governmental organizations (NGO) and by some Government institutions. But PRA's role as a data collection tool is recently felt and it is being increasingly used for social science research. PRA, like all methodology

used for research has a theoretical base and requirements for showing its accuracy. As a research methodology, PRA uses qualitative research methods based on some tools. Moreover, for this motive, seven specific tools of PRA have been used to get the required results.

PRA Tools:

1. **Social and resource mapping:** Community Maps are good starting point for PRA work and particularly useful in the diagnostic stage, because they generate discussion on a non-sensitive, common knowledge topic, allowing the facilitator to bridge communication gaps, and generate information about communal lands, trees, fields, farms, water, soils, trees, access, services, opportunities, and threats.
2. In the study of analyzing socio-economic condition of Himalayan women social and resource mapping may be used to identify social characteristics of a community, particularly those that are more sensitive as well being, living arrangements (Caste or religion-wise), educational and other infrastructure arrangement, and resources. This exercise is conducted in the village by facilitating the villagers to make map on the ground, by themselves, with the help of PRA team. Further, two or three volunteers are chosen for the purpose, while whole village participated as spectator and guided the volunteers in making the exact map. The process may depict that till how far women travel by foot to collect water and other household's things.
3. **Time Line:** It is a method of knowing history of major recollected events of the community to know the developmental pathway of the village. It is narrated by elderly villagers in details with respect to the major changes, which have taken place in their society and have impact on their economic, social and agro-ecological life. This exercise needs facilitation to broaden the mind of the villagers to remember the past. It may pave the way for them to understand their development process.
4. **Livelihood analysis:** It depicts different types of source of income for different types of households. This exercise need separate group discussions and involve the factors involve in livelihood process, in case of Himalayan region that are women. Men can be illustrated in different group and description of their division of earning from different sources can be taken.
5. **Wealth Ranking:** This exercise is used to identify the well-off/rich, average/medium and poor households through chit system. This is a very sensitive tool with potential for conflict and should be used with care and after trust has been established. In this exercise the first step is to distribute the chits with a given number and writing the names of the person in front of his/her number. After this in second step, facilitator makes three circles on the ground naming them rich, medium and poor. In third step, people are called to put their chits in the relevant circle, honestly. When this process is finished, all chits are collected, then by calling the name of persons, corresponding to the chit number, his/her decision is confirmed from the society. This exercise not only depicts the individual consideration but also the society consideration. The outcome of this tool tells the economic condition of the village. Then afterwards the economic condition can be analyzed with due care of social aspects and women conditions in different set of houses.
6. **Venn Diagram:** It depicts the key institutions in a community and their importance for decision making. The villagers are asked to tell their preferences and give rank to all institutions in their vicinity. Institutes related with women and their health may be noticed and the results may decipher the importance of women in their social surroundings
7. **Matrix Ranking:** It helps in understanding different criteria against which the villagers rank any particular object for eg. variety of work, infrastructure, transportation. In this exercise, villagers are asked about different varieties of particulars and how they prefer one over another. Every variety was ranked according to the given attributes. For women specific research we have to modulate and moderate the particulars and varieties.
8. **Trend Change:** This tool is used for depicting quantitative changes over a time in different aspects of rural life. By this one can see the increasing or decreasing trend of hardship in life of rural people. Women specific works may be mentioned to see the trend of their working hours, their duties, their economic contribution etc.
9. Building the capacity of the women group is the cornerstone of any facility's ability to address violence against women and girls in an ethical and effective way. (Shashi, Krishan. July 1, 2008) Methods for collecting information on provider's knowledge, attitudes, and practices include surveys and gathering qualitative data through group discussions or other participatory methods with providers. Qualitative data can provide an in-depth understanding of provider's perspectives (United Nations Children's Fund, 2010). For this purpose there should be a facilitator and the support staff who can go to the fields, the actual grass root level. In general,

facilitator should consider the following key activities to build staff capacity: Facilitator from facility administrators to service providers to support staff should first be sensitized about issues related to violence against women and gender discrimination and their socio economic contribution. Facilitators also need to have a basic understanding of the nature and scope of women's contribution to household and economic security . They should be having knowledge of gender issues and human rights and must be incorporate with good understanding of the legal framework, national policies and protocols. Their technical skills related to addressing violence against women and girls ought to be appropriate.

The Other specific works can be done through PRA approach as follows:

- Counseling
- Psycho-social Support for Survivors of disaster as the area is disaster prone
- A gendered analysis socio economic contribution
- Crisis intervention techniques
- Support group methods
- Trauma, coping and survival
- Current understandings of well-being and social inclusion
- Communication skills and intervention techniques
- The availability of state and community resources
- Non-discrimination and diversity

RRA (Rapid Rural Appraisal)

There is no generally accepted definition of RRA. RRA is more commonly described as a systematic but semi-structured activity out in the field by a multidisciplinary team and is designed to obtain new information and to formulate new hypotheses about rural life. A central characteristic of RRA is that its research teams are multidisciplinary.

Beyond that, the distinction between RRA and other research methodologies dependents upon its multidisciplinary approach and the particular combination of tools that in employs. A core concept of RRA is that research should be carried out not by individuals, but by a team comprised of members drawn from a variety of appropriate disciplines. Such teams are intended to be comprised of some members with relevant technical backgrounds and others with social science skills, including marketing research skills. In this way, it is thought that the varying perspectives of RRA research team members will provide a more balanced picture. The techniques of RRA include:

- interview and question design techniques for individual, household and key informant interviews

- methods of cross-checking information from different sources
- sampling techniques that can be adapted to a particular objective
- methods of obtaining quantitative data in a short time frame
- group interview techniques, including focus-group interviewing
- methods of direct observation at site level, and
- use of secondary data sources.

These type of techniques can be formulated specifically for taking data related to women and their contribution in the economy of the Himalayan region. The activities and working hours of women can be analyzed through it.

Self Help Groups (SHG)

As another major tool, Self Help Groups (SHG) may augment the sensitization and as a research tool in gender contribution in different aspects of Himalayan life. They focus not only on savings but also provide a space for women to access and learn about her rights. So the term can be backed with the other term and that is SMG (Self Motivated Groups). However a deeper analysis is needed to see how the loans taken by women are used for the purpose of enhancing their position, dignity and that benefits accrue to her. Vocational training skills promote economic security among the community women but most of them seem to be in the traditional domain and efforts are needed to challenge such gender stereotyping and explore non-traditional skills. Need to work with men in the community so they could play positive role in ending and preventing violence against women and girls.

The emphasis of the Self Motivating Groups should be on ensuring that not only should the material condition of women improves but also her position in the family and the community; involving greater decision making powers, right to a life free of violence and control over her bodily integrity and life, etc. There is need to carefully examine what the SMG is focusing on: improving her condition of health, education and other basic requirements.

For research purpose a facilitator can note down the activities of SHGs and the economic viability of women labour. This can play an important role in determining the decion making and economic role of women of Himalayan region.

“Case conferences”

The other tool is “Case conferences” that are as development research with a goal of seeking the professional insights and opinions of community, especially those colleagues with extensive experience or special expertise. The famed and named institutions should come forward in this direction to set an example in this regard. Especially the educational institutions can arrange conferences and

seminars to pave the way for research the minded fellows so they can further create the awareness to their peer groups and students.

The Case conference may examine the researcher's role from multiple perspectives, focusing not only on the skills but also bring to the fundraising process and importance of the internal relationships that make certain those skills are used, and valued. It may explore the important contributions that research, prospect management and analytics bring to the advancement process. Understand the power of applying analytics and predictive modeling to the prospect pipeline process. Access the relationship among advancement services professionals and front-line fundraisers to maximize the contributions of each group.

So this tool not only acts as a research tool but also as a solution in carving out the best possible policies for the women. The case conferences may also include the path breakers as motivators for other women attending the case conferences.

Street plays: Street plays may play very effective role in sensitizing the common mass. It is an act played by the trained actors to send particular message to the community. It includes minimum eight to ten people to perform the act in the language of that particular community, where the message has to be sent. The message is conveyed in attractive form as singing, acting and dance can be involved. Street plays can be organized by the educational institutes. With presentations and act they can ask questions from the community in a way that they can even answer those questions they don't feel comfortable with if asked directly.

A play can broaden up their mind to participate in the development process. To know the condition of the women of the Himalayan region, street plays may actually weaken the barrier of hesitancy and open up the way for more clear and unbiased research answers.

The critical and analytic perspectives of the present scenario signifies that when governments commit to the realization of women related policies, through legal reform as well as practical implementation, discriminatory practices can be curtailed. But to be implemented rightly, the policies need to be formulated with good and piercing research. However, other than recognizing women's contribution in household and economic activities, several challenges still exist in terms of the realization of women's human rights and sensitization. The implementation of legislation poses difficulties in the face of resource constraints and lack of gender-analysis in distribution and prioritization. Securing women's rights begins with ensuring the sensitization of the community and the above mentioned tools can make this target more achieving. This appropriate accountability mechanisms or tools will surely recognize the contribution of the women and ensure empowerment of women and improve their access to justice as more awareness of the mass definitely sensitizes people regarding women situation in society. For realizing this we have to break the plethora of collecting only quantitative data for research when a study of qualitative tools may make much difference in the outcomes and an effective policy making and its implementation.

References

1. Adhikarya, R. (1994). Strategic Extension Campaign: A Participatory-oriented Method of Agricultural Extension. Rome, Italy: FAO.
2. Adnan, S., Barrett, A., Nurul Alam, S. M., & Brustinow, A. (1992). Dhaka, Bangladesh: Research and Advisory Services.
3. Bank Technical Paper No. 247. Washington DC: World Bank.
4. Beebe, J. (1987). Rapid appraisal: The evolution of the concept and the definition of the issues. Proceedings of the 1985 International Conference on Rapid Rural Appraisal, Systems Research and Farming Systems Research Projects: Khon Kaen University, 47-68. Khon Kaen, Thailand: University of Khon Kaen.
5. Bunch, R. (1991). People-centred agricultural improvement. In: B. Haverkort, van der Kamp, & A. Waters-Bayer (eds.), Joining Farmers' Experiments: Experiences in Participatory Development. London: IT Publications.
6. Cernea, M. M., & International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. (1991). Putting People First: Sociological Variables in Rural Development. 2nd edition. New York: World Bank and Oxford University Press.
7. Chambers, R. (1993). Challenging the Professions: Frontiers for rural development, London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
8. Chambers, R. (1993). Methods for analysis by farmers: the professional challenge. Journal for Farming Systems Research Extension, 4(1), 87- 101
9. Chambers, R. (1994a). The origins and practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal. World Development Oxford (22 July '94), 953-69.
10. Chambers, R. (1994b). Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Analysis of experience. World Development Oxford, 22(9), 1253-1268.
11. Chambers, R. (1994c). Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Challenges, potentials and

-
- paradigm. *World Development* Oxford, 22(10), 1437-1454.
12. Conway, G. (1987). The properties of agro-ecosystems. *Agricultural Systems* 24, 95-117.
13. Cornwall, A. (1993). Acknowledging Process: Challenges for Agricultural Research and Extension Methodology. Sussex, England: Institute of Development Studies.
14. Coupal, F., Lagace, B., Shaw, B., Rimkus, S., Patterson, H., Elkhazin, T., Verbruggen, R., Bhurtel, S., Sulwe, C., Snyman, M. (1999). Snapshots from 'Deepening our understanding and practice: a conference on participatory development and beyond. August 25-27, 1999, Ottawa, Canada.' *PLA Notes* 36, 41-46.

Neha Atri/Research Scholar/Economics/Kumaun University/Nainital/