
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER – RURAL WOMEN'S IMPACT IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Agrotechnology & Community Service Center, University of Colombo located in a rural sector at Weligatta, Hambantota (250 km from capital Colombo) is an on-going project since 2000, on rural development through science & technology. This is the first ever kind developed by a University system in Sri Lanka in collaboration with government & other organizations. The attempt is also made to educate and empower the rural women and thereby to improve rural economy. Through the Science & Technology (S&T) activities, the potential for improvement of rural sector income was clearly seen. Both men and women showed enthusiasm to take up novel technology but in different aspects: women more in in-house science & technology such as processed food technology and mushroom cultivations while men in outdoor cultivations. It also revealed that when women are empowered, the family in general is looked after as the burden on the women who contribute significantly to the health and wealth of the family. The training programmes conducted clearly showed the enthusiasm among the young, to adopt novel technology in agriculture. It also showed the capabilities of the younger generation in the rural sector and their commitment. Also there was a clear economic improvement of the people: a ten-fold increase through the use of S&T in the cultivations. Increased income for all the stakeholders is the main driving force in the success of adopting new technology. Indirectly crimes would be reduced as work is available and villages have a hope for themselves and their children: a tendency already seen in the area.

INTRODUCTION

The topic "Science & Technology transfer – rural women's impact in Sri Lanka" was selected because of the importance of adopting S & T in the rural sector where the main income is through agriculture. The agric-producer/the farmer is faced with open economy, globalization and with WTO trade policies but hardly with any modern biological/agricultural technology.

It is known that, Science led to improvement of technology, which led to greater production, thus S & T together with mass education and social control is the basis for national development. National development in general is raising the living standards of the people where basic needs for life are available for all the people. Understanding this aspect, the first Prime Minister of India, Sri Jawahar Lal Nehru gave highest priority to S & T in India. As a result India has developed industries and agro-based industries have flourished (Sri Jawahar Lal Nehru, 1962).

However, the situation was different in Sri Lanka where science & technology, especially for rural sector, has been neglected until this decade. Almost 60% of the 19 million population in the country live in the rural sector where agriculture is the main source of income. Agriculture presently has