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# How Should Rural Women's Enterprises Be Developed and Promoted?

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## Abstract

This study was a qualitative research which was done by a case study approach. The samples were chosen from rural development experts of Hamedan Province during a snowball sampling process. The data were collected by the semi-structured interviews. The data collection was done by face-to-face interviews, after the interview questions guide was determined. The theoretical saturation was attained by interviewing 25 respondents and at this point the interview process was laid off. The qualitative analysis of interviews was done by a content analysis method. The results showed that in order to develop and promote the rural women enterprises not only financial, domestic, managerial, educational and cultural supports are needed but some approaches like culturalization and educational programs are vital too.

**Keywords:**  
*Women Enterprises, Business, Rural Development, Qualitative Research*

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## INTRODUCTION

The changing from the present system to a sustainable system could be accomplished by the participation of all individuals. Hence, the role of the women, which constitutes half of the population of the country, must be taken into account (Veisi and Badsar, 2005). Identifying and trying to use all of the human capacity in rural communities is central to achieving sustainable rural development goals. This approach shows the importance of identifying the role of rural women, and recognizing their status as half of the rural population, and highlights the necessity of utilizing the women's capabilities. Certainly, rural women can be a viable force for change and a potential source for growth of the rural economy, including an increase in employment (Movahedi and Yaghoubi-Farani, 2012).

The situation of rural women and their activities in Iran indicates that despite the significant role of women in economic, social and cultural activities, the employment of rural women is not in a desirable situation (Fallah-Jelodar *et al.*, 2007). Rural women have performed lots of social and economic indoor roles as well as outdoor ones. But, unfortunately, their actual position and value is not determined. They have been excluded from rural development plans; and, they have been only attributed to babysitting, feeding and etc. These issues caused the designers and programmers to neglect the particular potential of rural women (Mansourabadi and Karami, 2006).

The women should try to find some procedures in order to develop their thoughts and attitudes. They can strengthen their ability and competence by the making of the best use of participating actively in different courses; and, by this way, they can improve their status in the society. The promotion of women's position in the society is up to utilizing the opportunities, fair and equal circumstances for women. One of the most essential factors that cause poverty and penury for women is illiteracy and lack of knowledge about social, economic and even hygienic status. To be educated and to utilize educational facilities provide an opportunity for

women that enable them to promote their family and society by recognizing their biological and social status. According to statistics, the higher the women's educational level, the healthier individuals would be (UNESCO, 2004). If the effective role of women in production had been ignored, the economic development of any society would have encountered some dilemma; because, the financial management role of women in families deeply affects family economy, and in upper levels, society economy (Salahshour, 2003).

Traditionally, Iranian rural women have done some activities as: transplanting vegetables, weeding beet and cotton, pounding and grinding grains, sifting crops, well-setting bestial affairs and meat drying for the cold season utilization (Shahbazi, 2003). Although rural women are occupied with house-keeping, husbandry, breeding children and they also are involved in agricultural activities, their economic-social dignity is not deserved for their endeavor and activity; and finally, the illusion of rural woman in our country shows a hard-working, sufficient, patient and strong picture (Alayirahmani, 1996).

## Research Literature

According to some development theories, it is believed that all the social dimensions, parties and areas must be developed. Based on this theory, development experts believe that development in all the social aspects would be somehow impossible when the women are ignored. Therefore, women must be brought in development plans and they must become capable to participate in economic and political structure of the society. In order to determine the women status in development, it is primarily essential to investigate the human role and status in the development process.

In 1980, spreading sustainable development had caused the women role to be entered into a new phase. The advocates of sustainable human development believe that "sustainable human development" occurs only by providing equality and parity between sexes. Whenever the women are out of development cycle, the development would be incapable, though. The existence of

equality between sexes is essential in all the life dimensions in sustainable development (Malekmohamadi and Hosseininia, 1999).

The sustainable development attitude has located women in the center of development definitions and considering the women position in development has interned it into a new phase. On the other side, the agricultural executive policies must be continuously revised in such a way that increases the participation of rural women in production. The particular developmental plans, with regard to security circumstances for rural women, should increase the financial facilities of this active group, while their job pressure and hardship should be decreased.

Other supportive plans should consider all rural girls and women's needs in a systemic and comprehensive way, and this empowers them not only to help food security of family but also to implement health care. Moreover, the continuous revising of agricultural policies in order to meet the rural women needs and determining their priorities are of specified development tools and it increases agricultural products. The agricultural development projects will promote the rural general awareness and also urban life, if it is designed in a framework that increases the rural women empowerment.

Some achievements are related to extending the women participation in political, economic, social and cultural fields and accentuating their role in various situations has led to the creation of specific institutions. For example, in Iran, as a developing country, the most significant of such institutions are: the Women Socio-Cultural Council, the Women and Juvenile Specific Committee in the System Expedient Recognition Convention, the Women Participation Center in Presidency Institution, the Women Affairs Province Commission, the Women Commission in Islamic Council Parliament, the Women Affairs Office in Judicature and also the other institutions that are doing some activities indirectly for women such as Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, Agriculture Ministry, Literacy Movement. Regarding the importance of the women participation and exploiting their competence for the

recognition and resolving their problems, the organized and systematic planning in different fields is needed. By constituting special groups and institutions of women, particularly the rural women institutions, undoubtedly, it can form the woman's attendance in different fields and it removes the undeserved understanding of the women's positions and rights. On the other hand, statistically, the rural women population in Iran is about 12 million people; and 42 percent of rural women population are between 15 to 24 and 13.11 percent are adult and finally 9.4 percent are 65 and more (Shafaghi, 2001).

Generally, the enterprises which are related to women follow special plans and purposes. These goals can be defined as follow: to make an attempt to establish equality between women and men, to try to gain experiences and knowledge about women rights, to try to provide a situation for women to participate in conferences and seminars, to create secondary commissions to consider the women issues. To do this, the coordinator systems of the women NGO (non-governmental organizations) are constructed (Ahmadiyan, 1999). So, the rural woman enterprises can be both local and self-constructed that can be managed non-governmentally and it may be in the format of designs and projects that are supported by governmental organizations and it has an active role in all implementations and credit stages. As mentioned above, one of the most important elements of rural development is to make the women capable in managing fields and promoting their function in the same field, and to make decision and to accomplish in family and society. The participation value of the rural women would be increased in product and economy of the country by performing policies and codifying guiding plans by the use of educational, promoter and entrepreneurship plans. This would be possible by the creation and promotion of human enterprises and institutions in rural areas (Mafi and Mousavi, 2004).

Williamson (2005) believes that, in rural sustainable development, coordinating the activities would be effective when it is compatible with nature not when it is against it. The rural areas

in under-developed [third-world] countries have a prominent role in the development of a country by allocating a large portion of Gross National Products (GNP), occupation, providing food needs and habitat of a large population of people; as, one of the most effective approach for a strong and sustainable development of these areas would be making the use of partnership and competence of all individuals especially the rural to develop the rural areas in all dimensions (Dorzinia and Amiri, 2005).

The [World Bank \(2000\)](#) considers the rural societies participation as an essential path in accomplishing the rural development priorities in order to making the best use of the present sources in rural areas. [Warren-Smith and Jackson \(2004\)](#) underline the importance of rural social participation as both a big step in establishing democracy between social organizations and the creation of self-aiding sense between the rural. The commitment and persistence of these local enterprises forced the government to assign some of its heavy responsibilities to these local organizations while the government believes in their capability and effectiveness of these NGOs and their position. The NGOs define the human participation in society by the use of their medium [intermediate] role between the individuals and the government (Gholfi, 2003).

[Stenseke \(2009\)](#) mentions the rural participation, in the formation of rural enterprises, as an approach whose duty is to support the cultural values of an area -regarding the individuals participation and also success of enterprises in rural areas; there are two points that must be taken into consideration: first, the individuals should be encouraged to participate, because they have a key role in rural areas development; second, to provide some opportunities for the rural demands because the creation of human enterprises can be considered as a bridge that connects the rural needs to responsible men (Coelho and Favareto, 2008).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was a qualitative one which was done by the use of case study. The samples were chosen by considering the topic recognition

criterion from rural development experts of college and the administration part of Jihad-Agriculture Organization of Hamedan Province. The main criteria of selecting materials in qualitative researches are to be experienced and to be familiar with the studied phenomenon. The data collection method was the semi-structured interviews. First, the topic concept was investigated and by the use of it four principals were clarified as the research questions; and, interview questions guide were specified based on these questions. These four main research questions were as follow:

- 1- What are the roles and functions of women rural enterprises?
- 2- What types of supports, facilities and circumstances are necessary to operate rural women enterprises?
- 3- What are the barriers and limitations of rural women in rural women enterprises?
- 4- What are the solutions and approaches of promotion and development of rural women enterprises?

The data collection was done by face-to-face interviews, after the interview questions guide was determined. The number of samples was not clear at the beginning, but, as soon as the interview was started, the other key samples were defined by snowball sampling method and the data collection process was kept on till the samples theoretical saturation step. The theoretical saturation was attained by interviewing of 25 samples and at this point the interview process was laid off. The qualitative sample analysis of interviews was done by the content analysis method. To do this, first, the data were coded and summarized separately and finally the common topics were reported. Regarding that the number of samples was more than 20 cases, according to researches, the common topics were mentioned in the form of rehearsal frequency and percentage. So, in this paper the common topics were reported in the form of rehearsal frequency and percentage.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The expected experts are between 32 to 49 years of age. The average age of individuals is 38. Forty percent of samples were male and 60

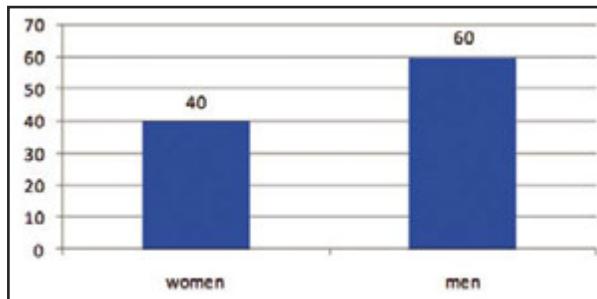


Figure 1: The percentage of gender samples

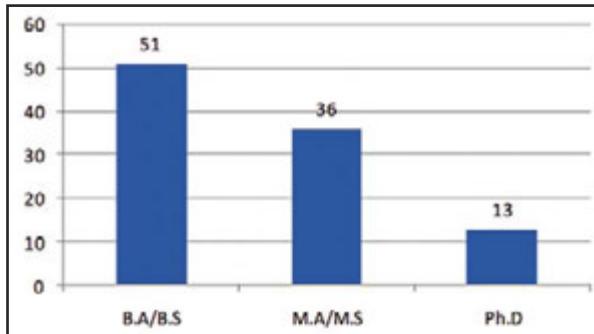


Figure 2: The percentage of education degree of samples

percent were female. Their job experience average was 8 years. The degree of interviewed sample were as follow: 51 percent B.S., 36 percent M.S. and 13 percent Ph.D. (graph 1 and 2)

### Interview question 1: Roles and function of rural women enterprises

The experts of rural development issues were interviewed and their responses were collected. Totally, different responses were collected which its data analysis is depicted in the following table. The

most significant roles and functions of rural women development, as illustrated in table 1, can be categorized in economic, social, individual, domestic, juridical, educational and managerial functions.

### Interview question 2: Supports, facilities and circumstances to develop rural women enterprises

The interviewers were asked to state their opinions openly about the essential support of implementing rural women enterprises. The results show that, as illustrated in table 2, lawful and financial, domestic, managerial, educational and cultural supports are of upmost importance which is necessary for the women enterprise development from the respondents' point of view.

Here, some comments are quoted directly:

“Regarding to the activity and enterprise type, bank credits and services must be available for women. The women who are cultivating mushroom, as an example, must be exposed to a proper place and bank conveniences to do so.”

“The location of the women enterprise must be such a proper and domestic place; hence, their families would let them participate in those enterprises. This place should be designed in a way which the mothers who have children could visit their children as easy as possible; for instance, such places like kindergarten must be available to take care of children; so, the mother can participate in the enterprises.”

Table 1: Roles and functions of rural women enterprises

Priority	Common topics	frequency	The percent of each element separately	The percent of each element related to others
1	Economic function (earning development, income increasing)	22	88	18.2
2	Social function (entrepreneurship, participation and women social relation development)	21	84	17.4
3	Individual function (self-confidence, motivation and individual creativity increase)	19	76	15.7
4	Family function (family health, mental and physical health, discrimination removal)	17	68	14
5	Juridical function (familiarity with the women's right, financial rules)	16	64	13.2
6	Technical and educational function (preoccupation and modern knowledge familiarity)	14	56	11.6
7	Managerial function (decision-making and planning power promotion)	12	48	9.9

Table 2: Essential supports, facilities and circumstances for implementation of rural women enterprises

Priority	Common topics	frequency	The percent of each element separately	The percent of each element related to others
1	Financial and juridical supports (bank credits)	24	96	23.8
2	Family supports	22	88	21.8
3	The enterprises planning and management supports (proper place and time, providing suitable situation)	21	84	20.8
4	Technical and educational supports	18	72	17.8
5	Medium and cultural supports	16	64	15.8

### Interview question 3: The solutions for the development and promotion the rural women enterprises

The respondents were asked to state their opinions about solutions and approaches of rural women enterprises development and promotion. After collecting the responses, different issues were coded by content analysis and then they were classified in common topic as illustrated in table 3.

### Interview question 4: Barriers and limitations of development the rural women enterprises

Here, the respondents' opinions were analyzed and the results were summarized in table 4. As the results show, the cultural, individual and domestic, economic, social barriers are identified as the most important barriers of development of the women enterprises.

Here, another comment is stated:

"To me, the first thing about the rural women is the matter of their family thought; maybe their husband, father-in-law, brother and daughters disagree with their activity. The large distance of the location of rural women enterprise may

cause lots of problems; and, rural women are not able to travel to far places. Culture and wrong beliefs is really widespread in rural areas. In Kurdish rural areas, affluent women usually do not work; and, their families are ashamed of women's working, except when they have to do so or when they are poor.

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results indicate that rural women enterprises possess different roles and function which are considered as an important part of rural development. The most vital roles and functions that are mentioned in this paper are as follow: economic, social, individual, domestic, juridical, educational and managerial functions.

The results also show that in order to develop and promote the rural women enterprises not only implementing lawful, financial, domestic, managerial, education and cultural is needed but some approaches like culturalization and implementing plans to empower women, the continuous implementation of educational and counseling plans, encouraging successful women enterprises are vital too.

Table 3: The solutions and approaches of the development and promotion the rural women enterprises

Priority	Common topics	frequency	The percent of each element separately	The percent of each element related to others
1	Proper culturalization and suiting (in individual, family, social and economic dimension)	23	92	30.3
2	Implementing plans to make the women more competent (political, managerial, official)	21	84	27.6
3	The continuous implementation of counseling and educational plans (introducing enterprises, familiarity, informing)	18	72	23.7
4	Encouragement and introducing successful enterprises	14	56	18.4

Table4: barriers and limitations of rural women enterprises

Priority	Common topics	frequency	The percent of each element separately	The percent of each element related to others
1	Cultural barriers (wrong beliefs in rural areas, lack of freedom)	24	96	27.9
2	Family and individual barriers (lack of self-confidence and physical power, lack of family permit to work)	22	88	25.6
3	Economic barriers (lack of loan, and bank credits, lack of the women's financial dependency)	21	84	24.4
4	Social barriers (lack of society admission, having different responsibilities)	19	76	22.1

The major limitation and barriers of rural women in developing such enterprises are: cultural barriers particularly the existence of the dominant thought in rural areas, lack of enough information and the women weakness in education and illiteracy, their semi-literacy, economic barriers specially financial problems their economic dependency to their husbands and social barriers.

Therefore, it can be said that the rural women's participation is a vital and essential issue in implementation of different developmental and agricultural rural activities. Hence, the rural development would be impossible without the women participation. Also, rural enterprises, as a supporting and cooperating and motivating element, can have an important role in making the rural women more competent. For this, it is suggested that these enterprises must be invigorated by the use of supportive, juridical and financial policies and the rural women enterprises development make the women more confident and competent.

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