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# CHINA'S RURAL DEVELOPMENT MIRACLE

WITH INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

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Abstract  
**THE POSITION AND ROLE  
OF WOMEN IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

*Liu Jin*

*Institute of Rural Development,  
Chinese Academy of Social Science, Beijing, China*

The question as to how to enhance the position and role of women in rural development has become an issue of world attention. In rural China women account for more than half of the labour force. This has effectively determined the special position and role of Chinese women in rural development. However, any change in the position and role of rural Chinese women has always been strictly subject to general social and economic changes.

China's post-1979 economic reforms have brought about significant political and economic changes in the rural areas. The introduction of the household responsibility system in particular has entrusted the individual peasants with fully independent decision-making powers. This has provided rural Chinese women with a wider scope and more opportunity for their talents and abilities beyond traditional household chores.

The effect economic reform has had on women in rural China is illustrated mainly in the following aspects: it has further awakened their self-consciousness, opened up to them more employment opportunities, and increased their enthusiasm for more education and practical techniques and skills. The paper examines these changes and the socioeconomic causes from seven different angles. It shows that there has been an improvement in the quality of the female human capital because they have been able to raise their levels of education and technical skills. These improvements have, in turn, promoted the development of the rural economy.

Rural development refers not only to economic development but also to developments in culture, morality, technology and the transformation of traditional thinking. Today the self-development of rural Chinese women and their full participation in rural development are restricted mainly by the following factors: (a) cultural barriers; (b) the lack of access to the means required for engaging in productive activities (i.e., land, skills, funds and credit); (c) the lack of training, including vocational education and technical training; and (d) the general lack of confidence and feeling of inferiority among peasant women.

The changing role of women and the exploration of ways to raise their position and give greater scope to their role in rural development has become a

subject for research. The most fundamental problem to be considered is how to help them increase their economic well-being. They need to be helped to engage in high-income producing activities. Another problem is to eradicate throughout the country the discriminatory feudal concept of women and furnish in women a sense of self-respect, self-pride, self-confidence and independence. At the same time, given the present imbalance in development in rural areas, particular efforts must be devoted to helping women in underdeveloped areas get rid of poverty. Along with the in-depth development of rural socioeconomic reform, in order to really free women from the heavy household burden and give them more time to engage in more constructive and rewarding activities, it is necessary to establish and to develop various service infrastructure facilities in rural areas so as to socialize housework and improve rural living conditions.

