

Gender Analysis and Planning in Rural Extension

Oleh: Dra. Nefi Aris Ambar Asmara, MA.¹⁾

"Because women are positioned within their societies through a variety of different social relation (for example, class, ethnicity and ages as well as gender) the interests, they share as a gender category will be shaped in complex and often conflicting ways".

This statement will be examine in the Implication for planning and implementation of development program for maximizing the beneficiaries-from Gender Analysis perspective, with the aimed at meeting the needs of rural women.

A. Introduction

Gender is socially constructed concept about of men and women which every development practitioner is expected to know the importance of, though still difficult to put in practice. Besides recognition about the importance of gender analysis, there might be views which act as barriers to gender-conscious approach.

When thinking the reason why project do not bring the effective results for sustainability, it could be said that those projects do not suit the needs of 'people' as a result of 'top-down approach', or insufficient analysis of the social factors, because the relation between woman and men is the largest unit in the society. As Moser (1993:91) claims, '...gender roles identification is a tool that makes visible previously invisible work'. Yet it is also important to remember that within women/men-group, there exist differences such as class, ages, ages, martial status, rich/poor and religious setting.

With these concepts in mind, we will discusses the social differences between women and men, and within women group as well as how such differences have an implication for planning and implementation of development programme aimed at meeting the needs or rural women. The argument begins with an account of gender relations and observes how this affects development programme in gender relations and the impact toward development program. Intra-gender relation its related with the differences within women-group. At the end, the proceeds to give the implication for the planning and implementation for development programme of the differences will be mentioned.

B. Gender Relations and The Impact Toward Development Programme

Looking at the society, it is consisted of different kinds of hierarchies, namely 'power relations'. To think about this power relation, one of the most dominant unit will be women and men.

1) Kasubag Kepegowatan dan Umum pada PKDA I LAN dan Dosen STIA LAN Bandung

It is generally accepted that women are more oppressed, powerless and marginalized. Most of the so-called gender-conscious approaches try to focus on women's empowerment to fill in the gap of the inequality. However, as pointed by Young (1991:63), the actual situations is that small-scale women's projects are frequently used as a justification by male development officials that they are doing something about women. This might be one of the barriers which maintains the status quo.

Elson, argues that few men show eagerness to overcome male bias, perhaps it is because the disadvantages of relinquishing male power are more immediately apparent, while the distribution of that giants is uncertain and the transition period may be painful. Besides, because of the oppression for long time, women show little understanding of the operation of male bias do much to perpetuate it (ibid., 191:3-7).

Cornwall (1998:54) suggests that instead of putting such differences as a problem, development workers should take it as an opportunity for development. She goes on to say that everyone, at some stage in their lives, has had the experience of being made feel powerless. Therefore these experiences can be used as a starting-point to explore the ways in which difference becomes hierarchy and leads to inequality. However, 'the most obvious problem is that gender is not the only difference, nor is it always the main difference that affects people's

options or choices. Defining women-in-general as an identifiable interest group obscures the effects of other cross-cutting differences' (Cornwall, 1998:50).

C. Intra-Gender Relation: Women Are Not Homogenous

While gender relation is focused on in development programme with emphasis on gender-sensitive planning, women are not homogeneous. There exist differences, such as classes, ages, marital status, rich/poor and religious setting and again, imbalance exists. Moreover, depending on the position where they live or the situation, the needs of 'women' might be different. About these complexities in the society, Young states as follows; 'Society is stratified in numerous ways by gender, class, caste, race, ethnicity, age. These forms of stratification cut across each other and interact in complex ways...it is impossible to priorities any one of them in the abstract' (ibid.,1993:149). In addition, Kindon (1998:160) articulates this complexity to say that, '...the conflict and tension present in same-sex discussion exist which extend beyond the boundaries of gender'.

When looking at this complexity, the poorest and most disadvantaged groups, a large proposition of which are rural women, tend to be excluded from a development which generally looks at in the limited project situation. Young (1993:65) states that 'for development planning to be able to respond to the needs of rural women, a closer examination is needed of social and

economic relations between men and women, between men and men, and between women themselves.

Taking into consideration this point, next section discusses the implication for planning and implementation of development programme, aimed at meeting the rural women's needs.

D. Implication for Planning and Implementation of Development Programme Aimed at Meeting the Needs of Rural Women

To reflect the people's needs, participatory methodologies are becoming popular. However, within the complexity of the society mentioned above, poorest and most disadvantaged groups amongst them a large proportion of rural women generally do not access to such meeting. This has some implication in intervention planning as follows:

Firstly, 'if participatory development is explicitly concerned with the effects of inequality, it is crucial that gendered inequalities are addressed' (Cornwall, 1998:53). There is a criticism to say that many participatory approach s often focus on using consultation to relieve the symptoms of oppression rather than its change process or causes. It is also said that there is nothing inherent in the participatory approach that addresses gender as an issue. (Gujit and Shah, 1998: 11; Cornwall, 1998).

Powerful people's voice is louder and they have access to claim the needs. Thus, programme should focus on

marginalized powerless people deliberately, avoiding to make the gap wider. To approach with narrow view for analysis of people's needs will be helpful to understand the social dynamics of planning and choice making as they take place. Indeed, the selection of participants will be crucial point.

Secondly, being flexible to take account of diversity rather than one which to impose a single 'universal truth' onto all rural peoples is important (Moser, 1995; Warner and Balcombe, 1996).

Mayoux, suggests that women will need a range of participatory options for different purposes in many cases, considering the differences, power balance and depending on the stages of awareness (Mayoux, 1995:243-250). Development professional may respond to women's needs due to generalization of the 'women-group', however, it is important to remember other complexity in the society.

Thirdly, responding only practical gender needs will not be necessarily effective, because women's immediately observable 'practical needs' are generally related to underlying and interlinked systems of inequality. These include gender inequalities between women and men and men as well as other inequalities such as class, age and ethnicity with in 'women' and without challenging the strategic needs of women, power-balance will not be changed (Moser,1993; Mayoux,1995:242). Development practitioner should not

assume that women are able, willing or even interested in taking part in a programme. To analyse those reasons will also help to understand the actual social situations.

Finally, understanding the condition in which women are formed has a times led into effectiveness of focusing on women's group as a first stage. Elson (1991:194) stresses about this point to say that, 'women's organizations have been successful in changing women's perceptions, increasing their bargaining ability within the family, enabling them to mobilize community resource, such as literacy classes and to gain a voice in local government'.

It could be expected to affect every aspect in the society to remove the existence and effect of unjust inequalities through empowerment. Gujit and Shah (1998:15), strongly argue that communication and social change take time and not everyone has it, least of all women. As the first step, knowing diversity in the society will help to analyse who is powerless and who should be empowered most.

E. Challenge for Planning and Implementation for Development Programme Reflecting Women's Needs.

As it could be seen above, gender issue including intra-gender issue, is complicated and it takes time to achieve the desirable situation for the whole society. As far as concerning this matter there are a lot of challenges for both development practitioner and 'people' in the society.

The most significant point might be about culture or tradition barrier. There is an argument that outsiders should not break the culture or traditions. However, the fact that outsiders come in the area as development practitioner already means a change to society (Mayoux, 1995:250). 'Without explicit commitment to positive changes in gender inequality with accepting that challenging gender inequalities is taboo, therefore it is unlikely that women's participation will be more than token or lead in itself to any real change' (Mehta, 1991:286). What people call culture or tradition might be also accumulation of 'changes' for long time in the past. 'Change' does not mean 'Destroy' and it is a natural trend in any society. One would argue, that real sustainability, self reliance, that is empowerment cannot be accomplished without thinking about diversity within the society. Thus, seeking research and planning methods which are culturally appropriate and go beyond gender neutrality will be important in knowing the local situation (Gujit and Shah, 1998:15).

It might be meaningful for outside interventionist to have adequate knowledge and understanding of the different values and norms of the particular culture, to know the complexity in the society (Mehta, 1991:288). As for the changes for 'people', common awareness toward changes, namely empowerment not only as individual but also as corporate might be substantial. The projects which reflect the needs of every people could never

exist, however, to maximise the beneficiaries, it will be a critical path to start projects with the consensus under those complexities.

In addition, to change social system for filling the gap within society, facing challenges against 'power' will be inevitable. To solve the root of the problems, it will be necessary to influence the policy level at some time to respond to the strategic needs of women, in other words for overcoming the marginalisation of some groups of people in the society. It will be impossible to solve every problem at the same time, however it could be helpful to prioritize and take a step (Elson, 1991: 191-1998).

As it could be seen here, it takes time for social systems to be changed and there is also possibilities that unexpected change will occur. In this meaning, careful monitoring will be significant to reflect on the changes (Gujit and Shah, 1998:19).

F. Conclusion

Young (1993:165) states that, 'Change will not come from above, but from the interaction between the compelling impetus of those who will directly benefit from change and those within the structures of power who have the capacity to share their wider vision'. As seen in this statement, to plan and implement development programme aimed at the needs of majority in the society, the first step will be analysis of

those who consist of the society and their power relations between them.

It is important to see gender relations, including intra-gender relations which consist the complexity in the society. By analyzing these relations, development practitioner may know the role and responsibility of each group in the society to identify the actual situation.

Moser (1993:190) claims that, 'Gender planning is not an end in itself, but a means by which women through a process of empowerment, can emancipate themselves'. Change may take a time and require positive attitude and action by majority of people in the society and by development interventions.

Change in the society may not stop, regardless of development interventions and it is clear that intervention from outside will be influential to that change. Thus, as a development practitioner, planning and implementation of programs with people might be indispensable approach. Again, this calls for a change in development professionalism in the side of outsiders in order to be good facilitators, not the teachers.

Bibliography

- Cornwall, Andrea (1998). *Gender, Participation and the Politics of Difference*, London: IT Publications.
- Elson, D. (1997). *The Impact of Structural Adjustment on Woman: Concepts and Issues*, London: City University Press.

- Gujit and Shah (1998). *Accounting for Women's Work: The Progress of Two Decades*, London: IT Publications.
- Kindon (1998). *Getting Institutions Right for Women in Development*, London: Zed Books.
- Majoux, Linda (1995). *Beyond Naivety: Women, Gender Inequality and Participatory Development*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Mehta (1991). *Women and The Power to Change*, Berkeley: Carnegie Commission in Higher Education.
- Moser, Caroline O.N. (1999). *Gender Planning in The Third World: Meeting Practical and Strategic Gender Needs*, London: Pergamon.
- Young, K. and C. Moser (1991). *Women and the Informal Sector*. Institute of Development Studies Bulletin, Vol. 12, No. 3.