

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1. Gender Concept

Gender roles are the social definition of women and men, and vary among different societies and cultures, classes and ages, and during different periods in history. Gender-specific roles and responsibilities are often conditioned by household structure, access to resources, specific impacts of the global economy, and other locally relevant factors such as ecological conditions. Gender refers to the socially and culturally established roles of women and men (Fieldstein, 1994). Rocheleau (1987) has asserted that gender is a complicating factor due to the unequal power relationship between men and women in most societies. In contemporary society, social process shapes the gender relations.

According to FAO, 1997, gender analysis seeks answers to fundamental questions such as who does or uses what, how and why. The purpose of gender analysis is not to create a separate body of social knowledge about women, but to rethink current processes - such as natural resource use and management, economic adjustment and transformation, or demographic changes - to better understand the gender factors and realities within them. Having this knowledge, it would be possible to avoid the mistakes of the past and tailor interventions to better meet women's and men's specific gender-based constraints, needs and opportunities.

The empirical studies on women in different countries have pointed to the importance of the roles of women in agriculture and rural economy (Cleave, J., 1976). Region by region, country by country, ethnic group by ethnic group, detailed studies documented that women's labor and women's decision making are absolutely crucial to agricultural production and development (FAO, 1982).

2.2 Workload

In Nepal, of the total economically active women population, 90.5% are engaged in agriculture (Bajracharya, 1994). The National Sample Census of Agriculture in 1991/92 recorded that, on an average, Nepalese women contributed 55 to 71 percent of all agricultural labor (Bajracharya, 1993). Female labor contributions in some agricultural related activities as the field preparation and ploughing including crop sowing, clod breaking, weeding, harvesting, manure supply and food processing are eight to ten -folds higher than that of men (Bajracharya, 1994). With regard to time allocation, women also provide more time in agriculture related activities than men. Nepalese women are equally involved in both field and post-harvest work in crop production. Ploughing is considered a man's job, whereas all other work, though shared by men, is mostly undertaken by women. Collecting and carrying compost to the field is normally performed by women (Katuwal, 1990). In both rain fed and irrigated area agriculture time spent by women is higher relative to that of men. In rain fed areas women devote 12.36 hours per person per day, whereas men do only 9.03 hours. Similarly, in irrigated zones women put in 11.61 hours per person per day whereas men do only 7.85 hours (Sharma, 1995 quoted in FAO, 2000). Women, both as participants and decision makers, share the responsibility of planting, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, carrying grains to the mill for grinding, including collecting wood, water and fodder. Women's involvement is very significant in care and management of livestock and poultry, and kitchen gardening (Axinn, 1990).

In Nepal, women are actively involved in livestock production. Fodder collection, grazing and milking are generally performed by both women and men, whereas activities like feed preparation, feeding, cleaning sheds and preparing milk products are women's domain (Acharya and Bennet, 1983). Women have a crucial role in detecting illness of the animal because of their close and frequent contact with them. Marketing of livestock is mainly done by men, but in consultation with women. Girl children also share the responsibility for herding goats (Katuwal, 1990). Tulachan and Neupane, 1999, reported that Women spend three to six hours a day on livestock and FYM activities, two to eight hours per day on crop-related farm

activities, and about three hours a day on fodder, bedding material, and fuel collection.

According to the Human Development Report (UNDP,2004) given the traditional gender divisions of labor, women concentrate more on their ascribed reproductive roles and responsibilities while men focus on “productive”, income-earning roles. As in most households worldwide in both developed and developing countries, reproduction is not regarded as work and household work is not considered productive. However, the work burden of women in Nepal (16 hours) is much higher than the global average for three reasons: First, reproductive work is much more intense; second, maintaining household is highly work-intensive, particularly during the peak agricultural season; third, participation of women in Nepal in “productive” activities is one of the highest in the world. The boundaries of all these activities undertaken by women are influenced by factors such as household composition i.e. extended/joint, nuclear and female-headed families, household stratification by economic status – wealthy, poor or landless – the migration of male family members, education, knowledge and health status.

In Thailand, it is found that women participate almost as equally as men in labor exchange, planting and harvesting of most crops. Women engage less than men in land preparation for crop production and in rearing of large animals such as cows and buffaloes. On the other hand, they take more responsibility than men in feeding management of small animals like pigs and poultry. Women work fewer hours in crop production. They work hard not only in the field but also at home (Shinawatra, Tongsir, and Pitakwong, 1987).

In Vietnam, survey conducted in the Mekong delta showed that 72 percent of women’s labor was in agricultural work, 82 percent were chiefly responsible for household work. Their educational level was rather low, and they did not receive technical the technical guidance (Luat and Son, 1992). The research on real situation of women force in household economy in the Red river delta found that the total man-day of women is approximately 293 days per year while that of men is approximately 279.2 days.

In most countries, women spend 30 hours or more on housework each week while men spend around 10 hours. In Andhra Pradesh, India it was that the work day of a woman agricultural laborer during the agricultural season lasts for 15 hours, from 4: 00 am to 8:00 pm, with an hour's rest in between. Her male counterpart works for seven to eight hours, from 5:00 am to 10:00 am or 11 am and from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. In overall farm production, women's average contribution is estimated at 55 - 66 percent and they provide one half of the labor in rice cultivation in India. In the Indian Himalayas it was found that on a one-hectare farm, a pair of bullock works 1,064 hours, a man 1,212 hours and a woman 3,485 hours in a year (Coonrod, 1998). In Kenya, women spend one third of working hours on food preparation and childcare, which stretches their working day to 13-14 hours (World Bank 1989 quoted in Saito and Spurling, 1992).

2.3 Access and control of resources and benefits

2.3.1 Land

Human Development Report Nepal, UNDP (2004), indicated that Nepalese women have limited access to resources and limited control over those they can access. Of the total landholdings, females own only 8.1 percent and the average size of their land is just two-thirds that of an average male holding. Only 4 percent of the households have female ownership of both house and land. Smith and Trujillo (1999) reported that less than one percent of the world's property is owned by women. Millions of rural women around the world have very limited land tenure rights -- the set of rights held by an individual or group to land, including rights to own, control and use the land. Similarly FAO (2002) quoted that in the world less than two percent of all land is owned by women.

Despite women's important role in agriculture in Nepal, traditional social norms and customary laws, which generally are biased in favor of men, are a barrier to women's equitable access to productive resources (Kumar and Hotchkiss, 1989). Looking at the woman's right over land and other property, Agarwal (1994) argues

that the women's right over property would be more secured with the reorganization of state laws. She asserted, "a woman may have the legal right to inherit property, but this may remain merely on paper if the law is not enforced or if the claim is not socially recognized as legitimate and family members exert pressure on the women to forfeit her share in favor, say her brothers".

Rocheleau and Edmund (1997) raise the point that the gender relations are the access to use, control resources in different agricultural land. In a research in Dominican Republic, agricultural land is divided into food cropland, patio garden, forest and pasture plots with tree cash crops. She examined the accessibility of men and women to the natural resources toward different types of land. According to her study, in every region of Dominican Republic, women and men differ with respect to specific division of labor, responsibilities, interests and control in the agricultural land forestry production and resources management. She also pointed out the current distribution of power clearly favors men with respect to land ownership, control over crops, trees, water, livestock, and institutional linkages to the technical support from national and international agencies.

A study in Ghana by Duncan and Brants (2004) showed that access to land determines one's access to income-generating activities as well as one's access to food. The authors also pointed that increased access to land by women would have a positive impact on the household in terms of food security, household income and family welfare due to their increased agricultural productivity. In addition, more secure land rights would give the users of the land greater control over their labor, a rational to invest in the land and crops, access to extension services, access to credit and inputs, bargaining power, and a higher status within the community. In this respect Silaa, Sameji and Merere (2002) said that women in Tanzania are, on average much less educated than men, are less likely to own land, and have less access to credit and loans. Due to these structural limitations, women are less mobile, empowered, and privileged, restricting their abilities to provide household food security. FAO (2002) describes that greater security of rights to land increases the holder's ability to make decisions regarding appropriate economic strategies that may

include diversification from subsistence farming. Security is a key to enabling individuals in the households to participate effectively in economic development. Inferior access to health services, education and training places women in a disadvantaged position in the labor market, they predominate in low-pay, low-status, part-time or contract work that offers limited opportunities of social security coverage. In addition, unequal access to productive resources, such as land, capital, credit, technology and extension services, has the effect of reducing incomes and savings, thereby restricting women's capacity for self-protection and increasing their dependence on their families.

2.3.2 Credit

Credit facilities for women are needed, not only to foster their independence, improve their lives, and give them a sense of ownership but also to enable them to buy basic agricultural inputs, such as fertilizers and seeds and introduce new agricultural technologies (Creevey, 1996). Hashemi, Schuler and Riley, (1996) explored the impact of credit on a number of indicators of empowerment: (i) the reported magnitude of women's economic contribution; (ii) their mobility in the public domain; (iii) their ability to make large and small purchases; (iv) their ownership of productive assets, including house or homestead land and cash savings; (v) involvement in major decision-making, such as purchasing land, rickshaw or livestock for income earning purposes; (vi) freedom from family domination, including the ability to make choices concerning how their money was used, (vii) a composite of all these indicators.

Women's lack of access to credit is part of a larger problem of inadequate credit availability for small farmers. Although women may have less credit risks than men (generally higher rates of repayment), banks and other formal lending institutions are reluctant to extend credit to them since the loans are usually small and women tend to be inexperienced borrowers often unable to meet collateral requirements such as land title or cattle (FAO, 1997). Rural women's low levels of literacy and numeracy make

it difficult for them to overcome the procedural barriers of taking out a loan (Saito and Spurling, 1992).

The Constitution of Nepal stipulates that non-discrimination and equality are fundamental rights. However, Nepal's State laws, as well as traditional values, still relegate women to inferior status. Marital status determines female's access to land and other property. Poor single women, even with many children, do not receive land in resettlement areas. Although a husband may keep property in the name of his wife, she cannot sell, rent or otherwise transfer it without the consent of her spouse or sons. All these limitations, along with household confinement and low educational attainment, restrict women's access to credit; both formal lending institutions and village moneylenders require tangible collateral (UNDP, Human Development Report, 2004). It has been accepted widely that women's access to credit is limited because formal credit institutions are required some property for collateral and women are deprived from institutional credit since women have little access to the inherited property. Women's access to institutional credit is restricted by their confinement to household activities and lower level of awareness and educational attainment (Acharya, 2002). Munyua (2003) stated that as a result of the land-tenure laws in various African countries, deeds of ownership are often issued to men, which leaves women without the most common collateral - land.

2.3.3 Household income

In Vietnam the total value of product, which produced by women, occupy 61.0 percent of household income but their private expenditure is only about 60- 80 percent of that of men (Trong, 1994). Kelkar (1999) found that the income and resources of a household are not equally shared and enjoyed by its members. Even when a household income per member is above the poverty line, the less advantaged members (women, children and the aged) of a household might live in sheer poverty (without enough food, time to rest, health care, education, decision-making power in natural resource management). According to Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO),2001 the specific constraints women face,

relative to men, include lack of access to productive resources such as land, property rights and inheritance; lack of access to the formal economy; and inequitable representation at all levels in both private and public and economic forum, and in particular in decision-making.

Research in Africa, Asia and Latin America has found that improvements in household food security and nutrition are associated with women's access to income and their role in household decisions on expenditure as women tend to spend a significantly higher proportion of their income than men on food for the family (FAO, 1997). According to Kelkar (1999) it is well known that the manner in which household income is used for meeting basic needs of the members of a household varies depending on whether income is controlled by men or women. Many studies have shown that women spend more of the money they control on children and household needs than men. According to Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), 2001, inequalities in access to resources, including independent income, faced by women reduce the participation of women in economic production and thus reduce their contribution to development. In addition, gender inequalities hamper human capital formation of future generations. A number of studies have shown that women have greater propensity than men to spend their income for the direct benefit other family members, especially children.

2.3.4 Agricultural extension services

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), 1995 pointed that women farmers often have no elementary schooling and agricultural extension is one of their most important external sources of information. According to FAO (1997) properly designed research and extension functions can have a high payoff in terms of improving food availability and providing employment opportunities as well as reducing environmental degradation and enhancing resource management. They are closely linked with research activities to provide improved technology aimed at increasing productivity and accelerating overall economic growth.

Although women play a major role in agricultural production, agricultural extension programs often neglect the women's roles. A global survey by FAO showed that women received only five per cent of all agricultural extension services worldwide. For the most part, extension policies do not specifically identify women as an integral part of the target audience. Existing extension services tend to focus on a few "progressive" farmers while neglecting many resource-poor farmers and the landless, including women. In this respect Saito and Spurling, 1992, quoted that on the South Asian subcontinent, training programs for women farmers have been described as being unrelated to women's actual needs because they concentrate on the domestic rather than farming base; are timed for the season when women cannot be away from the farm; and last longer than reproductive and farming duties permit. As yet agricultural research programs have rarely taken into account rural women's knowledge and opinions of crop varieties and planting systems. This is due to women's lack of participation in setting research priorities or in generating and disseminating conventional technologies (FAO, 1997).