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## Women's Role in Iran's Rural Development

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### Abstract

Most development planners believe that the human resources of a country are the major factors in social change and economic growth. As about half of the human resources are women, they are an essential goal and issue of development policy. The increasing cooperation of women in production of agricultural products, for example, is one of the indicators of social development. Since most of the population of Iran inhabit rural areas, the importance of the rural women's role as half of the rural population of the country can be considered effective in the process of agricultural production which leads to economic development of rural areas. It is observed that rural women present in the socio-economic scene of society, by performing their different roles, including management of home economy, educating children, working on the farm, etc. function as an always active element of society. Although, having a multi-aspectual role, they are not given the proper recognition they deserve. Their role in economic development is left unconsidered. In Iran, in the agricultural field, in many cases, the women's role is more difficult than men's. Such as transplanting, weeding, and carpet weaving . . . etc. Their status is lower than that of men. The productive role of rural women is not visible and is rarely recognised economically and socially. The contribution of female labour is estimated at 40% of the agricultural labour. They have no rights of access to resources. The above mentioned activities are not even considered in the official statistical records of the country as a business or productive activity. Unfortunately up to now Iranian rural women have not been considered seriously in development programmes although they are one of the central pillars of rural families. It seems that the first step would be an accurate assesment of their situation and an indication on rural womens' abilities, limitations and deprivations in the different dimensions of life (economic, social, cultural backgrounds). The favourable and necessary background for guaranteeing their real place in the process of rural development is yet to be developed.

**Keywords:** Rural development, women