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*resource development will require consistent national commitment and considerable investment of resources. The modernisation of rural economies should have a balanced approach that support technology for home front and farm front. Rural human assets particularly, rural women who had provided the labour for land based production as unpaid labour should be trained to take advantage of emerging opportunities. In the modern agriculture sector the gender disparity in lower wages paid to women should become a focus of agriculture labour equity provisions. In natural resource management front it is crucial that guaranteed rights to women to access and use and/or own to land and forest resources with responsibility to manage these resources supported by technology and information. The rural extension services units could become effective centres of learning for rural women assisted by information and communication technologies. The cost effectiveness and wide reach of communication technologies and infiltration of popular media in rural areas could favour a public education strategy to create awareness to change the biases against education for rural girl children and women. Most importantly the need of the time is the transformation of traditional norms which perpetuate biases against rural women and rural girls within family, communities and work organizations. As the countries move toward decentralization of governance process it would be important that the UN conventions agreed to and commitments made by the member nations are reflected in the local governance approaches and programs. Given the importance and urgency at this time, thus when it comes to planning for gender equality actions for reducing rural poverty it cannot be business as usual but it has to be business **unusual**.*

1. Income Poverty and Information Dispossession

Presently global dialogue over poverty highlights the idea that people are poor and powerless due to reasons of lack of income as well as information to improve their options to overcome poverty. An underlying belief is that relevant information improves the knowledge of livelihood alternatives and thus improves choices. So, the it is proposed that informed choices improve livelihood strategies. As the world economy and social interactions become increasingly connected, the poor confront new

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1.2. Furthermore within the countries distorted income and asset distribution situations create urban and rural disparity in income and thus income poverty is higher among th

women to function effectively in complex systems of exchanges should be given due attention in human development initiatives.

2. FAO Mission on Elimination of Hunger for Reducing Poverty:

An impending global development goal is to achieve equitable access to resources to improve living conditions among rural poor to reduce poverty and improve livelihood of rural households. FAO shares the global responsibility to eradicate poverty and elimination of hunger with a special mission to work for the people in agriculture and rural communities. Three dimensions of FAO food security programme are food availability, and access and stability and it is recognised in the World Food Summit Plan of Action that poverty eradication is essential to improve access to food^{viii}. The same document also recognises the role of women and men as partners in achieving the goals of sustainable food security and natural resource management. Under the commitment I of the World Food Plan of Action, the Governments committed themselves to

will demand a population policy in conjunction with poverty and food security policies. It should be explicitly recognised that the informal sector around the world is a labour pool made mostly of migrant rural poor-seeking livelihood in urban areas. Thus an urban growth management policy cannot ignore the basic cause of migration-namely the rural poverty- poverty among many whose livelihood base was natural resources and dependent on land based production.

4.0. Environmental Degradation Impact on Livelihood Risk and Food

the farmers in the absence of male members and thus face the constraints of working the poor land with inadequate support of technology and services to improve land based livelihood. Additionally, the forest dependent livelihood of rural women is threatened as degradation proceeds.

5.0. Advanced Technologies in Agriculture Development and Educational Gender Disparity

UNDP identifies two important trends in technologies, namely information and communication technologies and biotechnology (1999). The report states that, “ For both, there have been fundamental leaps in innovation-not just better ways of doing old things but radically new ways of doing previously unimagined things. The fusion of computing and communications-especially through the Internet – has broken the bounds of cost, time and distance, launching an era of global information networking. In biotechnology the ability to identify and move genetic materials across species types has broken the bounds of nature, creating totally new organisms with enormous but unknown implications. ... Communications change economic competition, empowerment and culture, inspiring global conversations. Genetic engineering leads to complex links between farmers and indigenous people in biorich countries and the multinational and agricultural industries (UNDP, 1999)^{xi}.” The technological revolution will impact on the agricultural development, but at this time the prospects for Asia-Pacific rural women’s participation in the new century technological innovations are not very positive.

rural equity in access to emerging knowledge based opportunities. From a human resource perspective the rural-urban disparity in education could impede rural women's participation and contribution to agriculture development driven by sophisticated modern technologies, such as biotechnology and information technology.

6.1. Changing global demand comes with implications for rural women's production at household level. An example on livestock production is presented. As relevant to livestock sector the following production trend is projected for 2020. It is stated that, "A demand-driven livestock revolution" is underway in the developing world, with profound implications for agriculture, health, livelihoods and environment... In per capita terms, demand for meat in developing countries will increase by 40 percent between 1995 and 2020, where as it will increase by only 10 percent for cereals. Worldwide demand for poultry meat is projected to increase by more than 85 percent between 1995 and 2020, for beef 50 percent and for pig meat by 45 percent. Nevertheless, demand for pig meat will continue to exceed demand for other meat commodities. In the developing world, demand for poultry meat is expected to increase the fastest, at an average annual rate of 3.6 percent, compared with 2.28 percent for beef and 2.3 percent for pig meat" (Pinstrup-Andersen *et al.* 1999)^{xii}. According to this projection a significant amount chickens and pigs will be needed to keep up with the growing demand within developing countries. It is stated that " the livestock revolution is a structural phenomenon that is here to stay. As in the case of the green revolution, the stakes for the poor in developing countries are enormous. How good or bad the livestock revolution will be for the people of the developing countries depends on how these countries choose to approach it. Lack of policy will not stop the livestock revolution but will ensure that the form it takes is less favourable fo

will take on economic activities based on cash economy rather than on land based commodity production. Thus even in rural areas primary concern could emerge as access to food rather than availability of food. There will be demand for alternative modes of income generation, up-scaling the production alternatives and managing cash based and market oriented enterprises. Again informal observation and qualitative information from the Philippines seem to suggest that overseas remittance income could diversify household livelihood strategies and investment in farm may only be one of the components of the livelihood strategies.^{xiv}

7.0. Right Based Approach To Development and Rural Women's Rights to Access Resources

In the year 2000 Human development report, it is acknowledged that "Human rights are fulfilled when the persons involved enjoy secure access to the freedom or resource covered by the right" (UNDP, 2000)^{xv}. As relevant to rural women, the human rights related to access to property and education are stressed. Among others freedom from hunger and starvation is also relevant to human resource development. Thus the role of rural women to contribute to food security is linked to rights to education and property. "Women's access in securing a commitment to their equal right to own, control and inherit land and other property, especially in rural areas, is particularly significant (Progress of World's Women 2000)^{xvi}." The legislative and administrative reforms for women's equal rights to resources and land rights have been on the agenda, but the progress had been rather slow. Since, it is a contentious issue both at household level politics and national laws.

7.1. A right based approach to development and the integration of women in development in particular will demand education of society and changing the attitude that under values girl children and women. The link between women's right for education and gender equity in human resource development will require consistent national commitment and considerable investment of resources. At the home front the family values and household economics should support the girl's education. Furthermore gender equality in education is not easy to achieve until and unless rural households escape the poverty trap.

8.0. Strategies for Active Advancing the Status of Rural Women in Agriculture and Rural Development Programmes in the Changing Regional Context

i) The regional economies are undergoing transformation in social, economic and political institutions. Most importantly the agriculture sector presents a mixed scenario. The subsistence agriculture sector coexists with advanced agricultural enterprises. Thus the scale and type of the enterprise wi

of intervention to improve women's access to resources. At the subsistence level the technological intervention should take into consideration the drudgery of women's work. If the women are not released from the domestic drudgery, they will lack time or incentive to explore livelihood strategies that could reduce resource vulnerability that threatens household food security. The modernisation of rural economies should have a balanced approach that support technology for home front and farm front.

- ii) The diversification of agriculture and global economic integration**
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- vii)** Information and communication technologies can be harnessed to achieve the two-fold purpose of improving the knowledge base of extension professionals as well as the technical expertise of rural women. The rural extension services units could become effective centres of learning for rural women assisted by information and communication technologies.
- viii)** Rural education system should be improved and educational opportunities for rural girl children's should be improved. This would demand interventions to alter the current biases that impede women's education and rural girl child's right to learn. The cost effectiveness and wide reach of communication technologies and infiltration of popular media in rural areas could favour a public education strategy to create awareness to change the biases against education for rural girl children and women.
- ix)** Most importantly the need of the time is the transformation of traditional norms which perpetuate biases against rural women and rural girls within family, communities and work organisations. Without such transformations in women's functioning environment, the women's aspiration to be empowered citizen cannot be fulfilled.
- x)** As the countries move toward decentralisation of governance process it would be important that the UN conventi

