Women in Production and Marketing of Medicinal Plants for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods in a Model Village of Sri Lanka
Naula Area

- One of the Medicinal Plants Conservation Areas
- Situation - Central Province
- Agro-climatic zone –
  - Low country Dry zone 1(DL1)
  - Low country Intermediate zone (IL)
- Land extent - 16,331 ha
- Location - Kumaragala mountainous range
Gender

**Macro - Level**

- Female Literacy rate – *90.6%* (2003/2004)
- Female Labour force participation – *35.7%* (2006)
- Female migrant employees – *55.9%* (2006)

**Contribution to the GDP as:**
- House maids – *50%* (2006)
Life Style of Naula rural Community

- Male dominated society
- Paddy cultivation
- Vegetables, onion, chilies and other subsidiary food crops
- Off-farm income
- Women displacement

Map of Sri Lanka showing locations such as Colombo, Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, and Kandy.
Project Objectives

To Assist communities living around the Naula MPCA

To Translate the recently developed policy on organic agriculture

To Enhance rural livelihoods through utilization of organically produced medicinal plants

To Bringing in harmony between conservation and development goals
Sample

- Grama Niladhari (GN) Divisions - 11

- From Each GN Division - 35 growers - randomly

- Total Interviewed – 361
Data

- Primary data – questionnaire
- Secondary data - published reports
- Data analyzing - Simple tabular analysis
Results

• Socio-Economic Indicators

- Interviewed Respondents - males - 63%

- Age categories -
  15-30 years - 15%
  31-60 years - 69%
  above 60 years - 16%

- Education - Less educated
  below Ordinary Level - 66%
  O/L - 27%

- Growing medicinal plants - part-time - 91%
Gender Participation

- **Men - Land Ownership**

- **Women** - Cultivation, access and control over medicinal plant genetic resources

- **Men and Women** - Share equal responsibility in harvesting

- **Women** - Drying, Grading, Bulk
Extension services

- Training acquired on conservation & Sustainable Use - 82%

- Female participation in training - very significant

- Attendance - training programmes conducted
  NGOs, Public sector, Government officers
  informal agents and others

- Do not received any training - 23%

- Loans obtained
  - Banks - 9%
  Previous medicinal plant project - 4%
Gross Margin

- Most - sold them in fresh form

- Demand - very less due to lack market access

- Value addition - limited to produce Ayurvedic products only

- Gross Margin – insufficient to maintain a family
Important points for successful implementation of women's programme

• motivation to enter into business
• availability and strength of social network
• management capability including time management
• delegation of responsibilities
• extent of diversification
• positive family involvement and support
• certain personality traits including positive attitudes
How Does Project Involve Women

- Asked them to:
  - Collect tradable medicinal plants
  - Grow them in home-gardens
  - Sell initial harvest as vegetable or leafy vegetable
  - Sell the rest as medicinal herbs in dry form
  - Supplementary income in split manner

- Supplementary income could be an attractive issue
- Learning by doing and sharing
Key Approaches in Involving Women

- Organize women groups
- Explain and frequent meetings
- Help to overcome their problems
- Prove supplementary income in practical manner
- Explain improvement of their nutritional status
Impacts on Women

Success Stories- 1  Mrs.R.M.Somawathini
Woman Entrepreneur

- SME enterprise producing mixture ailment packets containing 10 dried herbal plant parts under hygienic condition
- Under the permission - Ministry of Indigenous Medicine
- Marketing - by her to about 10 boutiques
- Price of a packet is Rs. 13/=  
- Helpers – 2 daughters
But market potential - Restricted retail price is not paying enough to make a sufficient gross margin

She has an access to micro credit scheme and small hand machines required for sealing the packets, franking machines and weighing machines

Pathetic situation – Machines not used to reduce drudgery of work

Her capacity – Adjusted to meet present demand
**Success Stories- 2**

Medicinal Plant Conservation Society - producing an herbal porridge - using several medicinal herbs available in home-gardens

This porridge is available daily at the sale centre at 40th mile post on Kandy Anuradhapura road

Income earned is shared by individual households who participated in this activity

It is important to document the women’s and men’s different indigenous skills in medicinal plant management.
Challenges

- 11 rural medicinal plant societies are available

- Provides equitable representation of men and women in planning process, defining activities and assessing their needs

- A micro credit scheme is available to encourage women
  - Maximum loan amount issued=Rs. 7000 /member 2007
  - Annual interest rate = 18%
  - Repayment amount suggested = Rs. 500/month with the interest
Micro credit scheme
Conclusions & Recommendations

- Medicinal plant cultivations - homestead under rain-fed condition
- Watering - hazardous activity
- Placement of community based tube wells reduces the drudgery of women
- Generally agronomical practices about medicinal plants acquired through generations
- Traditional knowledge on medicinal plants is seemingly disappearing due to slow transfer of information to younger generations
- Lack of documentation of this valuable pool of knowledge - great disadvantage for the expansion
Expanding market access for fresh or dried forms of medicinal plants may increase the family income.

Existing forms of *arista, asava, kalka* may not be enough to raise their family income.

SMEs - to make a positive contribution to the economy.

Producing value added herbal / medicinal products to the local & the international market raise the family income to alleviate poverty.
Without establishing forward contracts for futures market
– Drag women in to more desperate situations

Therefore it is important to consider
  - vulnerable group as women

Men are usually escaping - as more are dependent on other cash income generating cultivations and off-farm employment opportunities
Socio Economic Status on Production and Marketing of Medicinal Plants for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods in the Naula Area of Sri Lanka

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Thank You