

How successful is the Participatory Development Strategy in Empowering Women to Contribute to Rural Development in Sri Lanka. An analysis of the Change Agent Program.

Introduction

Community has been given much priority than other aspects in planning for development almost in all the countries in the present world. This is also common to the developing countries in South Asia. This priority has been given as more than 80% of the population consists of rural community in these countries. So that if they are forgotten in the development plans, their purposes cannot be achieved well. Therefore recently scholars have paid much attention on the necessity of people's participation in development plans. So it can be indicated that the outstanding features of the present development plans and poverty alleviation programs understand community development programs through community's participation, planning according to the community's needs, implementation by the community itself and gaining the plans etc. Thus, here the flow of implementation of plans is from top to bottom.

When the plans of rural poverty alleviation of governmental and non-governmental organizations of Sri Lanka for achieving the above purposes are concerned, the most outstanding feature of them is higher women's participation. For many countries higher women's participation is a basic characteristic of development programs which are succeeded well. There are 20, 00,000 members in the banking system of Bangladesh and 94% of them are women. In the program 'Service' which is a successful one is 100% women participated. This feature can also be seen in the poverty alleviation programs in South America, Africa and Eastern Asian countries. In Sri Lanka, this can be seen in the women's association in Habanthota, Samurdhi program, Social Agent program and Change Agent programs (Mithraratne, 1998).

In this study, it is expected to evaluate the Change Agent Program in Sri Lanka. Here, the way, how the rural women's participation have related to the Change Agent Program, which has been recognized as the prior in participation development programs is mainly studied. How is women's participation in the program and how far this program has affected rural women's empowerment are concerned in the study. In addition to these, it is expected to refer the facts such as whether changes have been made by the program in women's position in the society and in the family, and whether the program has been able to form a women's voice in the society. Here, it is also expected to study how far the Change Agent program has been implemented and how far the program has been succeeded.

Methodology

Questionnaire method is mainly used in collecting facts for the study. Here all the information has been collected from community based organizations in the districts of Galle, Badulla, Kandy, Kurunegala and Anuradhapura. Under the questionnaire method 362 persons were interviewed for getting facts in the random method. These people consisted of members of the

Change Agent Programme, those who left the program and members of other programs such as SANASA and Samurdhi.

In addition to these, facts were collected under case studies from the officials of community-based offices. Here, basic facts, and facts about funds of members etc. were concerned in gathering facts. Under the case study method, facts were also gathered from small groups. (In preparing this article, facts were also got from the first record of the final evaluation of Change Agent Program, by Prof. Kalinge Tudur Silva and Dr. Sepali Kottege. I regard them with great respect)

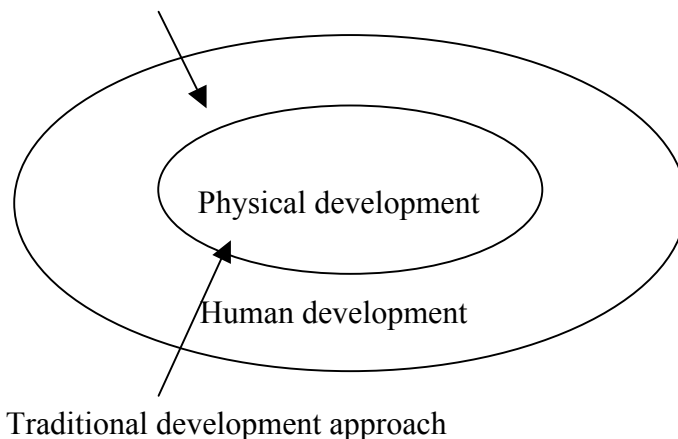
Change Agent Program

1970 was a decade in which poverty grew all around the world. Therefore a new development approach was formed with the mediation of social scientists, which were engaged in experiments about this problem, with the assistance of the Social and Economic Commission of the Asian and Pacific Region. This was also the outset of the Change Agent Program. Change Agent Program was started officially on the 28th of August 1978 as a training and research programme. This first started as a governmental organization. The Condered Asinorwure Foundation of Germany first assisted the program and P.V.S. de Silva and Panna Pannaraja who were two Sri Lankan social scientists were also prior in starting the program.

Self-courage and participation are the basic concepts of the Change Agent Program. Change Agent Program is the first program, which introduced participated rural development approach to the field of development. There was no program in which the poor are used as the targets or utensils of development earlier and so that the main purpose of this program was to use the poor as the pioneers of development. According to the Change Agent Program it is the poor who understand the needs of development and they are who continue the program from that moment according to those needs so as to get the gains of it. Thus it is expected to have their participation completely throughout the program. The development approach of the Change Agent Program is explained in the figure No.1.

Figure No.1
The development approach of the Change Agent Programme

Development approach of the Change Agent Program



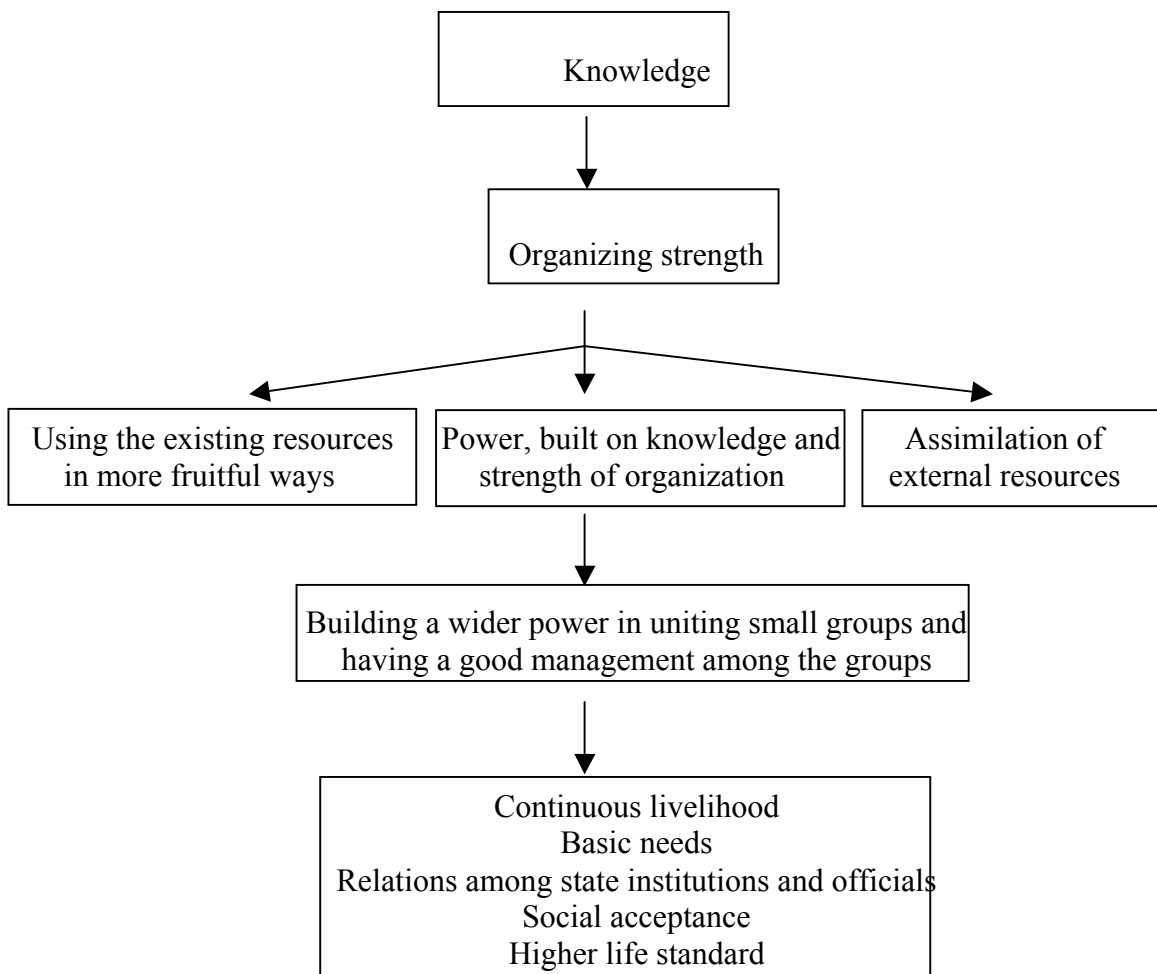
Source: Prajashakthi Praja Kalapaya, 1994

Following a development approach like this, there were many purposes to be achieved in the Change Agent Program. They were as follows.

- 1) Targeting the poor community and form development through their participation
- 2) Building self concept, self confidence, mutual confidence and co-operation among them
- 3) To make a background for a suitable institutional framework for themselves so as to build resources, abilities and new creations of the targeted community.
- 4) To make a background in which the families with lower income can understand the problems in their life style, especially in production, selling and consuming.
- 5) To assist them to protect their rights and co-operative activities.
- 6) To generate opportunities for housewives in which they are able to be partners in the process of development.
- 7) To form a sustainable development.

According to these purposes the Change Agent Programme keeps belief on self-courage and participation. Moreover it is clear that the main purpose of the Change Agent programme is to empower the poor through acknowledging them. This acknowledgement is known as mobilization and this process is formed through small group system. The implementation of the program is figured in the figure No.2.

Figure No.2
Implementation of the Change Agent Program



Source: Prajashakthi Prajakalapaya" 1994

Depended on these purposes" Change Agent Program started in four areas at the outset as an experimental program. At present it is implemented in 64 divisional secretariats in 12 districts around 40,000 poor people. It is seasonal to conclude the progress of the program that has been implemented over two decades.

Women's contribution of the Change Agent Program

The main point that is realized in the membership of the change Agent Program is that a higher percentage of it is consisted of women and men's participation is at the least level. For example, in Habaraduwa Participatory Development Foundation in the Southern Sri Lanka there are 2610 members and only 25 of them were men. It is 1% as a percentage and 2585 of them, 99% as a percentage was women. This is further explained in the Table No.1.

Table No.1
Membership of the program according to sex

Area	Women	Percentage	Men	Percentage	Total
Habaraduwa	2585	99%	25	1%	2610
Nagoda	1528	95.5%	72	4.5%	1600
Hikkaduwa	605	97%	28	3%	623
Madalgamuwa	405	90%	45	10%	450

Source: Field visit

This outstanding feature could be seen in the all five districts of the field study.

This situation can also be seen in other programs that are implemented in Sri Lanka. In addition to the Change Agent program, data about other governmental and non- governmental organizations were also gathered and a higher women's participation could also be seen in them. These figures in the Table No. 2.

According to the table the woman is the source in the poverty alleviation programs in Sri Lanka.

Table 2
Membership in community – based organization by gender of household member primary involved

Name of CBO	Percentage of households Who are members	Percentage of households where primary affiliation is through a female HH members
Samurdhi organizations	63.7	52.2
Rural development society	14.6	41.8
Farmers' organizations	18.1	42.0
Women's organizations	21.3	77.3
Youth club/ society	7.9	40.5
Sarvodaya samithi	24.3	60.0
SANASA	31.9	62.4
Funeral aid society	68.4	37.6
Seettu	43.6	57.1
Party branch	27.2	30.1
CAP Small groups/ GS	37.7	96.8

Source: Field visit

Contribution of the Change Agent Program in empowering the Woman

It was clear in the field study that the Change Agent Program has made a successful attempt at ensuring the concept of self – confidence among the women who are around it. Moreover improving understanding, information and training are some of the values that were gained by the members through the program. The people's idea, who were around the program was that the lower educated rural woman's contribution was limited to home, especially to kitchen earlier and the Change Agent program could get them out and could them make capable of contributing their knowledge and abilities to the process of development.

Small Groups and savings of the groups

In Sri Lanka, most attempts at poverty alleviation have mobilized women at the grassroots level into group savings schemes (Sirivardana 1998, Leelasena and Dhammika 1996, Hewavitharana 1995). The survey clearly showed that the majority of participants in CAP small groups are women. Small groups system represents a significant position in empowering the rural woman under the Change Agent Program. Especially after establishing the saving project as the main part of the Change Agent Program from 1980, women's membership has also risen up. Saving money is not the only function in the small group system. Mutual help, co- operation in solving problems and implementation of assimilation programs are also under this system.

Under the small group system, groups are made from 5 to 10 members, as they like. They meet once a month or week and they exchange their ideas. They are also tended to save in those meetings. Money is not the only medium that they save. For example in the studied groups the members collect two coconuts and 250g of rice and they distribute them among the

members once a week. It could be seen in the field study that the members distribute various things among them as they wish.

In addition to these, an amount of money decided by the group is collected once a week or month. This amount is from 2 to 10 rupees. It could be seen that many rural women joint small groups to solve their problems by them selves under this system without been trapped of those who give money on interest. So that the small group system of the Change Agent Program is practiced successfully. Through the table No. 03 small groups and group savings in the studied 11 communities based organizations are further explained.

Table No.3
Progress of the small groups and group savings

Year	Number of groups	Group funds (Rs.)
1988	784	1 "188,890
1990	1029	1,509,176
1992	5510	10,186,380
1994	5677	32,725,449
1996	7188	27,851,935
1998	6893	80,452,024
2000	8248	90,560,742

Source: Field visit

It is clear in this table that the small groups and group savings have risen up. Here it can be indicated that the small group saving system has been able to make a positive change in rural women's life. Examining actual cases of selected locations can assess some aspects of the actual operation of the small group process.

Case 1: Example of Successful CAP small Group

The Peraliya Small Group was considering one of the more successful in Peraliya GS in the Hikkaduwa PO of Gall District in Sri Lanka. The all- female small group consisted of 10 members. In the costal village of Peraliya most men were engaged in fishing while most women from poorer families were engaged in coir yarn making. The group was formed in 1992 under the influence of a change agent from a nearby village.

One member of the group, Pathma, was considered its leader. Of the 10 women in the group, three were related in some way. The others knew each other as neighbors. They were all engaged in coir work, a cottage industry practiced exclusively by women. Asked why they came together as a group, Pathma mentioned that relieving the credit burden of members and promoting social harmony and awareness among women were the main objectives of the group process. Depending on patterns of mutual trust, the participants' voluntary selected the group they wanted to join. In the village of Peraliya, 105 women formed 13 small groups and three GS organizations. The local change agents spent a long time with each of the groups to help them identify their common problems and jointly work towards their solutions.

At the beginning each member of the peraliya group saved Rs. 2.00 per week in the group fund. Later it rose to Rs. 5.00 per week and finally to Rs.10.00. In the early phase they also

collected a measure of rice from each member household every week to create a group fund to bulk buy rice for the group during the new year period, but by 2001 this practice of rice collection had stopped. The accumulated savings of the group as of 2001 was Rs. 35000.00. This accumulated group fund enhanced the sense of common and interest and was often mentioned as an index of solidarity within the group. The funds generated by the group had been used to lend money to group members at the rate of 5% interest per month, and to known outsiders at the rate of 5% interest per month. The members were paid 2% interest per month for their savings. The group leader maintained systematic records of savings, lending, interest payments and any other financial operations. The group had paid membership fees of the local GS, and some members of the group had saved money in the GS, but they had not borrowed any money from the GS or PO, opting to rely on their own financial resources.

Production capability

In the field study, it was clear that the members of the Change Agent Program have tried to increase their production through the small groups. The women who had got caught in the mediator's grasp and had been unable to have a just price for their productions have tried to get away from that grasp through the Change Agent Program. For example though women in the Southern Sri Lanka engaged in coir mil, they were under exploitation of the mediators. But After mediating the Change Agent Program in their industry, the organized producers tended to buy their investments directly from the factory by keeping bought ropes with their group funds. Their self-organization was so developed that they could supply their productions directly even to the biggest export market. The cashew production in the community based zones of Madalgamuwa, Batapotha and Minuwangamuwa in Gampaha district is also a production, which is succeeded under the small group system.

But here the problem is that this success cannot be seen in every area. There are three facts that should be fulfilled for the long-term existence of small production groups. They are, the members should engage in the same economic function, it should be their main source of income and that economic function should be accepted in the economic environment and it should be relevant for that environment (Gumatillake 2000). until these three facts are fulfilled, the process of production can be continued. But if these facts collapse, the production can also be collapsed. Therefore here the problems regarding the stability can occur. We found several instances where the model had led to a degree of empowerment of small producers, as illustrated in case study two

Case: 2 successful cottage industries

A similar process of conscientisation leading to a measure of economic empowerment was evident among the female coir workers affiliated with CAP in Hikkaduwa and Habaraduwa in Sri Lanka. In the relevant villages the coir workers have been among the poorest and the most downtrodden. The female workers have often been subjected to both economic deprivation and gender discrimination. Female coir workers had depended heavily on local middlemen to supply credit, raw materials and market the produce. The workers returns were so low that they only continued because they had no other means of earning income. The production technology, which was rudimentary, had remained stagnant, as the small producers had no way of improving it. Before CAP came along, the coir workers suffered silently whatever conditions were imposed by the middlemen.

There was considerable resistant form these middlemen- as well as form some coir workers- to the collective mobilization of coir workers under CAP. Following their conscientisation, however, more and more coir workers gradually joined the group process. The CAP group process enabled these low- paid female workers to reduce their dependency on local middlemen, identify and avail themselves of opportunities to improve their production processes, diversify their products, and market directly to exporters in Colombo. Through their collective action these female small produces successfully over came not only trade monopolies but also the entrenched power of the middlemen. The group process and the direct interactions between the small producers and exporters also led to marked improvements in the production methods used and in returns to the workers.

Women's life standard

How far the women's life has changed after they jointing the Change Agent Program was also studied. Here it was convinced that the rural woman has got several positive gains in participating in the small group activities. This is explained better in the Table No.4.

Table No.4

**Perception of female CAP members about impacts of the program on their lives.
(Percentage of female participants claiming positive impacts in relation to given aspects)**

Aspect	Percentage
Importance of small groups in creating a supportive social network	84%
Positive changes in the status of women within the community	72.7%
Positive change in the status of women within the family	50.7%
Positive change in the participation of women in decision-making Process in the village	72.2%
On a positive change in the participation of women in decision making Process in household	42.1%
Positive attitudes from other household members	66.4%
On changing conventional ideas about women's capabilities	69.2%

Source: Field visit

According to the women who are members of the Change Agent Program, the most significant thing that they possessed was that the program changed the status of their position. Table No.4 figures that a positive change has been made in the facts such as of higher network of social relations, having a certain acceptance in the community and higher capability of decision-making within the village. Further, understanding own capabilities, self-confidence, co-operation and group perception are other changes that were made by the program. Especially the mechanism for empowerment depends on higher understanding, gathering together the society and organizing the poor community. So that the Change Agent program has made a certain positive change in the women members' lives.

Weaknesses of the Change Agent Program in empowering the woman

Failing to get the women's voice beyond village level

According to the above explanation, it is clear that the Change Agent program has succeeded in making changes and positive impacts in Sri Lankan rural women's lives. Comparing with other program of same kind like Samurdhi, Change Agent program has virtually organized women on their own will in a very flexible way. Through the program they have become a responsible and capable part of their community. It is also clear that it is women who have become the base of the Change Agent Program in the village level.

Though this is the situation, it was clear in the study that most of the times men's voice can better be seen than women's voice in the higher or the decision making level. Men's participation is prior especially in higher ranks of the program such as pioneers of the programs; organizers and trainers, and women's representation was poor in these positions. Here the problem is that whether women's rights, capabilities and ideas have become prior properly as there is fewer women representation in higher positions though more than 90% of participation in the program represents women. Therefore a main weakness of the CAP is that the lack of a considerable participation of women's in the decision making level. So that it can be indicated that the Change Agent Program has not been able to extend the women's voice beyond the village level.

Incapability of making a change in gender relations within the family

Though the Change Agent Program has made positive impacts in women's lives, this situation is complex in the household level. For example according to the Table No.3 although they represents a higher percentage in decision making in the social level, in the household level it represents only 42.1%. This is better explained in the Table No.5.

Table No.5
Perception of female CAP members about impacts of the program on intra household gender relations. (Percentage of female participants claiming positive impacts in relation to given aspects)

Aspect	Percentage
Favorable change in social division of labor in household	17.5%
Reduction in violence against women	17.2%

Source: Field visit

According to the Table No.5 there is a slight difference of division of labor according to the gender.

So that the program has not been able to make changes in relation to the gender or division of labor in the family favorably.

Having not contributed to lower family violence considerably

According to the Table No.5 affect of Change Agent Program in bringing family violence lower is limited. For example according to their own ideas CAP has affected bringing down family violence only by 17.2%. But the program has been unable to lower violence against women in 37.3% of families. 18.7% of families have not shown a considerable loss of family violence. According to these data it is obvious that the Change Agent Program has not made a noteworthy effect in lowering family violence in the members' families.

Summary

Change Agent Program has made many positive impacts in the society, especially in rural women's life. For instance this program has resulted in generating the perception of empowerment among those who think that they are poor. Further this program has made a successful attempt at practicing the poor to think that they can develop and they should develop. The program has been successful in building unity and co-operation among the poor community. Especially the small group system can be introduced as a mechanism that is capable of forming an environment where the poor can discuss and solve their problems. Under this program the rural women have got the ability of arguing, getting away from the mediators' grasp and increasing their production.

Though these successes are achieved in relation to rural women it cannot be seen that the program has achieved its purposes as it expected. Especially the contribution of the program at alleviation poverty among rural women is less. Furthermore the contribution of the program at bringing down the gender disparities and gender based division of labor. The program has also shown a less significance in lowering family violence.

Another weakness of the Change Agent program is less youth participation in the program. This program has also failed in bringing women's voice forward properly. Women's participation is less in the decision-making level and representation of women's rights, abilities and needs is also not higher. So that it could not be seen that the purposes of the program was not in the practices. Therefore the program has not made a considerable success in alleviating poverty.

At the conclusion the program has succeeded in gathering together women. Through that the founders of the program have tried to make a positive impact on the women's position. However the program has not succeeded in bringing the women's voice forward or bringing down gender disparities.

Bibliography

Gunathilake,R. `` Sanvidanaya tulin dilidukama pitu dakema`` (Sinhala): In Economic
reveive, pp 2-28, 2000

Mitrarathne,G. `` sanvadeya, sanvidanaya, ha viplavaya `` Sinhala). In Gramiya
sanvaridenaya. Ed Siman navagathegama, pp 3- 30, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

World Bank. `` Attacking poverty –overview `` World Development Report 2000/ 2001, pp
1-4, New York: Oxford University press, 2000.

W.M.S.M. Kumari
Department of Peace and Development research
Göteborg University
Sweden.
sachitra.kumari@padrigu.gu.se

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name : W.M. Sachitra Mangalika Kumari
Address-home : Vegagatan 15, Room Number 09, Göteborg,
Sweden
Address-office : Dept. of Peace and Development research,
Göteborg University, Brogatan 4, Box 700, SE405
30 Goteborg, Sweden
Telephone-office : 0046 31 773 5944
Telephone-home : 0046 31 773 6129
Date of Birth : 27th June 1972
Age : 31 years
Sex : Female
Civil Status : Unmarried
Nationality : Sri Lankan
Religion : Buddhism

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

M.A., Sociology
University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, December 2001
B.A., Sociology
University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka., April 1998

ACADEMIC HONORS AND AWARDS

The Hilmi Manazil Prize for the best graduate in Sociology in 1998/1999,
awarded at the General Convocation of the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.
The Dr. Mrs. Stanley Abeysinghe Memorial Gold Medal for best graduate in
Sociology at the General Convocation, University of Peradeniya 1998/1999.

TEACHING COMPETENCIES

Sociology of work
Culture and Communication
Social work and social welfare
Introduction of Sociology
Social Psychology
Culture and Personality

PROFESSIONAL OVERVIEW

Temporary Assistant Lecturer, *Department of Sociology, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, May 1999-2001.*
Lecturer, *Department of Sociology, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. March 2001- Present.*
Responsible for teaching and designed syllabi for B.A. degree programme.
Sub-warden, *Sangamitta Residence Hall, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. May 1999-Present*

Volunteer Councilor - *faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.*
May 2001-Present.

PUBLICATIONS

“Sociological Features of the Folk Songs of Sri Lanka”, Publication of the Department of Sinhala, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, 1999.
“Ayurvedic Medical System, which is becoming remote from the Sri Lankan Culture”. Sanskruthika Puranaya, Central Cultural Fund, Sri Lanka. 1999.

PRESENTATIONS

“Recent women’s suicide trends in Sri Lanka”, 7th National Convention of Women Studies, Centre for Women’s Research, Colombo, Sri Lanka., March 2000.
“Woman’s participations and Rural development”, 8th National Convention; Centre for Women Studies, Colombo, Sri Lanka, March 2002.

AFFILIATIONS

Alumnus – Association of sociologist in University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
Centre for Women’s Research

REFERENCES

Prof. Böyand Hettne
Department of Peace and Development Research
Göteborg University
Box 700, SE-40530 Göteborg
Email: b.hettne@padrigu.gu.se
SWEDEN

Dr Michael Schulz
Department of Peace and Development Research
Göteborg University
BOX 700
SE-405 30 Göteborg
Tel: +46-31-7731380
Home: +46-31-931979
Email: Michael.Schulz@padrigu.gu.se
SWEDEN

Return-Path: <p.jeffery@ed.ac.uk>
Received: from lawnmarket.ucs.ed.ac.uk (129.215.166.63) by tema.gu.se with
ESMTP (Eudora Internet Mail Server 3.2.2) for
<sachitra.kumari@padrigu.gu.se>;
Mon, 5 Jan 2004 12:36:11 +0100
Received: from sspsxknnte5vmn (soc98.soc.ed.ac.uk [129.215.44.98])
by lawnmarket.ucs.ed.ac.uk (8.12.10/8.12.10) with ESMTP id
i05BaA8X013079
for <sachitra.kumari@padrigu.gu.se>; Mon, 5 Jan 2004 11:36:10 GMT
From: "Patricia Jeffery" <p.jeffery@ed.ac.uk>
To: "'Sachitra Kumari'" <sachitra.kumari@padrigu.gu.se>
Subject: RE: Abstract
Date: Mon, 5 Jan 2004 11:30:46 -0000
Message-ID: <001401c3d37f\$5cf7d900\$622cd781@sspsxknnte5vmn>
MIME-Version: 1.0
Content-Type: text/plain;
charset="US-ASCII"
Content-Transfer-Encoding: 7bit
X-Priority: 3 (Normal)
X-MSMail-Priority: Normal
X-Mailer: Microsoft Outlook, Build 10.0.4024
X-MimeOLE: Produced By Microsoft MimeOLE V6.00.2800.1165
In-Reply-To: <5.2.0.9.1.20031231163150.00bd7f38@padrigu.gu.se>
Importance: Normal

Dear Sachitra

Thanks for your note and abstract--I shall be pleased to include your
paper in the panel.

All the best, Patricia

Professor Patricia Jeffery
Department of Sociology
School of Social and Political Studies
Adam Ferguson Building
George Square
Edinburgh
EH8 9LL

Phone 0131 650 3984 (direct) or 4001 (secretary)

e-mail: pjeffery@staffmail.ed.ac.uk

-----Original Message-----

From: Sachitra Kumari [<mailto:sachitra.kumari@padrigu.gu.se>]

Sent: 31 December 2003 15:48

To: pjeffery@staffmail.ed.ac.uk

Cc: kumarimangalika@yahoo.com

Subject: Abstract