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WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT UNIT (WAND)
EXTRA MURAL DEPARTMENT, UWI

WOMEN AND ADULT NON FORMAL EDUCATION

THE USE OF PARTICIPATORY METHODS IN
A COMMUNITY BASED ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME

IN
ROSE HALL, ST. VINCENT

BY

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INTRODUCTION

The participation of Women in Development activities depends first on the capabilities of women at every level of society, their ability to use these for the benefit of themselves and their societies; and secondly, on the willingness of policy-makers to allow national policies and plans to be influenced by women's concerns. The many resolutions and recommendations at international and national level for the "full integration of Women in Development" will remain at the level of rhetoric unless the methodologies are found and used which would simultaneously build the self-confidence and skills of women at every level of society and at the same time, help policy-makers to have a clearer understanding and greater awareness of the reality of women's concerns and priorities.

A Non-Formal Education Programme which emphasizes maximum participation is one which seems to offer good possibilities for achieving these goals.

The process of participation is the key to the content of such a programme which would provide rural women with new knowledge and skills required to address their felt needs, to solve some of their problems and to change their existing situation.

Learning in adults takes place more effectively when it is focused on problems which affect their daily lives. Therefore, a non-formal education programme which uses a participatory methodology can raise their awareness, increase their capacity to analyse their problems and to a recognition of the potential of their creative efforts, unleash their creative energy and engender in them, the self-confidence and self-reliance which will allow them to act to change their situation.

In the Adult Education Programme described below the use of a participatory methodology has led to an "awakening of the individuals to a consciousness of self", to an increased awareness and sensitivity, to a civic consciousness among the members of Rose Hall community

BACKGROUND

In September 1980, the Women and Development Unit (WAND) of the Extra Mural Department, UWI in collaboration with the Government of St. Vincent initiated a Pilot Project for the Integration of Women in Rural Development in the small rural country of Rose Hall in St. Vincent. A community committee comprising representatives of all country groups was responsible for co-ordinating all project activities. It has selected from among its members a community facilitator to work with individuals and groups towards the development of the Rose Hall community. This committee has expanded its membership to others in the community and is now called the Women and Development Working Group.

LOCATION

Rose Hall is a small rural community on the Leeward side of St. Vincent. The village lies twenty-three miles to the North West of Kingstown, the capital and is nestled among the mountains - one thousand, two hundred and thirty-two feet above sea level and at the foot of the dreaded volcano - La Soufriere. This small agricultural community has a population of approximately one thousand, five hundred (1,500) people. About two hundred and ten (210) are registered farmers, although many more than this number are actively engaged in some aspect of agricultural production. The main product here is vegetables, and Rose Hall is the main producer of carrots in St. Vincent both for export and domestic use. In addition, root crops such as ginger, tannia, yams and other vegetables are grown in fairly large quantities.

Like their counterparts in other rural communities in the region, the people of Rose Hall experience a variety of problems. The chief of which have been identified as marketing, surplus fruits and vegetables and the accompanying problems of wastage and spoilage, lack of community services and unemployment.

TRAINING

For the project to achieve any of its objectives, the women in the community must be helped to acquire certain skills. If people in a community are to assume ultimate responsibility for their own destiny, they must develop self-reliance, they must become conscious of the roles played by women and men in their community and they must be prepared to participate fully in the process of development. In order to acquire the necessary skills many people will need to be exposed to training.

TRAINING FOR FACILITATORS

In April 1981, an initial three week training workshop in participatory approaches to community needs assessment, programme planning and evaluation was conducted in Rose Hall. The workshop was an exciting experience for resource people, community workers, facilitators and community members. Through a series of planned participatory activities and techniques, participants acquired skills in facilitating group discussions, problem solving, analysis, programme planning and evaluation. The process of community participation and education which began in this workshop has continued as the community facilitator works with groups and individuals to identify needs and problems, analyse these, identify resources and plan activities to meet their needs.

In April 1981, the facilitator and six members of the Working Group attended a follow-up workshop in which activities were focused on group interaction, effective communication and the decision making process.

TRAINING FOR RESOURCE PERSONS OF THE ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME

All resource persons except one are from within the community. Five of them are women who teach in Government schools, two of the men are Agricultural Officers and one is a farmer. A series of training sessions have been co-ordinated for these resource persons by the Project Co-ordinator. These have included a series of single three hour planning sessions as well as an intensive three day workshop on the Development and Use of Skills and Techniques for Teaching Adults. These training sessions have all focused on "Participatory Learning" and the use of methods and techniques which facilitate this. Some areas covered include:-

- Differences in teaching adults and teaching children
- Attitudes of resource persons to illiterate adults and to women
- Lesson planning - content, materials and methods of presentation
- Development and use of materials
- Practical "teaching sessions"
- Evaluating lessons and the entire programme.

The resource persons have recognised the need for further training in teaching "literacy" and this will be dealt with in subsequent training workshops.

IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS AND NEEDS

At the first workshop community members identified surplus fruits and vegetables and marketing their produce the major problems. In analysing these problems and exploring possible solutions, they agreed to form a strong farmers group. At the community meeting held to do this it was realised that many of the farmers did not feel confident to accept leadership positions. They felt inadequate because of their low levels of education and their semi literate state.

Using small group discussion techniques, the facilitator and the members of the Working Group analysed this "new problem". They agreed that an Adult Education Programme could be one way to begin to solve some of the community's problems. At the same time, they realised that if such a Programme was to meet the needs of the community, the ideas, views, input and support of the whole community would be of great importance. They therefore discussed ways of ensuring the participation of as many community members as possible.

Three suggestions were put forward and the advantages and disadvantages of each suggestion were examined:-

1. A public community meeting in the middle of the village. Members realised that at such a meeting the majority of the persons would merely listen and not express their own views;
2. A meeting at the primary school. It was agreed that a true cross section of the community may not be represented and many of the persons who would benefit most from an Adult Education Programme might not attend;
3. A survey. The committee agreed that this would allow them to get direct feedback from every member in the community and would ensure their full participation in deciding whether an Adult Education Programme was indeed necessary and/or useful.

THE SURVEY

Purpose

The purpose of the survey was to find out:

- (1) whether there was a real need for an Adult Education Programme;
- (2) what should be the content of an Adult Education Programme
- (3) whether community members would attend adult educational classes.

Methodology

Since the Working Group had identified "literacy" as a problem, they agreed that they would not use a questionnaire but that they would visit people's homes and by chatting informally with them get their answers and reactions to the three questions. They divided the community into zones and members were given responsibility for conducting the survey in particular zones. The survey took one week. One hundred and seventy-four (174) households were visited and nine hundred and twelve (912) persons were interviewed - (434 males and 478 females)¹. Both youth and adults were interviewed and responses were recorded both in local dialect and standard English.

Results

The Working Group discussed the information collected and decided that it was important to share it with the whole community and to have a general discussion on what action should be taken based on the information. To do this they developed a role play to highlight the two main concerns expressed:-

1. The problems of unemployment
2. The need for education to get a job.

¹ See Appendix I

At the community meeting the role play was put on and a number of "talks" were delivered by members of the Working Group, these included: the importance of education, discipline, sexual abuse and disadvantages to girls, causing them to leave school early. There was much animated discussion of the issues raised and general agreement that an adult education programme should be implemented.

Outcomes

This method of involving the community in the identification and analysing of its problems has:

- (a) created an atmosphere conducive to debate and discussion;
- (b) reinforced a sense of solidarity and common purpose;
- (c) led to some in-depth discussion on problems of unemployment, lack of skills and self confidence in community members and the reasons for these;
- (d) provided some concrete ideas for developing and implementing a community education programme.

PLANNING THE ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME

An education sub-committee was appointed to be responsible for implementing the programme. The Co-ordinator a young female teacher is responsible for the overall planning, identifying resource personnel and administering the programme. This committee felt that it was necessary to have a clear understanding of what people meant by the term "adult education" before they could plan a programme. It was therefore decided to conduct a one day community session with the theme "Education - What Does it Mean?".

Community interest and participation was so high that although the seminar was held on Tuesday, a working day, fifty-three (53) - (forty-six women and seven men) people attended. One woman remarked that although she had many things to do that day, it was more important to be at the seminar.

The seminar was conducted by the Project Co-ordinator.

Through a series of activities, small and large group discussions, participants agreed that education meant the following things:-

two way communication;

reasoning;

acquisition of ideas, knowledge and skills;

literacy;

creativity;

personal and community development.

By the end of the day, participants had come up with a common agreement of what education meant to them and what concepts should form an integral part of their education programme. In addition, they decided that objectives of the adult education programme should be:-

- (1) to raise the level of literacy of persons in the community;
- (2) to provide more agricultural knowledge;
- (3) to up-grade skills - especially in food preparation, storage and preservation and craft;
- (4) to promote self development and development of the community.

They also discussed new and creative methods of achieving the set objectives.

The sessions in this seminar were yet another stage in the process of community education begun in the initial three week training workshop.

Following the seminar, the education committee met with the Project Co-ordinator in the first of a series of planning sessions to develop the content of the programme. During this session the committee

- (1) Developed the content for the programme for the first term;
- (2) Identified resource persons;
- (3) Developed criteria for selection of participants;

(4) Decided on indicators to evaluate the programme.

They agreed that the content should be closely related to the everyday life of the community and should focus on agricultural information and the home improvement skills. They also agreed that they would use the following indicators to evaluate the usefulness/success of the programme:

- (a) Ten percent (10%) of the participants must at the end of the first term demonstrate a greater degree of self-confidence by speaking up in the group and taking an active part in discussions;
- (b) Eighty percent (80%) of those registered should still be attending;
- (c) There should be an increase in "literacy" skills of participants.

During subsequent planning sessions the resource persons continue to meet and discuss the content, develop lesson plans and decide on a variety of methods and techniques to present lessons in an interesting and meaningful way. One member of the education committee on her own initiative visited the neighbouring island of Grenada to observe and collect materials which were being used in a popular education programme there. Some of the ideas which she got have been incorporated into the Rose Hall programme.

Members of the committee also paid a visit to the Ministry of Education to inform the Chief Education Officer of their plans for an educational programme and to see what assistance he could give them.

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Over one hundred (100) persons expressed the wish to attend adult classes. The education committee had agreed that it was only possible to accommodate about forty (40). They agreed therefore on a process of selection and decided that they would charge a registration fee of \$5.00 and that persons would be selected on a first come first serve basis. About fifty (50) persons paid the required fee. The next step was to determine the "levels of literacy" of the participants in order to structure a programme which would be meaningful to them.

An initial test, adapted from Grenada programme was given to participants and this, along with personal interviews was used as the basis for grouping participants into classes. The committee also decided that classes could be held twice weekly from 5:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

IMPLEMENTING THE ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The education committee organised a formal opening ceremony on October 10. A number of Government officials and the prominent persons in the society were invited. Classes begun on the following day.

THE CONTENT

In keeping with the objectives, the programme foccuses on agricultural information, home improvement and personal development. Ten (10) persons - seven females and three males attend the agricultural classes and about thirty (30) persons, all female attend home improvement classes. Within these classes there are a number of small groups according to varying abilities of participants.

Examples of some of the topics which have been covered so far are:

Agriculture

What is a crop and crop protection

Seeds - vegetables grown by seeds, selection of seeds etc

Different methods of cultivation

Record keeping

Cash books - profit and loss statements etc

Field visits to farmers in other communities

Home Improvement

Food and nutrition

Food values

Use and preparation of local foods

Methods of cooking

Practical sessions

Personality Development

Self expression

Things that affect friendship

How to deal with people

Aspects of adult behaviour

Basic Maths and English

English

Ways of communicating

Dialect and standard English

Letter writing

Filling out forms

Maths

Buying and selling

Money - foreign exchange - remittance from abroad, fluctuating rates etc

Using the bank

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Throughout, resource persons have used a variety of methods, these have included small and large group discussions, role play, story telling, pictures, participants drawings, tape recordings and practical demonstrations. Some reading material was developed based on the work of participants and a number of charts and drawings developed by individuals and groups were used to stimulate discussion.

EVALUATION

Evaluation was built into the objectives of the adult education programme and has been an on-going process. It is being done by the community working group, by the education committee, by the Project Co-ordinator, and by individuals in the community to assess the impact of the programme on (a) the individual; (b) the community and the wider society.

Participatory evaluation techniques are being used to deepen community dialogue and understanding of how to deal with problems and change undesirable situations. Participants of the education programme are continually encouraged through discussion and questioning to assess what they have learnt, what problems they are encountering and whether the sessions are meeting their needs. At the end of the first term, the participants evaluated the terms work. They used the knowledge which they had learnt and in five groups created and presented dramas based on topics dealt with during the term. Within the community interviews have been held with individuals and discussions held with groups in order to get feedback on their impressions of the programme. At a community fair and a 'public' community breakfast opportunity was also taken to get reactions of the wider community to the programme. Through this process of participatory evaluation and increased dialogue the education committee is realising that the problem of illiteracy is much larger and more widespread than they first imagined.

IMPACT OF THE ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The participants in the programme have said that they have gained new knowledge and understanding and they now know:-

- things they never knew before
- the importance and value of using local foods
- the importance of a balanced diet and its relation to the improved health of their family
- how to prepare nutritious meals on a meagre budget by using available local foods
- the importance of keeping accurate records
- they have gained more self confidence and a greater sense of self worth
- they can express themselves better now
- they are beginning to understand other people better

THE COMMUNITY

Community involvement in the programme continues to be very high. Community members feel that the programme is benefiting the community, that it has made a difference to the way community members see themselves and their neighbours, as well as the way in which other people in the wider society see Rose Hall. In addition, they feel that the classes are providing an opportunity for people who did not have a "proper education" to get one. Although there are more women than men in the classes, it has been noticed that many young men in the community stand outside the school and look in when classes are in progress, one of these young men has said that he wants to join the home improvement classes. The people in Rose Hall are proud of their education programme and of themselves.

THE WIDER SOCIETY

The Rose Hall Adult Education Programme has stimulated a high degree of interest in the wider society and the "spin off effects" are beginning to have some impact. In one neighbouring community classes have been started and in another a women's group has been formed. Three male teachers in the programme attended the three day workshop on the teaching of adults, and for them, it was the first time that they were being exposed to participatory techniques and to discussing issues related to women.

On another level, interaction between the education committee and the Ministry of Education have had significant results. In response to a request from the education committee for assistance the Ministry has:

- granted the use of the school buildings for classes to be conducted
- agreed to give teachers/resource persons time off to attend training workshops and to develop materials for the Adult Education Programme
- provide stationery and other material for use in workshops.
- generally been supportive of the efforts of the education committee

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

The Adult Education Programme as any other community programme has had a number of problems. However, perhaps unlike some other similiar programmes the people involved have been aware of these and are taking steps to deal with them through dialogue, discussion and analysis

PARTICIPANTS

Although the need for the Adult Education Programme arose out of the formation of the farmers group, not many of the members of this group attend classes. Members of the farmers group are mostly men, while the majority of those who attend classes are women. The resource persons have talked to the men to try to find out the reason why more of them are not participating. Some of these men have said that they have no time and that when they return from the land at the end of the day they are too tired. It was then pointed out to them that women farmers were attending classes. In reply some said that they had nothing more to learn and that they knew enough about farming, others said that they needed the time after work to meet with their friends in the village rum shop.

The Working Group and education committee discussed this 'problem' and suggested several possible reasons for this problem:-

- (1) The men may feel ashamed that they can't read or write;
- (2) This could undermine their self confidence and develop in them a feeling of insecurity;
- (3) They may feel that their sense of authority and power in their relationships with their women would be affected;
- (4) Many of the women who were attending the classes had already begun to show an increase in self confidence and were speaking up more in public.

Out of discussions of this problem the education committee has suggested that a special workshop should be conducted on the Role of Men in the Development of Rose Hall. Plans for this workshop are now being made.

ATTENDANCE

During the first term when interest and motivation was high, all participants attended all classes regularly. Both attendance and regularity have however dropped during the second term. This has been true both of participants and of resource persons.

For many of the participants, this is the time when they spend longer hours in their lands in the mountains. Their tasks are more varied, the days are longer and they often return home between six and seven at night.

A few of the resource persons are themselves studying for examinations or taking courses to upgrade their skills and education. They have not been able therefore to meet as a group as regularly as before. However, the Co-ordinator and two others have kept the classes going.

These two situations have pinpointed two major problems which face those who attempt to implement community programmes or activities. These are TIME AND HUMAN RESOURCES. The education committee has become aware that it is necessary and important when planning its programme, to take into consideration all aspects of community life as well as the tasks and priorities of individuals within the community. They have also realised that to create a balance between these is not an easy task and that it may be necessary to suspend classes for certain periods and/or change their time and regularity.

It is important to recognise too, that all of the resource people, although young, enthusiastic and committed are engaged in full time employment which is very demanding (teaching and agriculture). The pressure of planning, preparing for and conducting classes is beginning to tell on them. Their awareness of the problems, however, is leading them to explore alternatives.

ATTITUDES/BEHAVIOUR

Early in the programme, the members of the education committee noticed that some of the participants were displaying negative attitudes towards others. There were instances when some were being ridiculed because they were unable to read and write. This happened not only in the classes but in the wider community. At the same time some of the younger women complained that the older women were not giving them a chance to speak during discussions. To deal with these problems, the resource persons developed a role play. The objectives of this was to define 'adulthood' and to identify acceptable and unacceptable patterns of adult behaviour. This role play was put on during one of the classes. It depicted a man who couldn't read well discussing his problem with two friends and trying to find out from them whether the adult classes would be useful. One of his friends told him about what he was learning in the agricultural classes and encouraged him to attend. The other laughed at him and insisted that he was not an "adult" because he could not read. The role play was discussed by the total group and comments recorded on two large sheets. These comments formed the basis of discussion of the problem in the total group.

Through discussion and analysis of the role play some misconceptions were clarified and a sensitive issue was dealt with. The persons who had been guilty of ridicule were not dealt with in open confrontation but indirectly. Negative and hostile feelings were aired, the problem has been effectively dealt with and has not resurfaced. Participants became more aware of, and sensitive to the feelings of others as well as of the effect that their behaviour/attitudes can have on them.

DOCUMENTATION

Although concerted attempts are being made both by members of the Working Group and of the education committee to record systematically all the exciting and important things that are happening in Rose Hall, alot of valuable experiences are not being documented. In addition to the problems of time and resources outlined above there is a further problem of methods being used to document. At the moment this is being done mainly through writing reports. However, more attention needs to be paid to exploring a variety of methods and ways to do this so that not only can they learn from their own experiences, but that these experiences may be shared with others.

CONCLUSION

It is approximately one year since the need for an Adult Education Programme in Rose Hall was identified. Much has happened since then; one important outcome of this Programme is a developing critical consciousness among community members. Indications of its "success" have all come spontaneously from the people in the community and all ring with a note of sincerity as they experience and feel a sense of growth and change in their lives.

By the Process of Participation, the culture of silence has been broken in Rose Hall. The dialogue which started in the initial stages with the Co-ordinator's visit to the community and her discussion with twelve women is continuing. Women and men are examining themselves, their situations and their community more critically. In doing this, they are able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, their problems and those of the community. Through discussion and reflection of these, they are attempting to arrive at the root cause and possible solutions to the problems and situations. Further discussions and analysis of the possible solutions are resulting in decisions, activities, programmes/projects which attempt to solve their problem or deal with the situation.

At the same time, this process is providing them with skills in communication, analysis, problem solving, decision making and with confidence to take responsibility for shaping their own development and that of their community.

Out of this experience they are gaining new and deeper insights into the complexity and enormity of the problems which they face and the reasons for these.

As this programme continues with the use of participatory methods and techniques, the people in this community will engage in deeper levels of analysis and understanding of themselves and of their social reality.

APPENDIX I

DETAILS OF SURVEY TO DETERMINE THE NEED FOR
AN ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN ROSE HALL

MAY 21 - 27, 1982

ZONES	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	AGE RANGE	INTERVIEWER
1. Lemelone	30	88	104	192	0 - 80	C. Ashton
2. Bathroad - Works	18	43	44	87	0 - 75	E. Chambers, A. Rodney
3. Yard - Corner Bay	17	40	47	87	3 - 85	S. Samuel, D. Samuel
4. Toproad - Cocoa	13	23	44	67	1 - 67	K. Samuel
5. Bottom Road	8	26	22	48	0 - 72	H. Browne
6. Nigger House	15	53	54	107	0 - 70	C. McGuire
7. New Village A	14	40	43	83	0 - 86	D. Ashton, A. Stapleton
8. New Village B	17	28	29	57	0 - 75	D. Ashton
9. New Village C	13	25	29	54	0 - 75	V. Burke
10. Housing Scheme	18	40	43	83	0 - 62	B. Williams, J. Richards
11. Cattle Pen Level	11	28	19	47	1 - 72	R. Lockhart
TOTALS	174	434	478	912		

