

Participation of women in Social Dialogue (Participatory Workplace Appraisal)

INTRODUCTION:

One of the SAVPOT's (South Asia and Vietnam Project on Tripartism and Social Dialogue in Action) objectives of this particular activity is to enhance the participation of women. The Social Dialogue project held workshops for the representatives to promote Social Dialogue in the participating enterprises. The elected trade union leaders and the management representatives participated in the workshops conducted by the project representing their enterprises. The experiences gained from the series of project workshops and study tours show that participation of women is low. Only 10% of participants were women. Hence, an appraisal was conducted by the project in two enterprises of the participating countries to assess the reason for the non-participation of women in the activities.

Unionization is facilitated and opportunities made available in the organized sector under the core conventions of ILO. However, infrastructure in some cases and nature of the enterprise determine the freedom of association and expression of the employees to a great extent. An analysis of the data from both the enterprises reveals that the organization has provided systems, which offer women an opportunity to participate actively. Despite the structure that was provided for women to participate, they did not participate in the activities for varied reasons.

Importance of participation:

The term participation has assumed different meanings, connotations and forms. Broadly, it has been viewed as "mental and emotional involvement of a person in group situation, which encourages him/her to contribute, to goals and share responsibilities in them. Participation presumes willingness on the part of the management to share with the employees' power and responsibility.

Colverson, E.K. (1999) addressed the issue of women in participation and feels that a lot depends on women's motivation and ability to disseminate information and educate each one of the fellow women she represents in keeping with her requirement. By actively participating in the research, the people themselves derive solutions to their own problems. Another advantage envisaged is that it would initiate a process of introspection among the participants that would eventually empower them to handle their situation themselves

Rahman, M.A (1984) describes participation as a notion viewed as a social process characterized by collective initiative of people in an organized framework, to promote their self perceived interests through processes over which they can exert effective control.

If women are motivated and given a chance to participate in any movement, certainly women can excel. This has inference to an Indian experience.

"The women who participate in and lead ecology movements in countries like India are not speaking merely as victims. Their voices are the voices of

liberation and transformation" said by Vandana shiva quoted by Coonrod, June 1998

Rationale of the study:

SAVPOT has provided a platform and encouraged women to participate in the activities of the project. But it is found that their involvement was not as much as expected. In order to create awareness among women on social dialogue and to evaluate the requirement of structure which needs to be in place for women to participate, the project has conducted trails known as "Participatory Workplace Appraisal". It is aimed for women on the shop floor in two enterprises each in India and Sri Lanka. Two enterprises were selected to conduct this study with the same cultural background. The influence of Social dialogue has brought transformation in these enterprises. This study has been aimed to analyze the influence of Social Dialogue in these enterprises with the women who were not a part of the process directly.

Both these enterprises provide more access to women's employment. Women are employed in all operations in both these enterprises. As male workers, women are also employed in various capacities. Titan is a joint venture of the Tata Group and the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO). Titan's business activities cover watches, clocks and jewelry. The workers are selected from the poor villages of the state, one person from each household. Titan follows the Tata Group philosophy with social and environmental responsibility, giving something back to the local community and 'improving the quality of life'. Thus women of various categories: age, education, skills, job nature and posts are employed in Titan. 17% of major workforce is women. Women are given equal opportunity and they are trained in many programmes in the enterprises. In the plantation, they are workers of different age and education employed to tap rubber, collect the latex and deposit in the tank. The employees go for work during the early hours along with their spouse. They tap the rubber trees and allow the latex to be collected in the container attached to the tress while they do the same process with the other tress allotted for them. Once they finish the cutting process, they start the collection of latex from all the trees and deposit in the vans or to the place where the latex is processed. This is a skilled process that consumes a lot of time. By the time, the latex is weighed and deposited to the supervisors, it is past noon. The nature of work is such that they start the domestic chores only in the evenings. Women play a major role in this enterprise also. Since these enterprises showed positive results through the Social Dialogue process, the general efficiency of the workers have been improved. The wages earned by the women workers have lifted their socio-economic status. The satisfaction that they derive out of their dialogue process has increased their production in their company. The interaction between the management and the unions has improved. The relationship between the labour and the union leaders has improved.

Objectives of the study:

- a. SAVPOT wanted to adapt a participatory methodology from community development and empowerment to test if this initiated process can be applied in an industrial setting

- b. To assess why women do not participate in organizational life at the enterprise level.
- c. Promote active participation of women in union work as a process of empowerment (PWA).
- d. To assess if SAVPOT has enhanced the participation of women.

To facilitate to achieve these objectives, this study will address the following issues:

- What is the role of women (dual) working in these enterprises
- How the cultural background and the family influence them in their work.
- What is the relationship of the employees with the organization
- How the Social dialogue project improved their working conditions
- What is the relationship the women employees have with the union,
- What is their expectation to participate in the activities of union.
- To what extent, their efficiency has been improved?
- Effects of the approach

METHODOLOGY:

Participatory Research:

Participatory Rural Appraisal is a method developed and popularized by Dr. Robert Chambers. Some of the methods of PRA come from social anthropology. PRA seem to know no boundaries of discipline or of geography. The term PRA was used in India around 1989. In India and Nepal from 1989 onwards there was an accelerated development and spread of PRA with many innovations and applications. Widespread applications include development and management, **adult empowerment** and literacy and women's programmes. According to him, "PRA is one of a growing family of approaches, methods and behaviours to enable people to share, enhance and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act and monitor and evaluate". **"PRA is empowering, a process of appraisal, analysis and action by local people themselves"**. The three elements found in PRA approach are:

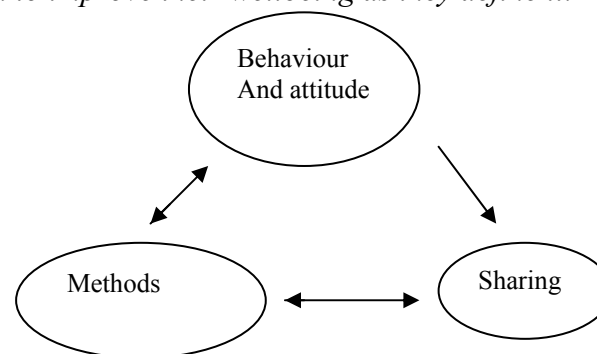
- **Responsibility.** Individual responsibility and judgement exercised by facilitators¹, with self-critical awareness, embracing error.
- **Equity and empowerment.** A commitment to equity, empowering those who are marginalized, excluded and deprived, often especially women
- **Diversity.** Recognition and celebration of diversity.

¹ The facilitator should be an adult educator who can assist grassroots people to become skilled as communicators and be able to access information necessary for learning and acquiring resources. According to St. Anne, "Effective facilitation is an art that engages the creative forces within persons which energize thinking and doing". The facilitator is seen as a synergizer too. This calls for appreciation of the concept of creativity (St. Anne, 1991) In order to participate and to communicate with each other people need to connect. Understanding creativity can be an exceptional force in the toolbox of the facilitator for activating the process of participation. 'Creative collaboration' and 'teaming selves' are ways to go beyond on individual's capacity to bring about change and participatory development. That paves the way for constructive interdependence, which brings a transformation among the participants. Facilitating participation requires a great deal of cultural sensitivity.

Since this approach fitted well with the objectives of the study, appraisals were conducted through group discussions and individual interviews as trials.

Dr. Robert Chambers in his Discussion paper 311, Rural appraisal: rapid, relaxed and participatory says,

If done well, PRA becomes self-improving and self-spreading: self-improving through critical awareness, embracing error, and learning what works; and self-spreading through sharing. The opportunities of PRA are hard to assess but look big. Time will show. Perhaps we have in good PRA one among a family of approaches for reversing centralization, standardization, and top-down development, and for enabling and empowering rural communities and the poor to do more of their own analysis, to take command more of their lives and resources, and to improve their wellbeing as they define it.



Study Procedure:

Case study has been widely accepted as an ideal methodology when a holistic, in depth investigation is needed (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991). Garson (2002) is of the view that Case Study research is a time-honoured traditional approach to the study of the topics in social science and management. Yin (1994) presented four applications for a case study model. They are to explain complex casual links in real life interventions, to describe the real life context in which the intervention has occurred, to describe the intervention itself and to explore those situations in which the interventions being evaluated has no clear set of outcomes. A single case study can be used to confirm or challenge a theory, or represent a unique or extreme case (Yin 1994). Systematically walking with key informants through an area, observing, asking, listening, discussing, identifying different zones, local technologies, seeking problems, solutions, opportunities and mapping and/or diagramming resources and findings.

Method chosen for this study is the case study method. The study focussed only on women workers employed in the private sector: Titan, India and in the public sector: Bogawantala Plantations Limited of Sri Lanka. The information is culled from the discussions with the facilitator. The focussed discussion lasted for 3-4 hours per day for three days initially and the same process is followed after 6 months to collect the results. The information is gathered from the focussed group discussions, interviews with the union leaders and also with the supervisors.

After a period of 6 months, the facilitator also did transect-walks² to find out the views of the individuals who were involved in the process to follow-up and collected the results in both these enterprises. Views of the management were also collected after 8 months of the initiation of the process.

Selected Enterprises:

Two participating enterprises were selected. The management of both these enterprises provided support to the project and women form the major workforce of these enterprises with the same culture and language.

Both the enterprises have major workforce of women. In BPL, Sri Lanka there are 689 women who constitute 65% of the workforce. In Titan, women are 502 in number constituting 17% of the total strength. Participation of 7 - 10 women covering the cross-section of all departments/divisions of the enterprise was requested. The participants were seated in a circle for the group discussions with the facilitator. As an ice-breaking exercise, different subjects like women as employees, influence of social dialogue project, efficiency of the employees after the introduction of the project were discussed initially. Reasons for non-participation of women in the activities were analyzed. Further, more emphasis was given to the structures to participate in the union, expectation of the employees for participation in the union, foresight of women in union activities, and the value, importance of active participation were discussed and analyzed at length.

- The study is based on the discussions and the personal interviews of the representatives of the respective organizations in India (Titan) and Sri Lanka (BPL).
- This study is only a trial exercise to test if this approach yields fruitful results.

Bogawantalawa Plantation Limited (BPL) is located 56 kms away from the capital city of Colombo. This company manages 28 sets of grooves of which 17 are a mixture of tea and rubber while the remaining are purely tea plantation covering a land area of 16220 hectares. This plantation was incorporated as a public limited company in 1992 under the privatization of the Sri Lankan government. The labour force working here are mostly of Indian (South - Tamilnadu) origin and working on the plantations of this nature for the past 12-13 generations. In one of these divisions of this plantation, social dialogue was introduced in the year 2000. All the employees are members of unions. People of different ages starting from 18 - 55 work in the plantation. Some of them are very old who still have the inclination to work for pressure of money.

Titan is located in a small town, Hosur in the district of Krishnagiri belongs to the state of Tamil Nadu. This company as a joint sector of TIDCO (Tamilnadu Industrial Development Corporation) and Titan, established in 1984. The unique feature of this organization is community development. The organization recruited people from the rural areas who are poor. The employees are well paid. From the management's point

² Systematically walking with key informants through an area, observing, asking, listening, discussing, identifying different zones, local technologies, seeking problems, solutions, opportunities and mapping and/or diagramming resources and findings.

of view, the company helps one family to survive. The company recruited only one person in a family. After the completion of 3 years including the probation period, they form the strength of the organization. They are posted in the assembly sections of watches and jewelry for their dexterity. Hence the age of these employees varies from 28-33 on an average. The average age of the employees is 30 years. There were executive secretaries too among the participants who were aged around 40-42 years. They are not members of the union.

The employees of Titan are specialized and involved in precision-engineering skills, production of micro-components and tools, repetitive operation and mass production. The nature of work is very much varied and demands for clean room discipline. As far as jewelry (Tanishq) manufacturing is concerned, it is handling of precious materials like Gold, Diamond and precious gems in abundance. The company has provided all the required infrastructure for the women employees, (For eg. Air-conditioned building, occupational safety and health measures, crèche facilities, food at the canteen). It facilitated by formulating many committees for women to participate in their area of interest. Job rotation is provided for employees. Titan is the highest pay master in the industrial belt of Hosur. "Performance Payment", an incentive is paid to the employees, which is linked to the performance of the employee during that particular year.

Outline of the study:

The report has five chapters. The first chapter contains introduction including background, rationale, objectives and methodology of the study. The second chapter presents socioeconomic profile of the women employees as a result of the initial findings. The findings will deal with the following:

reasons for employment, use of job income, attitude towards job, sufficiency of job income, attitude towards job security, health, education, habit and social behaviour, working environment, attitude of the workers among themselves, workers relationship between the trade union and management and attitude of the workers about the influence of the enterprise on the society. The same will be analyzed. In the third chapter, the outcome of the group discussion for the future challenges, motivation, perception of the supervisors, union leaders, associates are presented and analyzed. The fourth chapter will present the tangible results of the group discussions and requests made by the representatives who were involved and the future vision of this exercise. The final chapter will include the results achieved after a period of 2 years by one of the two enterprises (Titan).

Background:

Culture of the country:

Even though the study is carried out in two different enterprises of two countries, the culture and the language of the enterprises are the same. The employees of the Sri Lankan Plantation have their origin in Tamil Nadu. They preserve the same old culture and traditions of their forefathers for thirteen generations without any change.

During the vedic periods especially Rigvedic period (approximately

4000-1000 BC), women in India held equal status with that of men (Kuppuswamy 1975: Choudhary 1978, by Coonrod). The degradation of women started only since 300BC. The patriarchal joint family system, early marriage, self-immolation of widows or state of permanent widowhood, all became obstacles to the development of women (Neera, Desai, quoted in Kuppuswamy, 1975:243). The origin of the Indian idea of appropriate female behaviour can be traced to the rules laid down by Manu in 200 B.C: "by a young girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own house". In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord (husband) is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent .(quoted by Coonrod, 1998)

An article in "The Asian Enigma, published by Unicef in 1996 regarding the progress of Nations reveals that women in South Asia have less voice and freedom of movement. "Judgement and Self-expression and independence largely denied, millions of women in South Asia have neither the knowledge nor the means nor the freedom" (in Coonrod, 1998)

In India, the roles traditionally assigned for men and women are that of breadwinners and homemakers, respectively. Thus the education of girls is not seen as an important requirement for preparing girls for their future role as "home-makers". In reality, women's creative and intellectual potentials are either ignored or underplayed in education in India. As a consequence, generally fewer women are found to have had the opportunity of gaining a higher level of education in India. This pattern of behaviour cannot be attributed to current attitudes alone; they have been molded over several generations. (Asia-Pacific Population Journal, Vol.8 No.4 (1993 pp.59-77).

Women in India are leaving the four walls of their homes to venture out in search of work. The underlying reasons may vary with their socio-economic status. A majority of them belong to middle and lower socio-economic strata of society and they work due to sheer economic necessity, especially those belonging to the lower socio-economic class. Women from upper socio-economic strata of society may do so in pursuit of a career so as to be independent. The prevailing socio-cultural environment puts women on all those jobs that are deemed more suitable to them, like, a secretary, a schoolteacher, a nurse etc. Generally a woman is not expected to take up the job of a pilot or a truck driver (Singh.K, 2002).

Families are far less likely to educate girls than boys, and far more likely to pull them out of school, either to help out at home or from fear of violence. (Coonrod, June 1998). Sonalde Desai in Gender Inequalities and Demographic Behaviour asserts that "parents reluctance to educate daughters has its roots in the situation of women. Parents have several incentives for not educating their daughters. Foremost is the view that education of girls bring no returns to parents and that their future roles, being mainly reproductive. The role of parents is to deliver a chaste daughter to her husband's family. Sonalde Desai goes on to point out that "another disincentive for sending daughters to school is a concern for the protection of

their virginity. When schools are located at a distance, when teachers are male, and when girls are expected to study along with boys, parents are often unwilling to expose their daughters to the potential assault on their virginity. (quoted by D. Radha Devi)

*Exposure to and interactions with the outside world are instrumental in determining the possibilities available to women in their daily lives. The situation of women is affected by the degree of their autonomy or capacity to make decisions both inside and outside their own household. After marriage, the bride moves in with her husband's family. Such a bride is a stranger in a strange place. The older females in the household control them, and their behaviour reflects on the honor of their husbands. It is felt that emotional ties between spouses are considered a potential threat to the solidarity of the patrilineal group. A young bride is brought up to believe that her own wishes and interests are subordinate to those of her husband and his family. The primary duty of newly married young women and virtually her only means of improving her position in the hierarchy of her husband's household, is to bear sons. Sonalde Desai points out that the perception that sons are the major source of economic security in old age is very strong that many parents while visiting their married daughters, do not accept food or other hospitality from them. However, given women's low independent incomes and lack of control over their earnings, few can provide economic support to their parents even if parents were willing to accept it. **(Excerpts from the working paper of Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Limited)***

Traditionally, women bear primary responsibility for the well being of their families. Yet they are systematically denied access to the resources they need to fulfill their responsibility, which includes education, health care services and job training. (Coonrod, June 1998).

Advances made in social legislation and the relative ease with which Indian women secured legal and political equality, entered professions and occupied positions of power has led to a myth that, unlike some of the Asian societies, women's status in India is very high. In reality, four decades, after independence and five decades of planned development, the position of women has worsened considerably in every sphere, with declining sex ratios, declining economic participation rate and growing gaps in life expectancy and mortality rates between men and women.

The constitution guaranteed formal equality and radical social reforms. But the enactment of laws do not change attitudes, and ironically, these advances in social legislation have acted as a disservice to women, engendering an attitude of complacency whilst the views of society towards the position of women have changed a little over the years.

The prevailing attitude to women is still conditioned by religious symbolism which highlights the self-sacrificing, self-effacing pure image of women and the preferred role of a woman as a faithful wife and devout mother, whilst at the same time emphasizing the subordination of women, ie. a daughter or wife is a commodity or possession. Subservience of women is

precisely summed up in the famous injunction of the Manu's code, where it is stated that a woman should never be independent, As a daughter, she is under the surveillance of her father, as a wife, or her husband and as a widow, of her son or parents or male relative. A woman is always viewed as someone's sister, daughter, wife or mother never as a citizen in her own right who also needs to live with dignity and self-respect. (Excerpts from the working paper of Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Limited).

Culture of the state:

(Excerpts from Tamil Nadu :Working Manual on Status of Women and Empowerment published by the Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Limited)

The family in Tamilnadu, is largely patrilineal, in which the core of the family is the male and the women are brought as bridges into the family. Amongst the higher cases, extended joint families of several generations prevail, but this is less typical amongst the poorer people who lack the physical resources to maintain extended kinship structures. Life in joint families is highly segregated between men and women. A wife has little contact with her husband but spends a great deal of time with other women. The tasks of running the household are shared between the women with the youngest bride shouldering the heaviest burden. The older women are given the role of controlling the younger women and enforcing the qualities of docility, obedience and submission.

In the current social climate, the significance of family is vital for women, particularly for poor women in the rural areas. Women's survival is not socially conceivable without the family. Motherhood is the only acceptable social goal to which she can aspire. Her worth as a 'reproducer' confers some status on her. At the same time, the social value placed on the role of women in the family is also responsible for her subordination to men and for her lack of access to economic and political resources, even where she contributes equally or more to the family economy.

Women face considerable insecurity in the patriarchal family structure. Sent as a young bride into a strange household (in Tamil Nadu the average age of marriage is 20 years), contact with her natal home is discouraged. At the same time, a woman is never a permanent member of her husband's family - she may have to leave if she does not satisfy. This fear frequently encourages a woman to relinquish her rights to a share (legal coparcenary rights) in the parental property in favour of her brothers in order to enjoy the 'affection' of the brothers and to ensure a welcome in case she has to fall back upon them if her marriage breaks down.

The devaluation of women commences at birth with the preference for male offspring as the natural successor in the patrilineal family. The religious requirement of a son is an even more compelling reason for male preference, as a son alone is qualified to perform the rites of lighting the funeral pyre. The birth of a son is celebrated as the means of support in old age whilst the

birth of a daughter is viewed as placing a heavy on the family to raise the necessary dowry for her marriage and for other functions. A daughter is considered "another's property" and hence any investment in her development is regarded as fruitless. This leads on to discrimination in the allocation of resources - nutrition, medical care, education, etc - between the sexes. Even as adults, women frequently do not have equal access to food within the family but share what is left after the men have eaten, with consequent repercussions on their health and strength. These attitudes are in turn reflected in higher rates of mortality amongst female infants and young girls, whilst female infanticide is not uncommon, in some pockets, and amongst some communities.

The parental family undertakes the initial conditioning in acceptance of unequal status as young girls are taught to be submissive and docile while boys are given importance and status. The entire process of socialization of females is to internalize the concept of dependency and subordination to the will and happiness of others, with the emphasis on the development of roles rather than personality.

Corporate Culture:

Culture of the place determines the socio-economic status of women. It demands a woman to take care of the family after her return from work. Participation of women in any activity after the work is subjected to the approval of spouse and in-laws. The enterprise in India, which is located at Hosur of Krishnagiri District. This district is situated next to the Dharmapuri district, which is well known for the female infanticide. Girl children are perceived as burden to the parents throughout their life. In majority, children are not educated after their school. Girls with more qualifications and in good position are not preferred in marriage as the parents of grooms' feel that they would not be obedient and respect the elders as expected. Men in general do not prefer to get married to women who are highly educated which attributes to our findings that not many women hold managerial positions. Of late, there is an awakening in the middle class families that girls should be educated to till graduation to support the husband in financial matters but the deciding authority always lies with men and in-laws.

INITIAL FINDINGS

Role of women in enterprise and family

TITAN:

Relation with the organization:

Reaction of the participants to the exercise:

In Titan, there were 12 women participated in the focussed group discussion covering the cross section of all departments. The important point is that the project has asked only for 7 -10 participants with an intention not to disturb their production time. But the strength went up from 9-13 gradually day by day. Representatives had reservations to express themselves before knowing the objectives of the exercise. They are equipped with good reasoning power and they did not want to get involved with unless they were satisfied by the answers. Women are aware of the facilities provided by the company towards the union and the good exposure provided to the union bearers by visits to other countries. This has been done mainly to acquire knowledge of the products, like World Class Manufacturing and to understand the market scenario of the globalized world.

The women have pride in saying that they work for Titan. The employees are aware that it is very difficult to get a job in an organization, which take the employees welfare into consideration. These are very well reflected in their words. The job that Titan has provided made a huge difference in the lives of women. The value an employee attached to the organization is admirable. The company has provided the required facilities for the union office bearers.

In their words,

*"Titan is an **University**"*

"I am very proud to be a Titanian (She was emotional when she said these words)

"You will never find an organization like Titan"

"The management of this organization has seen to the minute detail of every employee. The management cares for each one of us"

You will find no where, a company that has given a room and released the office bearers from work to address the grievances of employees

You will nowhere find a company who sends the office bearers and the elected committee members for a course to understand the labour laws and labour welfare system.

Self - Reliant:

Young employees pursue their education after joining the company. Many of them have completed degrees, diplomas and some have been doing their management courses in pursuit of a better career in future. The latest trend in the urban areas is that men look for educated and working brides to have a comfortable life. With their education and a good earning, the women employees have grown up in life. Employees feel that working women are highly respected and their words carry a lot

of importance. This is because of the reason that they take a handsome salary home. The confidence of women employees is improved.

Intra-familial:

The inference that secure job with steady income at Titan has brought a spouse from high income group and hence they have a better say in the family than other women or even men who are not doing so well can be validated in the light of the following responses:

"Till date, my husband does not know my earnings". I have full freedom
"I equally contribute to the family
I have contributed for my family and also for my husband's family
With my salary I have educated my brother in laws and they are settled
I am fully responsible for the family
I talk to my husband and we both arrive at a conclusion". We take decisions together
Till I got married, I was responsible for the upbringing of my sisters and brothers.
My in -laws listen to me because I bring a good amount as salary.

Narration's revealed that status of women is good in majority but in some cases, women are treated as "money machines". But the programmes conducted by the organization for example, "Life Education" and "Stress Management" helped them to have a better say in the family. The programmes are conducted for the individuals to understand themselves and how to lead their lives in a better way, the way it is conducted in the culture setting looks that the programmes enforce the traditional roles of men and women. The findings imply that more involvement, more influence in the family and more favourable family climate provide more satisfaction not only to the family but also towards working life. In addition, the amount of meaningfulness of household jobs and autonomy in the family determine family as well as work satisfaction. Women also expressed their inability to meet the expectations at work place due to stresses such as poor relations with the in laws or their undue expectations. The different abilities to handle the situations that are brought about by dynamics of relations contribute a lot to women's participation in activities at workplace. There is a sense of achievement.



"I have problems at home. But the Life Education, Stress management conducted by the company help me to cope up with the problems."

Intra-Societal:

My marriage is a love marriage. I faced a lot of problems. But, I did not find anything wrong in that"

" I never complained any of my problems to my parents. Because my husband is of my choice". I knew that I have to face the problem and solve it. The job, the training I received from the company helped me to solve the problem

"My marriage is an inter-religious marriage. I converted myself to convince the minority community

Company has given us confidence to survive the problem through the training courses. I am very happy that I have joined the company instead of continuing my education.

I get good salary. My in-laws and husband want somebody who can bring home a good salary

"Inter-caste or Inter-religious marriages improve the understanding mutually"

Good income helped them to find a suitable husband. There were love marriages, inter-caste marriages, inter-religious marriages that are unusual in this part of the country where the cultural and societal values are viewed at large which shows the development and the shift in the mindset of working women. Women are very positive about their approach and they try to bring change in and around them. Steady Job in Titan has given the courage to find a better husband, better life and a better thinking towards the development. These responses about their personal life speak of their determination to face the consequences of their decisions that enabled to withstand all odds, which is the result of Titan's training towards "Life".

The Social Dialogue project in BPL played a vital role in bringing the women to dialogue with their colleagues whereas the women in Titan have not attended the social dialogue workshop. Involvement in the workshops motivated the women of the plantation to participate in the dialogues with one another and with the supervisors and senior managers. Their initial experiments yielded fruitful results. Further the participation in the dialogues is almost a voluntary action which made them request for more discussions. The management also has a sizeable share in encouraging the staff to participate in dialogue workshops and in the day to day meetings among themselves or with the senior managers. Titan women did not participate in the dialogue workshops. The overwhelming programmes of Titan enriched them with more knowledge but it has conditioned them towards domestic life. Titan in other words through their rigorous training programmes make them better house-wives but their inter-personal relationships among the employees are not satisfactory. The work relationship among women is not very comfortable. This may be a result of them not participating in the dialogue workshops as in the case of Bogawantalawa.

Influence of Social dialogue:

The participants had a very vague idea about the Social dialogue project. Even though the concept was familiar and dialogue had been taking place in and around them, the reason of reinforcement of dialogue houses was not known to them. Women did not participate in the project workshops and refrained from them because of the reason that only the Union-office bearers attend programmes of this kind. Women are heads of many committees in the organization. Women officiate as coordinators for the committees of Employees' Welfare and Community

Development. The organization has recruited lady supervisors also for the benefit of the employees.

Relationship with the Union:

All the employees are members of the company's union. Women expressed their satisfaction with the existing union office bearers. All the office bearers are men. It is quite evident that men as per the culture of the place dominate the activities. Women did not have any complaints and they are happy with the existing structure of men as office bearers. Women enjoy good relations with the 7 office bearers of the union.

"Union office bearers do a lot of good work

"Union members are respected for their responsibility. Officer bearers have done counselling, sorted out many problems even in the household". Many cases for divorce have been resolved without separation

The office bearers convince the family members in case of a domestic problem at home.

REASONS FOR NON-PARTICIPATION AS UNION LEADERS:

Fear of violence:

Coonrod in his Executive summary on Condition of Women in India points out the reason for the non-participation of women in outside activities as *"Male violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon. Although not every woman has experienced it, and many expect not to, fear of violence is an importance factor in the lives of most women. It determines what they do, when they do it, where they do it and with whom. Fear of violence is a cause of women's lack of participation in activities beyond home, as well as inside it. Within home, women and girls may be subjected to physical and sexual abuse as punishment or as culturally justified assault. These acts shape their attitude to life and their expectations of themselves.*

The insecurity outside the household is today the greatest obstacle in the path of women. Conscious that, compared to the atrocities outside the house, atrocities within the house are endurable, women continued to accept their inferiority in the house and society" (Coonrod, 1998).

Even though the security point as pointed out by Coonrod in his Executive summary on Condition of Women in India was not explicitly pointed out, this may also be one of the underlying reasons for the non-participation of women as union leaders.. Women in Titan said that they are not interested in to get involved in the activities of Union.

"Women are not interested to get involved in the activities

"We are very busy with our household activities after five'o clock"

"We donot have any time to do the union's work"

"If we have to participate in the union's activities, we need to sit after five ' o clock which would get extended till late in the evening.

I was once a committee member and used to go home very late". Company vehicle used to drop me home. Later on, when I briefed the other employees, I quoted the time also".

The instant reply for their non-participation in the union activities is because of responsibilities at home and the timing of the union meetings (after work). It is taken for granted that women after office hours would look after the domestic routine and help the children with their education. It is strongly believed by most of the women that union activities are only for men. It is felt that women do not possess the skill of negotiation (talking boldly as they call) as a representative that is required for being a trade union representative as the women employees were brought up with the restrictions not to argue and talk against any man. Their forced submissive nature does not allow them to participate.

Although, the management has made a number of efforts to ensure that women head committees of importance, and women also represent their fellow workers in units of more women than men, they do not seem to be enjoying trust of their fellow workers. The responses are quite interesting. A very strong factor that influenced them is the mistrust among women. Women have said that their representatives are also ridiculed for distorting information.

Nobody is aware of what is happening in the office. The ladies in the assembly units listen to some unwanted untrue statements of somebody and come to a conclusion. The employees do not even call the office bearer directly to find out if that particular statement is true or not in spite of being friends with them.

"Among ladies, there is lack of knowledge, nobody wants to take responsibility of anything

We do not have any information sharing among the ladies of Assembly unit"

In the General Body meeting, every body can voice their demands. But it is only I spoke from the ladies. None of the women in the company came forward.

We have a committee member who is responsible for our section. She collects the suggestions of the section and conveys to the office bearers.

We do not have unity among ourselves in the company

Women do not trust one another

Women do not vote for women if she contested in the elections

We, women discourage the one who is interested to do something.

Women listen to other men in another department rather than listening to her colleague in the same department.

I do not want anybody to encourage me, but at the same time, I do not want anybody to discourage me. Many people asked me not to involve in the union activities. They advise me over the phone at home, in the office from different department. I do not like that. Leave me alone. If you do not like, leave it, but do not discourage me.

"If all women in the company had voted for her, "We would definitely have one person as an office bearer.

Mistrust among women:

Women are concerned about their demands. They are not united to represent the women. From the responses, it is very evident that there is an innate rivalry among women. This is despite of all the support system such as dropping of the women representatives at their doorstep after the meeting.

*It is because of the ladies, things happened differently. They donot listen to us collectively, women are blamed for everything
Women are not interested to know the rules and the happenings of the company
Women do not want to know anything any information related to the technologies and the modern trends of the world.
Women do not know anything beyond their family. They do not know anything what is happening around them, in the world.
Women in the assembly unit, argue for unnecessary things and never come out with any suggestions". Even a genuine decision of the committee member will not be taken into consideration.
Your work is to communicate, do not argue!
Are you with the management.?
In the Governing Body session, all the employees are allowed to speak their problems. But only 9 turned up out of 400 employees. Out of that 9, I was the only one who was standing in front of the microphone and shouting.*

From the above responses, it is evident that women representatives need to imbibe skills of communication and leadership to win the hearts of their co-workers. It is quite likely that women representatives are rated lower than men due to family responsibilities, lack of confidence, illiteracy, male environment and job segregation. All these factors contribute to the poor participation of women in union activities. For group participation, it is essential to build in trust, mutual dependence, and sense of belongingness to the group.

Even women supervisors are not received well enough. The management places women supervisors in units where women workers are in larger numbers. This is with a view to create a more empathizing work atmosphere congenial to their better contribution to the industry.

*"The women employees are questioned unnecessarily"
"Women supervisors do not understand the feelings of the employees"*

Women employees felt that they are not viewed as "human", and they are just another factor of production. This is the case with the supervisory staff and fellow workers who are driven by targets to meet and work against the clock.

*"We were wished for the New Year by the end of the day to ensure that the production time is not wasted.
"We would be happy to see a Supervisor wishing us in the morning instead of talking about the supplies and the work to be done"*

"The supervisors directly start their business everyday. If we were treated a little friendly and humanely, the rate of production would go high".
"The employees also havenot taken any step to solve this problem. The supervisors also have not thought about it. Hence there is a gap between us. We now realize the importance of it in the course of this discussion".

Women feel that if the employees were approached in a more "humane" way, probably trust would set in between supervisory and floor staff. Employees also felt that neither of them felt the importance of solving this problem or bridging the gap between the employees and supervisors. A careful reading of these responses reveals that they were not happy with the fact that their views and roles of women representatives are not respected. Some women contest and lose while others who are motivated to contest refuse to do so. Committee members receive messages such as, "Convey messages, do not argue".

Dominance of men:

Union members expressed their views when approached and strongly feel that women cannot play the role of union leaders.

Women cannot handle these issues
Women are soft. They listen to the views of the management.
Definitely, they cannot talk to the management who is very dynamic.
Union leaders should be strong enough to argue with the management.

Women are very submissive and their nature is different. It is impossible for them to negotiate with the management. The culture of the place has in a way suppressed the women. Men perceive women as a silent employee both at home and at place.

There is a lot of cordiality and trust between the male and female employees. May be that is the reason that women do not feel the need of another women in the union. Another interesting fact that these women revealed was that they trust the male office bearers more than the women they themselves have elected as office bearers!. All of them have confidence with the male colleagues.

"Men donot have any domestic responsibilities like women
"Men are free. Nobody to question them. Just because they are men, they have respect in all the places.
"People listen to Men as leaders when they go out to the households on counseling.
"Men do a lot of social work. They have spoken to the concerned parties and were responsible for the reunion of many families
"Men can go out for solving any problem at any time. Even at night, they can go out from their place of residence to attend an emergency. At any point of the time, they can walk along, go in a bicycle but a lady cannot do that.

Fear of supervisors:

The next factor that attributes to the non-participation of women in the union activities is fear of supervisors. It is quite interesting to find that they do not participate in the activities for fear of management. They are afraid of the management to mistake their participation in union activities by which their future will be hampered. Women as women are considered to be innocent and problem-free. Women want to keep an image that they are innocent and they donot want to get into any problem. Women feel that if they participate in any activities of the union, they will be blacklisted as problem creators. Their innocence will be mistaken. Their supervisors might not like them to argue. As a result, the employees might lose their increment or their promotion may be postponed. They are also afraid that their supervisors might not give a good appraisal. The supervisors might carry a bad image to the management about that particular person. The senior management will have a bad impression, which will in future hamper their progress.

These women also reveal that although there are opportunities for association and expression, the channel is from female employee to male office bearer. It is very interesting to note the views of women employees on the ability of women leaders. Men blame women representatives when information is deformed. Ultimate power of carrying the demand to the management lies with men (office bearers). Women prefer to ignore the presence of women committee members to losing their importance in filing an inquiry.

Objectives met:

"This is the fantastic programme without any resource persons"

"You made us realize the potential we have within us"

"We realize the importance of talking to each other, a dialogue is necessary at all levels"

"We never thought about these things earlier" We should have spoken about these issues with our supervisors also instead of nourishing the grief within us.

You come after 6 months and see the achievement we have made.

It is evident from the above responses that Women in Titan realized the importance of dialogue with each other to avoid misunderstandings among themselves. Especially, when they discussed about the interpersonal relations among the employees, they felt the lack of dialogue and the need for it.

Women felt the need for talking among themselves to improve their misunderstandings among themselves. They also felt that talking among themselves and sorting out their differences would be the best way to eliminate their mistrust. One participant even pointed out that they should have thought of solving their problems with their supervisors instead of making a big fuss about the Supervisors. The employees could have improved their relations among themselves and with their supervisors. But they had not thought of it before it was discussed in the Participatory Workplace Appraisal, which was an initiative of SAVPOT.

It is felt that they should meet periodically to discuss about the prevailing issues to keep themselves abreast of the existing situation. Women made proposals about how to conduct the meetings. Many women instantaneously volunteered to host the meetings at their residences. Many wanted to stay back after office hours to have meetings. Even though they called that as meetings, it sounded like a get together. Some volunteered to bring snacks and some offered to bring drinks. The enthusiasm that was shown by the participants speaks volumes of their interest and their keenness to solve their problems. The women present in the group discussion felt that the union should be kept informed of the outcome of the appraisal, which would complement to the efforts of the union.

Twelve women who represented the eight different departments of Titan behaved like strangers on the first day. The change is felt immediately after the first day. The session was followed by lunch. They went together and they were talking about the participatory Workplace appraisal method. The information about this exercise was passed on to their colleagues. When they were assembled on the second day, the degree of friendliness was measured high. Even though they were allowed to participate in the appraisal consecutively for three days (3 hours per day), on the third day they have sought permission from their supervisors, from their managers of different departments and extended the appraisal exercise for another 2 hours which includes a highly interacted lunch session. Their interest and participation enriched the exercise and it gave an impression that it would last for long because it has kindled their emotions and themselves as women.

Bogawantalawa Plantations Limited (BPL):

Setting:

The management in the beginning kept a distance as they felt they were the representatives of job providers. The plantation owners, in the years gone by, were the British and their management or the Indians who bought the land from them used to follow the same code of conduct, as that of their rules. Now with the intervention of Social Dialogue project, the barrier is broken which had a tremendous impact on the psyche of the employee and improved the work atmosphere as a whole.

Due to the dialogue process, rain guards have been introduced to increase the production, employees were given food grain through the cooperative society after their enrolment as members, and salary is paid to them through the bank accounts. Thus their living conditions have substantially improved as the resources available are being utilized quite constructively. In the past, most of their earnings were spent on liquor.

Role and Status of women in BPL

In contrary to Titan, BPL is a residential enterprise where the women and men work in families and accommodated in the same premises. Even though it is a unionized and organized sector, the nature of work is just an extension of home. The job is simple and monotonous but it requires highly skilled labor to perform the job. Laws and unions less influence the women. Women are not ambitious and their perceived gains in active participation are dismal. Participants are illiterate.

Approximately 15 members participated in the group discussion varying in age.

The composition of the group includes young, middle aged married, old ladies and adolescent girls. Women of this place are hardly exposed to the outside world. Most of the ladies have never gone out of the premises of the plantation. They preserve the age-old tradition and culture that their forefathers brought from South of India. The families have license to work in the plantation as a worker for the last 13 generations. The women in BPL do not get an opportunity to interact with the educated communities of the urban habitats as they live within the premises of their plantation, which is very far from the urban area. The only aim is to earn money to make both ends meet. Life is a struggle for them.

The participants had to rely more on non-verbal communication, as their communication skills were not very good. They reason may be that they are not exposed to the outside world. Women began tapping rubber from the age of 15. They went to school till the age of 15. In case of older women, life has been a little different in that they had started collecting latex at a young age (12-13 years). During their adolescence, formal schooling was available only up to Grade VII. After completion, they joined their parents. Much older ladies in sixties did not go to school at all. They are on the job for the last 45-50 years. They started helping their parents in collecting latex at a very young age. Then they did it to help their husband, Women continued to rear children after the expiry of their husbands, as heads of their families, all through their youth. Now they are doing it because sons have grown up and deserted them. Some do it to support the family of their own, their brothers and some remain as a spinster for the same cause. Since the enterprise is residential, it is a routine matter for them to collect the latex till noon. These women with their spouses start their business in the wee hours. The women cut the trees and attach a container for the latex to be collected. The process is repeated for all the trees assigned to them. They spend 3-4 hours in cutting the barks of the trees, which requires a special skill. They start collecting the latex once the cutting process is over. After collecting the latex, the same is deposited to their supervisors. By the time they finish the job it would be past noon. They start their domestic chores immediately before dusk as they do not have electricity in their houses. It has become a routine for them to meet both the ends. Children also accompanied them before the school was opened in the plantation. They don't have any segregation of home and work. The following responses authenticate the observations made by the facilitator.

"We have been tapping rubber for the last 40-45 years

"I gave up studies to tap rubber because my father was unable to do it.

"We have been tapping rubber for the last 20 years. We used to help our parents before marriage and now do it to support our marital homes.

"my husband deserted me long ago"

"My husband doesnot contribute any thing but he visits the home once in a way. I have to bring up four daughters.

"We have to feed the family members"

We will be like this and spend the whole life going around these trees.

Only if we all work, we can eat. We earn around 2500-3000

(US \$ 35) rupees per month.

The earnings are not enough. We have to go outside as a domestic help if we want to earn more. But if we cross the age of 45, we cannot go.

"We can fend ourselves against hunger only we if all work in the family"

We go to tap rubber early in the morning, finish the work by noon and go home to cook. We have to finish the cooking by evening, as there are no electric lights in the line houses.

Influence of Social Dialogue:

The division, which participated in SAVPOT, has supportive Senior Managers. The participants revealed that of late, with the barriers of hierarchy broken between the workforce and the management, Self-Managed Team with the help of the Labour Welfare Officer is sorting out their problems. For instance, the issue of sexual harassment at work place was sorted out by allotting adjacent plots to couples. The



older women take care of the adolescent girls. However, one can say that they have better access to the supervisor. That has brought the families and communities together. There is better empathy among them. They are a cohesive group. The major development is the attitudinal change between the management and the employees. The labour force used to interact with the manager outside the window. There was a barrier in the form of a wall. The wall is broken. The present situation is that they sit next to the manager to offer information regarding the production of latex. The union leaders are facilitating information between the management and the employee's community. Three of the women who participated in the exercise were members of Self-Managing Teams. These women shared the information of the social dialogue project with other employees. But the team did not handle any specific issue of women.

The issues that were taken up include, arriving at consensus with the management over the suspended employees, absenteeism etc,. This is the outcome of Social dialogue. This company after its involvement with Social dialogue project did not go any for any strike. As women constitute 65% of labour force have access to the management representatives. Men, both among fellow workers and executives had the opportunity to interact with women workers, gauging their ability to offer suggestions and participate in decision making in the last couple of years of intervention. Thus they are not viewed as mere instruments that contribute to production but as a valuable human resource in the enterprise. But women did not participate in the union meetings.

Reasons for Non-participation in Union Activities:

Dual responsibility:

"We donot have time . "We have responsibilities at home"
My husband is a leader. I assist him to handle the issues of women through him .I donot have money to contest in elections.
We have a male leader and if all women want me to be their leader, I shall certainly become one.
If I become the leader, there is no need for me to go round the trees.
The venue of the meeting is very far, it is normally held in the office building. We have to walk a long distance. Normally, they meet in the evening hours. How can I go to a place, which is very far.
We donot have lights on the way. It is very dark after 6 o clock. Many snakes and leeches are there in the bushes.
We are not interested. We want to earn more money to feed our children.
We have male leaders. They are performing well. Why should we disturb them.
Male leaders will stay in power as long as they are performing well. Only if there is a change, we can contest.
I donot know how to talk as a union leader. A union leader has to speak boldly and negotiate with the management.

The responses of the participants support the findings of Colverson, E.K. (1999) that rural women have numerous home-centered responsibilities that often conflict with their ability to travel to meeting-sites, or attend training sessions. Their husband's lack of support to attend meetings may also restrict them.

Fear of violence:

Some of them felt that meetings are held in the evening when the women were attending to their domestic work. These women were compelled to do their domestic work, as there was no electricity provided to the line houses of the plantation. When participants get into heated arguments, muscle power supercedes verbal exchange. Traditionally, this kind of an interaction does not fit into the woman's idea of union or womens' social behaviour/ womens' organizations.. This has also been one of the main reasons for women staying away from it. Woman comes to work to supplement her family's income but she is seldom prepared to face such situations.

Most of the women in transect walks³ confirmed the fact that they don't want to get involved in the trade union activities because of the reason that they don't have the capability to talk as a union leader. It is felt that it is a different and a special quality that not everybody possesses to become a union leader. In their opinion, only men have strong vocal power and can become a union leader. Many of them want to participate in the trade union activities but they lacked information of how to go about it. Bennett (1992) calls it inside/outside dichotomy. Part of the cultural definition of

³ walking with the key informants to collect information while they are at work

the female in her association with the inside, the home and courtyard where she cares for her family. In contrast, males belong outside, in the fields and the bazaar where livelihoods are earned and economic and political power is wielded. Education, health care and labour force participation involves interaction with the outside where girls and women face special barriers.

Meeting place is far from residence:

It is very obvious from the information gathered from them that many women are interested to take part in the activities of the union, but their main barrier is meeting place is very far. This is confirmed by the study made by Colverson E.K. (1999). She studied women in India and found that there are problems such as distances of venue of meetings/training programs with no means of communication and children with no organized foster care. Their access to family resources adversely affects their opportunities to credit and other options for improving themselves.

It can be inferred from their responses that women in the plantation sector did not feel the necessity to come together as their needs are taken care of. Managing homes and works being the cause of their staying away from unionism. This particular exercise coupled with the social dialogue project has helped them to change their thinking and made them take part in the dialogues and meetings with the union leaders and supervisors. Now a multi-channel approach has developed among them. The women talk to all the concerned people, the welfare office, their union leaders and their supervisors, fellow workers, Self-Managing Team leaders and solve their problems. They in fact donot feel the need to go to the Union Meeting which is very far to their residences.

Fear of Supervisors:

All though the sectors are organized and workers are unionized, the unskilled worker is insecure, especially in the plantation sector. The immediate supervisor is often the sole assessor of a labourer's quality of work. The supervisor is thoroughly responsible for all the elements related to work. The nature of work is such that each labourer does his/her part of work and gets paid for it. The continuity of the job of the workers depends on the recommendation and the assessment of the Supervisors. In such a situation, voicing any dissatisfaction or complaint is likely to go against the employee. So for fear of loss of job also keep them away from participation.

In both the enterprises as an icebreaker exercise and to establish a rapport among them different topics of interest to women like sanitary facilities, childcare, and upbringing were discussed which captured their attention. They learnt a lot from their group work. Women have requested for more group works for learning and sharing information among them. This is a result of the Participatory Workplace Appraisal, which coincides with the Titan women. Titan women are educated and they wanted to keep themselves updated with the latest information on globalization and the existing issues of the company. Likewise, these women in BPL who are not educated and who want to be empowered with knowledge request for more group work to learn about hygiene and sanitary measures. It is interesting to note that the

thinking of women in both these groups were the same after the exercise was completed. This has been acknowledged by the following responses from them

Visit us often and give us suggestions on how to utilize our free time more effectively.

We never sat like this before and spoke to each other

Now we are all interested to do some good work instead of passing it on to others to do

Women in the rubber plantation realized their ability to come together and the need to work together. They wanted to work in their free time. The self- realization that is an outcome of this exercise motivated them. But they need a lot of support and guidance to be empowered as they lack education and exposure.

FINDINGS:

Our findings reveal that mere provision of systems for participation among employees in the enterprises did not ensure participation.

The working life of the employees is influenced by the community where they live, enterprises where they work and the union which support them in the place of work. The employees have a structure within their enterprises and outside and a process to follow which play a major part in their life.

The findings have been analyzed in the light of structure and process. (Fig.1).

	COMMUNITY	ENTERPRISES	UNIONS
STRUCTURE	Distance to the venue	Lack of regular meetings	Venue and timing of the meeting No fixed timing
PROCESS	Male culture	Dual role (house wife and worker)	Bargaining with the management is for men only
	Decision-making powers are with parents, husband and in-laws	Lack of awareness on effects of globalization	Content not focussed on women's issues
	Lack of self-confidence	Mistrust among women Fear of management	"I don't know how to speak in a union meeting"

(Fig.1)

FOLLOW-UP EXERCISES

Results at Titan:

A follow-up exercise that was a part of the programme was carried out after six months. The same employees were visited in their place of work separately to discuss about the outcome of the exercise. The facilitator met eight out of 13 and they expressed their complete satisfaction to the outcome. Five had taken the Early (voluntary) Retirement Scheme introduced by the company and left the enterprise. The company offered a highly attractive package for the employees. As a result of it, there is a overwhelming response from the employees to take up the VRS. The company had to counsel them. Social dialogue was used as a process to convince and retain the employees. This is a reason I could establish contact only with 8 women out of 13 whom we met earlier.. Women employees made use of the infrastructure provided by the company that is known for its employee-employer relations.

- This exercise has made the women employees realize the potential within them
- All women participated in the exercise started meeting often outside after office hours
- As an initial step, they contributed money to buy magazines and books to acquire knowledge on globalization and the latest technologies on watch-making
- The issue of enhancement of relationship with supervisors was discussed and achieved to a certain extent.
- These women kept the union informed about their activities lest it would be taken as a body in parallel to the union.
- Women started their interactions with other departments.
- A step ahead, they kept the management informed of their activities and sought their help in conducting the meetings within the premises.
- Some confessed that they could have done more, but due to the Voluntary Retirement scheme, which was introduced in the company they could not carry out many activities.
- All eight informed that they gained self-confidence as a result of this exercise, which has boosted their morale high.
- Improvement in interactions with other departments is improved. As a first step they had taken this to win the confidence of their fellow workers.
- Five women who had opted for "Early retirement" participated in the activities till they were in service. After their retirement had left the place for good.

Results at BPL:

In BPL, it is a different environment. As the vocabulary is limited and their



communication skills are to the minimum due to their lack of exposure to the outside world, this process has created a greater impact on them. These women informed that they have developed a habit of talking to the Labour Welfare Officer, Supervisors, SMT leaders, Managers and Senior Managers to solve their problems. The Labour Welfare officer who is a Sinhalese woman, do not belong to the same category of the employees, started speaking the language (Tamil) of the employees fluently. They did not have any hesitation and inhibition to talk to them as before. They requested the facilitators to convene more meetings where they could discuss many matters related to their life as a woman. The women in BPL look for an opportunity to discuss issues of importance related to their daily lives in the group discussion. This group discussion serves a window to the outside world. In fact, all women are interested to know about the issues of women in India, their status in India in comparison to them. The women wanted to transform themselves and keep themselves informed about the happenings of the world through the facilitator. The expressions of these women were very emotional towards this process. The requests that were brought in to acquire knowledge on specific issues convey their willingness to learn more on various subjects and their interest to get empowered. This group discussion coincided well with the Group Manager's request for an awareness session on the effects of alcoholism. He made the request to the project as he felt very strongly that women would certainly listen if the project provides a platform and discuss these issues to the women employees of this particular sector. The results of cutting down alcoholism among men through the Social Dialogue project have resulted in saving money, time and improvement in relations among the family members. That was the first achievement of this group discussion where the women were motivated to think about the other issues like empowerment.

The changes taken after the exercise talk about their involvement and commitment towards this particular exercise. The participants were very happy to talk about the outcome personally. The employees felt very proud about their involvement. The changes have made them to take part in all the activities. **Women formed a drama group, which portrays the effects of alcoholism to the other companies of the plantation sector. Women of different age participate in that group. Their willingness and initiatives taken by the women to solve their issues is quite promising.**

This is only the beginning of development in their life. In order to keep the group impact, a need is felt among them for more focussed group discussions, which was expressed. The social dialogue project was to be evaluated by the donors and the ILO by the end of December 2002. A team of evaluators visited this enterprise and the group of women who participated in the "Workplace Appraisal" expressed their satisfaction and requested for more help from the donor representatives directly. This again shows their initiatives and their confidence in dialogue towards voicing their needs to the people of high rank. **This is the empowerment, which is an achievement of this exercise at this stage. They were the same women, who used to hide behind trees when they see their Supervisors/Managers pass by while they were at work.**

Objectives met:

"We hardly have any time for reading, gaining knowledge on hygiene"

"We learnt that we also can go and talk to our supervisors boldly like men"

"This exercise gave us a exposure of what is happening in India and outside"

"We learnt about the women in India through the facilitators"

"We learnt about the sanitary measures and hygienic conditions from the facilitators"

"We help our union leaders by solving the problem through our Self-Managing Team leaders, Labour Welfare Officers and sometimes we talk to the supervisors directly without disturbing the union leaders from their work".

"Because of this system, the union leaders donot lose their wages if they want to solve any problem in a different division".

The women expressed that due to lack of education and exposure, they are not aware of so many ordinary things in life. Their life style did not allow them to acquire more knowledge on any particular issue of interest. The focussed group discussion helped them to learn things in an efficient way.

The union leaders expressed their satisfaction towards the initiatives taken by women as Self-Managed Team leaders, which reduces their burden to a great extent. Women's initiatives to solve their issues have enhanced their level of production. The management who was very supportive to their empowerment helped them with more blocks of trees to tap rubber. This, as a result, enhanced their production and their daily wages. Women are surprised at their own ability to analyze the working of enterprise. They are shouldering the responsibility of managing the blocks themselves and sharing the problems with their supervisors directly so there was no need of intermediaries. They however, agree that it means that the onus of the upkeep of their blocks lies on them. In the past, they had workers for this job alone.

The Social dialogue project improved their standard of life relatively better than what it was before and this has set the stage for the empowerment of women. The results of social dialogue are mainly the attitudinal changes between the management and the workers, which was a visible difference in this exercise. The social dialogue project facilitated the "Participatory Workplace Appraisal" exercise to attain success.

Results of the Social Dialogue project:

- Self-Managing Teams were formed
- Quality Control Inspectors were created for all five divisions
- Labour Welfare Officer is a woman employee of the management, discusses the issues of the employees and solves the problem very effectively.

- Sexual harassment has been sorted by allocating the adjacent plots to the couples to tap rubber collectively. Young girls are sent with the elderly women
- Children were sent to school who accompanied their parents at work
- But, after the introduction of the Self-Managing Teams, the team leaders solve the problems. Team leaders meet with the Union leaders to keep them abreast of the developments. Labour Welfare Officer keeps the management informed of the developments.

Results of Participatory Workplace Appraisal:

- Women were motivated to be the Self Managing Team leaders (in 6 out of 10 teams).
- The number of women in each team increased after the exercise (from 3 to 5 in number)
- The management had taken the interest of the women into consideration and appointed women as quality control inspectors. All five quality control inspectors are women.
- Women are empowered to talk about their issues with the managers, which is a hard to believe statement according to them. Women used to hide themselves behind the trees whenever their manager passed their block of trees. But the exercise has empowered them to discuss the issues with the managers to arrive at a solution.
- Sanitary measures were taken note of
- Issues like child care and breast feeding were given adequate importance by the employees
- Union leaders expressed their satisfaction to the initiatives taken by women as Self-Managing Team leaders. Earlier, Union leaders had to go from one division to other to sort out the problems with the managers. As a result, their daily wages were lost.

The results are complimentary to each other. The social dialogue project coupled with the "Participatory Workplace Appraisal" exercise had made some pertinent changes in the life of the employees of the plantation.

CONCLUSIONS

Suri, Gk, says, "An organization's human resource consists of individuals as well as collectives of such individuals. While individuals are important sources, groups and teams are qualitatively different from individuals. An organization may have excellent individuals, well trained and competent, but organizational effectiveness may still be poor if these individuals do not function as a cohesive team. It is for this reason that the focus is both on individuals and groups. Underlying human resource management efforts are based on assumptions such as people are capable of growth in terms of skills, values and commitment, people who participate in defining problems and solutions will become committed to the new directions that result from the process of participation, power equalization is a key to encouraging openness

and collaboration among stake holders, open communication builds trust and commitment, employees will be motivated and the organization will become more effective if they work towards organizational goals. (Suri, Gk, 1988).

Our findings vouch for authenticity of the views expressed by Suri, Gk.

For women to participate in the meetings, the issues of their concern should be discussed. Our findings reveal that if given an opportunity to share the views of women and discuss the issues related to them, they volunteer themselves to opt for additional responsibilities and participate in the meetings actively. Surprisingly, the level of participation is very high.

Over the past decade, trade unions have been responsive to women's needs and have been working towards harnessing their participation. They have been trying to identify factors affecting womens participation through self-analysis and enabling them to overcome their barriers (ILO, 2000).

This has inference to this case study where we found that unions and union leaders are very supportive to the participation and empowerment of women, which was supported by their expressions in the plantation.

Two union leaders in the plantation expressed individually in an interview that the establishment of Self-Managing Teams and women taking over as leaders has helped to solve their problems easily.

"In plantation, each employee work with their family members. The place of work is very vast. There are many divisions. The two leaders work in different divisions. They donot get an opportunity to meet during the time of work or place of work. If the employees face any problem, the same is passed on to the Union leader who used to rush to that place and take the matter to the Supervisors and the manager in the office. This was the practice before. By this process, the leaders lose many working days. But now, the employees take up the issue with their Self-managing Team leaders and take it directly to the Labour Welfare officer who is also a lady and solve the problem without the intervention of the Union leaders. In the evening, since all of them are accommodated in the line houses, the message has been passed on to the Union leaders."

The Union leaders are very happy with the present situation. The women employees were contacted at several latex collecting points about the new situation. They expressed their satisfaction towards this. On query about their leadership, they informed that they did not find any reason to change the leadership. They are happy with the Self-managing Teams and the set up created by the Social Dialogue project and the awareness created by the Participatory Workplace Appraisal exercise.

To attend a meeting that is held after dusk, at a place which is very far from their homes, disturbs not only their schedule of domestic chores but also calls for a lot of motivation. Now in the changed scenario, participation in union and management may give a taste of power, which will eventually help them for sustainability.

Women should be encouraged to discuss their issues of importance. That encourages women to participate in the decision making process. Hence, if the contribution of a woman in making her home is included in the common agenda for meetings of union representatives by giving it due importance, participation of women would be wholehearted and active.

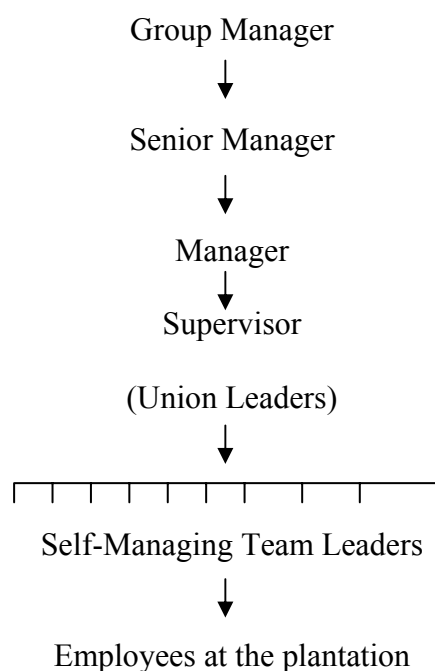
This exercise was helpful not only to collect the data but also for the transformation of women who participated in the process in a big way. The change that has come about among them during the exercise in the case of Titan and as a result of SAVPOT in the rubber plantation seems to be irreversible. This can be concluded from the initiatives of women themselves.

In Titan,

Women had meetings regularly after office hours
Disseminating knowledge of importance to the other employees
Discussing issues of the workplace
Buying magazines from their own contribution
Willingness to convene periodical meetings
Interest and initiatives have shown by the women to solve the problems.

In BPL,

Many women were motivated
Increase in the number of Self Managing Team (SMT) leaders
Appointment of women as Quality Control leaders
Initiatives by the women to solve the problems among themselves
Initiatives by the women to solve the problems with the managers
Directly.



Now the women have better access to management and participate in decision-making, Men have become better responsive and involve them in their day to day decisions. With the introduction of Social Dialogue project and the appraisal exercises, the barriers of hierarchy is broken between the employers and employees, it would influence the relations positively in future. This in accordance with the article 4 of Convention No.98 of the International Labour Standards (International Labour Conference-81st session, 1994)

Women in the board of enterprise too have a better say in the company matters than before and have access to the management. This facilitates participation of labour women in deliberations with their employers. Carr et al., (1996) there is a general trend observed among trade unions, women's groups and cooperatives to drift their focus from solely income and employment security - driven activities to more comprehensive development-focussed approaches with the aim of organizing women for overall economic and political empowerment.

The management of both the enterprises also has taken steps to follow this model. It is evident by the way the group discussions were organized and followed up in these enterprises, Titan and BPL. The managers also have expressed their interest towards the sustainability of the group.

Views of the management towards the appraisal exercise after 8 months (Titan):

"Thanks to ILO for involving Titan in the "Participatory Work Place Appraisal" for our women employees.

When the process started during April 2002, some of our team member employees were not very clear about their role, commitment, confidence level and Social responsibilities.

Post process of Participatory Work place appraisal system and the follow up sessions has given them the clarity in their approach to any problem, and getting the right solution, team work and self confidence. More over the teams have further interacted with other employees. They have been forming small, small teams and sharing the best practices, happenings around the globe, neighbourhood and their reading habits has increased. It is understood that these type of sharing happening after office hours and the relationships within their family and society has increased.

To strengthen the team, we are trying from our end to organize the smaller groups and provide them a common platform so that the right type of communication and information is shared for the benefit of members.

Thanks again for the opportunity given by ILO and to you personally"

Women from both the enterprises expressed their desire to participate in the union activities. Their expectations include:

- Empathy from their supervisors
- Value the women employees as a human being
- Maintain good relations among them instead of aiming to achieve the number (production)
- Women wanted to help each other, improve their inter-personal relations.
- Women want to share their information, experiences with the other employees.
- Women solve the problems with the help of the existing structure.

Joyce Rothschild, has given her ideas of Feminine model of organization where women like to participate in the western world.

1. *Values members as individual human being*
2. *Non-opportunistic-women view relationships as possessing value in themselves not as formal means to the achievement of organizational goals.*
3. *Careers are defined in terms of service to others: unlike members in bureaucratic model who define career success in terms of promotions, acquisition of power and pay increases, members of feminine model measure success in terms of service to others.*
4. *Commitment to employee growth - feminine organization create extensive personal growth opportunities, broadening employee competencies by offering new learning experiences.*
5. *Creation of a caring community*
6. *Power sharing*

From the above comparison, it is quite evident, that not only women in the west prefer these conditions to participate in the activities of union, but women from these enterprises in the South-East Asia also shown their inclination towards the feminine model of organization within their context of culture.

Future Vision:

The Social Dialogue project along with the "Participatory Workplace Appraisal" has helped them in empowerment. This empowerment will help them further in their social life for a better tomorrow.

- Social Empowerment through
- Equal status, participation and powers of decision-making of women in household
- Equal status, participation and powers of decision-making in the enterprise
- Breaking social, cultural and religious barriers to equal development of women
- Better awareness on health, education, environment etc,
- Improvement in Functional literacy
- Better communication skills
- Better leadership skills

Such empowerment women would lead to benefits at two levels - one, direct benefits to the individual women and women's groups; and two, ripple effect development benefits for other families, community and the enterprise.

Kanagarani Selvakumar
SAVPOT

RESULTS ACHIEVED AFTER A GAP OF 20 MONTHS

**ILO PROGRAMME ON
EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH SOCIAL DIALOGUE,
SHARING OF EXPERIENCES
SATURDAY, 12TH JUNE 2004
HOSUR, TAMILNADU**

SHARING OF EXPERIENCES BY THE WOMEN EMPLOYEES OF TITAL LTD:

Mrs. Banumathi

Professional Development :

- Encouraged to become an Executive Committee Member.
- Organized for Women's Day Celebration and arranged for a picnic with the help of few members.
- Self – confidence improved – assertive.

Personal Development :

- Learnt how to deal with the family members and act according to their liking and thus leading to the reduction of misunderstanding.
- Now knows how to deal with the personal problems independently, without any third party's help.

Mrs. Nagajothi :

Professional Development :

- Meeting is regularly held in the morning, discussing regarding day to day news, plan for the day (on production) etc.
- With the help of the other group members introduced the Prayer during the break.
- Encouraged the respective line member to pursue for Higher Education – all the employees in their line have completed Graduation and few Post – Graduation.
- Small Group Activities have helped employees come out of their shell – those who were hesitant to talk even among their group members, came out and boldly made their Presentation relating to Production and their achievements.
- Coordinated for the Women's Day celebration.

Personal Development :

- Was motivated to learn more about Stress Management and completed Graduation on Kayakalpa.

Mrs. Logambal.

Professional Development :

- Realised the Rights of women.
- Was encouraged to become the office bearer of the union.
- Self Confidence was improved.
- Is now confident to solve problem by ownself.

Mrs. Sabreeth Banu.

Professional Development :

- Was highly motivated to serve down trodden people in the society.
- Wants to open the school in the place called Horror, for those children who are not in a position to pursue their education due to family problems.
- Has so far participated in the HIV AIDS Awareness Programme, Eye Care Camp, Education Counselling etc with the help of Community Development Center.
- Incomplete Bachelor Degree was completed and also pursued the Degree in Post-Graduation.

Mrs. Bhoopathy

Professional Development :

- Cultivated self confidence of raising their voice and asking for their rights – where the number of women employees are less, they asked for equal rights in par with male colleagues.
- Was motivated to become the member of various Committees.
- The machinery where only male employees worked now is also being operated by the all the women employees, and have exceeded the set target.

Personal Development :

- Has now joined the Hindi Classes, which is at a little distant place from the place of residence. Is able to manage both family and also continue the education.
- Is now in position to help her children in Hindi.
- Learnt to balance the personal and professional life.

Mrs. Shanthi.

Professional Development :

- Has come out of hesitation and is now able to exhibit the hidden talents.
- Clarity and confidence.
- Learnt about team work and to empathize with fellow colleagues.

Mrs. Saraswathi.

Professional Development :

- Cultivated WE-FEELING
- Was able to break the myth of Women being called as Weaker sex-in terms of work calling for physical in nature.
- Learnt to take very decision logically – thinking twice taking a decision.

Personal Development :

- Is able to manage and adjust according to the different cultures followed at her place.

Mrs. Uthra Devi

Professional Development :

- The views which were put forth without giving a thought to the management, now are given a second thought and expressed in a very polished manner.
- Contested for the post of Office Bearer of union.

Personal Development:

Gained more confidence
Determined to become an office bearer one day
Highly motivated

Feedback from the Vice-President and the Chief Executive Officer of Titan:

Dear Ms. Rani,

I would like to personally thank you and ILO for choosing Titan in the " Participatory Work Place Appraisal " for women employees. I vividly recall, the number of visits and meetings you organized in the past two years. The commitment and the passion you demonstrated in all the meetings is commendable. I must congratulate you for coming out with a very good report on the study conducted at Titan, Tamilnadu, India & BPL, Sri Lanka.

I am sure, the objectives of the study was met and there is a lot of learning for the individual women, in particular and the ripple effect benefit that would accrue to the Company, Family and the Community, in general, through greater empowerment of women.

As I mentioned to you, we are planning to involve the spouses of Employees of our Company to become aware of the business aspects of the Company's operations, as also of the Social and Cultural contribution that the Company is making for the welfare of its employees and the Society at large. This movement is expected to give appreciable benefits like stronger sense of belonging and also serve as a tool for alleviating stress within the Organization.

Thank you once again and all the very best to you.

With warm regards

M S Shantharam
Chief Manufacturing Officer
Titan Industries Limited

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