

The Report
On the position of women who live in rural
areas and recommendations for its
improvement



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1. Introduction

The programme of the Private sector development (PSD) is implemented by Zlatibor Regional development agency on the territory of Southwest Serbia, focusing on the municipalities of Arilje, Nova Varoš, Priboj, Prijepolje, Čajetina and the city of Užice – part of Zlatibor Region. This programme is financed by the Swiss development and cooperation agency from May 2009 to December 2012.

The general objective of the programme is the development of economic opportunities and creation of jobs in Zlatibor Region – particularly for young people and women, and overcoming, at the same time, system obstacles for the economic growth and competitiveness within the selected industrial branches. Three sectors were selected as the major focus areas of the project during its implementation: tourism, meat and milk processing and fruit processing. It is believed that all three sectors have the potential for a considerable development of competitiveness in the region and/or the potential for generating income and creating jobs.

Within the intervention on the Development of quality of life of women from rural areas by strengthening female associations, PSD, in partnership with the Women's Center on the territory of Užice, Arilje, Čajetina, Prijepolje, Priboj and Nova Varoš, organised 6 public events on the territory of PSD municipalities with the following objectives:

- To present the possibilities provided by different types of associations
- To analyse the needs and potentials of rural women
- To include gender analyses into city/municipal budgets

Within six round tables devoted to economic strengthening of women and introduction of gender equality into local budgets, and with the aim to analyse the needs and potentials of rural women, the Women's Centre Uzice conducted a survey among all the people present at the discussions. The results of the survey enable better understanding of the position of rural women, their needs, the problems they have to face and the kind of support that is necessary for the improvement of the quality of life of women in rural areas.

2. Research methodology

2.1. Research topic

Research topic – *analysis of the needs and potentials of women in rural areas* by studying the conditions of living in rural areas, agricultural production of rural households where women live (type of production, use of mechanisation in production, agricultural practice and the sale of products), the opinions of rural women about cooperatives, associations, their involvement in rural tourism, as well as by studying the position of women in rural areas when compared to men.

2.2. Research objective

Research objective is acquiring the knowledge about the position of women who live and work in rural areas and understanding their situation in order to find an adequate type of support for the improvement of their economic status.

2.3. Designing a questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed by PSD Programme with the advice and recommendations of: Women's Centre Uzice, Agricultural counselling service Uzice, Veterinary station Dimi Vet and prof. Predrag Perisic PhD (professor at the Agricultural faculty in Belgrade).

The questionnaire is structured according to the research areas: household characteristics (the land, industrial objects, agricultural mechanisation), type of production (breeds, processing, sale), production practice, opinions about associations and cooperatives, rural tourism and the questions about the position of rural women.

The questionnaire contained 75 closed and 74 open questions.

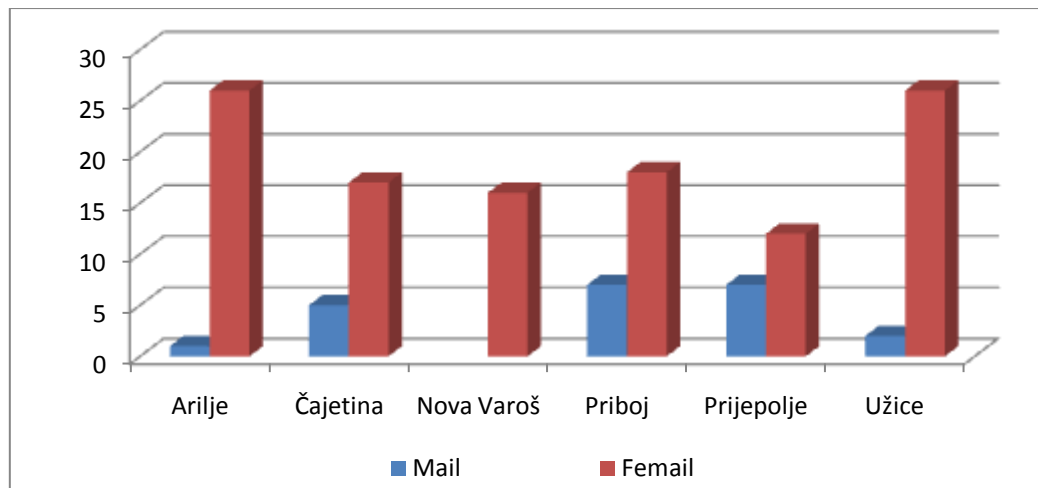
2.4. Research sample

Data were gathered at the six round tables devoted to economic strengthening of women in rural areas and introduction of gender equality into the budgets of local governments. The Women's Centre Uzice invited the public to attend the events and informed women with the help of the media and women's organisations, and thus created a random sample. The research was done on men and women in order to enable the comparison of the perception of the position of women of both sexes. The data were collected by individual form-filling and direct interviewing from 3-16 December, 2011.

2.5. Data analysis

In the analysis of the gathered data, several statistical methods were used (descriptive statistics, average value method and factor analysis) depending on the data quality. ***Since the sample was relatively small and since there was a large number of questions in the survey, only the data that gave relevant information were analysed.***

3. General sample analysis



Graph – Distribution of the sample according to the gender and municipality of examinees

During the research, 137 people were surveyed. Of the total number, 84% were women, and 16% were men. The examinees lived in 66 different villages, and 54 villages were included in the sample with fewer than 2.2 examinees per village (total 41%). The largest number of people was surveyed in the villages of Jablanica, Cajetina Municipality (16), Lunovo selo, Uzice Municipality (13), and Banja, Priboj Municipality (9).

4. Living conditions of women in rural areas

There are no significant differences in living conditions of the women on the different territories where the survey was conducted. **They mostly live in five-member families**, with the approximately same number of men and women in the family. Statistically speaking, a family consists of 2.6 people capable to work, 1.6 young people and 0.65 of elderly people. An average house (78%) in which they live has 2.5 rooms, electricity, a bathroom and a kitchen, a fridge, a freezer, a washing machine, a TV set, an electric cooker and gross income of 150 € per month. Their houses are, to a great extent, equipped with computers (61%), and one out of three households has the internet access. **However, only 29% of households have hot water in their bathrooms.** A dish-washer and a clothes dryer, which are largely used in most urban households, are very rare and there are less than 10% of them in rural households. **One out of 55 women is officially the owner of her house.**

One out of three women has no idea whatsoever as to how much land her family owns. One third of them can state the kind of property owned by the family, and only one third of them can state exactly or roughly how big the property is. More than a half of their households own mechanisation for cultivation and transport of products, whereas the mechanisation for forestry and fruit processing is much less present.

5. Household production

Their households mainly produce fruit, vegetables, agricultural products, meat and milk. **Fewer than half of the women can state how much they have produced and how they have sold their products.** At the same time, they produce traditional products: cheese, kajmak, smoked ham, ajvar, slatko, jam and cvarci (pork crisps), but they sell them sporadically (less than 5% of women has sold an amount less than 1% of their production).

While choosing species to be grown, few households consider the combination of factors of payability/suitability of the climate and the relief and the characteristics of the land used for cultivation.

Despite good relationships with veterinary stations (83%), only a third of households ask for the support of veterinarians during the process of animal birthing.

6. Opinions of rural women about associations and cooperatives

Almost all women (98%) desire to become members of cooperatives. They believe that a cooperative is fair (48%). Only around 40% of their households, there is at least one cooperative and 88% of women would like to have cooperatives opened in their area. In Nova Varos, there is no cooperative, and in Priboj, only 22% of women have a cooperative nearby. Only 32% of women have had an opportunity to work with a cooperative, and 44% have had very little experience in working with cooperatives; two thirds of these women live in Arilje, and among women of Cajetina and Nova Varos, not a single one has had an opportunity to work with cooperatives.

Four out of five women would like to invest in production together with other households, and as many as 91% of them gladly assist their neighbours in their work. In 50% of villages there is no cooperative work, and the women from the villages where this kind of work is still organised notice that there is less and less of it.

7. Opinions of rural women about rural tourism

Most women (93%) would like to get involved in rural tourism. It is positive that 41% of women state that it would be payable and interesting, which means that it is very important for them to do the job professionally. It is noticeable that **the high percentage of women (98%) would want more tourists to come to their villages and to spend more time with them as their main motivation.**

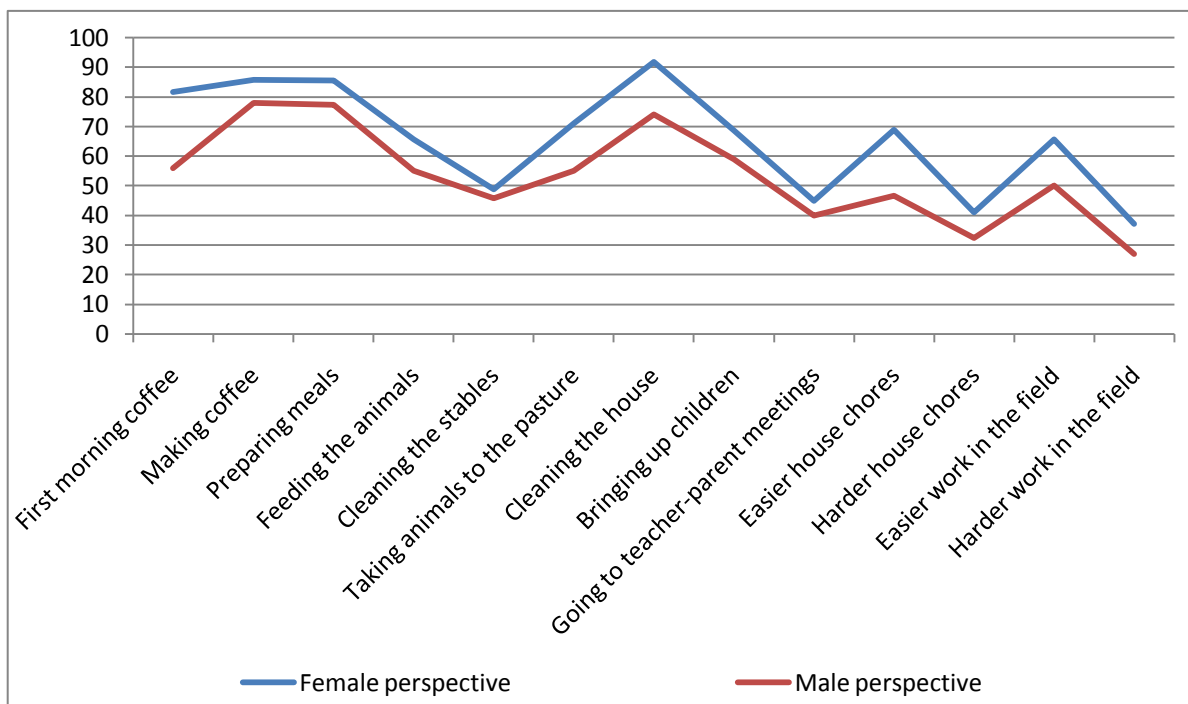
The women who would like to get involved in rural tourism have poor accommodation facilities, and only about 10% of women have houses with over ten beds. Another 20% of them have the possibility to invest into neglected buildings and create the capacity of more than 10 beds.

Most women have expressed the wish to attend a course on healthy nutrition, and more than a half would like to improve their knowledge of rural tourism.

8. Women's position within the household

Women from the target territory (over 80%) get up before men, they make their first coffee for them and every other coffee, they make every meal, and go to bed after them. They spend much more time bringing up children, but this is not emphasised in the survey (the conclusion is made indirectly). The work with animals is shared, but women are the ones who feed them much more frequently and take them to the pasture, whereas stables are cleaned by both men and women equally (49%). **Women almost always (over 90%) clean the house and very often do minor repairs around it, whereas when it comes to more difficult jobs around the house, they participate with 39%.** Very often, women (73%) do easier jobs in the field and participate in the harder ones as well (32%). They go to bed later and sleep less than men during the day.

It is interesting that more than half of the women do these jobs independently, they make coffee, meals, clean the house, feed the animals, take animals to the pasture, attend all parent-teacher meetings and do easier jobs around the house. Also, at least 30% of women do all the hard jobs around the house and all the easier and harder jobs in the field.



Graph – comparing opinions of women and men in terms of how much women work in and around the house

Generally speaking, men think that they get up at the same time as women and that they participate in household chores by at least 20% more than them. Also, **when it comes to rest and pastime, men think that women have twice as much rest as they do.**

Women are almost never owners of farms (1/55) and they do not know what their farms consist of (over 33%). They have very little contact with the finances and only one out of seven women is employed. Their situation is made worse by the fact that they have to look after the children and the elderly. Statistically speaking, in a household there are 1.25

women capable of working who take care of 1.5 children, 1.5 men capable of working and 0.65 old people (over the age of 70).

An average woman has two hours of rest by watching television and reads two newspapers per week. Her neighbours visit her three times a week for a cup of coffee, and she visits them twice or three times as well. **On average, she goes to the city five times a month, twice on account of personal affairs, and three times on some sort of business.**

Women want to move to cities. What they would most like to get in their village is a health centre, and a large number of them would like to have a sports ground. They would like to spend more time with other women in the village and to travel to other villages and spend time with women there.

It is interesting that depending on which municipality they come from, women perceive their participation in house chores differently. Women in the municipalities of Priboj, Prijepolje, Čajetina and Nova Varoš believe that their share in work is larger than the average by 10%, whereas women in the municipalities of Arilje and Užice think that their share is less than the average by 6%. There are also some discrepancies in terms of trends. Women in Čajetina make the first morning coffee most rarely (approximately 30% less than the average). In the municipalities of Čajetina, Priboj and Prijepolje, women participate in the work with animals to a great extent (over 90% on average). In Čajetina and Prijepolje, women do easier jobs around the house more, and in Nova Varoš, they do these jobs much less than the average. Women in the municipalities of Čajetina, Nova Varoš and Priboj, participate in the easier jobs in the field much more than women in other three municipalities.

It is also noticed that women in Čajetina read newspapers very rarely (one out of seven women reads a newspaper per week), whereas in Arilje and Užice, women usually read more than three magazines per month.

9. Conclusion and recommendations

Rural women live under complex circumstances. Their main job is to look after the house, make coffee and meals, clean the house, participate in work with animals and help in the field work. They usually bring up the children and are the pillar of the family in every possible meaning of the word. On the other hand, they are completely dependent on men when it comes to finances and are to a great extent excluded from the household finances.

It can be concluded that women show great interest in associations. They explicitly stated that it was important for them to have a fair cooperative, whereas it can be noticed that there is less and less trust among the villagers. They would like to cooperate and help one another a lot, but, on the other hand, there are fewer and fewer joint activities, they ask their neighbours for help much more rarely, which all indicates the lack of trust in neighbourly relations.

Rural women clearly show their interest in rural tourism and would like to learn more about it. They want to be informed about healthy food, which can be very useful in tourism involvement. Unfortunately, they usually do not have information about the possible benefits and the number of tourists who are interested in this type of tourism.

Women will be in a much better position once they become economically independent and more influential within their households.

This study gives a rough picture of the position of rural women. It is still unclear why women are excluded from the finances, whether they are simply not interested, whether men exclude them on purpose ... these questions are extremely important because they determine the way in which rural women could be helped in their economic strengthening.

- It is necessary to do another research in order to establish reasons for the exclusion of women from economic trends and get a more elaborate analysis of their position. It should be done on a representative sample at the municipal level with both men and women.
- It is necessary to assist women's associations in order to improve their social status. In this way, women would connect and become a better support to one another in all of their joint interests and problems. Also, women's associations are a very good basis for women's business associations.
- It is necessary to assist the opening of women's cooperatives (wherever it is possible) because in this way, women will get a more influential position in the household through joint work and sale of their products. Cooperatives will certainly help in opening the market for the products which have not been made before.
- There is a great interest in rural tourism and the farms which have the potential for it should be assisted. Rural tourism will considerably affect the opening of new markets in villages and the exchange of experiences between people from rural and urban areas. Rural tourism will not necessarily help women improve their position, but it will definitely lead to the economic strengthening of the village and exchange of experiences, which can be of great assistance to rural women.