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Women In Development

By

Gantiowati Prawiro Soedirdjo
One evening last week I was asked to speak at this forum today on Women and Democracy. I am not sure you had the right person in front of you. However, I'll try to sound as the expert you expect on this subject based on my personal knowledge about women in general.

Out the outset, I think it best, if I begin by making sure we are talking about the same thing, that is Communication and Women in Development. And those of us who work in the international arena know that there are shades of meaning from one country and one culture and one language to the next.

What I propose today is to share information how the women of the world find themselves not only as an integral part of their families, of their home office activities, but also of the world actions itself.

Ladies and gentlemen,

If we talk about the women, especially the men must know and must realize, that the women are trying for ages to make our
life as pleasant as possible. We women are working very hard just to help our men to make ends meet, not only as a wife, or a mother to their children, but also as a good citizen in preserving a happy family life and a healthy environment. As said by Aisyah Ali from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, that some men believe that deep-seated notion women's comprehension and empathy technology is suspected and as a result, they are overlooked for technical jobs. It is here that women has to strive double hard to prove their capability and their bravery to conquer the world, where men are spared. It is here that women should take a different stand. Not to stay meek, not to be bossy nor aggressive, but to show their willingness to cooperate in the ideas, the actions, the steps taken and or the plans to win honor and appreciation from their counter part. It is here that the women should show their rights and strive for better living and social standards, to protect their aims and ideals in reaching their goals. Because the role of women, like the society of which they form a part, is never static. It changes with the changing structure and texture of society. So keep in mind that women are no puppets easily manipulated by male puppeteers, but in this new era women performed important economic and social functions, even exercised political power. I think it is not too much asked if you would offer a better place in your heart so that the women could be more comfortably moving round to the benefit and advantage of the society. What the community find most attractive about the activities of the women is the fact that it expands women's roles
without diminishing their homemaking. So far the participation of women enables them to gradually move towards increased choices in life with both community support and approval. In this way, the women get more self-confidence which increases their involvement in the community as well as in the national development by sharing the skills learned.

It was said often that we are living today in a fast changing world due to the advance in technology. We see information crossing the boundaries faster than ever before which brought us face to face with the reality in smoothing the way we work and the way we live in. These changes and phenomena have enhanced the quality of life of the women it touches. No matter how good the concept we women develop is, the need to market it. What matters most is not how good our intentions are, but how well we are understood, accepted and or appreciated. Here is where we face the communication challenge, an intense interaction of human rights for women.

The only factor that prevented many millions of human beings from travelling long distances exploring new horizons was purchasing recognition of its existency as a member of the society.

Even though this barrier is fast thinning in developing countries, and yet the message carrier and the receiver must meet with a common goal is still to be seen. Their endeavour together did not yet find a solution on how to smooth the two way traffic communication to either satisfaction. Then come the question how do we communicate! As communication, to my
opinion, is the best vehicle for negotiations, then misunderstandings and miscommunications could be prevented, therefore, the women are urge to take the advantage of it.

The involvement of women in improve the quality of life and natural system is everybody's business. Women’s perspectives recognize that the eradication of poverty is central to solving problems. Women experiences, perspectives, and concerns, have not been taken into account in development generally, nor in most programs dealing with the protection of their rights. Women's full participation is essential for achieving sustainable development.

All over the world, especially in Asia, women based on their experiences, roles and skills, have specific valuable contributions to make on issues related to the national development which are being addressed by governments, United Nations agencies and other bodies concern. And yet to some extend too few women have been given the chance to promote themselves or have been involved in decision-making with regard to policies, programs, projects, or funding for the development in general. Even in the academic field, women educators are left behind. Women Rectors or Deans are still very rare. It seems that those places are only reserved for men. While in the business field the top positions are still occupied by men too.

These perspectives, experiences and contributions should be widely communicated to institutions and people through the
mass media. In this respect the mass communication existence could be a delight in promoting women achievements and assisting institutions, governments and the like to endeavour their programs.

Although to my opinion the goal of development cannot be reached by using media channels alone, still the media play an important role in disseminating information on the women activities to the people.

Communication has come to occupy a central place in efforts to improve living conditions everywhere. The role of information in development by using the mass media is to generate the spirit in rendering service to the nation; to motivate the communication network between governments and its community, vice-versa, covering all aspects of life aspirations and appraisals which develop in the midst society itself. An action executed occasionally by Indonesia through face to face communication, is a dialogue between the government and its people known as "klompencapir" about agriculture, health, family planning or environment. This information must reach target audiences who can question planners. The leaders must speak to the people, and the people to the leaders.

According to Hedebro (1982) the mass media in developing countries can be the peoples' medium. It has an ability to speak for them and report their needs. Mass Communication is considered as a lead to the general modernization of a country, which in turn paves the way for adopting methods.
as an example, the Indonesian Family Planning Board, where women play the main role and is the main target, without any hesitation has made advantage of the mass media in implementing its family planning program policy and as a result became so popular that it attracted the neighboring countries to see for themselves how it was done.

Another example, I heard, are the women here in Thailand, who were approached to motivate and encourage other village women to promote themselves in the agriculture and horticulture fields. The quality of Thailand rice is well known among the ASEAN countries, next to the Japanese one.

It could be noted that combining development activities, such as agriculture, family planning, health, environment with mass media implementation proved to be very successful in increasing the quality of family life and the living standard in general. To make these desires possible we cannot sit still without being conscious of the capacity of the women itself. The integration of women in national development, I suppose, requires good leadership, education, and determination. Women are considered good listeners, more attentive and more patient than men. They are flexible in their approaches by using their female intuition, a mysterious gift of skills developed through practice in reading many signals - both verbal and non-verbal. They are aware early on that they have a duty to nurture and, thus, they are not easily influenced by emotion. Therefore, gentlemen, it would be a big help, if the women are given the feeling of wanted and
a sense of belonging which they deserved and which would make
them more at ease in moving around to the benefit of all.

In addition, as for the THE WOMEN NGOs, I cannot say much.
But to my personal opinion, the above mentioned phrase should
be extended by UN to ease the tension and to give more space
to the women to move around. It has been going for decades
that the fate of women in fighting for their rights was
always overlooked. In the hope to get a better insight of
their attendance, the women all over the world were flocking
like birds to Beijing, Cina, where the 17th UN World
Congress of Women was held. Another attraction is of course
the well known great wall of Cina.

I was told that eventhough to some delegates the conference
was held on the outskirts of the city and it did not
compensate with the struggle of the women in reaching the
"Platform of Action", yet 200 delegates of women,
heterogeneous, individually as well as representatives of
their NGOs, came together to get a look for themselves, and
to speak out their rights to a better education, a clean and
healthy environment, surviving, getting justice in the face
of rape and violence, etc. In this context the women NGOs
were seeking a solution how to overcome all their problems
and how to be able to get the attention and the support of
the UN. It is expected in any possible way that Women NGOs
should try helping their own people with the little expense
available. As a result of their good work and good
intentions, I believe their aspirations should be heard, to
be studied, and their fate to be taken into consideration.

In this way, maybe their resolutions would be then not found as a noise factor nor hindrance, but would be considered something more worthwhile instead. Meaning, that probably this kind of attitude would bring the Women NGOs farther ahead than expected in their struggle for achieving a healthy democracy in their endeavor to be recognized for their existence. In every respect by using the good effective performance of communication techniques in conducting their goals. I very much hope that the Women NGOs would then find a solution to fulfill their deeds and needs, their actions and aims, and to secure good understanding vice-versa in accomplishing their programs.

Thank you.
Mrs. Gantiowati Prawiro Soedirdjo, M.Sc.

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