

Participation of Women in Agricultural Activities in Gazipur District of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture can be an important engine of growth and poverty reduction. But the sector is underperforming in many countries in part because women, who are often a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy, face constraints that reduce their productivity. In this paper we draw on the available empirical evidence to study in which areas and to what degree women participate in agriculture. This study analyzed women participation in agricultural activities and home based activities in Gazipur sadar upazila Of Bangladesh. It investigated the women's access to economic resources and examined the influence of selected socio-economic characteristics of women and access to economic resources on their participation in agricultural production. Multistage random sampling technique was used to select 50 respondents for this study. The research was carried out with the use of well structured interview schedule to obtain the necessary data. Both descriptive and inferential analytical tools were reemployed. Profit analysis was employed to investigate the determinants of women participation in agricultural activities and home based activities in the study area.

Keywords: Women; Participation; Agricultural activities;

The international development community has recognized that agriculture is an engine of growth and poverty reduction in countries where it is the main occupation of the poor. But the agricultural sector in many developing countries is underperforming, in part because women, who represent a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy through their roles as farmers, laborers and entrepreneurs, almost everywhere, face more severe constraints than men in access to productive resources (Ahmed, *et al*, 2008). Efforts by national governments and the international community to achieve their goals for agricultural development, economic growth and food security will be strengthened and accelerated if they build on the contributions that women make and take steps to alleviate these constraints (Lawanson, *O.I*, 2008).

Women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts

of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sector (Charles, *et al*, 2008). Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. Many of these activities are not defined as "economically active employment" in national accounts but they are essential to the well-being of rural households (Damisa, *et al*, 2007).

In Bangladesh, women are in general responsible for livestock and poultry rearing. Poultry rearing is a traditional activity performed by women for income generation. Feeding livestock, cleaning sheds, securing them properly for the night, and health care are the activities performed by women. Keeping this view in mind, the present study was undertaken with following

objectives to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent women, which influence them to participate in agricultural activities; to determine the extent of the rural women's involvement in agricultural activities; and to find out the relationship between selected characteristics of rural women and their participation in agricultural activities (Kabir, et al, 1977).

METHODOLOGY

A total of 345 housewives (Kanaia 130, Nilerpara 105, and Chakuli 110) were considered as the population of the present study believing that each family contained only one housewife. And from them ninety (90) housewives were selected as sample using stratified proportionate random sampling.

In stratified sampling, the population is subdivided into several part, called strata, and then a sub-Sample is chosen from each then. All the sub-samples combined together give the stratified sample. If the selection from strata is done by random sampling the method is known as stratified random sampling. Three villages namely Kanaia, Nilerpara, Chakuli of Gazipur sadar upazila were selected as the locale for this piece of the study and all housewives of the selected three villages were the population of the study. Primary data was collected through questionnaire prepared for fulfilling objectives of the study. Data were collected personally by the researcher herself through face to face interview. The entire process of data collection took 30 ranging days from February to March 2011. The primary data was analyzed through tabulation and graphical presentation. To measure this, each respondent was asked to indicate her extent of participation in each activity which was calculated in per cent. Thus, a respondent's involvement could range from 0-100% where '0' indicating no participant and 100% indicating full participation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participation in Agricultural Activities: Findings presented in Table 1 reveal that respondents' husband i.e., men are mostly involved (64 to 77%) with all the pre-harvest crop production activities including in budgeting for crop production, purchasing agricultural inputs, arrangement of agricultural implements, selection of land, selection of crop, land preparation and cleaning, sowing seed/ transplanting seedling, weeding, irrigation,

intercultural operation, determination of harvesting time and harvesting of crop. Respondent women have mentionable participation (13 to 28%) in pre-harvest agricultural activities. Children also are involved (7 to 14%) with pre-harvest agricultural activities based on the necessity of the family. Hence, pre-harvest crop production activities which are physical labor intensive and need technical decision are dominantly performed by the male counter parts of the respondent women.

Table 1. Participation of respondent women, men and children in pre harvest crop production activities

Activities	Woman	Man	Children
Budgeting for crop production	20	73	7
Purchasing agricultural inputs	13	77	8
Arrangement of agril. implements	13	77	8
Selection of land	28	64	8
Selection of crop	28	64	8
Land preparation and cleaning	22	66	12
Sowing seed/transplanting seedling	18	68	14
Weeding	18	68	14
Irrigation	18	68	14
Intercultural operation	18	68	14
Determination of harvesting time	18	68	14
Harvesting of crop	18	68	14

Traditionally women in Bangladesh are engaged in post-harvest agricultural activities solely or with their husbands or other male family members from the time immemorial. Though results displayed in Table 2 reveal that husbands of the respondent women play vital role in threshing of harvested crops (85%), carrying products to market (84%) and selling of products (81%) to the market.

Table 2. Respondent women, men and children's participation in post-harvest crop production activities

Activities	Woman	Man	Children
Threshing of harvested crops	13	85	2
Cleaning and winnowing	89	9	2
Sorting and grading of product	73	15	12
Processing of products	77	14	9
Carrying to market	7	84	9
Sale of products	6	81	13
Storage of products	66	21	13

But respondent women dominantly participate in most of the post-harvest crop production activities which are cleaning and winnowing of separated crop grains (89%), processing of products (77%), sorting and grading of product (73%) and storage of products (66%)

in compatible with cultural and social norms and values. Children also have little participation (2 to 13%) in post-harvest crop production activities based on their physical ability and family demand as well.

Participation in poultry rearing : In the study area 63 families had poultry out of 90 families. The findings presented in Fig. 2 depicts that woman participation is 100 per cent in collection of poultry, feeding poultry, taking care of poultry. But their counterpart husband play vital role in selling of eggs and poultry with 68 % and 67% participation, respectively. Very little participation of children is traced out in selling of eggs and poultry (Fig.1).

Out of 90 respondents, 13 rear goat while 47 of them rear cow. Information presented in Fig. 2 indicate that the respondent women have highest participation in collection /purchase of goat (92%) followed by rearing and milking of goat (77%). In case of cow women mostly involve in rearing (95%) followed by collection / purchase of cow (89%). Therefore, women are going

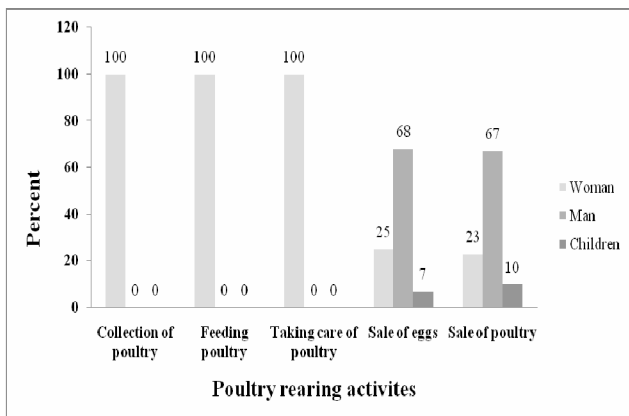


Fig. 1. Comparative participation of man, women, and children in poultry rearing

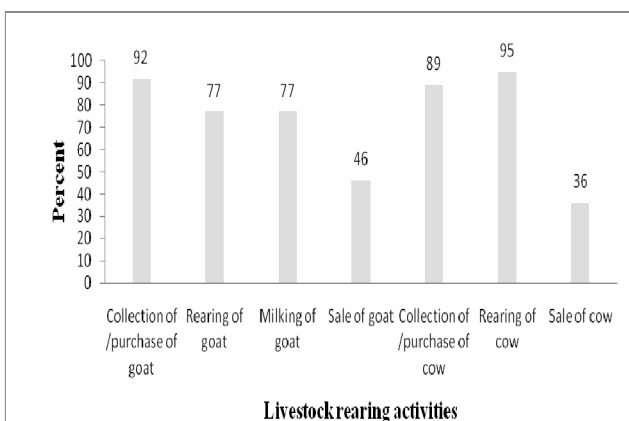


Fig. 2. Distribution of the respondents based on their participation in livestock

on performing vital role in livestock rearing (Fig.2).

Relationship between the characteristics of the respondents and their participation in agricultural activities: Women in rural Bangladesh along with their husbands also participate in agricultural activities. Relationships between the selected characteristics of the respondents and their participation in agricultural activities have been tested and results are presented in Table 3. Data reveals that all the selected characteristics of the respondent women showed insignificant relationship with participation in agricultural activities.

Table 3. Relationship between the characteristics of the respondents and their participation in agricultural activities

Selected personal attribute	(r)
Age	0.106 ^{NS}
Education	-0.074 ^{NS}
Family size	0.005 ^{NS}
Occupation	-0.182 ^{NS}
Media exposure	-0.086 ^{NS}
Shock reduction ability	0.154 ^{NS}
Husband wife relation	0.103 ^{NS}
Contribution to purchase	0.196 ^{NS}
Participation in social development activities	0.195 ^{NS}

*NS-Non significant

It indicates that irrespective of the age, education, family size, occupation, shock reduction ability, husband wife relation and media exposure of the respondent women, their participation in agricultural activities more or less similar. However, the relationships were positive with their age, occupation, shock reduction ability, husband wife relation and contribution to purchase which were negative with education, occupation and media exposure.

CONCLUSION

Respondent women’s participation was low in pre-harvest crop production but their participation was high in post-harvest crop production activities especially in cleaning and winnowing of the separated crop grains, processing of products, sorting and grading products, and storage of products. Respondent participation was greater in collection, feeding, taking care of poultry and livestock but very low in selling of poultry and livestock. Arrangement of vocational training on income generating activities especially on modern poultry raising and modern vegetable production in the homestead area

by GO and NGOs. Programs should be taken for increasing women's knowledge on post harvest activities especially on winnowing, drying, sorting and storing of

grains. The present study was conducted in Gazipur sadar upazila under Gazipur district. Similar study may be conducted in other areas of Bangladesh.

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