

Empowering women through strengthening participation and decision making in agriculture sector: Evidence from south west region of Bangladesh

Shakil Ahmed

Senior Lecturer and Head, Department of Development Studies, North Western University, Khulna, Bangladesh

Abstract

Women's participation in agriculture activities varies considerably across regions and women are often paid less than men for the same work. It is also shows that weeding, planting and post-harvest handling in agriculture sector, feed management, cowshed management, bathing, milking in livestock sector and weeding, dyke preparation, gher, pond preparation with their husband are predominantly female activities. This study re-affirms that women make essential contributions to agricultural, livestock and aquaculture are significant. It might be concluded that, participation of women in agriculture is still not satisfactory but upward trend and necessary steps concerning extension approach should be taken to increase the agriculture production by ensuring barrier free participation.

Keywords: women empowerment, participation, agriculture, livestock, aquaculture

Introduction

Women's involvement in agricultural operation varies from region to region and it is so far widely acknowledged that women perform most of the activities related to crops, livestock and aquaculture production and management. The objectives are women's roles in three sectors such as agriculture, livestock and aquaculture of crop production and use of agricultural inputs. This research represents an overview of the evidence on the roles of women in agriculture and also looks women's decision making position of several activities of household in study areas with regard to the gender composition of rural populations. The key objective of the study was to know the current degree of participation of women in the agricultural activities. And another one is women's empowerment across various domains and identifies some scopes for women for easy access in agriculture activities.

Literature Review

Esha Sraboni *et al* (2013) pointed out that women's ability to generate income in the agricultural sector is also severely constrained by their lack of access to productive assets. Shapiro *et al* (2000) explained that women are heavily engaged in the livestock sector and livestock caring activities are more associated with women than men. Livestock play an important role in supporting women and in improving their financial situation. Chowdhury (2011) found that decision making process and innovativeness had significant positive relationship with women's participation in homestead vegetable production. Chowdhury *et al.* (2011) showed that almost half percent of women had high contribution in homestead vegetable production and had medium contribution to the family. Hasan (2006) observed that the highest proportion of conventional rural women had medium involvement in homestead farming activities. Nahar (2008) in her study in a selected area showed that extent of participation is high in all cases which is highly encouraging. Ahmad *et al.* (2007) ^[3] reported that major

constraints in vegetable production found in the study were lack of capital, credit availability and lack of marketing facilities. Kazi Tobarak Hossain *et.al* (2004) revealed that women in fishing communities contribute a great deal to the fishing economy, either directly by harvesting, processing and marketing. Md. Mamun-ur-Rashid and Qijie Gao (2012) pointed out, women in Bangladesh have diversified roles in fisheries, with substantial involvement in small-scale fisheries.

Methodology

Researcher covering three upuzila in his study named Dumuria in Khulna District, Chitalmari in Bagerhat District and Kalaroa in Satkhira District. The study uses mainly primary data to conduct this study and data has been collected during the period from October 2020 to November, 2020. Targeted the key female respondents who is direct and indirect are involved with agriculture activities. In the study used structured questionnaires for female farmers who are involved with agriculture activities to get the required information to fulfill the purposes of the study. Data have collected through interview method that is interviewer has collected data from the respondents through face to face interview. A well-structured questionnaire has been developed and used for data collection from the respondents. A purposive and random sampling methodology was used for the study. The first criterion to select the key respondents were an adult female from each household who are involved in and well aware of the agriculture process and women's role in the household decision-making activity. Data were collected from 3 districts through one-to-one interview with an adult female respondent of the household. Sample size was 150 on the study areas and from each upazila 50 women farmers selected randomly.

Result Discussion and Analysis

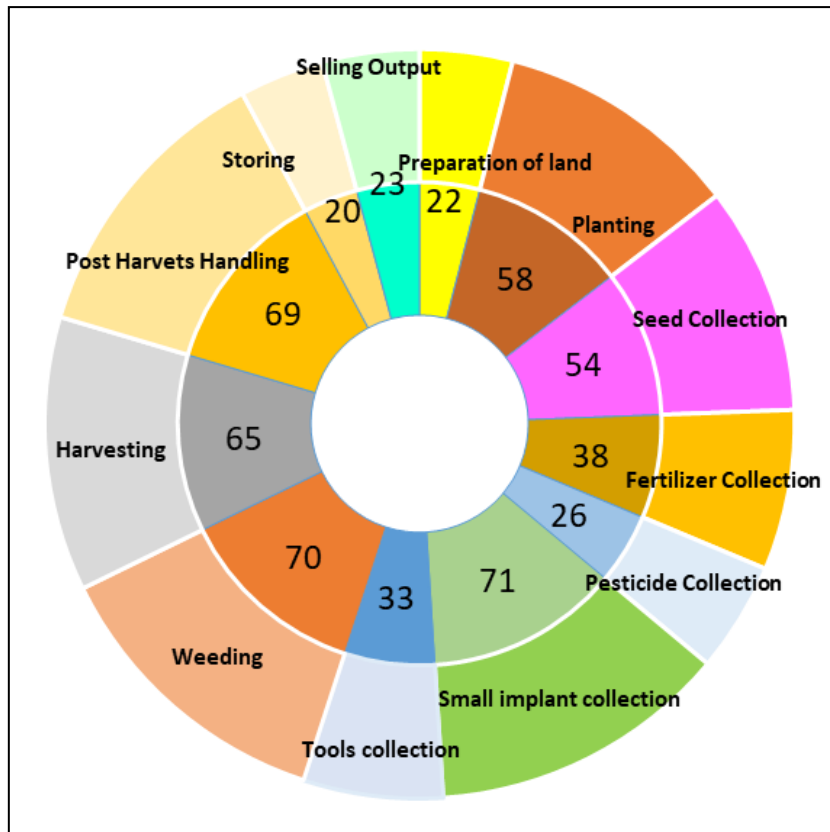
Occupation of the Respondent

From the study it is found that total of 63.3% of female respondents revealed that they are primarily engaged in domestic livestock rearing, and 14% mentioned that they are engaged with fish culture. Nearly 1% female involved with business.

Income Sources of the Respondent

To get a picture of family primary and secondary occupation

of respondent, asked income sources of the family. From the study it is found that total of 32.7% of households primarily engaged in vegetable cultivation and 21% mentioned that they are engaged with domestic livestock rearing. On the other hand, 44.7% households are secondary income sources domestic livestock rearing and 11.3% household's secondary income sources agriculture day labor. Only 3.3% households do not have secondary income sources.



Source: Author's Compilation Based on Field Survey, December, 2020

Fig 1: Agricultural Activities Undertaken by Female for Commercial Production

From the above figure it is revealed that women are most involved in small implant collection, weeding, and Post-harvest handling. It illustrate that, only 20% women are

involved with storing. On the other hand, 22% women are involved with land preparation. Similarly, only 23% women are involved with selling produced commodity.

Table 1: Decision-Making Authority within Households in Agriculture Sector

Decision Making Areas	Only Husband	Husband and Wife together	Only Wife	Son
Decides to buy or rent land	3.3%	92.7%	2.7%	1.3%
Decides what crops to produce	11.3%	84.7%	3.3%	.7%
Decides where and when to plant which crops	19.3%	74.7%	4.0%	2.0%
Decides on use of inputs (e.g., whether to use fertilizer, pesticides or herbicides; or where and how much to purchase)	40.7%	54.0%	3.3%	2.0%
Decides on purchase of agricultural tools and equipment	34.0%	58.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Decides on irrigation and which crops to be irrigated	22.7%	68.0%	5.3%	4.0%
Decides on hired labor	33.3%	59.3%	6.0%	1.3%
Decides on how much, which market and what price produced crop will sell	29.3%	62.0%	5.4%	3.4%
Decides on what to do with the revenue generated from sales	4.0%	77.3%	17.3%	1.3%

Source: Author's Compilation Based on Field Survey, December, 2020

In the above table it shows that women are most involved in land preparation, planting, seed collection, fertilizer collection and post-harvest handling. It illustrates that, 22.4% women under Dumuria upazila are engaged with planting on other hand, only 15.7% and 11% women are engaged with this activity under Chitalmari and Kalaroa

upazila respectively. 4.1% women of Kalaroa upazila sell their produced commodity whereas only. 5% and 1.1% women engage with this activity of Dumuria and Chitalmari upazila. 92.7% female participants indicated they made decisions together with their husband.

Table 2: Decision-Making Authority within Households in Livestock Rearing Activities

Decision making areas	Only Husband	Husband and wife together	Only wife	Son
Decides when to feed animals	8.0%	41.3%	50.0%	0.7%
Decides to take animals for grazing (i.e., when, how often and where)	12.0%	45.3%	41.3%	1.3%
Decides on veterinary care for animals?	26.0%	56.7%	16.0%	1.3%
Decides on use of inputs (e.g., whether to use forage supplements, artificial insemination)	25.3%	58.7%	14.7%	1.3%
Decides on hired labor?	42.0%	38.7%	18.0%	1.3%
Decides on what to do with the revenue generated from animal or dairy products sales	20.0%	50.0%	28.0%	2.0%
Decides on how much, which market and which price crop will sell	6.7%	66.0%	25.3%	2.0%

Source: Author's Compilation Based on Field Survey, December, 2020

This table shows that 100% women are engaged with cowshed and feed management of livestock under three upazilas and almost all decision areas husband and wife

together take decisions in household. Only in case of labor hired for performing household activities 42.0% husband and 38.7% women take decision respectively.

Table 3: Decision-Making Authority within Households in Aquaculture Sector

Decision making areas	Only Husband	Husband and wife together	Only wife	Son
Decides which type of fish culture for household consumption	1.3%	20.7%	77.6%	1.0%
Decides which type of fish to produce for the marketing	38.7%	6.7%	50.3%	4.0%
Decides which inputs to purchase	46.0%	9.0%	39.3%	6.0%
Decides which market sell of fish	78.6%	2.7%	13.3%	5.3%
Decides how to spend money	4.0%	16.0%	79.6%	1.0%

Source: Author's Compilation Based on Field Survey, December, 2020

In the above table it revealed that almost all decision areas husband and wife together take decisions in household. In the table is seen that 78.6% of men take decision regarding

market selling as well as 46.0% men also takes decision regarding type of input purchase for aquaculture production.

Table 4: Women Empowerment and Decision Making Authority of Women in Household

Decision making areas	Only Husband	Husband and wife together	Only wife	Other adult members of family
Working in income generating activities	32.7%	8.7%	58.0%	1.0%
Farming matters (like which crop to sow, inputs to use and when)	5.3%	22.7%	70.7%	1.3%
Marketing of produced commodity	10.7%	50.7%	36.7%	2.0%
Purchase of assets (land, gold, equipment's, etc.)	9.3%	8.0%	79.3%	3.3%
Savings	40.7%	3.3%	54.7%	1.3%
Education of children	17.3%	6.0%	75.3%	1.3%
Age of marriage of children	18.7%	4.7%	48.0%	28.6%
Choice of food and buying accordingly	16.0%	12.7%	65.3%	6.0%
Treatment for health	16.0%	24.7%	56.7%	2.7%

Source: Author's Compilation Based on Field Survey, December, 2020

This study assessed different aspects of women's empowerment, e.g. decision making authority, getting help, respect, and support from the family members, and ownership of properties, land and control of savings. Women have more autonomy to decide on certain issues like cooking, but, this autonomy declines in important issues like serious family matters. 40.7% women can take decision independently regarding savings. 75.3% women reported that in case of taking decision about children's education they consult with their husbands. 32.7% women reported that they independently take decision about to engage with income generating activities.

Membership and Leadership Position in Group

Majority of the women 99.3% belong to groups and 99.3% of the women belong in group but uncomfortable speaking in public. Thus, despite Bangladesh's significant achievements in delivering social and financial services through women's groups, such as in the microfinance movement, a gap still exists in terms of leadership position and ability to express oneself in public. 34.7% women hold

leadership position in groups and 65.3% women do not hold leadership position in group though they are member of group.

Access to and Participation in Training

Table 5: Types of Training Received by Respondents

Type of Training	Number	Percentage (%)
Land preparation	117	91.4
Agricultural input use: general instruction	110	85.9
Agricultural input use	68	53.1
Integrated pest management	61	47.7
Harvesting	75	58.6
Post-harvest	71	55.5
Marketing	39	30.5
Farming as a business	34	26.6
Seed as a business	29	22.7

Source: Author's Compilation Based on Field Survey, December, 2020

Above table above shows the types of trainings attended by

women. 91.4% women received training on land preparation and 90.5% women received training on agriculture input use. Only 22.7% women received training on seed as a business.

Findings and Recommendations

Most of women in the study are involved in livestock rearing and domestic livestock rearing is their main occupation. In agricultural production, women are primarily involved in seed collection, planting and post-harvest handling. In livestock activities, women are primarily involved in feed management, cowshed management, bathing and milking. In aquaculture activities, women are primarily involved in weeding, dyke preparation, gher or pond preparation with their husband. By analyzing it is seen that different aspects of women's empowerment, e.g. decision making authority, getting help, respect, and support from the family members, and ownership of properties, land and control of savings. In some cases women take their decision independently like income generation but most of the cases of family matters depend on family head or husband. Promote smaller input packages as well as women's friendly agriculture equipment's to encourage women in agriculture activities. Ensure women's friendly market where women can go market alone and sell the product which they can control may be able to improve women's control over resources and the income that these resources generate. Foster equitable participation of men and women in agriculture activities and also give equal importance of women in case of agriculture production to enhance women's participation in agriculture activities.

Conclusion

The contribution of women to agricultural and food production is clearly significant. However, it is impossible to verify empirically the share produced by women. Agriculture is usually a venture among household members and involves a range of resources and inputs that cannot be readily assigned by gender. We conclude that accurate, current, regionally specific information and analysis is necessary for good gender-aware agricultural policy making. It is needed to better understand gender roles in agriculture and how they change over time and in response to new opportunities. We have shown that women's roles are diverse and that they vary across regions and countries. These roles cannot be understood properly, and interventions targeting cannot be designed effectively, without also understanding their differential access to land, capital, assets, human capital, and other productive resources.

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