GENDER ROLE IN POST HARVEST ACTIVITIES: A STUDY IN ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to recognize the gender role in post harvest activities in rural areas of Assam. The study conducted on 900 farm families in six agro-climatic zones of the State which clearly indicate an active participation of both women and men in most of the selected activities in the area of post harvesting. Data were collected with the help of interview schedule by personal interview method. Participatory interviews with individual member of the households by using a combination of PRA techniques to quantify gender perspectives were used for data collection. The results indicated that majority of the rural women were working with male members almost in all the activities leaving aside marketing and management of produce at commercial level. . The role of rural women in post harvest operations especially in drying, storage and cleaning of grains was more prominent. It necessary to transfer of technical knowhow on these aspects to women, the technical guidance would help in enhancement of their efficiency and reduced the losses during storage. Such education would lead to increase their income and active role in post harvest activities An effort has been made in this study to understand the gender role in post harvest operation in Assam so as to know their present participation status. The data will enable for area based programmes to develop capacities of farm women.

Keywords: Gender, Role, Participation, Post harvest, Activities, Agro-climatic zone.

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to the American Heritage Dictionary the term “Gender” in grammar means masculine, feminine, and neuter, categories into which words are divided according to sex. This term generally refers to allocation of social roles based on behaviors but not based on biological differences (sex) of men and women (Goswami, 2013). Gender attributes are assigned roles and relations among them. Gender may count a variety of concerns instead of confined attachment among definite male and female attributes (Hassan, 2008). In cultural, academic and social studies the term gender refers to social structure instead of biological one (Kiren et.al 2015).

Gender relations are culture and context specific. Men’s and women’s role in food and agricultural system and their involvement in agriculture activity depend on the region in which they live. But inequalities between men and women are becoming more visible and glaring particularly in developing countries of the world.

The role of gender analysis is to observe that how the both sexes are involved in different roles and responsibilities. It is an important part of social analysis. It takes into account the economic, social, cultural, political and psychological relationship between both sexes. Women are engaged in a variety of agricultural activities such as cleaning, drying, and storage of grains (Kumari,, Oladubo, and Fajuyigbe, 2016) in various stages of production and storage of agriculture products. Most of their work related to post harvest activity was considered as part of their housework and the amount of labour that they devote was ignored (Saikia P & Das M.D 2013).

Post harvesting is a concluding activity in the agriculture to secure the foods and other crops mostly performed by the rural women. In different studies (FAO, 1998; 1996) it has been emphasized that despite women are the main element for agriculture, they face more obstacles than men do. In the general social structure of developing countries men are dominant and they take many of the critical socio-economic decisions in the society. Similarly, Anonymous (2004) reported that the farm women activities are transplanting (50%), harvesting (26.5%) however post harvest activities such as threshing (50%), Drying (33%) and parboiling (67%).

In rural areas women undertake 53% of all workload and devote 20% more time than men for work. This essential contribution of women is not appreciated. In this sense, women are negatively influenced by traditional pattern and economic policies. In most rural communities, women make up a significant part of the farming workforce. Even in societies where women don’t work in the fields, they are active in post-harvest activities. Though they comprise nearly two thirds of the agricultural labour force and contribute up to 80 per cent of total food production, women receive less than one percent of the total credit available to agriculture. Though they comprise nearly two thirds of the agricultural labour force and contribute up to 80 per cent of total food production, women receive less than one percent of the total credit available to agriculture. An effort has been made in this study to understand the gender role in post harvest operation in Assam so as to know their present participation status. The data will enable for area based programs to develop capacities of these women in this important area of their activity. The study was carried out with the following objectives:

2. OBJECTIVES

- To study the profile of the farm families
- To assess the Gender role in post harvest activities.

3. METHODOLOGY

The data were generated under the project titled ‘Gender Specific Data base on Farm Families’ as a part of the All India Coordinated Project on Home Science (Extension Component) from the state of Assam. The data was collected from six agro-climatic zones namely Upper Brahmaputra Valley Zone, Central Brahmaputra Valley Zone, North Bank Plain Zone, Lower Brahmaputra Valley Zone, Barak Valley zone and Hill zone. From each zone one district was selected. The size of sample was 150 households from each selected districts. Nine hundred families were proportionately selected from different landholding categories. The total size of the sample was 1800 respondents belonging to 900 households. Data were collected with the help of interview schedule by personal interview method. Participatory interviews with individual member of the households by using a combination of PRA techniques and tools to quantify gender perspectives were used for data collection. One adult active male member and one active female member of each household was the unit of data collection. The gender role was assessed in terms of performance and responsibilities either independently or jointly with male and female members. The responsibility profile was in terms complete, partial and no responsibility for both male and female members separately. The data has been analyzed in quantitative measures with frequency and percentage.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Profile of the farm families:

Table 1 shows that majority (30%) of farm families were educated upto high school level followed by majority of them belongs to schedule caste category. It evident from the table that there is abruptly the joint family system where 76 percent were nuclear family. Farming was their main occupation (63.58%) and majority (44.73%) of the farm families were acquainted small land holding categories. Majority (62.50%) of farm families had medium range of farm asset.

Table1. Profile of the farm families N= 900 rural women and 900 rural men

Sl. No	Item	Group	% of the respondents
1	Family Education	Illiterate/Unlettered	9.7%
		Can Read And Write Lettered	7.40%
		Primary School	17.10%
		Middle School	18.40%
		High School	30.00%
		Post Metric Diploma	13.40%
		Graduate And Above	4.10%
2	Caste	Backward	24.72%
		OBC	26.76%
		SC/ST	32.06%
		Upper Caste	16.46%
3	Family Type	Joint	24.00%
		Nuclear	76.00%
4	Main Occupation	Business	4.46%

		Farming	63.58%
		Daily wage earner	21.26%
		Enterprise	6.24%
		Service	4.46%
5	Land holding	Large	1.33
		Medium	9.67
		small	47.33
		Landless	41.67
6	Farm asset	Low	25.00%
		Medium	62.50%
		High	12.50%

Source: The authors' survey

3.2. Gender Role in the post harvest activities

To estimate the gender role in Post harvest related activity such as winnowing, cleaning, drying, post harvest processing of produce, management of surplus produce, storage, marketing, management of cash earned, engagement of labour were included.

The role performance revealed that most of the activities related to post harvest all the respondents of both the categories were performing the activities. a detail analysis reveals that the independent participation female members was low but the female members actively participated with male members in retention for seed (78.50%), retention for consumption (77.54%), storage(75.84%), threshing (74.18%), drying (66.16%) cleaning (63.88%) as can be seen from Table 2.. Independent participation of female members in winnowing was highest (20.12%) among all the activities followed by cleaning (15.06%) and drying (13.32%). Nearly one third of the male members (29.95%) independently performing marketing of produce followed by management of cash (26.61%) and engagement of labour (25.70%). It was revealed that most of the women of Assam do not participate in marketing of produce and engagement of labour in different farm and home activities. Most of the cash related activities involvement of men was higher than women. (Table 2)

Table 2. Gender Role in the post harvest activities N= 900 (M-900, F-900)

Type of Participation (% of respondents)						
Post Harvest	Female			Male		
Sub Activities	Indepen dent	Joint with female	Joint with male	Indepen dent	Joint with female	Joint with male
Cleaning	15.06%	17.97%	63.88%	16.64%	64.45%	5.43%
Drying	13.32%	17.15%	66.61%	15.02%	66.61%	5.12%
Eng. of labour	2.79%	5.96%	52.14%	25.71%	33.04%	7.14%
Management of cash	3.00%	6.94%	69.61%	26.61%	51.79%	6.25%
Retention for Consumption.	3.84%	8.83%	77.54%	18.05%	66.67%	10.13%
Retention for Sale	3.70%	7.78%	72.57%	19.89%	58.92%	10.22%
Retention for Seed	4.22%	8.06%	78.50%	18.66%	65.86%	10.82%
Storage	2.43%	6.93%	75.84%	17.30%	63.06%	9.01%
Threshing	2.50%	4.43%	74.18%	20.66%	50.37%	18.45%
Winnowing	20.12%	13.35%	55.32%	11.75%	52.24%	7.46%

Source: The authors' survey

The data in the table 2 shows that most of the post harvest activities were performed jointly with both male and female.

3.3. Gender responsibility in the post harvest activities

The responsibility profile of women was found to be partial for most of the post harvest related activities and data is presented in table 3. The responsibility of women though partial but was highest i.e. cleaning (83.12%) followed by Drying (82.66%), Retention for Seed (81.77%) Threshing (79.96%), and winnowing (72.73%). On the other hand complete responsibility of man was higher compared to partial responsibility. Data indicate that both rural men and women actively performed different post harvest activities. (table3)

Table 3. Gender responsibility in the post harvest activities N= 900 (M-900, F-900)

Sub Activities	<i>Type of participation (% of respondents)</i>					
	Female			Male		
	Complete	No responsibility	Partial	Complete	No responsibility	Partial
Cleaning	14.52%	1.27%	83.12 %	68.48%	2.45%	25.74 %
Drying	14.60%	1.09%	82.66 %	68.02%	1.94%	25.62 %
Eng. of labour	6.15%	8.19%	54.93 %	53.93%	3.21%	12.32 %
Management of cash	8.07%	3.00%	71.11 %	68.04%	0.89%	17.68 %
Marketing of produce	6.25%	4.17%	68.94 %	69.15%	2.18%	12.34 %
Retention or Consumption.	10.56%	2.11%	79.65 %	70.90%	3.50%	23.02 %
Retention for Sale	8.75%	2.53%	75.49 %	68.40%	3.35%	18.96 %
Retention for Seed	9.21%	1.92%	81.77 %	71.08%	3.92%	22.20 %
Storage	6.93%	3.37%	76.03 %	69.91%	2.34%	18.56 %
Threshing	7.51%	3.28%	79.96 %	69.30%	2.39%	20.96 %
Winnowing	16.83%	2.13%	72.73 %	64.18%	3.73%	22.20 %

Source: The authors' survey

4. CONCLUSION

Rural women provide most of the labour for post harvest activities, taking responsibilities for winnowing, storage, stocking, and processing in most rural communities, women make up a significant part of the farming workforce. Jahan & Sarker (2015) reported that families without women are not sustainable and women are responsible in 90% post harvest activities further reported the role of women in homestead and family life. Rural women play important role in post-harvest activities. Therefore it is necessary to develop some women friendly technology which reduces their drudgery and time. Storage method should be taught to the rural women,

which may be easy and economical. The technical guidance will help in enhancement of their capabilities which in turn will lead to reduction in losses during storage. With more and more men taking up additional income generating activities along with farming, the women should be made efficient in the handling those post harvest activities independently in which they work jointly with men. This will enable women to play pro- active role in post harvest operation. The technical guidance will help in enhancement of their capabilities, which in turn will lead to reduction in losses during storage and enhance their capabilities. (Sidhu 2007).

5. RECOMMENDATION

- Women training centers should be established at national level whose responsibility to conduct training for rural women on different agricultural activities to enhance their knowledge and skill.
- Timely provision of extension services from agricultural department to farm women groups for better yield production
- Government should initiate actions on enhancing the educational standards of women in general as well as making effective provision for their training, practical experience and personality development programme and so as to improve their overall personality development
- KVK/line department, extension functionaries should give attention for increasing social and mass media participation, achievement motivation and innovativeness of farm women through effective and participatory trainings/ demonstrations for better understand and adoption of improved technology

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