

Characterization of participation pattern of tribal women in house, farm and allied areas

■ Monsumi Bora, Manoshi Baruah Deka and Sayanika Borah

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■ **ABSTRACT :** The study was conducted in Jorhat district of Assam. From the study it was found that tribal women's independent participation was highest in cooking (83.33%), serving of food (80.00%), care of children (70.83%) in household activities and post harvest processing (75.84%), winnowing (60.00%), harvesting (56.67%), weeding (52.50%), and irrigation (50.83%), in farm related activities. In kitchen gardening- harvesting (66.00%), irrigation (60.00%), seed sowing (55.80%) and in livestock related activities, respondents participated independently in fodder management (60.00%) management of produce (53.33%) and cleaning of shed (52.50%). It can be characterized from the findings that the tribal women, participated in almost all household, livestock and kitchen gardening related activities. However in case of farm related activities though their independent participation was found in selected activities only yet they participated in labour intensive activities like weeding (52.50%) and irrigation (50.83%), which were not generally seen among the rural farm women.

See end of the paper for authors' affiliations

■ **Monsumi Bora**

Department of Extension and
Communication Management,
College of Community Science,
Assam Agricultural University,
Jorhat (Assam) India

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The tribal population in India numerically constitutes a small segment of the total population of the country but is a significant part of the population (Chatterjee, 2014). Hence, it is considered as an integral part of India's social and cultural system and accounts for 10.4 crore as per 2011 census which constitutes 8.60 per cent of the total population of which 5.25 crores are men and 5.19 crores are women. The tribal population of India are concentrated mostly in the central belt of India and parts of the North-East India. The North East region is considered as one of most culturally diverse regions of the country and is a land inhabited by more

than 200 fascinating tribes.

The tribal people mostly live in remote areas, confined within their society. They have their own style and tradition which are quite different from the other sections of the society. The lifestyle and tradition of these indigenous communities are characterized by uniqueness and ethnicity.

Women in a tribal society play a significant role in their social, cultural and religious ways of life and truly prove themselves as an asset to their society. They mostly engage in agriculture, livestock rearing, household chores and maintaining the household. But in spite of their

contribution in all the spheres of life, they still remain backward due to traditional values, literacy and many other social and cultural factors.

Tribal women of Assam :

Assam is the homeland of various tribal communities with their own cultural heritage. The total populations of Assam in 2011 census were 3.12 crores. Out of which 38,84,371 lakhs were scheduled tribes (ST) constituting 12.28% of males and 12.63% of females. The state has 9 scheduled tribes in the plains districts and 14 in the hills districts (Chutia, 2015).

The Mishings and the Shyams also known as Khamyang, are two of the plains Schedule Tribes of Assam who have been maintaining their age-old tradition, culture and practices in spite of various socio-political trials and tribulations through the ages. The tribal women of these two tribes from time immemorial are resuming their role as custodians of traditional culture and management of all types of resources as well. But still they are not entitled an equal social status with men with regard to ownership over the resources. They participate actively in different areas of their lives especially in the house, farm, livestock and other allied activities.

There are a large number of studies on tribal communities but only a few are focussed on characterizing the participation pattern of tribal women. The review of literature has reflected that the research studies conducted so far in India in general and in Assam in particular had been done taking one aspect at a time such as involvement of tribal women in household, farm or livestock. Reviewing the studies on tribal women it may be mentioned that the existing information on participation pattern of tribal women in house, farm and allied activities are very limited. Hence there is a need for conducting research studies which can fill the information gap.

Through the proposed study on characterization of participation pattern of tribal women of Jorhat district would bring into focus the indicators for action points for policy formulation, designing and implementing target specific Govt. and extension programmes leading to development of sustainable livelihood system. Further the participation pattern of tribal women in house, farm and allied areas varies by tribe, region, culture and socio-economic status. Hence, characterizing the status quo of the tribal women through a holistic approach would

help later in assessment of their needs and provide a deeper insight for policy interventions to provide work opportunities with better wages to tribal women.

Keeping these points in view the present study is entitled as “Characterization of participation pattern of tribal women in house, farm and allied areas”.

Objectives:

- To assess the participation pattern of tribal women in house, farm and allied areas
- To characterize the tribal women in terms of participation pattern in farm and allied activities.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study was conducted in Jorhat sub-division of Jorhat district of Assam. From Jorhat district two blocks namely North-West development block and Titabar development block were selected. From these two blocks two villages, one from each block was selected using simple random sampling technique. From each of the village 60 tribal women were selected through simple random sampling. Thus total numbers of respondent were 120. Data was collected using structured interview schedule and analysed using appropriate statistical techniques *viz.*, frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and chi-square.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the present investigation as well as relevant discussion have been summarized under following heads :

Participation pattern of respondent’s in house, farm and allied activities and their characterization :

The distribution of tribal women presented in tables below according to their participation pattern in different activities which includes household, farm and livestock.

Household activities :

Under household activities eleven sub-areas were included to study the participation pattern which included different household activities such as cooking, cleaning of house, washing clothes and utensils, fetching water, collecting firewood, preparation of rice-beer and care of children, elderly and other family members.

In household activities, independent to joint participation was reflected with other family members

amongst the respondents. The detailed data shows that a very high per cent of women independently perform the activities of cooking (83.33%) and serving of food (80.00%), care of children(70.83%) and care of elderly (59.16%). Independent participation was also reflected in washing of utensils and fetching of water by an equal percentage of respondent *i.e.* 46.66 per cent. In carrying out the other activities the respondents participated jointly with other family members, highest being collecting firewood (60.00%) followed by cleaning of utensils

(58.34%) and washing cloths and drying (56.67%). The data revealed that though almost all the respondents participated in all the household activities but preparation of rice beer was found to be community-centric as half of the respondents who belonged to the other tribe which was the Shyam tribe were not involved as it is not a part of their custom. However in labour intensive activities like fetching of water and collection of firewood joint participation with husband was also reported in a few cases indicating that the male members of the tribal

Sr. No.	Activities	Independent participation	Joint participation			No participation
			With husband	With other family members	With hired labours	
1.	Cooking	83.33	-	16.67	-	-
2.	Serving food	80.00	-	20.00	-	-
3.	Washing of utensils	46.66	-	53.34	-	-
4.	Cleaning of house	41.66	-	58.34	-	-
5.	Washing cloths and drying	43.33	-	56.67	-	-
6.	Preparation of rice beer	20.00	-	30.00	-	50.00
7.	Fetching water	46.67	10.00	43.33	-	-
8.	Collecting firewood	29.17	9.17	60.00	-	1.67
9.	Care of children	70.33	5.84	17.16	-	6.67
10.	Care of other family member	55.83	12.50	25.00	-	6.67
11.	Care of elderly	59.16	11.66	19.16	-	12.02

Sr. No.	Activities	Independent participation	Joint participation			No participation
			With husband	With other family members	With hired labours	
1.	Land preparation	8.84	15.00	4.16	5.17	66.83
2.	Preparation of seed bed	11.67	33.33	4.16	2.50	48.34
3.	Sowing	25.00	23.33	25.84	3.33	22.50
4.	Transplanting	50.83	8.33	32.50	4.17	4.17
5.	Irrigation	50.83	20.83	14.34	10.00	5.00
6.	Weeding	52.50	9.16	19.16	10.84	8.34
7.	Application of fertilizer/manure	2.50	28.33	12.50	8.33	49.16
8.	Plant protection	4.16	28.34	5.00	7.50	55.00
9.	Harvesting	56.67	22.50	16.67	10.00	2.50
10.	Threshing	5.83	51.67	13.33	13.34	15.83
11.	Winnowing	60.00	0.83	25.84	10.00	3.33
12.	Cleaning	51.67	1.67	34.16	8.34	4.16
13.	Drying	50.84	4.16	30.00	5.00	10.00
14.	Storage of produce	3.33	62.50	5.83	2.50	25.84
15.	Post harvest processing	75.84	1.67	18.33	-	4.16
16.	Maintaining records of farm produce	12.50	30.83	8.33	-	48.34
17.	Collecting farm inputs and implements	9.16	15.83	6.67	-	68.34
18.	Price fixation	7.50	50.00	16.67	-	35.83
19.	Marketing	30.00	50.83	4.17	5.00	10.00

community share labour intensive household activities with their wife and other family members.

Farm activities :

Under farm related practices, a total number of nineteen practices were included starting from land preparation to use of plant protection measures and from post harvest processing to marketing, to assess the participation pattern.

It is evident from the data that more than 50 per cent of respondents contributed in the activities independently in areas such as post harvest processing (75.84%), winnowing (60.00%), harvesting (56.67%), cleaning (51.67%), weeding (52.50%), drying (50.84%), irrigation (50.83%) and transplanting (50.83%). Similar findings were reported by Saikia (2017).

Furthermore joint participation with husband was seen mainly in activities like storage of produce (62.50%), threshing (51.67%), marketing (50.83%) and price fixation (50.00%) Joint participation with other family members was found to be below fifty per cent and joint participation with labour was found mainly in threshing (13.33%), weeding (10.84%) and an equal per cent (10.00%) in harvesting, irrigation and winnowing. However, the use of hired labours in farm was not recorded amongst the Mishing tribe.

Apart from these, participation of a large number of respondents were not found in some of the activities, the highest being collecting farm inputs and implements (68.34%), followed by land preparation (66.83%) and plant protection (55.00%) which may be mainly due to ignorance about these activities or might be due to existing social system.

Kitchen gardening :

A total number of eight sub activities were included

to study the participation pattern of the respondents in kitchen gardening starting from land preparation to use of seed sowing and from buying and application of fertilizer to harvesting.

It was revealed from the data that in kitchen garden related activities most of the activities was done independently except for disease/pest management (63.33%) and buying and application of fertilizer (56.67%) which were done in joint with husband which might be due to lack of knowledge on use of fertilizer and medicines which leaves a scope for conducting awareness campaigns about management of different fertilizer and pesticides, preferably organic.

Livestock rearing activities :

A total number of seven sub activities were included to study the participation pattern in livestock rearing activities which included selection of site for rearing, construction of shelters, selection of suitable breed, cleaning of shed, fodder management, disease management and management of farm produce.

Table 4. shows that independent participation was found mainly in fodder management (60.00%) followed by management of farm produce (53.33%) cleaning of shed (52.50%). Joint participation with husband was predominantly seen in construction of shelters (43.33%) and disease management (40.00%). Similar findings was reported by Dutta (2016) and Sujeetha and Anamica (2017).

Summary of participation pattern in house, farm and allied activities and their characterization :

The findings reveals that though most of the activities performed by the tribal women are similar as other rural women of Assam but significant difference was observed in farm related activities where

Table 3 : Participation pattern of respondents in kitchen garden related activities (n=120)						
Sr. No.	Activities	Independent participation	Joint participation			No participation
			With husband	With other family members	With hired labours	
1.	Land selection	50.83	26.87	11.67	-	10.00
2.	Land preparation	51.66	15.00	8.33	-	25.85
3.	Seed selection	40.00	23.34	8.34	-	13.33
4.	Seed sowing	55.80	25.80	10.00	-	8.40
5.	Irrigation	60.00	24.17	10.00	-	5.83
6.	Buying and application of fertilizer	22.00	56.67	10.00	-	13.33
7.	Disease/pest management	18.30	63.33	11.67	-	6.67
8.	Harvesting	66.00	8.33	22.34	-	3.33

participation was quite high in weeding and irrigation. Hence, it can be characterized that the tribal women apart from participating in other activities also takes part in labour intensive activities. In kitchen gardening also the respondents participated almost in all activities independently.

It is revealed from the findings that though joint participation was seen in some of the activities but still most of their participation was found to be independent in all the household activities. Hence, it can be characterized that tribal women participate in all household activities as they are considered as responsible for them and which they presume as their duty from ages.

With regard to the farm related activities it can be characterized from the findings that the tribal women mainly involves in activities like transplanting, harvesting, winnowing ,cleaning ,drying and post-harvest processing, irrigation, weeding, threshing, storage of produce and price fixation. Though the tribal women participated in selective activities only but yet their participation was seen in labour intensive and time consuming activities like weeding (52.50%) and irrigation (50.83%), which were not generally seen among the rural farm women as reported by Saikia (2017) and Saikia (2015). Hence, from the overall participation scenario, Fig. 1, it can be characterized that tribal women had medium participation level in all the activities related to house, farm and allied areas.

In case of livestock related activities it can be characterized from the data that the tribal women performed almost all activities independently barring a few.

Overall participation pattern in home, farm and allied areas :

The Fig. 1 reveals that majority (66.67%) of

respondents had medium level of participation followed by low (18.33%) and high (15.83%) in home, farm and allied activities. This finding is in conformity with Saikia (2015) and Saikia (2017). The medium level of participation of respondent might be due to prevailing cultural and social practices of Assam.

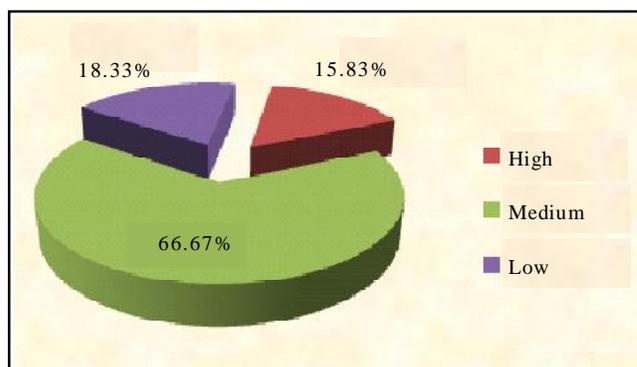


Fig. 1 : Distribution of respondents according to overall participation pattern in home, farm and allied activities

Conclusion :

Tribal women play an important and vital role in home, farm and allied areas including the main crop production, livestock production, kitchen gardening, post-harvest operations, etc. They are involved almost in all activities of day-to-day life along with different activities related to farm, livestock etc. They contribute far more to the economy of the family than has generally been acknowledged. The findings of the present study helps us to draw the conclusion that, the tribal women performed almost all activities the house either independently or jointly. However, in case of farm related activities though their independent participation was found in selected activities only yet they participated in labour intensive activities like weeding and irrigation, which were

Sr. No.	Activities	Independent participation	Joint participation			No participation
			With husband	With other family members	With hired labours	
1.	Selection of site for rearing	41.67	29.16	-	-	29.17
2.	Construction of shelters	6.67	43.33	-	-	50.00
3.	Selection of suitable breed	46.67	29.16	-	-	24.17
4.	Cleaning of shed	52.50	15.00	17.50	-	15.00
5.	Fodder management	60.00	15.00	13.33	-	11.67
6.	Disease management	20.00	40.00	10.00	-	30.00
7.	Management of farm produce	53.33	33.33	-	-	13.34

not generally seen among the rural farm women. In livestock management activities, which were also the additional source of income for most of the tribal women and in kitchen gardening also, they participated in almost all activities independently barring a few. Hence, it can be characterized that tribal women performed almost all types of activities including the labour intensive and time consuming activities too.

Authors' affiliations:

Manoshi Baruah Deka and Sayanika Borah, Department of Extension and Communication Management, College of Community Science, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat (Assam) India

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