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Khattak, Naeem Ur Rehman Khattak and Hussain, Anwar
Hussain

Pakistan Institute of Development Economics Islamabad Pakistan

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AN ANALYSIS OF GENDER-BASED PARTICIPATION IN MAJOR ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED VILLAGES OF DISTRICT MANSEHRA

Naeem-ur-Rehman Khattak and Anwar Hussain

ABSTRACT

The study was conducted in district Mansehra during 2007 to investigate the gender-based participation in major economic activities. Primary data was obtained through questionnaire using a sample of size one hundred and sixty allocating to eleven villages of the research area on the basis of systematic random sampling technique. Agricultural and forest activities were mainly performed by men. In Hilkot, Syedabad and Sumbal men were the dominant in performing all the agriculture activities. In Kundi, females played comparatively dominant role in gross cutting which was 50% as against 45% for males. In Boijri, females' contribution was higher than males in weeding, fodder collection, gross cutting and fertilization which were 38.1%, 47.6%, 47.6% and 42.9% respectively. In Sathangali females were dominant in weeding and fodder collection with share of 57% and 61% respectively. In Gulderi, females' contribution was high i.e 60% for harvesting and in Naka it was 55% for fodder collection. Females' contribution was dominant on average in Kotni/Dehri/Kund for weeding and, fodder collection i.e. 57% and 51% respectively. Men were found dominant in decision-making. In forest activities, women contribution was higher in collection of medicinal plants only i.e. 47% as against 34% for males. Female contribution in grazing (85%) and milking (80%) was highest as compared to men in the major livestock activities. Women should be given opportunities and liberty to play their role in economic activities.

Key words: Gender-Participation, Agriculture activities, forest activities

INTRODUCTION

Effective gender-based participation and responsibilities in natural resources management ensure balanced, equitable and sustainable development in developing countries. The gender-based roles, relations, concerns and obstacles that rural women and men face in mountainous areas significantly affect their socio-economic conditions and status of natural resources. Nowadays there are convincing arguments, substantial proof and broad agreement that development responses will be more equitable, balanced and sustainable when gender is mainstreamed throughout sustainable natural resource management initiatives. The men are regarded as planners, thinkers and decision makers, and the women as acceptors of decisions and guardians of the children and customs (Shreshta, 2001). It has been observed that women play a pivotal role in re-greening exercise, but what they lack is appropriate support. Many women encounter social, economic, institutional and cultural barriers that should be done away with and the women motivated and given moral and material support at family, community, regional and international levels to continue their good work (Odeny, 1999). Timsina, *et al.*, 1996 identified the gender (men and women) role in terms of labor contribution in the household, farm and animal production, and fuel wood and fodder collection in the two distinct communities. Bajracharya, 1994, highlighted the gender roles in agroforestry management and the impact of women

on the tree-planting programme. Burch and Grove, 1993, stated that gender played an important role in community forestry projects in Baltimore. Women participation in natural resources management was also observed (Molnar, 1991; Borg, 1989; Mkandawire, 1989; Pandey, 1985; Cruz, 1984; Kabraji and Zuberi, 1991; Kaur and Sharma, 1991 and Chidzonga, *et al.* 1993). The process of economic development can not be effective till women are not given opportunities to play their role. The status and responsibilities of women and men should clearly be identified. So, this is researchable issue to highlight the contribution of males and females in major socioeconomic activities in general and particularly in agriculture and forest activities in rural areas.

In the present study an attempt has been made to highlight gender-based participation in major economic activities in the research area. Their contribution in sowing, land preparation, harvesting, weeding, fodder collection, gross cutting, fertilization, transportation, irrigation and marketing have been discussed. Furthermore their share in forest activities and decision-making was also observed.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to investigate the gender-based participation in major economic activities in district Mansehra.

* Department of Economics, University, of Peshawar – Pakistan.

** Department of Economics, Government Post Graduate College, Charsada – Pakistan.

More specifically the study aims to:

- i. Highlight the role of males and females in major agriculture activities.
- ii. Assess the contribution of males and females in decision-making and forest activities in the study area.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

District Mansehra was the universe of the study. Eleven villages of District Mansehra have been selected for the relevant informations. In each of the eleven villages of the watershed, 17% of the households were interviewed. Stratified random sampling technique was used to collect the primary data. A sample of size 160 was used because the villages are quite homogeneous in terms socio-economic characteristics. Female respondents comprised 50% of the total respondents. Primary data was personally collected from the respondents through structured questionnaire. Simple percentages, classification and tabulation were used for the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following important results regarding gender participations in natural resources management were observed.

Gender Participation in Major Agricultural Activities

Males and females worked side by side in various agriculture activities in the study area. However, the contribution of women differed from area to area. Sowing, land preparation, harvesting, weeding, fodder collection, gross cutting, fertilization, transportation, irrigation and marketing were the major agricultural related activities.

Their shares in agriculture activities are given as under:

Women's share in sowing activity for the village Hilkot, Kandi, Bojri, Syedabad, Sumbal, Sathangali, Gulderi, Naka and Kotni/dehri/Kund were 13.8%, 12.5%, 14.3%, 10%, 10.5%, 25%, 16.5%, 25% and 14% respectively. While the contribution of men was 86.2%, 81.3%, 47.6%, 65%, 84.2%, 43.8%, 66.7%, 50%, and 56% respectively. For land preparation, women's share was 6.9%, 12%, 4.8%, 5%, 0%, 6.3%, 8.2%, 6.3% and 6.6% respectively. While, the contribution of men was 89.7%, 75%, 61.9%, 85%, 100%, 68.8%, 83.3%, 50% and 93.4% respectively. For harvesting, women's share was 0%, 2.3%, 9.5%, 10%, 21.1%, 45%, 60%, 50% and 34% respectively. While men's share was 100%, 81.3%, 85.7%, 55%, 36.5%, 50%, 35%, 50% and 50% respectively. Similarly for weeding, women's share was 24.1%, 15%, 38.1%, 10%, 31.1%, 57%, 25%, 42% and 57%

respectively while men's share was observed as 75.9%, 70%, 14.3%, 90%, 50%, 30%, 25%, 60% and 30% respectively. Similarly for fodder collection, gross cutting, fertilization, transportation, irrigation and marketing, the figures are given in Table I.

In research area the activities of grazing were mainly performed female members of the household (85 %) while the male members mostly used to provide veterinary treatment (95%). Open grazing was practiced in whole of the watershed. All of the respondents reported that there was no any restriction on grazing and they did not used to pay nothing as grazing fee to any one. Similarly, milking was exclusively performed by female members i.e. 80% of the total sample households. However, it is important to mention that the male members due to male domination in this traditional remote area kept the receipts from the sale of milk. Although it was said that these livestock were mainly used for domestic use but in some cases excess quantity of milk was sold out in the market by male members. The figures are given in table II.

Gender Involvement in Forest Activities

Gender-wise distribution of forest activities was markedly different in different communities. In Swati and Syed communities, all activities related to forest e.g. collection and transportation of fuel wood and timber, sale of forest products, protection of the forest and plantation and collection of medicinal plants were exclusively performed by the male members of the households. On the other hand in Gujar community collection and transportation of fuel wood was carried out by about 37% male, 34% female and 29% both. Collection and transportation of timber, sale of forest products, protection and plantation are carried out by 78% male, 4% female and 18% both. Medicinal plants are collected by 34% male, 47% female, and 19% both. The figures are given in table III.

Gender Involvement in Decision-Making

In research area males were dominated and women were less empowered to take part in any decision making process. The respondents reported that the male members of the family always made the decisions. In a very few cases it was found that the decisions are made collectively by both the members of the family with consensus. Women possessed a nominal role in decision-making about their children education and the males made all such decisions. In case of decisions regarding marriages, women were taken into confidence in most of the cases. However in case of decisions regarding conflicts outside the family, decisions were exclusively made by male

members of the family. Most of the decision in the households about cultural activities was decided by women i.e 88% while the males share was 12% only (field survey).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the research area men were found dominant in performing the agriculture and forest activities but still the contribution of women can't be ignored. The contribution of males members of the in agricultural activities like sowing, land preparation, harvesting, weeding, fodder collection, grass cutting, fertilization, transportation, irrigation and marketing in Hilkot was 86.25%, 89.7%, 100%, 75.9%, 100%, 89.7%, 82.8%, 100%, 100% and 82.8% respectively. While the females contribution was 13.8%, 6.9%, 0%, 24.1%, 0%, 3.4%, 6.9%, 0%, 0% and 6.9% respectively. In Hilkot, Syedabad and Sumbal men were the dominant in performing all the agriculture activities. In Kundi, females played comparatively dominant role in grass cutting which was 50% as against 45% for males. In Bojri, females' contribution was higher than males in weeding, fodder collection, grass cutting and fertilization which were 38.1%, 47.6%, 47.6% and 42.9% respectively. In Sathangali females were dominant in weeding and fodder collection with share of 57% and 61% respectively. In Gulderi, females' contribution

was high i.e 60% for harvesting and in Naka it was 55% for fodder collection. Females' contribution was dominant on average in Kotni/Dehri/Kund for weeding and, fodder collection i.e. 57% and 51% respectively. Men were found dominant in decision-making. In forest activities, women contribution was higher in collection of medicinal plants only i.e. 47% as against 34% for males. Female contribution in grazing (85%) and milking (80%) was highest as compared to men in the major livestock activities. Collection and transportation of fuel wood was carried out by about 37% male, 34% female and 29% both. Collection and transportation of timber, sale of forest products, protection and plantation are carried out by 78% male, 4% female and 18% both. Medicinal plants are collected by 34% male, 47% female, and 19% both. Livestock activities were mainly performed by females in the watershed except selling of the livestock, veterinary treatment and keeping receipts from sale. However liberty to women should be given to perform economic activities. The government should provide opportunities for women to play their role actively and should be involved in decision-making. Women participation in decision-making is a reality and need of the hour, which should be accepted for improving their livelihood conditions and better management of natural resources.

Table-I Gender involvement in agricultural activities

Village	Village wise gender share (%) in agricultural practices																	
	Hilkot		Kandi		Bojri		Syedabad		Sumbal		Sathangali		Gulderi		Naka		Kotni/Dehri/ Kund	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Sowing	86.2	13.8	81.3	12.5	47.6	14.3	65	10	84.2	10.5	43.8	25	66.7	16.5	50	25	56	14
Land preparation	89.7	6.9	75	12	61.9	4.8	85	5	100	0	68.8	6.3	83.3	8.2	50	6.3	93.4	6.6
Harvesting	100	0	81.3	2.3	85.7	9.5	55	10	36.5	21.1	50	45	35	60	50	50	50	34
Weeding	75.9	24.1	70	15	14.3	38.1	90	10	50	31.1	30	57	25	25	60	42	30	57
Fodder collection	100	0	87.5	5	4.8	47.6	90	10	60	31.6	30	61	45	50	40	55	30	51
Gross cutting	89.7	3.4	45	50	19.0	47.6	39	40	60	25	55	40	46	40	55	30	60	39
Fertilization	82.8	6.9	87.5	10	9.5	42.9	95	5	62.5	18.8	85	10	50	50	45	45	98	2
Transportation	100	0	100	0	57.1	19	100	0	68.9	19	55	23	75	10	45	45	98	2
Irrigation	100	0	100	0	52.4	14.3	100	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	75	5
Marketing	82.8	6.9	100	0	66.7	14.3	100	0	100	0	93	2	75	20	25	25	99	1

Source: Field Survey

Table II *Gender role in major Livestock activities*

Activity	Male participation (%)	Female participation (%)
Grazing	15	85
Veterinary treatment	95	5
Milking	20	80
Sale of Milk	98	2
Sale of livestock	100	0

Source: Field Survey

Table-III *Gender involvement in various forest activities*

Activity	Male %	Female %	Both %
Collection and Transportation of Fuelwood	37	34	29
Collection and Transportation of Timber	78	4	18
Collection of Medicinal Plants	34	47	19
Sale of Forest Products, Plantation and Forest Protection	78	4	18

Source: Field Survey

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