

TRIBAL WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE : A STUDY ON INVOLVEMENT OF KARBI WOMEN IN *JHUM* CULTIVATION AND THEIR PERFECEIVED DRUDGERY IN PERFORMANCE OF FARM OPERATIONS

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ABSTRACT

A study on involvement of Karbi women in *jhum* cultivation and their perceived drudgery in performance of farm operations was carried out. The socio - economic profile of the respondents showed that highest percentage of the women were found to be illiterate and belonged to middle aged group. Majority of the respondents were from poor income group and were marginal farmers. Extent of involvement of women in farm operations like selection of seeds including hulling and inter - cultivation activities was high whereas in case of land preparation, sowing activities, harvest and post - harvest activities respondents showed medium level of involvement. On the basis of perceived drudgery by majority of the Karbi women, it was found that none of the farm operations were very light, only selection of seeds and mixing of seeds are fairly light activities and the rest were moderately heavy to very heavy activities.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture from the time immemorial has been the ladder for the growth of civilization. Nearly, 72% of working population of India depends on agriculture and related jobs. Women contribute about three fourth of the labour required for agricultural productions. Women participated in most of the agricultueal operations right from transplanting to storing (Devi, 1984). As a result, participation by women has largely been confined to activities involving low wages and drudgery. According to Verma (1995), women perform 70-80% of manual farm operations and they work longer and harder than men. Despite women have played an intregal part in farming and agricultural production, the gender division of labour remains unchanged.

The present investigation was undertaken to study the extent of involvement of women in farm operations and the drudgery perceived by women in performance of farm operations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A multistage purposive cum random sampling method was adopted to carry out the study. Lumbajong Development Block of Dipuhu subdivision of Karbi Anglong district was selected purposively. Three per cent of the villages of this block were selected purposively where *Jhum* cultivation was in practice. In all, 15 villages were selected. From each village 10% of the households were selected. Thus 102 tribal rural women constituted the total sample of the study. Interview method was used to collect the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic profile of the respondents

The findings of the investigation showed that half of the respondents (50.9%) were of middle aged group. Majority (80.4%) of the farm women had joint family and little more than half (51%) of the farm women were from medium size family. 72.6% respondents family income was quite low. It was found that 71.6% of the respondents were marginal farmers having size of operational landholding below 1 hectare.

Extent of involvement of women in various farm operations

Nearly 80% of the women showed high level of involvement in selection of seeds and cleaning of seeds. In cutting of jungle, majority (70.6%) of the farm women showed low level of involvement. More than half of the women (66.6%) involved in hoeing of land and land levelling. In manure application women's involvement was found to be low. Among the selected sample 75.49% showed medium level of involvement in cleaning of boundaries. Table 1 revealed that more than half of the farm women had high level of involvement in mixing of seeds (84.31%), broadcasting (94.11%) and dibbling (92.16%) whereas medium involvement of women was found in care of germination (65.69%) and watching of seedlings (61.77%). Involvement of women was recorded to be 92.16% in weeding and 51.97% in watching of standing crops (48.03%). Majority of the women were highly involved in all the harvest and post-harvest activities like reaping of crops (98.04%), making bundles (96.07%), carrying of crops from field (70.6%), threshing of grains (77.45%) winnowing of grains (88.23%), storage of grains (67.65%), storage of grains for seed purpose (79.41%), drying of grains (76.47%), dehussing of grains (79.41%) and cleaning of grains (76.47%) [Table 1].

Perceived drudgery in performance of farm operations

Large (51.97%) percentage of the respondents perceived selection of seeds and cleaning of seeds as fairly light and moderately heavy respectively. Cutting of jungle was felt as very heavy by 66.67% of women, whereas hoeing of land and land levelling was apprehended as very heavy by majority of the women (84.1% and 67%, respectively). Most of the women considered manure application (66.67%) and cleaning of boundaries (58.51%) as moderately heavy. Mixing of seeds, broadcasting and dibbling were reported as fairly light, heavy and very heavy by majority (42.16%; 40.19% and 57.85%, respectively) of the respondents. Watching after germination (63.72%) and seedlings (58.82%) were moderately heavy activities according to large percentage of the women. Weeding and watching of standing crops were remarked as very heavy and moderately heavy by more than half of the respondents (53.92% and 52.95%, respectively). It was found that reaping of crops (63.72%), carrying of crops

from field (82.35%), threshing of grains (79.41), winnowing of grains (76.47%), dehusking of grains (86.27%), and cleaning of grains (56.86%) were very heavy activities as stated by significant percentage of the women. Making of bundles was reported to be heavy activity by more than half of the women (55.89%). Majority of the women perceived storage of grains (65.69%), grains for seed purpose (61.76%) and drying of grains (53.92%) as moderately heavy activities.

On the basis of the above findings, various farm operations can be categorised under different perception level as shown in Table 3.

From the above findings it can be concluded that tribal women's contribution in *jhum* cultivation is significantly higher. They toil hard in performing labour intensive agricultural activities. Hence to reduce drudgery from farm operations, it is essential to educate the rural women to adopt improved implements which would increase their work output and efficiency. Though, they play an important role in farming, due importance is not given to them while designing of agricultural implements. Farm implements designed are mostly for wet land cultivation. Thus, it is necessary to design tools and implements for dry land cultivation in hill areas suitable for women, where their involvement is more compared to men. The adoption of technological innovation is of utmost importance for reducing drudgery of farming activities. For more rational approach in decision making for the betterment of farming, the educational level of the women farmers should be raised.

REFERENCES

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Table 1. Extent of involvement of women in various farm operations

N = 102

Operation	Extent of involvement (%)		
	High	Medium	Low
1. Selection of seeds including hulling			
(a) Selection of seeds	79.41	20.59	
(b) Cleaning of seeds	77.45	22.59	
2. Land preparation			
(a) Cutting of Jungle	4.90	24.5	70.6
(b) Hoeing of land	66.67	31.37	1.96
(c) Land levelling	66.67	31.37	1.96
(d) Manure application	-	2.94	97.06
(e) Cleaning of boundaries	16.67	75.49	7.84
3. Sowing activities			
(a) Mixing of seeds	84.31	15.69	-
(b) Broadcasting	94.11	5.89	-
(c) Dibbling	92.16	7.84	-
(d) Care of germination	38.23	61.77	-
(e) Watching of seedlings	34.31	65.69	-
4. Inter cultivation activities			
(a) Weeding	92.16	7.84	
(b) Watching of standing crops	51.97	48.03	
5. Harvest and post-harvest activities			
(a) Reaping of crops	98.00	1.96	
(b) Making bundles	96.07	3.92	
(c) Carrying of crops from field	70.6	29.4	
(d) Threshing of grains	77.45	22.55	
(e) Winnowing of grains	88.23	11.77	
(f) Storage of grains	67.65	32.35	
(g) Storage of grains for seed purpose	79.41	20.59	
(h) Dying of grains	76.47	23.53	
(i) Dehusking of grains	79.41	20.59	
(j) Cleaning of grains	76.47	23.53	

Table 2. Drudgery perceived by women in performing farm operations (%)

Operation	N	Very light	Fairly light	Moderately heavy	Heavy	Very heavy
1. Selection of seeds including hulling						
a) Selection of seeds	102	-	51.97	40.19	7.84	
b) Cleaning of seeds	102	0.98	28.43	51.97	17.64	0.98
2. Land preparation						
(a) Cutting of jungle	30	-	-	13.33	66.67	20.00
(b) Hoeing of land	100	-	-	3.00	13.00	84.00
(c) Land levelling	100	-	-	7.00	26.00	67.00
(d) Manure application	3	-	-	66.67		33.33
(e) Cleaning of boundaries	94	-	1.07	58.51	35.10	5.32
3. Sowing activities						
(a) Mixing of seeeds	102	3.92	42.16	41.18	12.74	
(b) Broadcasting	102	-	1.97	24.51	40.19	33.33
(c) Dibbling	102	-	-	2.94	39.21	57.85
(d) Care of Germination	102	24.51	63.72	9.80	1.97	
(e) Watching of seedlings	102	26.48	58.82	14.70		
4. Inter cultivation activities						
(a) Weeding	102	-	-	9.80	36.28	53.92
(b) Watching of standing crops	102	3.92	17.64	52.95	24.51	0.98
5. Harvest and post harvest activities						
(a) Reaping of crops	102		3.92	32.36	63.72	
(b) Making bundles	102		0.98	23.52	55.89	19.61
(c) Carrying crops from field	102		1.97	15.68	82.35	
(d) Threshing of grains	102		5.89	14.7	79.41	
(e) Winnowing of grains	102		2.94	20.59	76.47	
(f) Storage of grains	102		9.80	65.69	22.54	1.97
(g) Storage of grains for seed purpose	102		11.76	61.76	24.51	1.97
(h) Drying of grains	102		7.84	53.92	35.3	2.94
(i) Dehusking of grains	102		2.94	10.79	86.27	
(j) Cleaning of grains	102	0.98	10.79	31.37	56.86	

Table 3. Categorization of various farm operation as perceived by majority of the women

Perception level	Farm operation
Fairly light	Selection of seeds
	Mixing of seeds
Moderately heavy	Cleaning of seeds
	Manure application
	Cleaning of boundaries
	Care of germination
	Watching of standing crops
	Watching of seedlings
	Storage of grains
	Storage of grains for seed purpose
	Drying of grains
	Cutting of jungle
Heavy	Broadcasting
	Making bundles
Very heavy	Hoeing of land
	Land levelling
	Dibbling
	Weeding
	Reaping of crops
	Carrying of crops
	Threshing of grains
	Winnowing
	Dehusking of grains
	Cleaning of grains