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# Women's Role in Agriculture and Allied Fields in Manipur

S. Roma Devi<sup>1\*</sup> • L. Kanta Singh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>KVK Churachandpur, Personmum 795128, Manipur

<sup>2</sup>KVK Imphal West, Lampalphet 795004, Manipur

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### ABSTRACT

Women are the backbone of agriculture, in Manipur. Manipur has a total population of 2570390 and female population constitute of 49.81% to the total population. Average female's work forces contribution in Manipur is 43.35%. The average percent of female cultivator /farm labourer to male cultivator /farm labourer in Manipur is 44.43%. Women are also involved in forest based handicrafts and cottage industries. About 15.49% of total female population in hill areas are involved in forest based livelihoods system. Women involved from rearing of fishes to post-harvest activities of fisheries. More than 90% of the marketing of fishes are take care by women. Women play a significant role in agricultural and allied fields' development including crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post harvest operations, agro-forestry, fisheries, etc. in Manipur.

## 1. Introduction

Women contribute productive work force in the economy of Manipur. There are realization of the key role of women in agricultural development and their vital contribution in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors. Women form the backbone of agriculture, in Manipur. Comprising the majority of agricultural labourers, women have been putting in labour not only in terms of physical output but also in terms of quality and efficiency. Women are moral responsible to all maintenance of a household in Manipur. Besides from caring and brought up of children, women are indulges to preparation daily meals, maintain the home garden, and assisting in crop and animal production. Women are involved in all aspects of agriculture operations, from crop selection to land preparation, to seed selection, planting, weeding, pest control, harvesting, crop storage, handling, marketing, and processing. Almost all women in rural Manipur can be considered as a 'farmers' in some sense. Women in Manipur sometime work as agricultural labour, sometime work as unpaid agricultural labour in the family agricultural farm.

Several agricultural activities generally carried out by men are also now being undertaken by women as men charges higher wages than women. Thus, it is witnessing a process which could be described as feminization in agriculture and other allied sectors in Manipur.

## 2. Study Area

Manipur is one smallest state of India located in northeast part of the country (Figure 1) and covers an area of 23,327 km<sup>2</sup>. The state lies at a latitude of 23°83'N – 25°68'N and a longitude of 93°03'E – 94°78'E. The state capital of Manipur is Imphal. The state is boundary between Nagaland in the north, Mizoram in the south, Assam in the west, and has international border with Myanmar in the east as well as in the south. Manipur is geographically divided into two parts, the centrally situated valley and the surrounding hills. The state is divided into nine districts viz, Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal, and Bishnupur, comes under valley districts, while Chandel, Churachandpur, Senapati, Tamenglong and Ukhrul comes under hill districts.

\*Corresponding author: [drsroma@gmail.com](mailto:drsroma@gmail.com)

The valley comprises of four districts having about 2,000 km<sup>2</sup> area of oval-shaped located in central part of the state surrounded by several mountain ranges. Manipur has four major river basins namely; the Barak River Basin to the west, the Manipur River Basin in central Manipur, the Yu River Basin in the east, and a portion of the Lanye River Basin in the north. Manipur contributes about 0.7236 Mham of water resources to country's total water budget of 400 Mham (million hectare metre).

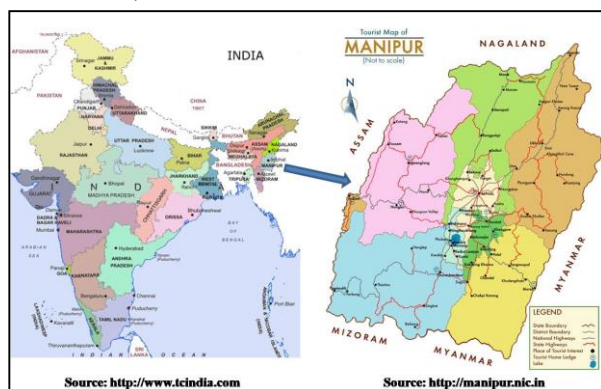


Figure 1. Location of study area

### 3. Population ratio men and women

Manipur has a total population of 2570390, out of total population male population is 1290171 and female population is 1280219.

Average female population has 49.81% to the 50.19% average male population. In case of the valley districts namely Imphal East, Imphal West and Thoubal has more female percent of population than male population (Anonymous, 2014). The details of district wise male and female population of Manipur are given Table 1.

### 4. Gender and Economic Status

Women's economic contribution is also major share to household requirements. The majority of married women worked in subordinate to men's needs. The average female literacy to male literacy is 45.26%. In the entire district the female literacy to male literacy is more than 40%. The details of district wise male and female literacy are given Table 2. The status of gender is shown by economic activities. The work forces of women are more concentrated in unorganized sectors, self-employment sectors and as cultivators and agricultural labourers in rural areas. Percent of average female's work forces contribution in Manipur is 43.35%. Except Imphal East and Imphal West district rest of the district contribution of women's work force is more than 40% (Anonymous, 2014). The details of district wise gender based worker status of Manipur are given in Table 3.

Table 1. District wise male female population of Manipur (Source: Anonymous, 2014)

District	Male	Female	Total	Percent of total women to total men
Senapati	98908	94836	193744	48.95
Tamenglong	72371	68280	140651	48.55
Churachandpur	138820	135323	274143	49.36
Chandel	74579	69603	144182	48.27
Ukhrul	94718	89280	183998	48.52
Imphal East	226094	230019	456113	50.43
Imphal West	255054	262938	517992	50.76
Bishnupur	118782	118617	237399	49.97
Thoubal	210845	211323	422168	50.06

Table 2. District wise male female literate population of Manipur (Source: Anonymous, 2014)

District	Male	Female	Total	Percent of female literate to male literate
Senapati	68169	56013	124182	45.11
Tamenglong	47403	37603	85006	44.24
Churachandpur	104013	91922	195935	46.91
Chandel	51053	39249	90302	43.46
Ukhrul	70148	59681	129829	45.97
Imphal East	173314	151350	324664	46.62
Imphal West	205985	186641	392626	47.54
Bishnupur	87313	69020	156333	44.15
Thoubal	152617	116687	269304	43.33

**Table 3.** District wise gender based worker status of Manipur (Source: (Anonymous, 2014))

District	Male	Female	Total	Percent of female worker to male worker
Senapati	50198	37867	88065	43.00
Tamenglong	37237	33438	70675	47.31
Churachandpur	70594	52061	122655	42.45
Chandel	42615	33623	76238	44.10
Ukhrul	46533	41396	87929	47.08
Imphal East	117562	77286	194848	39.66
Imphal West	128540	84847	213387	39.76
Bishnupur	62807	47130	109937	42.87
Thoubal	109377	85942	195319	44.00

### 5. Women's participation in Agriculture

Women are the backbone agricultural activities in Manipur. Women are extensively involved in agricultural activities. The female participation in agricultural system varies with the status land ownership. Women's roles involved from managers to landless labourers. Women have been the primary seed keepers, processors. They have been the both experts and producers of food, from seed to the kitchen. Women carry the labourious work burden in agriculture. Manipur is essentially an agricultural state and agriculture is the mainstay of the state's economy. About 22% of the populations are engaged in agriculture. The size of the cultivated area is, however, only 7.24% of the total geographical area of the state and of this total cultivated area, 56.88% is confined to the valley. From the time of seed-sowing till harvesting women took an active part. The percent of female cultivator /farm labourer is more than male cultivator /farm labourer in two districts namely Ukhrul and Tamenglong. The average percent of female cultivator /farm labourer to male cultivator /farm labourer in Manipur is 44.43% (Anonymous, 2014). The district wise gender based cultivator/farm labourer status of Manipur is given in Table 4. Women mostly do transplanting, weeding and harvesting in Manipur. In Manipur, the people practice two methods of cultivation upland land cultivation and cultivation in wetland. In valley people mostly practice wetland cultivation and where as in the hills, the hill farmers practice both *jhuming* and terrace cultivation. Due to reduced in *jhum* cycle there has been exploitation of natural resources in the hilly areas like deforestation. As a result of deforestation, women had to walk long distance for collection fuel wood and other forest products.

### 4. Forest Based Livelihoods

Most of the forest-based livelihoods are confined to the hilly areas of Manipur. Economic status in the rural areas

Manipur is generally linked to the availability of culturable land and its productivity. Women have been major contribution in poor families' income in rural areas by collecting fuel wood and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) especially for communities living near to the forests. Besides commercial timber, most NTFPs, like fuel wood, honey, fibre, wild vegetable, fodder, etc. come from forests and provide valuable income to many families. Women play key role in gathering of such valuable products from the forest (Anonymous, 2004). Women are indulging in sale of fuel wood, fodder and rearing of livestock using forest fodder (Figure 2). Women have equal contribution as men in production of charcoal using forest products (Figure 3). Women are also involved in forest based handicrafts and cottage industries. About 15.49% of total female population in hill areas are involved in forest based livelihoods system.



**Figure 2.** Selling of fuel wood in the local market collected from the forest area at Hengbung village, Senapati district, Manipur.

### 5. Women in Fishery

In Manipur women play a major role in fisheries. Women involved from rearing of fishes to post-harvest activities of fisheries In some of the farm activities like processing and storage, women predominate so strongly that men workers are numerically insignificant.. More than 90% of the marketing of fishes are take care by women.

About 56461 ha of area are under fish farming in Manipur. The fisheries sector in Manipur is an important source livelihood for hundred thousands of people.



**Figure 3.** Women participating in preparation of charcoal of in forest area at Mayangkhang Village, Senapati district, Manipur

## 6. Handloom Industry

Weaving industry is one of the important cottage industries ruled by women in Manipur and contributes economy to the state. Every grown up rural women expected to learn the art of weaving. Weaving has a big role in tribal hill society of Manipur, knowing weaving provides good qualification rural female youth for marriage. The handlooms products are not only sold in the local market, but also sold to other neighbouring states. Handloom industry is lifeline to thousands of family in Manipur.

## 7. Marketing

Most of agricultural produced are marketed by women in Manipur. Women in the hills would sell agricultural products at the roadside and also brought down to the valley, where population density is much higher and purchasing powers are more. Most of the market systems in Manipur are women dominated. Women deal with different trades like selling of fishes, vegetables, fruits, handloom products, meals, tea, snacks, etc.

## 8. Conclusion

Women play a significant role in agricultural and allied fields' development including crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post harvest operations, agro-forestry, fisheries, etc. in Manipur. The nature and extent of women's involvement in work force varies from region to region.

In some of the farm activities like processing and storage, women predominate so strongly that men workers are numerically insignificant Recognition of their contribution in agriculture should not be neglected the fact that farm women continue to be concerned with their primary functions as wives, mothers and homemakers. The women are the backbone of agricultural workforce but worldwide her hard work has mostly been unpaid. She does the most tedious and back-breaking tasks in agriculture, animal husbandry, household works and also other allied activities for income generation. Her enlightenment will change the face of rural people one day.

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