

A Glimpse Of Workforce Participation Of Tribal Women In Some Areas Of Goalpara District Of Assam

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Abstract:

A country's social and economic development significantly depends upon the participation rates of its women because they constitute around 50 percent of its human resources (NIPCCD, 2010). Not only that, women's participation in the workforce as compared to men is also a key determinant of their social status (Mammen, 2000). Women's employment is crucial for raising their livelihood pattern and well-being. In this study an attempt has been made to study the trend of workforce participation among the Rabha and Bodo women workers in Goalpara district of Assam.

Key word: Employment, Participation, Workforce,

1. Introduction:

Women constitute an integral part of the society and actively participate in the socio-economic development process of the society. In ancient and medieval period, status of women was placed particularly lower than the male all over the world throughout history. Among prominent negativities, women in our society are regarded just to give birth to son without enjoying property right, human right and equal status with men-folk. However, there has been a reversing trend to this belief and the issue of gender inequality emerged resulting from rapid socio-economic transition. The move of gender equality has been now a burning concern of all economies, consequently, chronically deprived womenfolk are sought to give equal opportunity in respect of education, health, earning, etc. i.e., to empower them.

Above observations imply an essence of increased work-participation for an anticipated and justified socio-economic transition of any region. Goalpara district of Assam is a rural-based district and it is comparatively backward than counterpart and its HDI is also very low at only 0.591 in 2014. However, it is seen that presently, there has been a trend of women work-participation not only in the limited formal sectors, but also in various non-formal sectors. The present move of gender equality along with growing consciousness of women right accompanied by expansion of health and education facilities, necessitate to discourse women work participation and to induct it into Goalpara district of Assam.

2. Objectives of the study:

- To discuss the socio-economic characteristics of the sample population in the study area.
- To examine the level of workforce participation of Rabha and Bodo women in the study area.

3. Data Source and Methodology:

To fulfil the objectives of the study, an evaluative and descriptive method is adopted. The study is based on primary as well as secondary data. Secondary data have been gathered from various published sources such as Planning Commission of India, NSSO, ILO, Census of India, Economic Survey of the central government, statistical handbook of Assam, District census handbook, various journals and periodicals, reports etc.

To assess the ground realities and to induct the issue, primary information have been collected from the study area. For this purpose, a purposive multi-stage random sampling technique has been adopted which involves the following stages-

- **Stage I-Selection of District:** While considering the state of Assam, it is seen that in Goalpara district, the diversity of tribal population is relatively higher than other districts. Among all the tribes, the population of the Rabhas is higher in Goalpara district followed by the Bodos. The Rabhas is the fourth largest tribe of Assam and the percentage of the Rabhas is highest (35.03%) in Goalpara district among all other districts of Assam. Although the percentage of the Bodos is lower (3.02%) in Goalpara district compared to some other districts of Assam, yet it is not negligible. Because of these reasons Goalpara district is selected purposefully for the study.
- **Stage II-Selection of Block:** Goalpara district has 8 community development (CD) blocks and both the communities- Rabha and Bodo inhabit almost in all blocks. From the total CD blocks, only two blocks i.e. Rangjuli and Kochdowa have been selected purposefully considering the intensity of concentration of the Rabhas and the Bodos. The selection of CD blocks in second stage is followed by selection of gaonpanchayats.
- **Stage III-Selection of GaonPanchayat:** Rangjuli CD block and Kuchdowa CD block have 9 numbers and 8 numbers of gaonpanchayats respectively. Considering Rabha and Bodo dominating areas, 3 gaonpanchayats from Rangjuli CD block and 2 gaonpanchayats from Kuchdowa CD block have been selected purposefully constituting a total of 5 gaonpanchayats. Among the sample gaonpanchayats, Kathakuthi, Dhanubanga and Dhupdharagaonpanchayats have been chosen purposefully from Rangjuli CD block considering the higher concentration of Rabha and Bodo population. From the selected Kuchdowa CD block PuraniBhita and Dudhnaigaon panchayats have been selected taking into consideration the higher proportion of Rabha and Bodo population.
- **Stage IV-Selection of villages:** From the 5 selected gaonpanchayats, 8 villages (4 villages for each community- Rabha and Bodo) are selected purposefully for conducting the field survey.
- **Stage V- Selection of Household:** The last and final stage in the sampling design is selection of sample households from the selected villages. For this purpose 15 percent households from each village have been selected randomly for the primary survey. Thus a total of 218 households (Rabha- 118 and Bodo- 100) are considered as sample households under the study.

4. Analysis of the study:

4.1 Socio-economic characteristics of sample population:

A human community claiming as an ethnic group can be defined having a common descent and normally living in a homogeneous area with distinct language, social organization and culture, including various religious beliefs and faith. There are various ethnic social groups in Assam. Out of them there are a large number of tribal people inhabiting in this state. Among the prominent tribal groups Rabha and Bodo communities possess ethnic characteristics some of which are discussed below:-

4.1.1 Social characteristics of sample population:

Villages:

The inhabiting areas of Rabha and Bodo communities in Goalpara district possess rural character and they have affinity and proximity almost in all aspects of life. In regards to residential establishment, the Rabha and Bodo people have unique characteristics. Usually, every household has spacious residential place having 2-3 houses along with a homestead garden (*Bari*).

House Type:

In the study area about 41.74 percent of the sample households live in semi-pucca houses and only 28.90 percent live in pucca houses. About one-third per cent of the sample households live in kutchha houses. This picture indicate a poor living standard of both the communities in the study area.

Types of family:

In case of the Rabhas 96.61 % households have nuclear families and only 3.39% have joint families out of 118 Rabha households. In case of the Bodos, households having nuclear and joint families are respectively 95% and 5% out of 100 Bodo households. From the discussion, it is clear that households having nuclear families are comparatively higher for Rabhas than the Bodos.

Religion:

From the survey it is seen that in the study area all the households (118 households) of Rabha tribe are Hindus while considering the Bodo tribe it is seen that only 9 households are Christians out of 100 sample households and remaining 91 households are Hindus. As a whole it is found that majority of households (95.87%) of both the tribes are Hindus and the rest (4.13%) are Christians.

Language:

In the study area the Rabha language is now confined among the Rangdani and the Maitori group. The Patis, one of the major groups of the tribe now speak a mixture of Assamese and Rabha language. Efforts have recently been made to standardize the language and to impart education at the primary level through mother tongue. In case of Bodo tribe almost all people know the Bodo language and it is used as mother tongue in every household under the study.

4.1.2 Economic characteristics of sample population**Annual income of sample households**

Income is an important economic indicator through which the living condition of a household or a family can be determined. It is also a very important factor to determine the status of women workforce participation of a household or within a family. So, it is important to see the income status of sample households of both the Rabhas and the Bodos. For this purpose annual income of the sample households are divided into following categories-

Table 1: Distribution of sample households by annual income (Rs.)

Tribe	Annual income (Rs.)						Total
	Below 1,00,000	1,00,001-2,00,000	2,00,001-3,00,000	3,00,001-4,00,000	4,00,001-5,00,000	Above 5,00,000	
Rabha	16 (13.56)	42 (35.59)	35 (29.66)	11 (9.32)	8 (6.78)	6 (5.09)	118
Bodo	14 (14)	38 (38)	29 (29)	9 (9)	6 (6)	4 (4)	100
Total	30 (13.76)	80 (36.70)	64 (29.36)	20 (9.17)	14 (6.42)	10 (4.59)	218

Source: Field Survey data

(Note: Figures within parenthesis denote percentage)

The table 1 portrays that, majority of both the Rabha (35.59%) and Bodo (38%) households' annual income falls under the second category (Rs. 1,00,001-2,00,000 per year). The percentage of Bodo households under the first and second category of annual income (less than Rs. 1,00,000 and Rs.1,00,001-2,00,000 per year) are higher (14% and 38% respectively) than the Rabha households (13.56% and 35.59% respectively). In case of third,

fourth, fifth and sixth categories of annual income (Rs. 2,00,001-3,00,000, Rs. 3,00,001-4,00,000, Rs. 4,00,001-5,00,000 and above Rs. 5,00,000 per year) the percentage of Rabha households are higher (29.66%, 9.32%, 6.78% and 5.09% respectively) than the Bodo households (29.36%, 9.17%, 6.42% and 4.59% respectively).

The average annual income of the Rabha households is found higher (Rs. 1,20,540.61 per year) than the average annual income of the Bodo households (Rs. 90,785.25 per year)

Annual consumption expenditure of sample households:

Expenditure is also considered as an important determinant which determines the living standard of a family or a household. The table 3.11 indicates the expenditure pattern of sample households of both the selected tribes. The annual consumption expenditure of sample households for the tribes are categorized into the following six categories.

Table 2: Distribution of sample households by annual consumption expenditure

Tribe	Annual consumption expenditure (Rs.)						Total
	Below 50,000	50,001-1,00,000	1,00,001-1,50,000	1,50,001-2,00,000	2,00,001-2,50,000	Above 2,50,000	
Rabha	14 (11.86)	26 (22.03)	26 (22.03)	34 (28.82)	12 (10.17)	6 (5.09)	118
Bodo	17 (17)	26 (26)	30 (30)	15 (15)	7 (7)	5 (5)	100
Total	33 (15.14)	50 (22.94)	56 (25.69)	49 (22.47)	19 (8.72)	11 (5.04)	218

Source: Field Survey data

(Note: Figures within parenthesis denote percentage)

The table above shows that, out of total households, the majority of Rabha households (28.82%) fall under the fourth category of annual consumption expenditure (Rs. 1,50,001-2,00,000). Similarly in case of Bodos the majority of households (30%) fall under the third category of annual consumption expenditure (1,00,001-1,50,000). From the table, it is seen that, in case of fourth, fifth and sixth categories of annual consumption expenditure (Rs. 1,50,001-2,00,000, Rs. 2,00,001-2,50,000 and above Rs. 2,50,000) the percentage of Rabha households are higher (28.82%, 10.17% and 5.09% respectively) than the Bodos (15%, 7% and 5% respectively). But in case of first, second and third categories of annual consumption expenditure (Rs. below 50,000, Rs. 50,001-1,00,000 and Rs. 1,00,001-1,50,000), the percentage of Rabha households are lower (11.86%, 22.03% and 22.03% respectively) than the Bodo households (17%, 26% and 30% respectively).

As a whole, it is seen that, the majority of households of both the communities (25.69%) fall under the third category of annual consumption expenditure (Rs. 1,00,001-1,50,000).

The average annual consumption expenditure of Rabha households is found Rs. 70,980.75 which is higher than the Bodo households (Rs. 60,460.50).

Annual saving pattern of sample households:

Saving also determines the living condition of a household or a family. Higher saving specifies better living standard of a family and vice versa. The table 3.12 shows the saving pattern of the sample households. The saving pattern of households of both the tribes are divided into the following broad categories-

Table 3: Annual saving pattern of sample households

Tribe	Annual saving pattern (Rs.)						Total
	Below 40,000	40,001-80,000	80,001-1,20,000	1,20,001-1,60,000	1,60,001-2,00,000	Above 2,00,000	
Rabha	18 (15.25)	46 (38.98)	32 (27.12)	9 (7.63)	8 (6.78)	5 (4.24)	118
Bodo	21 (21)	42 (42)	24 (24)	7 (7)	4 (4)	2 (2)	100
Total	39 (17.89)	88 (40.37)	56 (25.69)	16 (7.34)	12 (5.50)	7 (3.21)	218

Source: Field Survey data

(Note: Figures within parenthesis denote percentage)

From the table, it is seen that, for both the communities, a large portion of households (38.98% for Rabhas and 42% for Bodos) fall under the second category (Rs. 40,001-80,000) of saving pattern. In case of third, fourth, fifth and sixth categories of saving pattern (Rs. 80,001-1,20,000, Rs. 1,20,001-1,60,000, Rs. 1,60,001-2,00,000 and above Rs. 2,00,000), the percentage of Rabha households are higher (27.12%, 7.63%, 6.78% and 4.24% respectively) than the Bodo households (24%, 7%, 4% and 2% respectively). Contrariwise, in case of first and second category of saving pattern (below Rs. 40,000 and Rs. 40,001-80,000), the percentage of Rabha households are lower (15.25% and 38.98%) than the Bodo households (21% and 42%).

From the above discussions, it is seen that the average annual saving of Rabha households is found Rs. 49,559.86 which is higher than the Bodo households (Rs. 30,324.75).

4.2 Levels of women workforce participation:

The study of levels of women's workforce participation is vital towards understanding the socio-economic functioning of a region. The workforce participation rate and occupational composition among them certainly reveal their economic status and the system of social organization in it. The participation rate of women in workforce brings in two positive effects in their society - it raises the quality of living and exerts an effective control on family size (Kar, 2002).

The study aims to reflect into the levels of female workforce participation and also the various reasons behind workforce participation among the women of Rabha and Bodo community of Goalpara district of Assam.

Workforce participation rate:

The data collected from the study area, reveals that out of total 664 sample population of Rabha community 321 are male and 343 are female. Similarly for Bodo community out of total 478 sample population 248 are males and 230 are females.

While considering the working age group (i.e. 15-59), it is seen that out of 343 females population of Rabha community, 281 belongs to the age group 15-59 of which 144 women are found to be engaged in various

works. In case of Bodo community, it is seen that out of 230 females, 167 female belongs to the age group 15-59 of which 72 women are found to be engaged in various works.

The workforce participation rates of Rabha and Bodo women are computed below by using some standard formula.

Crude Workforce Participation Rate: Crude Workforce Participation Rate (CWPR) is defined as the ratio of the total workers to the total population multiplied by 100. For female the formula of CWPR will be-

$$CWPR = \frac{\text{Total female workers}}{\text{Total female population}} \times 100$$

By using the formula the CWPR for both Rabha and Bodo women are found 41.98% and 31.30% respectively, while considering the state of Assam it is found to be only 22.46 percent. Thus it is seen that CWPR of female of both Rabha and Bodo community are higher than Assam.

It is seen that the CWPR of Rabha women is higher than the Bodo women. The CWPR does not reflect the true picture of workforce participation rate, because in total population there may be economically inactive population i.e. each person of the population is not eligible to participate in economic activity. Therefore it is necessary to consider the General Workforce participation Rate which will provide the actual picture of workforce participation of a population because it considers only the population belongs to the age group 15-59, which is usually known as the working age group of a population.

General Workforce Participation Rate: General Workforce Participation Rate (GWPR) is defined as the ratio of the total working population of the age group 15-59 to total population of the same age group multiplied by 100. For female the formula of GWPR will be-

$$GWPR = \frac{\text{Total female workers of the age group 15-59}}{\text{Total female population of age group 15-59}} \times 100$$

By using the formula, the GWPR for Rabha women is found to be 51.25% which is higher than the work participation of total Rabha population of Assam (47.2%). For Bodo women GWPR is found 43.11% which is lower than the work participation rate of total Bodo population of Assam (43.30%). It is seen that GWPR for Rabha women in the study area are higher than that of Bodo women. The possible reason behind it is that Rabha women are more educated than the Bodo women and there is high desire among them to become self-dependent and in some cases they want to make their own identity.

Though GWPR can give a clear picture about the workforce participation rate than CWPR, it gives us only an overall picture of work participation rate among the women of working age group (15-59). But in reality it is seen that the desire to work and ability to work is not same for all categories of age group. Therefore it is necessary to examine the workforce participation rate for different age groups separately which is known as Age Specific Workforce Participation Rate (ASWPR). The ASWPR in the study area for both Rabha and Bodo women are computed below.

Age Specific Workforce Participation Rate:

For different age group, the percentage of workers may differ. At various age group women can participate in the work force differently. Therefore it is necessary to calculate and examine the level of workforce participation among the women workers at different age group. The Age Specific Workforce Participation Rate (ASWPR) for both Rabha and Bodo women are depicted in the following tables by using the formula-

$$ASWPR = \frac{\text{No. of female workers of a specified age group}}{\text{Total No. of female of the age group}} \times 100$$

Table 4: Age Specific Workforce Participation Rate for Rabha women workers

Age group	Total female population	Female workers	ASWPR (in percentage)
15-19	45	2	4.44
20-24	53	30	56.60
25-29	35	22	62.86
30-34	36	18	50
35-39	30	23	76.67
40-44	28	18	64.29
45-49	25	15	60
50-54	17	10	58.82
55-59	12	6	50
Total	281	144	51.25

Source: Field Survey data

From table 4, it is seen that work participation rate for Rabha women are highest between the age group 35-39 (76.67%) followed by the age groups 40-44, 25-29, 45-49, 50-54, 20-24, 30-34, 55-59 and 15-19.

Table 5: Age Specific Workforce Participation Rate for Bodo women workers

Age group	Total female population	Female workers	ASWPR (in percentage)
15-19	27	3	11.11
20-24	41	19	46.34
25-29	22	11	50
30-34	24	15	62.5
35-39	15	8	53.33
40-44	13	6	46.15
45-49	11	5	45.45
50-54	8	3	37.5
55-59	6	2	33.33
Total	167	72	43.11

Source: Field Survey data

From table 5, it is seen that work force participation rate for Bodo women are highest between the age group 30-34 (62.5%) followed by the age groups 35-39, 25-29, 20-24, 40-44, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59 and 15-19.

From both tables it is clear that workforce participation rate for both the communities are lowest in the age group 15-19 followed by the age group 55-59. The possible reason behind it is that in the first category age group there are majority of school going girls and they do not have too much burden to bear the responsibility of their households. The age group 55-59 comprises of elderly women who are not physically too much active to do some hard works. Except these two categories of age groups, in the remaining age groups majority are married women and they have to work to earn for their family. In fact, it is found from the survey that majority of households depend on their female members for their livelihood and therefore it becomes the responsibility for them to engage in jobs to maintain their family.

5. Conclusion:

Through the study of workforce participation of both Rabha and Bodo women workers the study reflects a clear picture about the status of tribal women in the study area. The study clearly brings to light the importance of the issue of female workforce participation. It is found from the study that workforce participation rate for Rabha women are slightly higher than the Bodo women workers.

Ensuring that women can take part in the workforce on equal terms with men is important for gender equality and poverty reduction. When women enter into the workforce, they are able to provide for themselves and for their families to some extent. To attract more women into the labour market, the economy will need to create more appealing working opportunities. Devoting extensive resources to programs supporting female entrepreneurship and tailored to socio-economic context should constitute a key part of government policies aiming to create higher quality jobs and encouraging greater participation by women.

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