



EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS OF SELECTED NGOs PARTICIPANTS AT FARM HOUSEHOLDS IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

Bangladesh is poor and over populated country in the world. A lot of people of this country are unemployed and underemployed. Different NGOs are working to improve the unemployment status of the people in the country. They have under taken many programs for the economic development as well as for reducing the unemployment problem of the country. Development programs have different dimensions in different political and social systems but common to all is the need to reduce unemployment, poverty and inequality with the participation of the masses. Employment of women in income generating activities is regarded as an important element of economic development of the country. In such situation, NGOs are playing an important role in rural development by encouraging women's participation with credit support in income generating activities and wage employment. The aim of the present study was to address the patterns of employment of participants under selected NGOs, in Bangladesh. For that purpose, seven upazilas from six districts were selected where the selected NGOs are working actively. The study shows that after joining the program with the credit support, a significant proportion of the participating women got involvement in income generating activities. The sizes of family and education level were found to be directly related to the off-farm labor supply. Higher education levels had increase strong influence to labor skills and therefore, the opportunities for off-farm work. As a consequence, women participants gained substantial financial development and social status. The perception of NGO participant women was that they were benefited financially and their awareness also increased tremendously. All NGOs were successful in bringing about impressive positive change of the participant women with respect to increase in production, savings, total income, overall technical knowledge, attitude, efficiency, improvement in health and sanitation, which had enhanced economic well-beings of their families.

Keywords: Employment, NGOs, women participation

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is one of the densely populated countries in the world. Almost 40% people of this country are underemployed (World Factbook 2012). Many NGOs are working for creating the employment opportunities in the country. Since its birth as an independent nation in 1971, Bangladesh became a remarkable site for Non Government Organizations (NGOs). At present more than 2500 NGOs are available in the country. They are trying to improve the economic condition of the country through the increasing women participation in the economic activities (Rahman *et al.* 2002). Labor force participation in Bangladesh is increasing day by day. The increased labour force was mostly absorbed in non-agricultural occupation. The absolute size of the

agricultural labour force increased during the past two decades. The most important feature of agricultural employment in Bangladesh is underemployment or disguised unemployment due to small in farm size and seasonal characteristics of agricultural employment. The average annual working days of the subsistence farmers in their own farm was estimated at about 120 days (Mahmud 1996). Small farmers depend on other farms for their income. The smaller the farm, the higher the proportion of off-farm income required. Modernization in the rural sector has increased off-farm income opportunities for the small farmers, but in most cases these are seasonal and on a short term basis. In this study, we wanted to know the economic activities of the participants on the basis of before and after programme participation and to know the

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nature of off-farm employment and income of farm households under selected NGOs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to be realistic, and considering the limitations of the research, five reputed Non-government Organizations (NGOs) namely PROSHIKA, BRAC, ASA, RDRS and GKF which had widespread network throughout Bangladesh. Care was taken to select the areas where the selected NGOs have intensive programme for over five years. Easy accessibility and familiarity of the researchers to the areas were also important factors. A total of 45 villages from seven upazilas considered as (namely Sadar upazila, Sadar upazila, and Fulbari, Sadar upazila, Muktagacha, Domar and Debigonj) of six districts (i.e. Rangpur, Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat, Mymensingh, Nilphamari and Panchogarh) were selected in consultation with the field-level officials. After selection of the villages in each upazila, respondents list were prepared with the help of respective NGOs area manager, credit officer, and field worker. Data of 100 (one hundred) samples from each of the NGOs from seven upazilas were collected. A total of 500 samples were selected by following a stratified random sampling procedure. The study was mainly based on a set of field level primary data collected through the direct interview with a set of questionnaires designed for the study, both tabular and statistical techniques were used to find important relationships among the relevant variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Economic Activities on the basis of before and after Programme Participation: Table 1 reveals that at the time of joining the NGO's about 97 percent of the participants of the GKF were not involved in any income earning activities and it was followed by 95 percent in the ASA, 90 percent in the RDRS, 89 percent in Proshika and 85 percent in BRDS. In the case of BRAC about 15 percent of the participants were involved in income earning activities at the time of joining. After joining the programme, with the credit support, a significant proportion of the participating women got involvement in income generating activities. Table 2 shows that capabilities to contribute to the economic wellbeing of their families have increased. At the time of joining the programme, more than 91 percent members were housewives and it had declined to 22 percent, who reportedly did not directly participate in income earning activities. The rate of women's participation in income earning activities had increased. The findings clearly indicate that programme participation supported by credit facilities had significantly expanded income earning opportunities for the poor women. They, along with their household work, were engaged in petty

business, poultry and livestock rising, handicrafts, sewing, operating hatchery, and other home and village-based economic activities

Off-farm employment and income of farm households of the selected NGOs

Agriculture alone cannot provide full employment. The needs and livelihoods of farm households demand more income. The changing conditions in resource endowments have made encouraging conditions for improving the rural employment situation. Consequently, farm households derive their living from a wide range of both farm and off-farm activities. However, involvement of farm households in off-farm work depends upon the resources available to them and the requirement of these resources at farm level. It is a crucial task to continue absorption of the ever-growing labour force of the country in agricultural sector because the process of economic development is characterized by a substantial development in the off-farm activities (Baluch *et al.* 1997).

Operational holdings and off-farm activities: One of the main factors affecting participation of members of farm households in off-farm activities is the operational holding. The less the operational holding, less is the requirement for labour. Thus, the labour requirement is likely to increase with the increase in operational holding. Moreover, the income received by the farm households cultivating small holding is insufficient to fulfill domestic requirements. Thus, the surplus labour and insufficient farm income motivate farm households to adopt off-farm activities to earn a decent living. In Table 3, it was observed that with the increase in operational holding, the involvement of the members of the farm households had increased in performing farm job. The participation of the BRAC members of the farm households, owning operational area upto <5 decimal, was 10 percent in farm jobs and 46 percent in off-farm job, whereas such proportion for the farm households owning area 2.5 – 7.5 acres and involved in farm job was only 4 percent. However, in case of off-farm job, again an increase was observed in this group of farm households which might be due to available education facilities. Similar results were observed in Proshika, ASA, RDRS and GKF respectively. Rural off-farm sector is usually an important source of secondary employment for the small and landless farmers. Sen (1996) has shown the greater importance of off-farm occupations for the landless and functionally landless group with land size up to 5 acres in Bangladesh. Farmers employed in non-farm or off-farm employment provide crucial support for the welfare of their families.

Income and off-farm activities

Farm households derive their income from a wide range of farm and off farm activities. The distinction between farm and off-farm income is that farm income includes all income generated by family

Table 1. Sampling plan for the study area

Items	Rangpur	Dinajpur	Mymensingh	Panchogorh	Nilphamari	Lalmonirhat	Total
BRAC	33	33	34	-	-	-	100
Proshika	-	-	33	34	33	-	100
ASA	33	33	34	-	-	-	100
RDRS	-	-	-	33	33	34	100
GKF	33	34	-	-	33	-	100
Total	99	100	101	67	99	34	500

Source: Khanam , 2007

Table 2. Economic activities of NGO participant before and after program participation (percent)

Economic activities	BRAC		PROSHIKA		ASA		RDRS		GKF		ALL NGOS	
	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before
House wife	24	85	14	89	16	95	34	90	20	97	22	91
Income earner	76	15	86	11	84	05	66	10	80	03	78	09
Petty business	25	07	36	01	35	01	24	02	29	01	29	02
Poultry and Livestock	46	06	51	08	48	04	38	07	48	02	46	06
Handicraft	05	02	05	02	01	-	04	01	03	-	03	01

Source: Khanam, 2007

Table 3. Distribution of Earner Group in Different Jobs by Operation Holding (percent)

Farm/off farm	BRAC			Proshika			ASA			RDRS			GKF		
	Farm	Off Farm	Total	Farm	Off Farm	Total	Farm	Off Farm	Total	Farm	Off Farm	Total	Farm	Off Farm	Total
<50	10	46	56	8	25	33	9	48	57	14	36	50	1	24	25
50-100	3	15	18	13	10	23	7	13	20	11	10	21	11	12	23
100.01-150	3	8	11	6	6	12	6	6	12	8	-	8	11	14	25
150.01-250	4	5	9	6	9	15	1	3	4	10	4	14	7	8	15
250.01-750	4	2	6	9	6	15	5	2	7	6	1	7	4	8	12
>750	-	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
All	24	76	100	43	57	100	28	72	100	49	51	100	34	66	100

Source: Khanam 2007

Table 4. Distribution of earners group of farm household by various income groups (percent).

Farm/off farm Income group	BRAC			Proshika			ASA			RDRS			GKF		
	Farm	Off Farm	Total	Farm	Off Farm	Total	Farm	Off Farm	Total	Farm	Off Farm	Total	Farm	Off Farm	Total
<25000	14	33	46	15	28	43	13	27	40	21	41	62	17	18	35
25000- 50000	3	19	22	14	20	34	8	19	27	13	4	17	13	21	34
50001- 75000	2	7	9	9	3	11	2	14	14	8	2	10	2	19	21
750001- 100000	2	8	10	1	3	3	4	9	10	6	2	8	1	6	7
Above 100000	3	10	13	4	3	7	1	65	1	1	1	2	1	2	3
Grand total	24	76	100	43	57	100	28	72	100	49	51	100	34	66	100

Source: Khanam 2007

Table 5. Distribution of earner group by education (Percent).

Farm/off farm Education	BRAC			Proshika			ASA			RDRS			GKF		
	Farm	Off Farm	Total	Farm	Off Farm	Total	Farm	Off Farm	Total	Farm	Off Farm	Total	Farm	Off Farm	Total
Can put signature	16	41	57	20	24	44	19	34	53	32	24	56	21	22	43
Primary	8	27	35	17	22	39	9	22	31	2	16	28	13	9	42
Secondary	-	6	6	4	7	11	-	9	9	3	11	14	-	8	8
Higher secondary	-	2	2	1	3	4	-	5	5	2	-	2	-	2	2
Above	-	-	-	1	1	2	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	5	5
All	24	76	100	43	57	100	28	72	100	49	51	100	34	66	100

Source: Khanam 2007

Table 6. Distribution of earning members of farm households in to various jobs by family size (percent).

Family member (No.)	BRAC			Proshika			ASA			RDRS			GKF		
	Far m	Off Far m	Tot al	Far m	Off Far m	Tot al	Far m	Off Far m	Tot al	Far m	Off Far m	Tot al	Far m	Off Far m	Tot al
2	1	4	5	4	2	6	1	4	5	3	2	5	1	5	6
3	1	11	12	10	8	18	4	14	18	3	4	7	6	12	18
4	9	12	21	7	17	24	9	22	31	13	13	26	12	31	43
5	4	27	31	13	24	37	11	18	29	18	21	49	11	15	26
6	4	13	17	6	5	11	2	8	10	10	9	19	3	1	4
7 and Above	5	9	14	3	1	4	1	6	7	2	2	4	1	2	3
All	24	79	100	43	57	100	28	72	100	49	51	100	34	66	100

Source: Khanam 2007

assets allocated to the farm whereas off-farm income refers to the income derived by the household from the work other than work done on own farm. It includes income obtained by supplying services for off-farm work as well as the agricultural work done on the farms of other farmers. Insufficient farm income against day to day requirements of the farm households is one of the factors leading the family members towards the adoption of off farm jobs.

The data presented in Table 4, support the statement, as about 30 percent of the members of the farm households, falling in the lowest income group, were found involved in performing off-farm jobs. Such proportion decreased with the increase in farm income. Contrary to that the relative proportion of the members of farm household depending upon farm income increased with the increase in income level. The situation in this context was similar in all selected NGOs.

Education and off-farm activities: The education status is one of the factors which determine the quality of labour force. The basic theoretical justification for education is provided by the theory of human capital which stipulates that human beings invest in themselves in a variety of ways through incurring present cost for future benefits (Becker 1962). The data given in Table 5 indicate that the participation of earning labour force of farm families in off-farm jobs was positively correlated with educational level. This implies that attitude to work improves with the attainment of education. Contrary to that the participation of the members of farm households decreased in farm activities with the increase in educational level. So education appears as inhibitive factor in the case of adoption of farm business and thus, education level had positively contributed in off-farm job.

Family size in off-farm activities: Some ancestral traditions were inherited by farm families to maintain operational holding as a symbol of prestige. These traditions inhibit adoption of off-farm job by these families. However, changes in economic and social aspirations have led most of such families especially with large family size to come out of this cage of traditions. The data presented in Table 6 indicate that the family size was positively correlated with off-farm job, while such relation was negative in case of farm activities. This reflects that the families with the large size had surplus labour to participate in off-farm activities.

CONCLUSION

Employment of women in income generating activities is regarded as an important element of economic development of the country. They can

play vital roles in family income and thus in national

income. Agriculture was the main occupation of the heads of households for selected NGOs. It was found that more than 20 percent of the earning members were day laborers, petty business represented main occupation for 15, 13, 15, 2 and 19 percent of BRAC, Proshika, ASA, RDRS and GKF participant households. The findings clearly indicate that NGOs participation supported by credit facilitates had significantly expanded income earning opportunities for the poor households. Ownership of land is an important indication of the economic condition of the individual household.. The main finding regarding loan distribution of NGOs played an important role in improving the economic conditions of the borrowers. After joining NGOs participants' total farm income had increased. In case of employment pattern of farm households the non-farm activities of the respondents is higher compared to that of agricultural activities. The distribution pattern of labour of farm households between farm and off-farm work, the size of family and education level were found to be directly related to the off-farm labour supply. Higher educational levels had increased labour skills and, therefore, the opportunities for off-farm work. The increased farm income of the highest farm income group was associated with more off-farm work. The increase in operational holding had resulted in a decrease in off-farm labour supply because of excessive requirements of labour on farm with higher operational holdings. Despite participation of females in farm activities, they cannot enable the male members to provide their services to non-farm labour market which might be attributed to their participation to fulfill seasonal requirements of labour for farm practices.

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