

Study the perceived benefits other than economic being received by the landless women through functional participation in income generating activities

M. Aktaruzzaman, M.K. Dey, M.S. Rahman, M.E. Haque and M.D. Amin¹

Department of Agricultural Extension, Khamarbari, Dhaka, and ¹Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation, Dhaka

Abstract: The main objectives of this study was to identify the training, other supports and perceived benefits, other than economic being received by the NGO guided landless women of two unions under Nakla upazila of Sherpur district through functional participation in Income Generating Activities (IGAs) given to them. Data were collected with a pre tested interview schedule from a sample of randomly selected 120 landless women during March and April 2010. The total functional participation score of landless women was obtained by summing her scores for 12 selected IGAs. Pearson's product correlation coefficient (r) was computed to explore relationship of the women's individual characteristics with their functional participation in IGAs. Findings indicate that almost equal proportion (50.8 percent & 49.2 percent) of the respondents had less and moderate functional participation, while none was found under no or much functional participation category. Out of 12 selected IGAs, 'poultry rearing' had highest standard activity functional participation score. It was found that highest proportion (61 percent) of the respondents had low and 3.3 percent had high training exposure. Most of the respondents perceived benefits through training, consultation or group discussion on the issues like human right, social justice, group development, micro-credit management, awareness on dowry etc., which may be considered as the women's personal and social empowerment.

Key words: Benefits, Landless women, Income generating activities.

Introduction

Women are ascribed as being of lower status compared to men, and poverty is higher among women than men (MOWCA, 2008). Women are often treated as burdens, while men are seen as assets to families. The status of Bangladeshi women has been ranked the lowest in the world on the basis of twenty indicators related to health, marriage, children, education, employment and social equality (NCBP, 2000). Poverty has engulfed rural women, and they face many challenges to achieve and maintain their livelihood. They are vulnerable to income shocks and their systems of livelihood are often so fragile and finely-balanced that a small misfortune can destabilize the households for many years. It is expected that the participation of women in IGAs can contribute to enabling households to cope with income shocks, to ensure food security, to avoid an increase in poverty or to prevent vulnerable households from falling below the poverty line. Women's income is important for achieving economic growth and sustainable development in Bangladesh and thus, their economic contributions should be given importance in policy design (Kabeer, 2003). Unfortunately, existing societal opportunities and structures have hindered rural women from fully participating in IGAs. To eliminate the distressed condition of rural women and bring them to the main stream of development for achieving a sustainable livelihood, they need to be involved in income activities much more actively. Furthermore, they need to improve in all sorts of areas such as income, information, knowledge and skills, education, and access to capital through the services of the intervening agencies. In Bangladesh, apart from government initiatives, a large number of non-government organizations are operating in rural areas, concentrating on rural women to change their livelihood. Due to the direct and indirect support from these organizations, the capabilities of the involved women are increasing day by day, motivating them to participate in various income activities which are expected to eventually contribute to their household income. In order to formulate suitable strategic measures for the improvement of the

studied women's livelihood, this research focuses on socio-economic characteristics of women and their existing livelihood situation and examines their income strategies, along with their scopes and constraints of participation in IGAs.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted to identify the training, other supports and perceived benefits, other than economic being received by the NGO guided landless women of two unions under Nakla upazila of Sherpur district through functional participation in IGAs given to them. Data were collected from a sample of randomly selected 120 landless women from a total of 153 with a pre-tested interview schedule during March to 6 April, 2010. The selected independent variables were age, education, family size, homestead size, family income, agricultural knowledge, daily time use, credit received, husband's cooperation and social participation and it was measured with the score. The extent of functional participation of landless women in IGAs was the dependent variable of the study. Functional participation of a respondent in each of the IGAs was measured by considering two dimensions of participation: (i) pattern of participation (i.e., how regularly a respondent participated in a particular IGA) and (ii) extent of time use (i.e., how long a respondent participated in a particular IGA). The total functional participation score of landless women was obtained by summing her scores for 12 selected IGAs. It was done by responding to any one of the three responses namely-regularly, occasionally and not at all against each activity. Again the respondent was asked to respond in the extent of time use in her participation i.e. each of the 12 items of IGAs. It was done by responding any one of the three-response namely-sufficient, less and not at all against each activity. Weights assigned to both type of responses were 2, 1 and 0 respectively. The score of extent of time use was multiplied by pattern of participation score of a respondent for corresponding activity. The scores obtained by the individual respondent in different IGAs were added together to constitute personal functional participation score

which could range from 0 to 48. The scores obtained by all the respondents on a particular IGA were added together to constitute activity functional score which could range from 0 to 480. To facilitate meaningful comparison of data, standard activity functional participation score (SAFPS) for a particular IGA was computed by using the following formula, $SAFPS = \frac{\text{Observed activity functional participation score}}{\text{Possible activity functional participation score}} \times 100$ (Hossain, 2002). The score could range from 0 to 100 where '0' indicating no functional participation and '100' indicating more functional participation. In order to understand the comparative activity functional participation in the different IGAs, the 12 items of IGAs have been arranged in rank order according to their SAFPS. Pearson's product correlation coefficient (r) was computed to explore relationship of the women's individual characteristics with their functional participation in IGAs.

Results and Discussion

Extent of functional participation of landless women in income generating activities: The respondent landless woman's score for functional participation in IGAs could

range from 0 to 48. The computed functional participation score ranged from 2-22 with an average of 11.99 and standard deviation of 3.54. Based on their possible functional participation scores the respondents were classified into four categories as shown in Table 1 which show that the highest proportion (50.8 percent) of the respondents had less functional participation in IGAs compared to 49.2 percent moderate functional participation. Data revealed that all (100 percent) of the respondents had less to moderate functional participation. This is an unsatisfactory issue of IGAs regarding the gender issue. It could be said that the present scenario is not as encouraging as involvement of the landless women in IGAs. The average functional participation score (11.99) is also low. It requires careful consideration of the total context of the landless women members of the families in the study area. The landless women are busy individuals at home. Social system and our tradition encourage women especially wives to undertake the responsibilities of kitchen, child rearing, entertaining guests and other homestead activities like cleaning, washing etc. These huge workload in and around homestead keep them away from participating in IGAs.

Table 1. Salient features of extent of functional participation of the respondent

Categories (rated score)	Frequency	Percent	Ranges (score)		Mean	SD
			Possible	Observed		
Not functional (0)	0	0				
Less functional (1-12)	61	50.8	0-48	2-22	11.99	3.54
Moderately functional (13-24)	59	49.2				
Much functional (25-48)	0	0				

Comparative standard activity functional participation of the respondents: In order to make comparison among the selected IGAs, a standard activity functional participation score (SAFPS) was calculated for each IGA. The computed SAFPS and concerned rank order have been presented in Table 3 which revealed that there was wide variation in the extent of functional participation in

the different IGAs. This is evident from the fact that the highest SAFPS was '100' and the lowest was '0'. In terms of functional participation, poultry rearing was by far the most important and it ranked 1st with SAFPS of 97.65 where rickshaw purchase (SAFPS 0) and handicraft (SAFPS 0) were in last position (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparative standard activity functional participation of the respondents

IGAs	Number of respondents	Activity score			Rank order
		Observed	Probable	Standard	
Poultry rearing	117	457	468	97.65	1
Fried rice	7	25	28	89.29	2
Agriculture crop production	103	363	412	88.11	3
Livestock	79	264	316	83.44	4
Rice husking	11	32	44	72.73	5
Fruit and vegetables production	103	244	412	59.22	6
Grocery shop	5	9	20	45	7
Fish culture	18	33	72	44.44	8
Flying business	31	53	124	42.74	9
Tailoring	6	10	24	41.67	10
Rickshaw purchase	13	0	0	0	11
Handicraft	0	0	0	0	11

Training Exposure and other supports given to the landless women: Training exposure of the respondents ranged from 0-20 days. The mean was 4.92 days with a standard deviation of 3.13. On the basis of training exposure scores the respondents were categorized into four groups as shown in Table 3.

In the study area, the respondents had received 13 types of other supports including demonstrations and agricultural equipment. From this reference, the data presented in Table 5 indicate that highest proportion (61.67 percent) of the landless women received no other supports, while 37.50 percent received low other supports, only 0.83

percent received medium other support and no one received high other supports. From the findings it was shown that almost all (99.17 percent) of the respondents received no to low other supports. It was possible because

most of the respondent landless women had no suitable land and homestead area to establish demonstrations properly.

Table 3. Distribution of landless women according to their training exposure

Categories of exposure (day)	Respondents		Ranges (days)		Mean	Standard deviation
	Frequent	Percent	Possible	Observed		
No (0)	4	3.3				
Low (1-5)	73	60.9	Unknown	0-20	4.92	3.13
Medium (6-10)	39	32.5				
High (>10)	4	3.3				

Table 4. Other supports received by the landless women

Categories of support received (score)	Frequency	Percent	Ranges		Mean	Standard deviation
			Possible scores ranges	Observed scores ranges		
No (0)	74	61.67				
Low (1-2)	45	37.50	Unknown	0-4	0.48	0.70
Medium (3-4)	1	0.83				
High (>4)	0	0				

Table 5. Perceived benefits of IGA other than economic

SL. No	Areas of benefit	Respondents (percent)
	IGA management training	
	-Vegetable production	95.00
	-Nursery management	25.00
1.	-Fruit trees management	66.67
	- Poultry rearing	25.83
	-Beef fattening	22.50
	-Small business	59.16
2.	Human rights and social justice	85.83
3.	Group management and leadership development through rights	90.83
4.	Awareness of family health and care	90.00
5.	Awareness of family planning	94.16
6.	Access to family and community rights	86.66
7.	More participation in family decision making	86.66
8.	Awareness on dowry	86.66
9.	Adult education	29.16
10.	Micro credit management	90.00
11.	Waste management and compost preparation	63.33
12.	Conflict management and negotiation techniques	41.66

Perceived benefits other than economic of landless women from functional participation in IGAs:

NGO provides credit to their group members and proper supervision to conduct IGAs and additionally arranges IGA-wise training program for the credit borrowers. Thus the participating members make them equipped to handle the IGA to earn maximal benefit. So that, they become empowered to conduct different IGAs even with the withdrawal of support from NGO. All the borrower members received training on the respective IGA.

Again, IGA-participating women received other supports about human rights, social and community development, family issues etc. Most of the respondents (85-95 percent) received either training, consultation or group discussion on the issues like group management, leadership development, awareness on family health care and family planning, family rights, awareness on dowry, micro-credit

management, waste management and compost preparation etc (Table 5).

From the above issues it may be seen that participating landless women somewhat becoming solvent through functional participation in IGAs while they are developed through training and consultation on the above issues. All these lead them to be empowered personally and socially. Thus, the landless women groups are establishing their rights and privileges gradually in the society. Probably these sorts of activities may one day lead them to earn handsome lives in the society and removed their names from the list of “landless”.

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