

RESEARCH NOTE

GENDER PARTICIPATION IN THE MILK PRODUCER ASSOCIATIONS: A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS FROM THE EASTERN DEVELOPMENT REGION OF NEPAL

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Introduction

Nowadays, there is a widespread concern in gender studies over women's exploitation, oppression and domination by patriarchy in the Nepalese society. Gender generally refers to the complex process by which male and female become socially men and women, affecting their own actions, desires and wishes. It also refers to the masculine and feminine genders which are also known to be a product of the social organization of the sexes into two distinct categories: men and women.

The data are derived from fieldwork carried out in January 1992 in the four districts of the Eastern Development Region: Morang, Sunsari, Jhapa and Ilam. Twelve milk producer associations (MPAs) in these districts are taken as a basis for the situational analysis. The paper deals with the Gender role in the Peasant farm household. It further focuses Gender role in the milk producer associations mainly consisting of milk production, milk processing and milk marketing. Finally, the paper is based on the situational background and recommendations made for the MPAs which are summarised in the conclusion.

Gender in the Peasant Farm Household

Men and women activities differ geographically to regionally by caste, and by society. Boserup (1970) identified African countries where women work to produce food crops for domestic subsistence and men work in production of cash crops for the market sale. She further identifies that in the developing countries women are found to be engaged in the income generating activities, explaining why the poorer the households the greater the farm work and income generating activities hours of women are clearly observed.

Whitehead (1984) reported of "Conjugal Contact" which means exchange of goods, services, incomes and labour between husband and wife in the household. The Status of Women in Nepal (1981) reported that women spend

long working hours in relation to animal husbandry, crop production, gathering firewood, food processing, walking a long distance to fetch water in pots, grinding the grains, house cleaning, cooking, washing clothes and child bearing activities. This statement might be supported if a meaningful survey is conducted at the farm level during the peak agricultural season where women are found to work about 11 to 12 hours per day (UNDP, issue paper, 1980). *Foreign Aid and Women* (1983) also reported that the women contribute more to household activities than men.

A recent study conducted in 1992 by UNICEF on the status of women and children in Nepal reported that the son preference and the gender disparity, a human indicator, in Nepal is the highest in the world. In fact, Nepal is one of the few countries which has lower life expectancy for women. Son preference is highest and gender disparity worst.

The above mentioned reports support the argument that women's work done at home is always higher than men. But, where the access in terms of land registration, credit, training and income are concerned, men are always the privileged group in the peasant farm household. Different studies conducted in different parts of the world report the clear picture of the work hour per day in the peasant farm households by each man and woman (Table 1).

Table 1: Working Hour per Day by Each Men and Women in Household and Income Earning Activities

Source of Data	Working hour per day			
	Household Activities		Income earning Activities	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
1. Uganda	0.43	6.15	N.A.	N.A.
2. Upper Volta	0.46	7.19	N.A.	N.A.
3. Philippines	1.70	6.33	7.44	2.33
4. Nepal	1.29	6.68	N.A.	N.A.
5. Bangladesh	0.22	5.10	7.04	1.61
6. Java	1.35	6.65	10.32	3.20

Note: The studies were carried out according to number by the following researchers and the year of their studies: (1) Hanger - 1973, (2) Mesweeney - 1979, (3) Evenson et al. (4) Acharya and Bennett - 1982, (5) Cain et al. 1979, and Hart - 1980.

Source : Frank Ellis (1988).

The studies report about the working hour per day by each man and woman where men's participation is less at the household level in comparison to women, whereas women participation is also found less in the income earning activities in comparison to men. In some case studies, men's participation is less than one hour per day at the household level whereas women participation is more than 7 hours. In the case of Bangladesh, men's participation is less than an hour at the household level, whereas women are seen hardly more than one hour in the income generating activities.

When the sixth five year plan was introduced in the country, the women and their participation in development programmes and projects were prominent. Women were made the target group, but integration of women was lacking in development programmes and projects. The seventh five year plan included certain modifications to integrate women in development efforts. Now, the eighth five year plan is making tremendous efforts for integrating women into development programmes and projects, and a lot of INGOs and NGOs are mushrooming in the country in the name of women. But due to lack of communication, co-ordination and integration among ministries, departments, Social Welfare Council and even between INGOs and NGOs, women development has not been achieving positive results, and even gender disparity has also not been reduced in the country.

Gender in the Milk Producer Associations (MPAs)

The origin and initiation of MPAs are found to be developed by the Dairy Development Corporation (DDC) to collect and procure milk a group benefit as well as the benefit to members. Actually, DDC provides a commission for the total volume of milk sold to milk supply scheme (MSS). The formation of MPAs is based on cooperative principles on paper, but it differentiates in practice. If these MPAs can be institutionalised according to a cooperative principle, the socio-economic conditions of the rural people can be enhanced whether they are residing within the MPAs' command area or outside of it by providing a management system for selling cattle feeds, medicines for livestock and basic consumer goods.

Twelve MPAs are taken from the four districts from the Eastern Development Region for analysis and presentation here (Table 2). These MPAs are from different locations within the districts of Morang, Sunsari, Jhapa and Ilam.

The continuous development of MPAs is a positive sign in the rural milk producing areas for the milk collection programme of the DDC. There are a few MPAs which have very good management systems and are effectively expanding their activities. During the field survey, the Itahari, Sukrabare and

Salakpur MPAs were assessed managerially, financially and economically effective.

Table 2: Summary of Twelve Sampled MPAs

S. No.	Name of MPAs	Year of Establishment	Idea Origin-ation ¹	Beneficiary House holds	Total General Members ²		Total Executive Members		Total Participation ³
					Men	Women	Men	Women	
1.	Letang	1984-85	SFDP	184	181	3	9	-	184
2.	Salakpur	1980-81	DDC	300	270	30	9	-	300
3.	Sukrabare	1981-82	DDC	107	103	4	9	-	107
4.	Itahari	1980-81	DDC	123	97	26	8	1	123
5.	Damak	1988-89	LFG	71	66	5	9	-	71
6.	Taragaon	1989-90	DDC	84	68	16	9	-	84
7.	Samal bung	1989-90	DDC	45	35	10	9	-	45
8.	Mangalbare	1988-89	DDC	221	206	15	9	-	221
9.	Arthetar	1990-91	DDC	62	50	12	9	-	62
10.	Baghbire	1987-88	DDC	42	41	1	9	-	42
11.	Boudhan	1990-91	DDC	157	153	4	9	-	157
12.	Harkate	1990-91	DDC	121	100	21	8	1	121

1. SFDP = Small Farmers Development Project
DDC = Dairy Development Corporation
LFG = Livestock Farming Group
2. Each household represents one male or female member.
3. Gender includes both men and women participation as a member.

Agriculture is known as a principal occupation of the beneficiary households. The distribution of land holding among members as unequal. Medium and small farmers couldn't earn their livelihood from the land alone, so they adopted the livestock farming system as a subsidiary and supplementary occupation. In the livestock farming, not only medium and small farmers were involved but large farmers, particularly high castes, as well.

The beneficiaries had positive feelings towards the MPAs, though most of them have been unable to be more conscious about the objectives and working procedures of them due to lack of on-going awareness programmes at the MPA level. Thus dairy farmers have not been able to derive the expected benefits. During the field survey, most of the dairy farmers responded for strengthening the timely availability of inputs (cattle feed and

medicines for livestock). Emphasis was also given to increasing the female participation. The MPAs have eliminated the exploitation of middlemen by strengthening their capacity to provide feeds, medicines for livestock, fertilizer for crops and basic consumer goods to their members. These MPAs are needed to be merged in a cooperative form in the near future.

Milk Production: Gender participation in the twelve sampled MPAs has been classified under following headings: milk production, processing and marketing. Here, milk production is basically analyzed under three subheadings:

(A) **Grazing:** Grazing was basically done by family members in Salakpur, Sukrabare, Letang, Itahari and Damak MPAs, and in the remaining MPAs livestock's were staff-fed. Generally grazing hours differ according to the season (rainy and winter and availability of persons in the household. Mostly males and children were seen to be involved in grazing practices. They devoted an average of 2 hours per day whereas females devoted 1 hour per day.

(B) **Fodder Collection:** Fodder collection was mostly done by female members while less participation was found among males and children. generally, females devoted 2 hours per day whereas male and children each devoted 1 hour per day.

(C) **Livestock Management at Home:** Looking after livestock at home includes feeding, milking, cleaning animals and stalls, and preparing concentrates involves a much participation of females at home. Livestock are fed and maintained by women in the hills and by men in the Tarai. But women clean the containers and maintain the quality of milk for sale. The table given below shows that women devoted 2 hours per day while men hour per day and children devoted a half an hour per day to look after livestock at home.

Milk Processing: The produced milk of the members was sold directly to the MPAs. Very few households were found to be engaged in preparing milk products, i.e., curd and ghee. These products were prepared only for the domestic consumption. Women's participation was found to be high where milk products were made. The MPAs have solved the problem of milk marketing and providing cash to its members at their doors. This cash payment is given to them after 15 days.

Women's involvement was found to be negligible, about half an hour per day, whereas men's and children's involvement was not seen in milk processing.

Milk Marketing: Women have less input in the sale of milk, and only male members were found to be involved. Decisions were made by both about where and what amount of milk has to be sold. Either children, females or males carried milk to the MPAs' collection points. Here, milk marketing is related only to the sale of milk by the consultation of females at home.

Children devoted about half an hour per day, while males and females devoted less than half an hour per day for selling milk to the MPAs' collection points. One who is involved always depends upon the availability of time and persons in the households. This work was generally done by children under 15 years (Table 3).

Table 3: Estimated Average Time per Household per day Devoted by each Male, Female and Children for Milk Production, Processing and Marketing

Gender Participation	Grazing ¹	Fodder Collection	Management of Livestock at Home ²	Processing ³	Marketing (sale of milk)
Male	2	1	1	-	0.15
Female	1	2	2	0.30	0.15
Children	2	1	0.30	-	0.30
Total	5	4	3.30	0.30	1.00

This table is derived from the study on financial and management feasibility studies of MPAs participation in Dairy Business.

1. Few animals were grazed at Salakpur, Sukhrabare, Letang, Itahari and Damak MPAs, remaining MPAs livestock's were stall fed.
2. Feeding, milking, preparing concentrate (maize + pina) and cleaning the animals and their stalls.
3. Produced milk was directly sold to the MPAs, very less quantity was processed in few households only for the domestic consumption.

Conclusion

The situational analysis of MPAs shows that the importance of rural women both in domestic and production activities is relevant to the policy of research, since rural development programmes and projects are designed in the

country. Here it relates to the livestock sector under MPAs where high priority has been given to gender inequality in relation to the different operations of the MPAs.

According to the analysis of different aspects of men's and women's participation in MPAs activities the following concrete recommendations are proposed.

- (a) Before formation of MPAs, awareness programmes should be launched for both men and women members in relation to the MPAs activities.
- (b) Men and women should be basically stratified according to land holdings, caste and religion. On the basis of the above stratification, men and women can be easily separated and organized under MPAs for cow, buffalo, pig, poultry and sheep rearing.
- (c) Under the MPAs, primarily the women members should be facilitated for training, credit and extension activities.
- (d) The participation of women members should be increased both among the general members and the executive members.
- (e) Micro-level enterprises managed by rural women can be initiated at the local level by adopting grassroots schemes (i.e., locally made concentrates based on maize+pina).
- (f) Finally, gender has been recognized as an important indicator of economic, social and political roles. Therefore, there is a special need for special policies targeted basically to the rural women in general, and women members under MPAs in particular, for adult education, training, technology and credit facilities.

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