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Women Time Allocation and Adoption of Family Planning Practices in Farm Family *

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INTRODUCTION

Women constitute about half of the total labour force of Bangladesh although their rate of participation in income-generating activities seems to be lower than that of males. However, the rural women are kept out of the labour force by the census definition of economically active population as consisting of those employed and looking for work. It follows that those women who are neither employed nor offering themselves for any wage employment will be excluded from the labour force although they may be very much engaged in productive work within the household. Such women have been categorized by the census as "housewives", which is inappropriate because a large proportion of them participate in income-generating activities even within the household. Although the actual and potential economic contribution of rural women in Bangladesh is not always fully realized, their rate in economically productive activities should be recognized because the degree of female participation in productive work within the household can be taken as a good indicator of the importance of female labour in the rural economy. The households owning little or no income-generating assets and depending on wage employment for living are often bound to mobilize their entire workforce regardless of sex to ensure a bare subsistence. There are households with female heads and/or only female able-bodied workers. In rural areas excluding a small number from upper classes and families of landlords, women share with men in responsibility for production in the field, in household industry and even in marketing. In addition to taking care of children, preparing and serving food to other members of the family, the rural women in Bangladesh are responsible for agricultural and other non-agricultural activities. They do these as members of "family labour" or as workers and labourers for landlords in addition to work in their own houses. In all such cases, the level of income and hence of welfare of a household will depend crucially on the degree of female participation in income-generating activities, the opportunities for productive employment open to women, the educational and skill characteristics of the female labour force, the wage rates offered to women, the mode of their employment, optimum number of children of the female labour with optimum spacing and such other factors. Hence, any policy choices effecting these factors are likely to have an impact on the welfare of the households.

THE RESEARCH STUDY

Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the study were: (1) To identify the agricultural activities performed by the female members of the farm households; (2) To find out the amount of time spent by the female members in different agricultural and non-agricultural activities in a normal day; (3) To find out the spacing of children born in the farm families; and (4) To find out the extent of adoption of family planning practices by the farm housewives.

The Study Area

Three project villages of Agricultural University Extension Project under Kotwali Thana of Mymensingh District namely Sutiakhali, Dari-bhabakhali and Kallayanpur were selected for this study. One hundred and fifty households were purposively selected from 338 households.

Instrumentation

The data were collected with two types of schedule such as (1) Household diary to collect data through participant observation method, and (2) Interview schedule to collect recall data.

FINDINGS

Types of Agricultural Activities Performed by the Female Members

No female member participated in the pre-harvest activities performed in the field except in homestead farming and kitchen gardening. Women members usually participated in all the post harvest activities either fully or partially. It was revealed that all the activities of homestead farming and kitchen gardening (from sowing to harvesting) were performed by women. For field crops, the activities of women started from the separation of paddy from straw in case of rice. A majority of the women (74.67 percent housewife) participated in storing of agricultural commodities except jute. Only 1.33 percent of other female members (except housewife) took part in storing jute. Grading of crops was also done by women (42.67 percent housewives, 9.33 percent housewives and other females together and 2 percent only other females). Women also participated in drying jute. The percentage of participation in jute drying by housewives and other females together and only by other females was 38, 7.33 and 2, respectively.

The participation of men and women in homestead farming and kitchen gardening was 37.42 and 62.53 percent, respectively. Among women, majority were housewives (65.73 percent). About 46 percent (45.92) women participated

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in post harvest activities of field crops. Out of this 45.92 percent women, 34.58 percent were housewives, 9.34 percent were housewives and other females together and 2.00 percent were other females only.

Time Spent in Agricultural Activities

Paddy drying took maximum time covering one and a half hours per day for the 16 percent housewives. This was followed by threshing (1 hour), cleaning (28 minutes) and winnowing (35 minutes) of paddy. This is reasonable as this period is the end of Amon season and the farm households usually perform all these activities in these months. Time spent by other female members of the house (other than housewives) was also relatively at par with the housewives. Threshing, drying and winnowing of paddy took about 1.38 hours, 1.09 hours, and 0.35 hours, respectively by the other women. Storing took about one-fourth of an hour for both the housewives and other female members. All these activities included the post-harvest items.

Women usually spend less time in pre-harvest activities at the time of observation. However, harvesting of fruits and vegetables from the homestead farming and kitchen gardening took about 20 minutes and 44 minutes for the housewives and other female members, respectively, although the percentage of participation of other female members was quite negligible (2 percent only). About one-fourth and half an hour was usually spent by the housewives and other female members, respectively, in intercultural operation. Housewives and other female members spent about one-fourth and half-an-hour, respectively in land preparation.

In pre-harvest activities, housewives spent on the average less time (17 minutes) than the other female members (40 minutes) per day. In post-harvest activities, housewives and other female members spent more or less equal time (58 minutes for housewife and 54 minutes for other female members). However, it can be stated that on the average housewives spent less time (1-15 hours) than the other female members (1-34 hours) in agricultural activities. That is, more time is required to perform agricultural activities by other female members than the housewives themselves. This indicates that the housewives are efficient in minimizing time to complete the daily agricultural activities than the other female members.

Time Spent in Non-agricultural Activities

At the time of observation the housewives used to spend maximum time in preparing food. Two hours was required to prepare dinner, one and a half hours was required to prepare lunch and fifty minutes was required to prepare breakfast. Preparation of breakfast by the other female members took less time (19 minutes for other members while 50 minutes for the housewives). In case of rice processing maximum time was spent for husking and boiling of paddy. Almost 3 hours was spent for rice husking and boiling by the housewives and other female members together. This was followed by rice drying, storing etc. Housewives used to spend more time in child care than the other female members. It

was seen that 35 percent mothers spent about one-third of an hour to look after the children. Some 10 percent mother also spent 26 minutes in gossiping with their children. Village mothers were also careful in managing children for going to bed as both the housewives and other females did spend time in this matter (23 minutes for mother and 11 minutes for other females). Both housewives and other females spent almost equal amount of time in sewing, cleaning clothes and caring for poultry birds. Both housewives and other females spent time in cattle raising at home. Children were taught only by about 5 percent housewives in the surveyed houses. House cleaning was also equally participated by the housewives and other females as they used to spend almost equal time in this work (15 minutes and 19 minutes by housewives and other females, respectively). Forty-eight percent housewives used to take rest for about one-third of an hour after lunch. Bathing also took almost the same time (one-third of an hour) for housewives.

By way of a summary, 67 percent housewives spent about 40 minutes daily in food processing. In 19 percent houses, other female members spent 25 minutes for the same work. It was, therefore, revealed that housewives took more time in food preparation than the other female members. Rice processing took 36 minutes for the housewives while for other females it required 40 minutes. Child care required 21 minutes for the housewives and 13 minutes for the other females. Almost 65 percent housewives spent about 10 minutes a day in poultry raising. Almost the same time was spent by the other females in poultry caring. About 5 percent housewives spent half an hour in teaching children at home. Housewives and other females spent 15 and 18 minutes, respectively, in caring for cattle at home. House cleaning was done by about 55 percent housewives and 33 percent other females and this took almost one-fourth and one-third of an hour, respectively. Sewing and cleaning clothes took almost the same time for both the housewives and other females.

Housewives spent about 7 hours a day in sleeping and about 65 percent housewives spent one hour daily in praying. Twenty-four percent housewives listened to radio for half an-hour a day. More than one-third of an hour was spent for visiting neighbours' house by the housewives. Almost 91 percent housewives also used to gossip and make amusement for more than quarter of an hour daily. About 41 percent spent about one-fourth of an hour in collecting information from others on various matters. Only 3.53 percent housewives spent about quarter of an hour in reading newspapers and other printed materials.

Spacing of Children

Out of 150 housewives, 40 percent had no formal education, 56.67 percent had primary level education and the remaining 3.33 percent had above primary level education (up to class VIII). The average number of children gave birth by the zero, primary and above primary level educated mothers was 5.5, 5.21 and 4.0, respectively.

As regards spacing of children, it was revealed that the age difference between 1st and 2nd child was maximum (4.29 years) for the primary passed mothers and minimum (2 years) for the above primary passed mothers. Further,

the age difference between 3rd and 4th child was lowest within the different educational levels (3.03 for the zero educated mother, 2.67 for the primary passed mother and 1.70 for the above primary passed mother.)

The above findings indicate that the fertility of mother becomes more vulnerable after the birth of the 3rd child. It is also seen that the educated mothers got children earlier than the less educated or non-educated mothers. The educated mothers were more fertile than those of non-educated in the rural setting. Further, the average spacing between children of the uneducated, primary passed and above primary level farm operator's wife was 3.24, 3.46 and 2.43 years, respectively. However, these findings may be different in an urban setting.

Extent of Adoption of Family Planning Practices

Out of the 150 housewives, approximately 2 percent were found to have adopted family planning measures, 87.33 percent did not adopt any measure and the rest 11.34 percent housewives did not reply to the question.

Causes of Non-Adoption of Family Planning Practices

Out of 131 non-adopters, 18.32 percent did not adopt simply because they did not like it, 18.32 percent had naturally less children, 13.74 percent regarded family planning as a sinful act, 7.63 percent non-adopters could not adopt due to objections of husbands and other family members, 5.34 percent were not aware of the practices, and 3.83 percent could not get materials on time. The remaining 32.83 percent non-adopters did not state any reason as they had no possibility to conceive due to old age.

Opinion about Future Adoption of Family Planning Practices

Out of 150 housewives, 10.67 percent wanted to adopt family planning practices in the future while 50.66 percent did not want. The rest 38.67 percent did not reply regarding adoption of family planning practices in future.

Causes of Future Adoption of Family Planning Practices

Out of 16 housewives agreed to adopt family planning measure in future, 50.00 percent were found to have reported to adopt if needed, 25.00 percent were not in need of children, 18.75 percent wanted to adopt for maintaining a peaceful life and the remaining 6.25 percent wanted to adopt it to bring economic solvency in their family.

Causes of Non-Adoption of Family Planning Practices in Future

Out of 76 disagreed housewives, 31.58 percent reported that they could not adopt as their husbands did not like, 30.26 percent reported that birth control is a sinful act, 17.10 percent did not adopt as they had less children in their family, 9.21 percent did not want as they had no possibility to conceive,

3.95 percent desired to get more children, 3.95 percent due to reliance on God, 2.63 percent said that the existing methods are not liked and the rest 1.32 percent did not want it due to sickness.

Best Method of the Family Planning Practices According to Adopters' Opinion

Out of 16 adopter housewives, maximum percent (37.50) reported "Injection" as the best method and 25.00 percent liked to prevent by avoiding completion during fertile period. Twenty-five percent respondent also liked oral tablets. This was followed equally by plastic coil and ligation (6.25 percent).

Housewife's Views About Optimum Number of Children in the Family

Forty-one percent wanted to have 4 children. This was followed by 3 children (28 percent), 6 children (9.34), 5 and 2 children, respectively. Eight percent housewives did not reply. None wanted one child or more than six children.

Above findings show very poor results about the diffusion of family planning practices in the selected households as about 88 percent housewives did not adopt any practice. Adoption of family planning practices by only 2 percent housewives is very insignificant because of the fact that Government has been spending a lot of money for family planning. Of course, there are reasons for non-adoption of practices. The reasons for non-adoption as have been shown in this study might be carefully considered by those who are involved in the service. Some reasons such as religious belief, unchild mothers etc. are difficult to take care of. But other reasons as unawareness about the practice, non-availability of the materials in time, husband's objections etc. can be taken care of easily if the relevant professional personnel take interest in it and try to solve these problems. At least 11 percent housewives who are willing to adopt family planning practices can easily be motivated raising the percentage of adoption from 2 to 13 immediately. Those who want to adopt the family planning practices are quite reasonable and could identify the causes of non-adoption of these practices. Communicator or extension workers involved in the diffusion of family planning practices should also identify the cause of non-adoption of these practices and try to motivate the housewives or husbands accordingly. They also need to diffuse those methods that are liked by the users. As an example the housewives in the selected houses liked the injection as the best method. The reason is that the women and particularly the village women can not maintain the regularity and formalities in other methods and as such they liked injection as the best method. The Government should, therefore, try to give more emphasis to diffuse injection method of family planning practice relative to other methods in the rural areas. The rural housewives are not that much unreasonable as majority of them liked to have 4 children in their family.

It can, therefore, be said that the professionals involved in diffusion of family planning practices have a great responsibility to perform as considerable number of village housewives are ready to respond positively in matters of adoption of family planning practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. As the female members participate in all sorts of agricultural activities within the homestead area, extension education and services should be made available to them directly by the female extension workers.
2. As seed is a very important factor of increased agricultural production and preservation of seed is mostly done by housewives, special extension programme may be undertaken to train the housewives regarding processing and storing of seeds.
3. Homestead farming, kitchen gardening and cattle and poultry raising are important sources of generating income and saving expenditure. Special extension programmes may also be undertaken to educate the rural women on these subjects.
4. Extension programmes also need to be undertaken to educate the women sector to perform non-agricultural activities more efficiently. All the non-agricultural works such as choice of balance and nutritious items for food preparation, maintaining cleanliness at home, proper care for children etc. also need some sort of training and guidance for women to raise the standard of living and making best use of available resources in the rural areas. Relevant organizations, therefore, may take care on these issues to improve the quality of rural life.
5. Primary education for housewives is a very important factor for raising the living standard of the farm houses. As educated mothers had less children and child mortality in mother-educated families was less, steps should be taken by the Government to provide education to the future mothers of rural Bangladesh, that is, the young girls of the rural areas.
6. Immediate steps may be taken to diffuse the family planning practices among those who are willing to adopt. As almost 11 percent housewives are willing to adopt family planning practices, the personnel engaged in this field should find out these housewives and spend more time with them.
7. Easier methods of family planning practices should be advocated to the housewives than the complicated ones. As women by nature are not particular in taking medicine, the injection was liked more than the oral tablets. The researchers may, therefore, try to discover or invent easier methods of family planning practices.
8. The rural housewives usually feel shy to talk with the family planning extension worker. It is, therefore, recommended that the women extension worker in the field of agriculture may be entrusted to diffuse the family planning practices along with the agricultural practices. It is easier for the women agricultural extension workers to motivate the housewives to adopt the family planning practices. Government will also be able to save expenditure if multipurpose extension workers are engaged than

mono-purpose extension workers. However, the multipurpose extension workers must be supported by the subject-matter specialist as and when required.



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