



Female Workforce Participation in North-Eastern Region: An Overview

Dr. Ananta Pegu

Asst. Professor in Economics, N.C. College, Badarpur, Karimganj, Assam, India

Abstract

The female workforce participation means the rate of percentage of female engaged in the total working population of a state or country. Women constitute an important part of the workforce of all over the world and India. According to the Registrar General of India, the work participation rate for women was 25.51 per cent in 2011 and 25.6 percent in 2001. This is an improvement from 22.3 per cent in 1991 and 19.67 per cent in 1981. The two important aspects that is required to be mentioned here that while there has been an improvement in the work participation rate of women, it continues to be substantially less in comparison to the work participation rate of men. In 2011, the work participation rate of men was 53.26 per cent and 51.8 percent in 2001. Secondly, there seems to be a rural-urban divide in so far as work participation of women is concerned.

In the context of North-East Region, the role of female in the workplace has been expanding due to socio-economic and political-legal changes. All states of North-Eastern are significantly different from each another in respect of their socio-economic conditions. The northeastern states are predominantly agricultural states. So, women in the region mainly engage in agriculture and its allied activities. The infrastructure facilities like supply of input, marketing, institutional credit and extension services are inadequate limiting women to go for greener pastures. The geographical area of North-East is different from other part of India. The region is characterized by difficult terrain, wide variations in slopes, altitude, land tenure systems and diverse cultivation practices. The transport and communication system is poorly developed and as a result majority of the areas in the region remain still in accessible. Expanding women's participation especially in ways that enhance their productivity and earning potential raises women's own living standards and contribute to better economic performance, the reduction of poverty and improved family welfare. It is found that Literacy rate for women has increased in north east and it has a positive impact on the ideological, political and social spheres. All this is the result of the positive changes that education and training have brought in the region. It is expected that such kind of initiative will further expand women's mobility, their control over labour, production and income, exercise of political power and participation in the decision making process and thereby strengthen the process of development throughout the northeastern region.

Key Words: Workforce participation, Labour, North-Eastern Region, Socio-economic, Women

Introduction: The female workforce participation means the rate of percentage of female engaged in the total working population of a state or country. Women constitute an important part of the workforce of all over the world and India. According to the Registrar General of India, the work participation rate for women was 25.51 per cent in 2011 and 25.6 percent in 2001. This is an improvement from 22.3 per cent in 1991 and 19.67 per cent in 1981. The two important aspects that is required to be mentioned here that while there has been an improvement in the work participation rate of women, it continues to be substantially less in comparison to the work participation rate of men. In 2011, the work participation rate of men was 53.26 per cent and 51.8 percent in 2001. Secondly, there seems to be a rural-urban divide in so far as work participation of women is concerned.

In 2011, work participation rate for women in rural areas was 30.79 per cent as compared to 11.88 per cent in the urban areas. In the rural areas, women are mainly involved as cultivators and

agricultural labourers. In the urban areas, almost 80 per cent of the women workers are working in the unorganized sectors like household industries, petty trades and services, buildings and construction.

"The home was the principal site for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture, and women must take the main responsibility of protecting and nurturing this quality"(Chatterjee, 1989: 243). It continues to be true that Indian women play a critical role in religious rituals, maintaining kinship ties, and celebrating festivals, apart from their reproductive roles and responsibilities. An implicit social contract continues to influence the allocation of household roles and responsibilities.

According to Banerjee (Banerjee, 1998), women can be seen as a 'flexible resource' of the household, the implication being, not that they are confined to private spaces or to any rigid roles, but rather that they lack the autonomy to take decisions about work. However, women are active participants in the household and it is likely that the final labour market outcomes reflect mainly an internalization of prevalent social norms by both men and women.

In comparison to Eastern Europe the Indian female work participation is very less whereas Eastern Europe there are about 54 percent of the total workforce participating.

The real causes for their low employment are to be found in the religious, cultural values, the colonial ideology and the evaluation of social institution that restrain women entry into labour market (Varghese, 1993, p.49). ILO also highlighted that women work participation rate varies from one place to another place due to different socio-economic and cultural conditions prevailing in each region. Thus socio-economic, in general, have come in the way of participation of female in the workplaces.

In the context of North East, the role of female in the workplace has been expanding due to socio-economic and political-legal changes. All states of North-Eastern are significantly different from each another in respect of their socio-economic conditions. The northeastern states are predominantly agricultural states. So, women in the region mainly engage in agriculture and its allied activities. The infrastructure facilities like supply of input, marketing, institutional credit and extension services are inadequate limiting women to go for greener pastures.

Profile of North-Eastern Region (NER)

North-Eastern Region (NER) considered the "land of Sun Rising" is situated at the North-Eastern Himalayan sub-region of India. NER is composed 7 (Seven) States namely Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. In 2010 Sikkim also become under the State of NER and now there are 8 (eight) states under NER. The region is bounded by Tibet and China in the north and east, Bangladesh in the south, Myanmar in the south east and Bhutan in the West. In terms of geographical size, Northeast India constitute about 8% of the total India's size, and is roughly 3/4th the size of the state of Maharashtra. Northeast India's population (all 8 states combined) is approximately 40 million (2011 census), which represents 3.1% of the total Indian population (1,210 million).

Population of NER region is composed of heterogeneous elements of different races, castes, languages and cultures. There are different types of Tribal population settled both in the plain and hill areas and they maintain different languages and profess different faiths and every tribes has own different identities.

The region accounts for one of the largest concentrations of tribal people in the country - constituting about 30 percent of the total population - though with a skewed distribution of over 60 percent in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland taken together. With the only exception of Kerala outside it, three states of the region - Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya contain an overwhelming majority of Christians (90.02, 87 and 70.03 percents respectively). The region is characterized by extraordinary ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, with more than 160 Scheduled Tribes belonging to five different ethnic groups and over 400 distinct tribal and sub-tribal groupings speaking about 175 languages, and a large and diverse non-tribal population as well concentrated mainly in Assam and Tripura (Bhaumik 2010).

Population	38,857,769
Area	262,230 km ² (101,250 sq mi)
Population Density	148/km ² (380/sq mi)

Time Zone	IST (UTC+5:30)
States and Territories	Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura
Largest Cities	Guwahati, Jorhat, Agartala, Dimapur, Shillong, Aizawl, Imphal
Official Languages	Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, English, Garo, Khasi, Kokborok, Manipuri, Mizo, Nepali, Sikkimese, Urdu
Religion	Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Animism (Sanamahism, Seng Khasi, Donyi-Polo etc.)

Tourist Map of North-Eastern Region (NER)



Role of Female towards Socio-economic Development in North-Eastern Region

The politico-legal, social and economic changes that have taken place during the recent decades have brought about perceptible changes in the status of women. The role of female in the workplace has been expanding due to the above mentioned changes. All states of North-East are significantly different from each another in respect of their socio-economic conditions. The northeastern states are

predominantly agricultural states. So, women in the region mainly engage in agriculture and its allied activities. The infrastructure facilities like supply of input, marketing, institutional credit and extension services are inadequate limiting women to go for diversification of their working activities. Women's are contributing not only domestic activities but also income generation activities at outside and participating human development through community activity. If we take the case of India's North-eastern states, even though economically poorer as compared to the rest of the other part skewed sex ratio states of India although male oppression in these region and society is comparatively lesser. One gets struck by the strength and public presence of women cutting across age, caste, class and community. Northeastern states, in terms of treating their womenfolk equally, are quite better explicated than any other Indian states.

There is lots of different between women described by Verrier Elwin and the present women. Women are marching towards progress, and are no longer passive spectators. There are women Ministers, Administrators, Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, Nurses, Typist, Clerks, Social Workers and they are in all field.

The work participation of Female is determined by various factors like structural factors as well as socio-cultural, i.e. family, caste, region, environment etc and socio-cultural factors like attitudes, customs, family ideology, division labour etc.

Trend of Female workforce participating in North-Eastern Region since 1981 to 2011

The northeast India comprises of eight states with a topographical terrain completely different from the rest of India. It is the largest reservoir of biodiversity not only of India but also of the whole world. With the diverse flora and fauna it is unique in its topography. The majority of the tribals of India inhabit the six northeastern states. Therefore the culture and the tradition of the people are varied in nature. This has a direct implication on the population trend in the northeastern region.

The geographical area of North-East is different from other part of India. The region is characterized by difficult terrain, wide variations in slopes, altitude, land tenure systems and diverse cultivation practices. The transport and communication system is poorly developed and as a result majority of the areas in the region remain still in accessible.

Expanding women's participation especially in ways that enhance their productivity and earning potential raises women's own living standards and contribute to better economic performance, the reduction of poverty and improved family welfare.

In case of North East it is observed that the contribution of primary sector to the Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) has been declining from 37% in 1980-81 to 26% in 1996-97 in Arunachal Pradesh, from 46% in 1980-81 to 29% in 1995-96 in Manipur, from 38% in 1980-81 to 24% in 1996-97 in Meghalaya, from 28% in 1980-81 to 18% in 1993-94 in Nagaland, and from 46% in 1980-81 to 26% in 1996-97 in Tripura. The annual per capita net domestic product has been increasing over time in all of the states. If we examine the national level of women employment it has been seen that the Southern Zone was highest and lowest in the Central zone. The increased in employment in terms of percentage was highest in the North-Eastern Zone whereas the Western Zone recorded a negative growth of 1.7%.

The work participation rate by gender shows that the males' overall WPR registered an increase in 2001 and 2011, whereas the females' overall WPR had increased in 1991 and 2001 but remained same in 2011. The male-female combined WPR had increased all throughout during the last three decades. For the males, their main worker's WPR has declined and their marginal workers' WPR has increased. For the females, their main workers' WPR does not show any patters; it has increased between 1981 and 1991, it declined between 1991 and 2001, and thereafter shown an increase between 2001 and 2011. The WPR of female marginal workers had increased between 1981 and 2001, and thereafter it has shown a marginal decline in 2011.

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Table-1
Trend of Female Population of North-Eastern Region since 1981 to 2011

	(In percentage)			
States	1981	1991	2001	2011
Assam	N/A	47.98	48.31	48.92

Arunachal	N/A	46.22	47.18	48.41
Manipur	49.26	48.92	49.35	49.81
Meghalaya	48.82	48.86	49.28	49.72
Mizoram	47.90	47.95	48.33	49.38
Nagaland	N/A	46.98	47.38	48.21
Tripura	N/A	48.57	48.66	48.98
Sikkim	N/A	46.75	46.67	47.09
India	48.27	48.10	48.26	48.46

Source: Census in India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

Table-2

Trend of Sex Ratio of North-Eastern Region since 1981 to 2011

(Female sex ratio per 1000 males)

States	1981	1991	2001	2011
Assam	946	923	932	954
Arunachal	862	859	901	920
Manipur	971	958	978	987
Meghalaya	954	955	975	986
Mizoram	919	921	938	975
Nagaland	863	886	909	931
Tripura	946	945	950	961
Sikkim	835	878	875	889
India	934	929	934	940

Source: Census in India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

Table-3

Trend of Female Literacy in North-Eastern Region since 1981 to 2011

(In percentage)

States	1981	1991	2001	2011
Assam	N/A	43.7	54.6	67.3
Arunachal	14.0	29.3	43.5	59.6
Manipur	34.6	48.6	60.5	73.2
Meghalaya	37.1	44.7	59.6	73.8
Mizoram	68.6	78.0	86.7	89.4
Nagaland	40.2	55.7	61.4	76.7
Sikkim	27.3	46.6	60.4	76.4
Tripura	38.0	50.0	64.9	83.1
India	29.7	39.2	53.6	65.4

Source: Office of the Registrar General of India

A person who can both read and write with understanding in any language is considered as literate and a person who can merely read but cannot write is taken to be as illiterate. The North Eastern states have witnessed a continuous improvement in the female literacy rate particularly from 1981 to 2011. From the Table-3 it is found that in comparison to national level the female literacy rate is continually increasing and above national level among all the states of North-East India except Arunachal Pradesh which is 59.6% in 2011. In Assam, the level of female education is just above to national level. Mizoram is bearing very high level of female education i.e. 89.4% along with high percentage of female workforce participation.

Table-4

Trend of Female Workforce Participation in NER since 1981 to 2011

(Combined urban and rural percentage)

States	1981	1991	2001	2011
Assam	N/A	21.6	20.7	22.5
Arunachal	45.6	37.5	36.5	35.4
Manipur	39.4	39.0	39.0	38.6
Meghalaya	37.4	34.9	35.1	32.7
Mizoram	37.7	43.5	47.5	36.2
Nagaland	43.2	38.0	38.1	44.7
Tripura	12.7	14.9	21.1	23.6
Sikkim	37.6	30.4	38.6	39.6
India	19.6	22.0	25.6	25.5

Source: Office of the Registrar General, India

From the Table-4 it has been evident that the trend of female work participating in North-Eastern region continues increasing except Arunachal Pradesh and all the states above the national level whereas Assam and Tripura are the lower than all India level. However, Tripura is continuously increasing the level of female work participation from 12.7% in 1981 to 14.9% in 1991 and 21% in 2001 to 23.6% in 2011. It is a good indication of increasing female workforce participation in the state.

From the Table it seen that in Arunachal Pradesh the female workers decreasing from 45% in 1981 and from 37.5% in 1991 to 36.5% in 2001 and 35.4% in 2011. The continues declining rate of female workforce participating in Arunachal may be due to impact of high rate migration from other parts of India, female work substitute, increasing per capita income, and it may be due to and increasing female education in the states. But the state of Arunachal Pradesh has always low level of female ratio and female education is also very low level in comparison to national level. The continuing declining of female work participation is the result of high rate of migration from other parts of India to Arunachal Pradesh. It deserves mention here that the female in Arunachal are not joining in the workplaces and remain busy with their domestic responsibilities, which is resulting into the decline of female ratio in workplaces.

Among all the northeastern states Nagaland is bearing the highest level of female workforce participation where it is 44.7% in 2011. In Assam, female work participation was in 1971 and it was increased up to 21.6% in 1991 and slightly decreased to 20.7% in 2001 again it increased to 22.5% in 2011. Mizoram has also a trend of decreasing female work participation. The table shows that in Mizoram the ratio was 47.5% in 2001 and it declined to 36.2% in 2011. In case of Manipur it is noticed that the state has been continuously maintaining the same level of female workforce participation from 1981 to 2001 but it decline to 38.6% in 2011.

Analysts have attributed the low level of female workforce participation and decline to a mix of positive factors such as increased participation in education; cultural-aspiration sanctions whereby increased prosperity and household income leads to withdrawal of female workers; and labour market issues resulting in wage discrimination and barriers to entry into preferred jobs.

Conclusions

The study revealed that Literacy rate for women has increased in north east and it has a positive impact on the ideological, political and social spheres. All this is the result of the positive changes that education and training have brought in the region. It is expected that such kind of initiative will further expand women's mobility, their control over labour, production and income, exercise of political power and participation in the decision making process and thereby strengthen the process of development throughout the northeastern region.

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