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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LIVELIHOOD STATUS BETWEEN THE 'ADIBASHI' AND THE NATIVE RURAL WOMEN IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

Kabir LI, Haider ML, Ahaduzzaman SK M, Roy AK (2013) Comparative analysis of livelihood status between the 'Adibashi' and the native rural women in Bangladesh. *J. Innov. Dev. Strategy.* 7(1), 20-23.

Bangladesh has approximately 30 'Adibashi' (indigenous) minority communities living both in the hill regions and in the plain lands. The majority of the 'Adibashi' population lives in rural settings. The main purpose of the study was to determine and compare the livelihood status of 'Adibashi' and native rural women and to explore relationship between livelihood status and their selected characteristics. Livelihood status of the rural women was taken as dependent variable, which was operationlized through using the "Asset Pentagon" consisting of human capital, physical capital, natural capital, social capital and financial capital. The independent variables were however, measured through using suitable scales and techniques. Majority of the women farmers were young, in both the groups. Greater part of the 'Adibashi' women farmers had secondary level education while the native farmers had primary education and the difference was found significant. No significant difference was observed between the two groups in case of family size. 'Adibashi' groups were found to be better off in their farm holdings, annual income, extension media contact, cosmo politeness, agricultural knowledge, training exposure, savings (although the mean difference was not significant) and material possession. The livelihood status of the two groups were compared and found that 'Adibashi' had better livelihood status than the native rural women.

Key words: *livelihood status, 'Adibashi', native rural women*

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is one of the least developed countries in the world with an area of 1,47,570 square kilometers and a population of near to 153.2 million people. Agriculture is the backbone of the economy of the country. Approximately 80 percent of the population lives in rural areas with 63.2 percent of the country's total labor force engaged in agriculture. Women constitute approximately 46% of the farm labor force, the vast majority living below the poverty line (BBS 2011).

In spite of many plans, programs and promises, Bangladesh has yet to achieve food security, employment and improvement of both the social and natural environment. In view of making livelihoods more sustainable, the Bangladesh government has designed and implemented different sectoral programs since its independence in 1971 under the Department of Agricultural Extension. The programs are aimed at increase employment opportunities, provide housing, accelerate income-generation, improve health-conditions, uplift housing condition, eradicate illiteracy and provide micro-credit. One of these programs was operated under the Smallholder Agricultural Improvement Project (SAIP). Initiated in 2000 under the Ministry of Agriculture, its mission was to improve the income and livelihood (including women's empowerment) of rural landless, marginal and small farmers. In collaboration with 16 partner Non Government Organizations (NGOs), SAIP was endeavoring to be an effective instrument of development aimed at poor women farmers. It had pioneered the concepts and method of organization building participatory approach and planning process, access to common property-resources such as, social forestry, education programs and many innovative employment and income generating activities through credit management, and had been working to improve the general status of women's livelihood. There were five categories of beneficiaries involved namely: Landless Group Farmers (FLGs), Marginal Farmers Group (MFGs), Small Farmers Group (SFG), 'Charlanders' and 'Adibashi' people.

The 'Adibashi' are a distinct special interest group in Bangladesh differing from the rest of the population in terms of their culture, economy, food habits, etc. There are over 30 (thirty) indigenous Adibashi minority communities living in Bangladesh, both in the hilly areas and in the plain lands (Ali Nawaz 1980; Oxfam 2006). The 'Adibashi' are considered as one of the unprivileged or under privileged section of the Bangladesh population 153.2 million (BBS 2011) in terms of their overall economy, which is generally subsistence in nature and mostly based in agriculture.

Adibashis are susceptible to crises of cultural and social identity. They are slowly and steadily losing their own heritage, language, culture, customs and music (Dasgupta and Ahmed, 1998). Though there have been several reports on the livelihoods of various 'Adibashi' people, no systematic study has thus far been conducted to make a comparative analysis between the livelihoods of 'Adibashi' and native rural women in selected areas of Bangladesh. From the above trust, the study was undertaken to compare the livelihoods of 'Adibashi' and native rural women.

The present study was therefore conducted with the following objectives: 1) to determine and compare the livelihood status of the 'Adibashi' and native rural women. 2) to determine the selected characteristics of respondents. 3) to explore the relationships between livelihood status of 'Adibashi' and native rural women and their selected characteristics.

Null hypothesis in the study were tested and found the following: i) there was no relationship between the selected characteristics of the 'Adibashi' and native rural women with their livelihood status, and ii) there is no significant difference of livelihood status between the 'Adibashi' and native rural women with regard to the following: human capital, natural capital, physical capital social capital, and financial capital.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at different villages in the Mymensingh District, in northern Bangladesh. The 'Adibashi' (72 groups) and native (80 groups) in this research are the beneficiaries of Grameen Manobik Unnayan Sangstha (GRAMAUS), a partner NGO of SAIP which had been working to address poverty alleviation with the aim of improving livelihood status of rural women and therefore, they were considered as the population for this study.

A total of 21 groups (10 from 'Adibashi' and 11 from Native farmers' groups) were randomly selected as sample group for the study. In the next stage, 5 women from each of these 21 selected groups were taken to make the sample size (21 x 5) = 105.

Table 1. Distribution of population and sample of the study

Group Category	No. of group			Total sample size
	Population	Sample	@5 members/group	
Adibashi	72	10	10 x 5	50
Native				
SFG	80	4	4 x 5	20
MFG		4	4 x 5	20
LG		3	3 x 5	15
Total	152	21		105

SFG: Small Farmer Group (having land >25 decimal)
MFG: Marginal Farmer Group (having land 50-150 decimal)
LG: Landless Group (having land <50 decimal)

The ex-post facts design was followed to conduct the study. An interview schedule (in Bengali) was used to collect data and the entire process of data collection took 20 days.

Measurement of Livelihood Status

Livelihood status of the respondents was operationalized by computing a 'livelihood status score'. Livelihood status was categorized as human capital, natural capital, physical capital, social capital and financial capital. Each of these capital assets were measured against 5 statements using a 5-point Likert type scale using 'highly decreased', 'decreased', 'no comment/as was before', 'increased', 'highly increased'. Scores assigned to these responses were 1,2,3,4, and 5 respectively. Accordingly, each of the assets could range from (5 x 5) = 25 to (25 x 5) = 125.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Selected Characteristics of the Respondents

The selected characteristics of the respondents such as age, education, family size, farm size, annual income, extension media contact, cosmo-politeness, innovativeness, agricultural knowledge, training exposure, savings, credit received and assets (material) possessions were studied.

A major proportion (91.43%) of the respondents consisted of young to middle aged. About 63.0% of the beneficiaries had more than 4 family members. The primary education in the family was 0.5 to 5 years of schooling. The highest proportion (93.34%) of the respondents was landless to small farm size category. The majority (76.19%) of the respondents were low to medium income group. Most of the respondents (78.9%) fell in the low extension media contact. More than three fifths (60.95%) of the respondents were identified in the low category of cosmo-politeness. More than half (56.19%) of the respondents had low to medium range of innovativeness. The majority of respondents (63.81 percent) had low knowledge on agriculture. Most of the respondents (70.48%) had limited exposure to training (several days to a week).

An overwhelming majority of the respondents (77.14%) were small savings category. Most of the respondents (85.72%) were low to medium credit recipients. Approximately two-thirds of the respondents (65.714%) were categorized as having low material possession.

Table 2. Salient features of the characteristics of the respondents and their livelihood status

SL. No	Characteristics of farmers	Scoring method	Possible score	Observed score	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Age	Number of years	-	20-55	36.0	9.69
2	Education	Scores	-	.05-14.0	4.6381	3.39
3	Family size	No of family members	-	2-13	5.68	2.24
4	Farm size	Hectare	-	.00-3.03	.3958	.432
5	Annual family income	Taka (in thousand)	-	15-357	63.63	47.20
6	Extension media contact	Scale scores	0-24	0-21	5.47	4.27
7	Cosmo-politeness	Scale scores	0-24	0-16	3.70	3.83
8	Innovativeness	Scale scores	0-50	0-25	12.23	7.35
9	Agricultural knowledge	Scale scores	0-44	3-44	17.84	10.15
10	Training exposure	Actual day	0-27	0-107	5.34	13.84
11	Savings	Taka (in thousand)	-	130-11080	2.5052	5.10951
12	Credit received	Taka (in thousand)	-	0-33	5.72	4.17
13	Assets/materials possession	Computing scores	-	0-81	21.31	19.42

Livelihood Status

Possible scores for livelihood status of the respondents ranged from 0 to 125 and observed range was 80 to 97. All of the respondents (100 percent) were found to have a high status of livelihood. None of the respondents was found belonging to low status or medium status of livelihood.

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents to their livelihood status

Categories	Farmers (N = 105)		Mean	Standard deviation
	Number	Percent		
Low status (below 50)	-	-	88.83	2.96
Medium status (50-70)	-	-		
High status (>70)	105	100		
Total	105	100		

Relationships of Selected Characteristics with their Livelihood Status

Relationships of the 13 selected personal, economic, social and psychological characteristics of the respondents with their livelihood status were investigated in this study. The computed value of correlation coefficient showed that education, farm size, annual income, extension media contact, cosmo-politeness, innovativeness, agricultural knowledge, training and material possession had a significant positive relationship with their livelihood status. On the other hand, age, family size, savings and credit had no significant relationship with their livelihood status.

Table 4. Relationship between selected characteristics of farmers and their livelihood status

Dependent variable	Selected characteristics of farmers	Computed 'r' values
Livelihood status	Age	-0.070 ^{NS}
	Education	0.498**
	Family size	0.113^{NS}
	Farm size	0.327**
	Annual family income	0.439**
	Extension media contact	0.599**
	Cosmo politeness	0.473**
	Innovativeness	0.375**
	Agricultural knowledge	0.536**
	Training exposure	0.215*
	Savings	0.033^{NS}
	Credit received	0.91^{NS}
	Assets/ materials possession	0.451**

NS = Not Significant

* = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

** = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

CONCLUSION

In accordance with the above findings, the following conclusions were drawn;

1. The study reveals that significant and positive changes were observed in a number of important livelihood areas of the respondents, which included human capital, natural capital, physical capital, social capital and financial capital. Thus, it could be concluded that planned interventions played a positive role in improving livelihoods of the respondents of the study areas;
2. The findings showed that age and family size of the respondents had no significant relationships with their livelihood status. In view of this fact, it might be concluded that age and family size of the respondents were not important factors for improving livelihood status;
3. Savings and credit received by the respondents also had no significant relationships with their livelihood status. It might be included that livelihood status, savings and credit received of the respondents are independent of each other;
4. It was found that some initiatives such as awareness building, agricultural activities, revolving fund development, leadership training, agricultural training, savings mobilization, income generating activities, technological support and overall empowerment were duly considered by the concerned authorities, which helped in bringing positive change in their livelihood status. Thus, it could be concluded that the continuation of these initiatives will be helpful for the respondents for sustainable changes in livelihood status; and
5. The majority of the respondents were found having a very low extension media contact. Extension contact is considered as an instrument for profit maximization from scarce natural resources. It could be concluded that more extension exposure might be a strong means of increase the living standard of the respondents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of findings and conclusions of the study, the recommendations are as follows:

1. A strong initiative should be taken to improve the educational status of the beneficiaries in the study areas in collaboration with relevant GOs and NGOs.
2. Lack of suitable credit distribution system and a good communication system were found to be major constraints in improving the livelihood status of the respondents in the study area. In this regards, necessary steps should be taken through co-ordination with different GOs and NGOs;
3. Alternative sources of income generation activities of the respondents should be made available during the time of lean season farming. Different GOs and NGOs can play a vital role to overcome the situation;
4. It should be ensured transparency among all the public and private partner organizations; and
5. A strong coordination program is needed among the partner organizations (GOs and NGOs) for promoting an improved and sustainable livelihood status of the farmers in this study area.

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