

Status of Women Education in ‘Char’ Area: A Case Study of Sonitpur District of Assam

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ABSTRACT: The riverine islands of the Brahmaputra river in Assam are locally known as *char* or *chaporis*. *Char* dwellers are generally marginalized people.. The sample of this study is taken using the two-stage random sampling technique. The villages under the *char* area are the first unit of sampling and the farm households are the second for this investigation.

Key Words: Education, Char, Riverine, Labour

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I. INTRODUCTION

Educational status of farming community especially women plays a significant role in empowering rural mass and grassroots level institutions and vital for economic development. Indian economy cannot stand without agricultural development. It has made a considerable stride in the development of the country. Despite several measures adopted to raise the overall standard of agriculture, the food requirements remain unsatisfied in weaker areas of the country where farm production performances are below the national average.

Actually speaking, education could be termed as the eradicator of all other aspects liable for development. Whatever policies and programmes prepared for upliftment of rural mass have not been effective and do not percolate to the rural poor because of inadequate level of education which is severe in case of women specially the women folk living in remote rural areas. Many studies show that aggregate levels of education and literacy as well as community development are positively associated with the women empowerment and with the age at marriage of girls (Srivastava, 1992). In most cases women are not usually accepted as the medium of social change. It may be due to the fact that women are yet to attain the expected level of educational standard.

The riverine islands of the Brahmaputra river in Assam are locally known as *char* or *chaporis*. In some parts of the country, *char* areas are regarded as *diara* land. In fact, *char* is one kind of *diara* land but all the *diara* land may not be *chars*. This paper attempts to confine in the study of demographic characteristics and literacy status of the *char* areas in Sonitpur district of Assam and presents an account of the results obtained from the analysis of the data in respect of age group wise population, worker, non-worker, student and educational standards of women in farming community relating to different farm categories in the *char* areas of the district.

II. METHODOLOGY

The sample of this study is taken using the two-stage random sampling technique. The villages under the *char* area are the first unit of sampling and the farm households are the second for this investigation. A sample of 10 per cent *char* villages are selected at random. From the selected villages a list of the farm households is prepared along with the operational area per farm. These are then arranged in ascending order of their operational areas and their distribution are transformed to get four size classes of marginal, small, medium and large for the study. A sample of 20 per cent farms is selected at random from each of these categories of farms.

The literacy status of the members of farm family is highly correlated with the adoption behavior and risk bearing capacity of farmers particularly when they faces new production technology or when they faces decision making processes. It is therefore, very important to have the detail information on the educational standards of the farm family members. This study tries to analyse distribution of farm family members according to their educational standards. The results are given in Table and Fig. below and discussed.

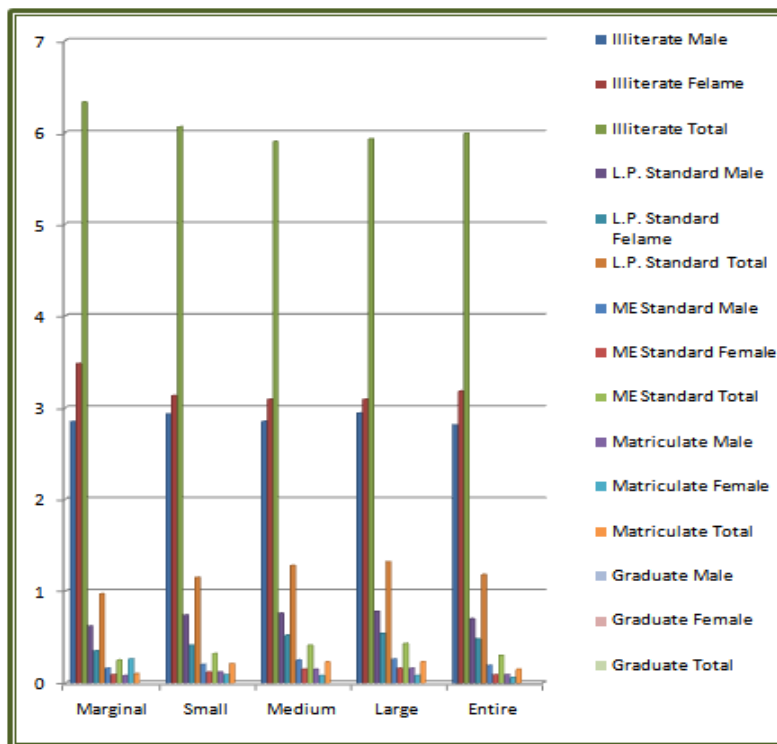
TABLE: DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY MEMBERS ACCORDING TO EDUCATIONAL STANDARD

Farm Size	Illiterate			Literate												Total Literate		
	Male	Female	Total	LP Standard			ME Standard			Matriculate			Graduate			Male	Female	Total
				Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total			
Marginal	37.25 (2.85)	45.49 (3.48)	82.74 (6.33)	8.10 (0.62)	4.57 (0.35)	12.69 (0.97)	2.09 (0.16)	1.17 (0.09)	3.27 (0.25)	1.04 (0.08)	0.26 (0.02)	1.31 (0.10)	--	--	--	11.24 (0.86)	6.01 (0.46)	17.25 (1.32)
Small	37.85 (2.93)	40.44 (3.13)	78.29 (6.06)	9.56 (0.74)	5.30 (0.41)	14.86 (1.15)	2.58 (0.20)	1.55 (0.12)	4.13 (0.32)	1.55 (0.12)	1.16 (0.09)	2.71 (0.21)	--	--	--	13.69 (1.06)	8.01 (0.62)	21.70 (6.68)
Medium	36.44 (2.85)	39.00 (3.09)	75.45 (5.90)	9.72 (0.76)	6.65 (0.52)	16.37 (1.28)	3.20 (0.25)	1.92 (0.15)	5.24 (0.41)	1.92 (0.15)	1.02 (0.08)	2.94 (0.23)	--	--	--	14.83 (1.16)	9.72 (0.76)	24.55 (1.92)
Large	35.90 (2.94)	39.06 (3.09)	74.97 (5.93)	9.86 (0.78)	6.83 (0.54)	76.69 (1.32)	3.29 (0.26)	2.02 (0.16)	5.43 (0.43)	2.02 (0.16)	0.88 (0.07)	2.91 (0.23)	--	--	--	15.17 (1.20)	9.86 (0.78)	50.50 (1.98)
Entire area	36.88 (2.81)	41.73 (3.18)	78.61 (5.99)	9.18 (0.70)	6.30 (0.48)	15.48 (1.18)	2.49 (0.19)	1.18 (0.09)	3.94 (0.30)	1.18 (0.09)	0.79 (0.06)	1.97 (0.15)	--	--	--	12.86 (0.98)	8.53 (0.65)	21.39 (1.63)

Figures within parentheses indicate actual average

The figures in table reveal that for the average farm of entire area illiteracy is the dominant figure being 78.61 per cent of total farm family members and this is about 3.50 times larger than that of literacy figure. The male illiteracy (36.88 per cent of total population) is considerably smaller than the female (41.73 per cent of total). The male literacy being 12.86 per cent of total population is much higher than the female (8.53 per cent only). The highest population under various literacy standards is found under L.P. standard with 15.48 per cent of total population. Under this standard the male literacy is (9.18

DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY MEMBERS ACCORDING TO EDUCATIONAL STANDARD



per cent) is much higher than the female (6.30 per cent of total population). This is followed by M.E. standard covering a total of 3.94 per cent of total population, male being 2.49 per cent and the female 1.44 per cent of total family members. The highest educational standard is estimated to be the matriculation comprising

1.97 per cent of total population. Here also male literacy (1.18 per cent of total) is much higher than the female (0.79 per cent of total).

The analysis of educational standards under various farm categories shows that total illiteracy related inversely with the farm sizes decreasing from 82.74 per cent in marginal farm to 74.97 per cent of the total farm population in large holding. The male illiterates are found to be smaller than the females in each of the farm categories. In the case of total literacy each of the male and female literates increases with the increase in farm sizes. The total literates increase from 17.25 per cent in marginal farm to 50.50 per cent of total population in the large holding. The male and female literacy increases from 11.24 and 6.01 per cent of total population, respectively in the large holding. Among the educational standards, L.P. standards includes the largest magnitude of literates in each of the farm category with positive relationship with the farm sizes covering 12.69 per cent in marginal farm to 16.69 per cent of total population in large holding. The male literates under this standard are considerably higher in each of the farm groups. Each of the male and female literates related directly to the farm sizes ranging from 8.10 and 4.57 per cent respectively in marginal holding to 9.86 and 6.83 per cent respectively in the large farm. The next important educational standard in each of the farm sizes with increasing trend with the farm sizes covering from 3.27 per cent in marginal to 5.43 per cent in large holding. Under this standard the magnitude of males is very large in comparison to that of female in each farm category and each of the male and female literates indicates positive relationship with the farm sizes. The males increased from 2.09 per cent in marginal farm to 3.29 per cent of total population in large farm and the female from 1.17 per cent to 2.15 per cent, respectively. For matriculation, the literary is found to be negligible having the largest (2.94 per cent) in medium farm and the smallest (1.31 per cent) of total population in marginal farm. In this standard also the magnitude of male is very large in comparison to that of female.

The above analysis of the literacy standard of the farm families in the study area indicates a very poor picture. No member of the farm family is found to have education above matric standard. On the whole, the illiterates covered more than 3.50 times of the literates. In most of the cases of educational standard, the magnitude of literacy increases with the increase in farm sizes. The total illiterates show inverse relation and the total literates indicate direct relation to the farm sizes. In each case, male literacy is found to be considerably larger than the female in the study area. Human labour force in our country more particularly in the state of Assam has been supplied primarily and to the large extent by the farm family itself. Further the efficiency and the quality of the labourers influence to the large extent in attaining the required goals of the farm. The levels of education, occupational patterns, scope of the alternative employment of the farm family members have been highly correlated with the planning and execution of farm production process under various technology of farm production.

The overall analysis of demographic characteristics of the study brings out that the largest population of farm family members represents the most productive age group of 16 to 60 years and male members are larger than the female in each group of farm sizes. A negligible survival of the population is found after 60 years of age which is in the age group of above 60 years. Again the largest number of farm population concentrates in the non-working group in each of the farm categories and the average farm for entire study area. The magnitude of full-time workers increases with the increase in farm sizes. Whereas the part-time workers and non-workers show inverse relationship to the farm sizes. The full-time workers are supplied largely by the age group of 16 to 60 years and also contributed to a considerable extent by the age group of 6 to below 16 years in each farm category. The supply of part-time workers is mainly from the age group of 6 to below 16 years. The population in the study area is very poor in educational standard. No farm family members are found to have education beyond the level of matric. The illiterates cover more than 3.50 time of the existing magnitude of literates. The number of family members under each of the educational standards relates positively to the farm sizes. In each educational standard male literacy is larger than the female under each farm category.

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