

WOMEN'S LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN RURAL BANGLADESH: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract : Labor force Participation for women are considered as a vital marker of women development. It is universal that there are strong relationships between gender attitudes and the actual socio-economic opportunities for women in patriarchal social settings. However, due to some socio-cultural factors, possibilities for men and women to get employed and advanced in the labor force remain disproportionate. Therefore the main objective of this article is to evaluate the present situation of women's labor force participation in rural Bangladesh. This paper also highlights some factors affecting women's labor force participation in the context of Bangladeshi society. To obtain the objectives, this paper follows an analysis based on secondary data collected from various published and unpublished sources.

Key words: Rural women, Labor force participation, Socio-cultural factors, Bangladesh

1.0 Background and Rationale

Women constitute nearly half of the total population. Therefore, Socio-economic development cannot be truly achieved without the active participation of women at every level in society. Research that focuses just on one work area ignores women's moves among different types of work, it may not be able to represent women's real scenario. In Bangladeshi society, rural women are left behind economically, socially and culturally as it is male headed and tradition bound in terms of socio-cultural notion. To ensure the participation of women in all spheres of life, all sorts of facilities and opportunities are to be provided to them. In this respect, the Bangladesh government and international agencies have publicized how many women have overcome traditional barriers of *Purdah* household seclusion to take formal work in various sectors and

participate in income generating activities. In rural area, many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operated non-collateral economic activities to women. Other women have undertaken self-employment and informal sector activities instead of waged formal labor.¹ However, due to some socio-cultural factors, possibilities for men and women to get employed and promoted in the labor force remain jagged. Despite this, there are many barriers to participation of rural women in economic activities. Rural women are often forced to work in agriculture at wages much below the usual rates compared to their male counterparts since male are treated as breadwinner and women are treated as household laborer that are uncalculated in our national economy. According to Bangladesh Bank Report (2008), employment grew at a relatively slow rate of 1.6 percent per annum since the 1990s. Total employed labor force increased by 8.4 million (e.g. 39.0 million to 47.4 million) of which 3.4 million (e.g. rising from 7.9 million to 11.3 million) were females and 5.0 million (e.g. rising from 31.1 million to 36.1 million) were males. Rural employed labor force grew by 5.8 million (e.g. from 30.3 million to 36.1 million) of which 2.7 million (rising from 5.9 million to 8.6 million) were females; while urban employed labor grew by 2.6 million (e.g. from 8.7 million to 11.3 million) of which 0.7 million (e.g. rising from 2.0 million to 2.7 million) were females.² Simultaneously, the male underemployment rate was 10.9 percent in 2006; while the underemployment rate for females was staggering at 68.3 percent. In addition, female workers are especially disadvantaged in terms of quality of employment. Of the 10.3 million laborers who are employed as unpaid family workers, 6.8 million (66 percent) were female workers in 2006. This also shows that, of the 11.3 million female labor employed in 2006, 60 percent work as unpaid family workers while similar share for male employed labor is less than 10 percent.³

Rural women's participation in variety of socio-economic activities has been increased slowly over the recent decade. Women labor force has an extraordinary implication on our socio-economic development, as they constitute half of the total population. Previous research works, based on rural women's workforce, have been conducted and several of them are linked with different socio-cultural phenomena. Besides, various government and non-government organizations accounted sectoral outline of women's labor force participation in the rural area, most of them are linked with various socio-cultural phenomena. To account all things, however, current

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paper will assess the present situation of women's labor force participation rural Bangladesh. In addition, this paper highlights many of the unique factors influencing rural women workers' participation in Bangladesh.

2.0 Methodology

This paper mainly based on analytical approach. The required secondary data have been collected from related published and unpublished journals, books, reports and online sources. The current study has used secondary sources in order to collect in-depth information related to this very issue.

3.0 Operational Definition

3.1 Women labor force: Women labor force denotes the extent to which women are active in the labor force. Actually the labor force is the number of people employed and unemployed.

3.2 Socio-cultural factor: Factors relating to the socio-cultural matters that have influence on women's labor force participation in particular settings.

4.0 Constitutional Provisions and Women's Employment

Overall, women have some rights recognized by the constitution of Bangladesh. For example, article 15(d), under the heading of Fundamental Principles of State Policy, states that where the state accepts a fundamental responsibility towards raising the standard of living of the people, it specifically undertakes responsibility for providing social security to widow. Article 17(a) provided for equal access of boys and girls to free and compulsory education up to the level to be decided by law. Article 18 (2) provides that the state shall take effective measures to prevent prostitution. Article 19(1) ensured equal opportunity for all citizens. Sub-section 2 of the same Article required the state to take effective measures to remove socio-economic discrimination. The Third section of the Bangladesh Constitution contained provisions for fundamental rights. Rights and opportunities for women (or rights relevant to them) are the following: Article 27: equality of all citizens before law and equal protection under law. Article 28(1): no discrimination on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Article 28(2): equal opportunity for men and women in all spheres of state and public life. Article 28(3): no discrimination on grounds only of religion race, caste, sex or place of birth in providing access to any place of public entertainment or resort, or admission to any educational institution.

Article 2(91): equal opportunity for all citizens in respect of employment or office in the service of the Republic. The provisions stated as fundamental rights in the constitution are believed to have provided adequate guarantee for women in Bangladesh. In reality, however, despite the constitutional provisions, women's fundamental rights have little practical application in the family work place and everywhere.

5.0 Present State of Women's Labor force Participation Rural Bangladesh

According to World Bank Report (2007)⁴, women are at a significant disadvantage in the labor market, earning as much as 60 percent less than men in the same type of work. Obviously, a much more sophisticated analysis than this one is needed to attribute these results to discrimination.⁵ It is important to note that women those are educated and live in the urban areas, have considerably better opportunities and in paid employment, particularly in the public sector jobs. But women those are less educated and live in the remote area, specifically in the rural area, have a few chances in paid employment both for the public and private sectors. Until recently, most women in the urban formal labor force worked in garment industries, which provided 76 percent of Bangladesh's foreign earnings.⁶ Present situation of Women's Labor force Participation is discussed below:

5.1 Women's Education and Labor force Participation in Rural Bangladesh

According to the report of gender Statistics of Bangladesh (2008)⁷, (table1) at the national level about 50.86% percent women labor forces in 2005-06 have no education at all whereas 30.08% men remains in the same condition. Due to some socio-cultural factors, gender based disproportion in education remains from the earlier. The participation of women having no schooling was 39.76% in the urban area compared to 54.26% in the rural area, as women of rural community is less conscious than urban community. 24.98% in the urban area and 40.89% in the rural area for men. On the contrary, the percentages of women labor force, for the rural area, having such kind of professional degree were 0.03% and 0.05% consecutively both for the women and men. At the national level, with regard to general education, the percentage of women having SSC or equivalent degree were 4.6% compared to 7.54% for men. The percentages for rural area were 3.65% and 6.71% respectively.

It is interesting to mention that labor force with masters or equivalent educational degree was 0.99% for women compared to 3.32% for men at the national level. For the rural area, men's masters or equivalent educational degree holders were about three times higher than women, for instance, the percentage of women with aforementioned degree was 0.21% for women and 0.68% for men. Overall, it is clear that gender variation in the work force participation in respect of higher education is also decreasing which has greater effect on the broad economic sectors in terms of job selection and level of earnings.

Table1: State of education at difference stages by sex and locality
2005-06 (In percentage)

Level of Education	National	Urban	Rural	National	Urban	Rural
No Schooling	50.86	37.08	39.76	24.98	54.26	40.85
Class1-5	22.88	24.12	21.34	21.55	23.35	24.92
Class six to eight	10.72	13.29	10.79	12.80	10.71	13.44
Class nine to ten	5.45	8.19	5.63	7.88	5.40	8.29
SSC/equivalent	4.61	7.54	7.76	10.20	3.65	6.71
HSC/equivalent	2.32	4.23	5.39	7.93	1.38	3.08
Degree/equivalent	1.82	3.32	4.75	7.93	0.92	1.88
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2008.

5.2 Labor force Participation in Economic Sectors

Women's participation in economic activities shows great variations by gender and by nature of sectoral activity. According to Gender statistics of BBS (2008)⁸, in 2005-06 employment person based on broad economic sectors has been shown (Table-2) that of the total employed women the highest 68.13% were engaged in agriculture sector followed by 31.87% were in non-agriculture sector and 19.35% were in service sector, 11.51% were engaged in manufacturing sector and the rest were in other sectors. Simultaneously, for men as high as 58.19% were engaged in non-agriculture sector followed by 43.05% were in service sector and 41.81% were in agriculture sector. Moreover, 10.88% were engaged in manufacturing sector and the remains were in other sectors. It is notable that women's access to non-agricultural and decision making position is limited compared with their male counterparts as women are treated as household laborer in a patriarchal social settings.

Table 2: Employed person 15 years and over by gender and economic sectors-2005-06⁹

Broad Economic Sector	Female		Male	
	No. (In million)	Percent	No. (In million)	Percent
Agriculture	7683	68.13	15084	41.81
Non- Agriculture	3595	31.87	20996	58.19
Service	2183	19.35	15532	43.05
Manufacturing	1298	11.51	3926	10.88
Other industries	114	1.01	1538	4.26

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2008.

5.3 Women's Labor Force Participation by Occupations

It is seen from table-3 that in the national level, 68.33% women were engaged in agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors, productions and transport labor 10.06%, Professional/Technical 4.32% and service workers 7.67% compared to 42.19%, 26.66%, 2.82% and 5.24% men respectively. On the contrary, 78.78% rural women were engaged in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sectors then productions and transport labor 11.08%, Professional/Technical only 2.40% and service workers 5.04% compared to 52.31%, 23.00%, 3.49% and 4.16% men respectively. It is important to note that in respect to administrative / managerial sectors position of women are much more vulnerable both for the rural and urban areas. It is also mentionable that in the aforementioned field, rural men's positions (0.32) are significant than those of rural women's positions (0.15). For example, it is about doubled compared to their male colleagues. But at the national level, it is really surprisingly that 0.56% men was engaged in administrative / managerial sectors whereas only 0.19% women are engaged in the same sectors.

Table 3: Status of Women Labor force Participation -2005-06¹⁰

Various Occupation	National		Rural	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Professional / Technical	4.38	2.82	2.40	3.49
Administrative / Managerial	0.19	0.56	0.15	0.32
Sales Workers	1.27	2.42	1.73	1.38
Services Workers	7.67	5.24	5.04	4.16
Clerical Workers	2.08	17.95	0.81	15.19
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries Workers	68.33	42.19	78.78	52.31
Production, Transport Labors	10.06	26.66	11.08	23.00
Others	0.01	0.17	0.01	0.16
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2008

5.4 Women's Labor Force Participation in Major Industry

It is seen from the statistical picture (Table 4) that in the urban areas, 33.86% women were engaged in agriculture hunting and forestry that was the highest among the industries. Afterward 24.58% manufacturing industry, 17.38% community, social and personal activities, 6.76% education services and 6.11% women were in wholesale and retail trade industry compared to men where 28.39% were in wholesale and retail trade subsequently 17.38% manufacturing industry and 14.38% were transport storage and communication industry. On the other hand, 76.61% women were engaged in the agriculture hunting and forestry in compared to 48.86% men in the rural area. At the same time, 7.48% women were engaged in manufacturing industry and 7.48% in fishing compared to 8.87% and 3.05% men respectively.

Table 4: Women in Major Industry-2005-05¹¹

Name of Major Industry	Urban		Rural	
	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)
Agriculture hunting and forestry	33.86	8.48	76.61	48.86
Fishing	0.36	0.89	1.77	3.05
Mining and quarrying	0.04	0.12	0.07	0.12
Manufacturing	24.58	17.38	7.48	8.87
Electricity, gas and Water	0.05	0.41	0.02	0.14
Contraction	0.95	5.76	0.91	3.37
Wholesale and retail trade	6.11	28.39	2.80	15.53
Hotel and restaurant	0.87	2.65	0.33	1.58
Transport, storage and communication	1.32	14.83	0.36	9.59
Bank, insurance and finance	2.80	2.88	0.47	0.53
Real estate business activities	0.22	1.49	0.07	0.36
Public administration	1.90	4.43	0.62	1.45
Education services	6.76	3.82	1.89	2.31
Health and social workers	2.81	1.43	0.54	0.43
Community, social and personal activities	17.38	7.11	5.87	3.80
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2008

5.5 Women's Labor force in Garment Industry

Garment industry has an extra-ordinary implication in our economy in terms of creation of women employment, national economic growth and achieving foreign currency. It is stated from the table-5 that in 2001-02 women employee in the garment industry was three times higher than men employee. This situation was remaining same for the year 2002-03. It is notable that for the year 2003-04 and 2005-06 the ratio of women participation increased sharply, for example, it was about four times higher compared to men employee. Moreover, in the years of 2005-06 and 2006-07 the ratio of women employee was increased rapidly, for example, it was about six times higher than men employee. Therefore, it is clear to us that our garment industry, is the heart of our national economy, mainly based

on women labor force. But due to a variety of factors, women employees are used to depriving of fair wage in this sector. Nevertheless women, specifically poor women seek to engage in this sector, as they are less educated, inefficient, less skilled, lived in poverty line, and overall substandard in relation to men.

Table 5: Women in Garment Industry 2001-2007¹²

Year	Total(Million)	Women (Million)	Men (Million)	Percentage of Women
2001-02	1.80	1.35	0.45	75
2002-03	2.00	1.50	0.50	75
2003-04	2.00	1.56	0.44	78
2004-05	2.00	1.60	0.40	80
2005-06	2.20	1.87	0.33	85
2006-07	2.40	2.04	0.36	85

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2008

Without garment industries, women's labor force remains unrepresentative in terms of participation ratio in broad economic sectors. Some women simultaneously combined household, informal, and formal sector work or a triple shift of work as a survival strategy. Given high levels of unemployment for men and women, the loss of factory jobs without comparable employment has already proven problematic for Bangladeshi women, families, and the economy and affected many gains in empowerment.¹³

6.0 Factors Affecting Women's Labor force Participation in Rural Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, socio-cultural rules, norms and beliefs hindered the overall progress of women in general and women's outdoors work participation in the rural settings in particular. In most societies, yet it is understated that the benefits to education, especially for women, when we consider formal labor market returns alone. Returns to informal sector work are more difficult to calibrate since work is often unpaid or earnings are poorly measured. Various Socio-cultural factor of women's labor force participation is discussed below:

6.1 Patriarchal Outlook

The traditional patriarchal society of Bangladesh is based on class and gender divisions. Class mobility allows movement between rich and poor, but the division of social space and the difference in behavioral norms between men and women are rigidly maintained.¹⁴ As a primitive social institution, the family constitutes the basic unit of social control, sets the norm for male and female roles. Within this system, the father, or in his absence, the next male kin is the head of the household. As a result, men control both the decision-making powers and economic operations in terms of education and employment. In a male controlled family, women are deprived of

sufficient educational attainments that also lead women's unemployment as well as dependency as higher education is needed to get a high-quality job. Hence, patriarchal rules and norms always disfavored women's education and incarcerated them within the four walls that resulted women's limited access to workforce participation.

6.2 Lack of Economic Support for Education

In Bangladesh, a large number of people live under poverty line in both the rural and urban areas. Most of them have no ability to provide educational expenditures for their school going children. But education is an important way to obtain human capital; it can be accumulated in many different ways.¹⁵ For economic reasons, many parents consider women's education as a waste of funds. Such parents believe that money spent on a girl's education is a waste, since she will soon be married off to her husband's family, thus leaving only boys in their original family to provide for their parents. Therefore, when families are faced with the option of choosing between sons' and daughters' education, the daughters are always the victims. This situation also creates barrier for women to participate in income generating activities.

6.3 Traditional Social Systems

Conservative observers of society believe that when women become educated they become disrespectful and no longer adhere to male dominance. They agree that women should become doctors, engineers, lawyers etc. but must attend institutions meant for women only. The liberal are not so liberal either. They might not have such hang-ups as to profession or choice of educational institution, but they ultimately hanker after the secret wish to see women in their traditional roles. Moreover, they are not comfortable with such words as 'empowerment' or 'emancipation'.

6.4 House Keeping Activities

In our traditional society, Parents think that women are for household activities and sons are for outside incivility. House keeping tasks may often make the girl child to become too tired to concentrate on her studies. This belief is embedded in their thought. As a result, girls are socialized and envisioned as household labor force that is uncalculated in terms of economic contribution. Besides, the female child works thrice as much as, or even more than the male child. Nevertheless girls or women are treated as unproductive in terms of economic grounds. Though their averaged contribution in household

activities is more than 60% whereas men's contribution is about ten times lower than women.

House keeping Tasks performed by both the sex¹⁶

Sex	2002-03		2005-06	
	National	Rural	National	Rural
Both Sex	35.1	21.2	68.8	70.9
Women	65.7	39.8	80.6	82.5
Men	5.7	3.5	6.2	5.5

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2008.

It is seen that those who are outside the labor force a large portion of them are engaged in household work.¹⁷ It is important to note that the working aged populations who are engaged in household for women in rural area are higher in 2005-06 compared to 2002-03. It is also expressed that participation in household work is increasing day by day that is a negative sign for women development.

6.5 Veil (Purdah) system

Veil (*Purdah*) system is highly responsible for limited participation in private and public job market of rural women in a male dominant society like Bangladesh. Though the importance of women employment is being realized now a day, still a portion of our society think that female should be kept behind the veil or the *Purdah*. Similarly, in the traditional culture, women must always stay in the background. In the rural areas of our country, some of the illiterate *mullahs* do not believe in the education of women including their female children and wives. They think that the place of the woman is in the kitchen.¹⁸ In the name of religion some uneducated *Mullahs* strictly oppose women's workforce participation, as they do not believe in women equality.

6.6 Stereotyped Gender Roles

In a male dominated society, rights of women are determined on the basis of their roles. It is seen that for many years, women, were made to believe that their rightful place was in the home front; as housewives, producers and caretakers of children. It is called stereotyped gender roles of women. It's a common concept embedded in our society that women's roles are limited within the household. Horner (1969) said that- as girls are traditionally socialized to be feminine and home-based, they will regard academic excellence as incompatible with their female virtues and fear to succeed. Therefore, they naturally scale down their aspirations and avoid infringing the unacceptable boundaries. Rather

they prefer gaining satisfaction from the domestic spheres to striving for more rewarding positions in the public sphere.

6.7 Defective Gender Socialization Process

Gender socialization is one process through which people learn about and are influenced by gender roles and stereotypes. It prepares women and men for the types of activities likely to be required of them and the types of opportunities likely to be opened to them in their national culture. In male dominant society, education for girls' right from the very beginning is designed to make them primarily effective mothers and housewives. Hence girls are brought up in the traditional family set-up to be passive, obedient, ladylike and always submissive to men. In this regard, Elizabeth A. Corrigall¹ and Alison M. Konrad (2006) stated their opinion that is mentioned below:

Gender socialization process results in women and men valuing different job attribute preferences. Because women are viewed, and often view themselves, as society's nurturers, they are likely to value jobs that involve helping others and that allow flexibility in working hours to accommodate family demands. On the other hand, masculine ideals promote aggression and the ability to support a family. Thus, men are likely to value job attribute preferences such as money and the opportunity to advance.¹⁹

In our traditional family system, boys are encouraged to be aggressive, competitive and independent. On the other hand girls cook, clean house, fetch water, and help their mothers care for younger children, especially those who are ill. These are the outcomes of faulty gender socialization process that prepared them (girls or women) to choice and join home based profession.

6.8 Violence and Harassment Against Women

Violence against women has also been an instrument to dominate women in the work place. Sexual and mental harassment is common picture in male dominant societies like Bangladesh. In the workplace, their male counterparts often victimize women. As a result, women are to continue their livelihood in an unsecured work environment. Biesenthal and Sproule (1997) noted around five thematic areas of occurring violence that include: Geographic location, Isolation, Economic conditions, Access to services and Lack of anonymity/rural ethic of self-sufficiency. There is a notion grounded

in our mentality that women are not physically and mentally fit for challenging profession. So they do not need more education rather than they should engage household activities. This may be psychological torture towards women that is one kind of violence against women. There are some superstitious people in our country who believe that women are inferior to men in terms of intellectuality.²⁰ Thus their (women) duty should be limited within the four walls.

7.0 Discussion

Patriarchy is highly predominant at all stages in our society that has greater effect on women's movement and labor force participation.²¹ Attitudes toward women's employment are embedded in different economic, social, political and cultural systems.²² In this respect, attitude towards women's work in Bangladesh is not viewed as fair at all. Thus, a comparative perspective of attitudes toward women's employment can reveal the diversity of gender ideologies under different institutional systems.²³ Education has been strong predictor of economic development. It is also called the panacea to development. In addition, higher education is an important forecaster for both the entry level of labor market and in regard to fix wage structure. Due to some socio-cultural factors, in the rural area, gender based disproportions in education remains from the earlier. For the rural area, men's masters or equivalent educational degree holders were about three times higher than women, for instance, the percentage of women with aforementioned degree was 0.21% for women and 0.68% for men. It is observed from the BBS's data that in the year of 2001-02 women labor force in garment industry was 1.35 million and in the years of 2005-06 women labor force reached at 1.87 million. Specifically in the year of 2006-07 the ratio of women employee was increased rapidly, for example, it was about six times higher than men employee. Women in the rural area have lackage of proper information about labor market. That's why they are being deprived of quality jobs.

In respect to administrative / managerial sectors position of women are much more vulnerable both for the rural and urban areas. Specifically, at the national level, it is really surprisingly that 0.56% men was engaged in administrative / managerial sectors whereas only 0.19% women are engaged in the same sectors as rural women are less aware and educated. Moreover, there are much more communication gap among the job seeker rural women as most of them have limited social network which is essential to get a quality

job. Women's position in managerial levels is really distressful. For instance, at the national level, it is about three times higher than men. Facilitating technology based communication system like mobile and access to information about jobs may also go a long way in attracting women into the labor force. In the rural area, there are far difference in performing house keeping tasks between men and women. For example, in the rural area, most of the women are engaged in housekeeping activities. In respect to unpaid family worker, women (6.8 million) are more than doubled compared with the men (3.5 million) that indicate the negative evaluation of women labor force in terms of economic contribution. Moreover, women absentee in labor force participation highly increased (29.4 million) whereas absentee of male (5.7 million) labor force decreased extremely. Overall, positions of rural women in labor force participation are vulnerable compared men. Hence, better policy relating to rural women's employment should be addressed for mainstreaming women at variety of level.

8.0 Major Findings

The dramatic growth in women's employment is led by the agriculture and garment industry sector. As the majority of women labor force are engaged in agriculture or agriculture-based activities, various employment strategy also needs to address issues that would improve women's productivity in the agro-based sector. Women's work participation rates have increased rapidly. Specifically in the year of 2006-07 the ratio of women employee was increased rapidly, for example, it was about six times higher than men employee. Education has been an important indicator of economic development. It is interesting to mention that labor force with masters or equivalent educational degree was 0.99% for women compared to 3.32% for men at the national level. Women's position in managerial levels is really distressful. For instance, at the national level, it is about three times higher than men. Misleading sexist categorization of jobs in homes, and employers of labor is a major discriminatory factor. So it should be eliminated to develop a gender balance society. Specifically, in the rural area, there are gender gap in performing housekeeping tasks between men and women. For example, in the rural area, women unpaid family workers (6.8 million) are more than doubled compared with the men (3.5 million) that obviously indicate substandard position of women in the society as a whole. Finally, it is seen from various literatures that some socio-economic and cultural factors namely-patriarchal socio-economic

structure, social norms and belief, veil system (*Purdah*), insufficient economic investment for girl' education, poor human relation, violence and harassment in workplace, stereotyped gender role for women etc. also have an influence on women's limited labor force participation in rural Bangladesh.

9.0 Conclusions and Suggestions

The present situation and status of rural women's labor force participation reveal that women bear a disproportionately high share of the country's underdevelopment compared to men. Despite this depressing representation of rural women, there has been an increase in the levels of female participation in the national economy. By removing various barriers, women's access to labor force participation in various fields can be dispersed. For this reason, some necessary measures are needed to uplift the present situation. Since the majority of women labor force are engaged in agriculture or agriculture-based activities, various employment strategies are also needed to address the issues that would improve women's productivity in the agro-based sector. Women must be connected with employment policy and plan formulation process. Similarly, the misguided stereotypical division of work into men and women's jobs must be eliminated.

Poverty is an important risk factor to ensure of women education that has a linkage with employment in rural Bangladesh. It is universal that education is the panacea to development. Hence, poverty alleviation programs should be well articulated, vigorously pursued and objectively carried out so that poverty level of parents would be reduced. This will enable poor parents to give equal opportunities to their children that will result into higher education of women and high quality job for women as well. Moreover, since poor women's access to waged work is so poor, policy also needs to be based on a better understanding of the approach in which large public employment programs benefit women as they are left behind economically and socio-culturally. Facilitating technology based communication system like mobile and access to information about jobs may also go a long way in attracting rural women into the labor force. It is needed to

formulate and implement a gender-neutral education policy to ensure gender sensitive curriculum and textbooks at every level of education. Misleading sexist categorization of jobs in homes, and employers of labor is considered as major discriminatory factor in terms of providing facilities. It should be eliminated through creating mass-consciousness activities. Print and electronic media should play pivotal role in this respect. Overall mass-peoples' mentality change is badly needed to mainstream women in economic development and building up a gender balance society.

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