

# Understanding Women's Work: Gendered Analysis of Women's Participation in Domestic Duties in North East India

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Ellina Samantroy



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# Understanding Women's Work: Gendered Analysis of Women's Participation in Domestic Duties in North East India

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# Contents

	Preface	v
	Acknowledgment	vii
	List of Tables	viii
	List of Figures	iv
	List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	x
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	
1.1	The Context	1
1.2	North Eastern States: A Profile	3
1.3	Review of Literature	5
1.4	Objectives	8
1.5	Methodology	9
1.6	Outline of the Study	9
<b>2</b>	<b>Education, Skill and Labour Force Participation: A Gender Perspective</b>	
2.1	The Context	10
2.2	Education	12
2.3	Vocational Training and Occupational Segregation	18
2.4	Women's Participation in Labour Force	21
2.5	Women Participation's in Workforce	24
2.6	Sectoral Participation and Status as Workers	28
2.7	Summing Up	33
<b>3</b>	<b>Socio-Cultural Norms, Gendered Responsibilities and Women's Participation in Unpaid Work</b>	
3.1	The Context	34
3.2	Domestic Duties and Household Division of Labour in the North Eastern Region	35
3.2.1	Reasons for Spending Most of the Time in Domestic Duties	42
3.3	Women Engaged in Domestic Duties by Marital Status, Education and Household Size	45
3.4	Willingness to Work in Household Premise and Type of Assistance Required	49
3.5	The Relevance of Time Use Surveys in Understanding Women's Work	52
3.6	Summing Up	53
<b>4</b>	<b>Conclusion and Policy Recommendations</b>	55
<b>5</b>	<b>References</b>	61

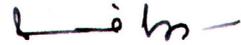


## Preface

The level of economic development in a country as a whole and within various regional contexts set out the broad parameters of occupational options for both men and women. But, certain social and cultural factors like perceptions of gender roles and division of work between men and women, access to certain occupations and prevalence of traditional customs determine women's entry into the labour market and the North Eastern region is not an exception. In the north eastern society, women are dependent on forests and natural resource for livelihood generation. The geographical location and associated risks of climate change and other vulnerabilities needs a thorough probing on assessing the impacts of such risks on the vulnerable groups like women. Since the north eastern society has a large number tribal population and other ethnic groups' gender sensitive approaches are necessary for empowerment of women. For example language barriers and social discrimination faced by women of several ethnic groups restrict them from access of human capital and income generation opportunities. Therefore there is a need to recognize intra-household dynamics that influence allocation and distribution of resources and also determine the conditions for women's participation in labour market or income generating activities. In this society, gender biases continue to be embedded in the socio-cultural structures, economic processes and labour market institutions. Moreover, the dynamics of cultural practices, institutional norms and customary practices have impact on household division of labour and access to occupations. These socio-cultural constraints are important factors determining the entry and exit of women into the labour market. The governmental data sources are unable to inform us whether women who are currently engaged in housework but work in subsidiary capacity are doing it by choice or because of the adverse conditions in the labour market, peculiar to the North Eastern Region.

In this context, the present work tries to analyze the gendered dimensions of employment in North East India and explores the dynamics of women's work, thereby enabling a critical understanding about the reasons for gender differentials in the working lives of men and women. It also tries to understand the inter-linkages between education, skill and labour market participation. There is also an attempt to analyze women's unpaid work with specific emphasis on their participation in household and related activities (domestic duties) thereby exploring intra-household dynamics and role of socio and cultural norms, ethnic identities and regional disparities for interpreting gender relations in the household.

The study also tries to provide policy recommendations for improving women's work and economic participation in the North East Region (NER). I am sure that this work will be definitely prove to be a valuable asset in guiding planners, social scientists, trade unions, civil society organizations and scholars working in the area of north east.



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**Ellina Samantroy**

<b>Table No.</b>	<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
Table 2.1	Literacy Rates and Decadal Difference in Literacy Rates by Sex: 2001-2011	12
Table 2.2	Percentage Attendance Rates in Educational Institutions of Different Age Groups for Each State	13
Table 2.3	Percentage Distribution of Persons of Age 5-29 Years Who Were Currently Not Attending Any Educational Institution by Broad Reason for Non-Attendance for NER	15
Table 2.4	Percentage Distribution of Persons of Age 15-59 Years Who Received Formal Vocational Training by Field of Training, Status of Education and Vocational Training in North-East and India, NSS 66th Round	18
Table 2.5	Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for persons aged 15 to 59 years by Usual Status in NER	22
Table 2.6	Workforce Participation Rate (WFPR) in 15 to 59 Age Group by Usual Status in NER	25
Table 2.7	Sectoral Distribution (per 100) of Worker in 15-59 Age Group in NER	28
Table 3.1	Number of Females (per 100 Females) Engaged in DD (according to the UPSS) by Age Group During 1999-2000 to 2011-12	36
Table 3.2	Number of Females Engaged in DD (UPSS) per 100 Females During 2011-12 (15-59 Age Group) in NER	39
Table 3.3	Number of Females Aged 15 to 59 Required to Spend MTDD (Most of the Time in Domestic Duties) per 100 Females Engaged in DD	40
Table 3.4	Number of Females Engaged in DD (according to the UPSS) who were Required to Spend MTDD and their Distribution by Reason for each Age Group and Sector	42
Table 3.5	Reason for Spending Most of the Time in Domestic Duties (MTDD) in 15-59 Age Group in NER	44
Table 3.6	Household Size by Reason for Spending Most of the Time in Domestic Duties (MTDD)	48
Table 3.7	Percentage Distribution of Females (15-59 Age Group) Usually Engaged in DD (UPSS) and Willing to Accept Work in the Household Premises by Type of Assistance Required for all North Eastern States	50
Table 3.8	Percentage Distribution of Females (15-59 Age Group) Usually Engaged in DD (UPSS) and Willing to Accept Work on the Household Premises by Nature of Work Acceptable	51

<b>Figures No.</b>	<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
Figure 2.1	Female LFPR in 15 to 59 Age Group by Usual Status in NER	23
Figure 2.2	Female WFPR in 15 to 59 Age Group by Usual Status in NER	27
Figure 2.3	Workforce Composition: Gender Distribution (15-59 Age Group), Rural, 2001	30
Figure 2.4	Workforce Composition: Gender Distribution (15-59 Age Group), Urban, 2001	31
Figure 2.5	Workforce Composition: Gender Distribution (15-59 Age Group) Rural, 2011	31
Figure 2.6	Workforce Composition: Gender Distribution (15-59 Age Group) Urban, 2011	31
Figure 3.1	Percentage of Females Engaged in DD (According to the UPSS) by Age Group During 2011-12	38
Figure 3.2	Number of Females Engaged in DD in UPSS per 100 Females During 2011-12 (15-59 Age Groups)	39
Figure 3.3	Number of Females Aged 15 to 59 Required to Spend MTDD (Most of the Time in Domestic Duties) per 100 Females Engaged in DD	41
Figure 3.4	Percentage Distribution of Women Engaged in DD by Marital Status	46
Figure 3.5	Percentage Distribution of Women Engaged in DD by Education and Marital Status in 15-59 Age Group in Rural NER and India by UPSS	47
Figure 3.6	Women engaged in DD by Education and Marital Status in 15-59 Age Group in Urban NER and India by UPSS	47
Figure 3.7	Percentage Distribution of Females between Age 15-59 Years Engaged in DD (UPSS) and Willingness to Accept Work in the Household Premises by Type of Assistance Required, 2011-12 in Rural and Urban Areas	49

## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AGI	Adolescent Girl Initiative
ATI	Administrative Training Institute
CSO	Central Statistical Organizations
DD	Domestic Duties
Ex-SNA	Extended System of National Accounts
GDI	Gender Development Index
GGR	Global Gender Gap Report
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Reports
ILO	International Labour Organization
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
MOLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
MODONER	Ministry of Development of North-Eastern Region
MOSPI	Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTDD	Most of the Time in Domestic Duties
MWCD	Ministry of Women and Child Development
NAs	National Accounts
NER	North East Region
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NSS	National Sample Survey
NSSO	National Sample Survey Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SHGs	Self Help Groups
SIRD	State Institute of Rural Development
SNA	System of National Accounts
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
UPSS	Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status
WB	World Bank
WFPR	Workforce Participation Rate

# 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 The Context

Though economic growth and prosperity has led India to rank as one of the largest economies of the world, a large section of population has remained excluded and marginalized from such growth process. Various studies pointed out that market reform measures have widened the gaps across the regions and the states for last two decades. Regions with better governance, infrastructure, connectivity, investment, and economic freedom are reaping the benefits of reforms and moving much faster than regions, which are still volatile in terms of insecurity, economic stagnation, and governance-deficit. Many eminent scholars have pointed out that regional disparity in terms of development in India is on the rise, especially during the post reform period (Bhattacharya, 2014). Particularly, North-East India has experienced problems like immigration, severe intra-regional differences in socio-economic issues and ethno-political aspirations, which have implications for the social, economic and cultural lives of both men and women. Women in the North East share a common history of marginalization both by the outsider or the state and the insider or their own community (Banerjee, 2014). There is no denying fact that the North Eastern society has displayed tremendous diversity in terms of caste, religion and ethnicity. However, women of the region have been the victims of poverty, unemployment, exploitation, inequality, despite their significant contribution to the economy. Gender gap still exist in terms of access to education, employment and health.

The recent Human Development Report (HDR) 2015 unveiled that India has been placed at the 130<sup>th</sup> position in the Human Development Index (HDI) among the 188 countries. Although Gender Development Index (GDI), reported female HDI value for India is 0.525 in contrast with 0.660 for males whereas GDI value of all India recorded as 0.795. In addition, India reported in Gender Inequality Index (GII) value of 0.563 (UNDP, 2015)<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> **Human Development Index and its components (HDI)** ranks countries by 2014 HDI value and details the values of the three HDI components: longevity, education (with two indicators) and income.

**Gender Development Index (GDI)** measures disparities in HDI by gender. The table contains HDI values estimated separately for women and men; the ratio of which is the GDI. The closer the ratio to 1, the smaller the gap between women and men. Values for the three HDI components—longevity, education (with two indicators) and income—are also presented by gender. The table also includes country groupings by absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI values.

The human development indicators show that inequalities are still rooted in India and get more pronounced in institutional structures such as labour markets which provide unequal access to men and women. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR) 2015, the economic opportunity and participation rankings of India is 139 amongst 145 countries. In over all gender gap global index, India ranks 108 amongst 145 nations which makes it extremely challenging to achieve the global commitments on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>2</sup>. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reaffirmed the universal consensus on the crucial importance of gender equality and its contribution to the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. More jobs-and quality jobs-for women, universal social protection and measures to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and household work are indispensable to delivering on the new trans formative sustainable development agenda, which aims to reduce poverty (Goal 1) and inequalities (Goal 10), to achieve gender equality (Goal 5) and to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (Goal 8), (ILO, 2016). The SDGs addresses women's economic empowerment – including that of rural women<sup>3</sup>. Although several policy initiatives and economic empowerment programmes for women exist , yet a lot more needs to be done. Further, the Human Development Reports of the North East Region (NER) also showed that women of the region were at disadvantageous position compared to men. However, the status of the women in some states of the region and in areas like education, employment, health, etc. were far better than that of the nation as a whole while in others the situation was adverse (Mahanta and Nayak, 2013).

It is generally perceived that women in the NER enjoy greater mobility and visibility, economic autonomy and control over their labour than women of any other part of India. But there are diverse contexts where women are

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**Gender Inequality Index (GII)** presents a composite measure of gender inequality using three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. Reproductive health is measured by two indicators: the maternal mortality ratio and the adolescent birth rate. Empowerment is measured by the share of parliamentary seats held by women and the share of population with at least some secondary education. And labour market is measured by participation in the labour force. A low Gender Inequality Index value indicates low inequality between women and men, and vice-versa.

<sup>2</sup> On September 2015 many countries adopted a set of goals as sustainable development goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity and well being for all. 17 goals with certain targets are to be achieved by 2030. Details available at <http://www.un.org/sustainable-development/sustainable-development-goals/>

<sup>3</sup> For details please see (<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/speeches/2016/03/18/helen>)

located in the NER as women in hills and plains operate in different contexts and their activities differ considerably. Further, there is a lack of adequate micro finance, infrastructure, training and education in the development of their skills. However, the customary laws practiced among many of the tribals in North East India are not always favorable to the interests of women. Women perform a large number of economic activities, yet their economic contributions are underestimated due to conceptual problems as most of them are engaged in unpaid work (Sinha and Sinha, 2013).

While reflecting on the qualitative dimension of women's work in North East, it can be argued that much of women's work fall outside the census definition of work but is crucial for the sustenance of their families and households. The non-market economic activities performed within households are usually not recorded adequately and therefore the contribution of men, women and children within the household, to the economy, is generally undervalued. Moreover, goods and services provided to the household by unpaid household members constituted the largest single item left out of National Accounts (NAs). Other unrecorded economic activities include repairs of household premises and equipments, basket making, weaving, knitting, sewing, etc. for own consumption. A lack of statistical evidence on women's unpaid work and time use surveys<sup>4</sup> have led to gross underestimation of women's capabilities and status as workers. This is reflected in the low Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPRs) of women as recorded in employment-unemployment surveys of India.

Against this backdrop, the present study tries to understand the patterns of employment in north eastern society, focusing on women's employment. It makes an attempt to understand the intra-household dynamics in interpreting women's work and also the cultural and social factors responsible for low labour force participation among females. While exploring the gender differentials in the working lives of men and women, the study analyses the reality of unpaid work in India, North-East India in particular, and the constraints women face to participate in paid employment.

## 1.2 North Eastern States: A Profile

The HDR 2002 reveals that the region comprising of the eight states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland,

<sup>4</sup> Time use surveys are quantitative summaries of how individuals allocate their time over a specified time period - typically over 24 hours of a day or over the seven days of a week on different activities and how much time they spend on each of these activities.

Sikkim (the last to be included in the region) and Tripura, constitutes a land surface of 262,230 square kilometers where a population of 38.9 million belonging to different ethnic and cultural groups inhabits. Topographically, the region is a mixture of hills and plains. While Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim are almost entirely hilly, about four fifths of Assam is plains<sup>5</sup>. Manipur and Tripura have both plain areas and hilly tracts. The hills account for about 70 per cent area and accommodate about 30 per cent of population of the region and the plains constituting the remaining 30 per cent of area hold about 70 per cent of its population (Nayak, 2010)<sup>6</sup>. The NER has been a haven for many people belonging to various castes, religions and ethnic groups in various historical epochs. However, the North East is home to over 200 of the 635 tribal communities in the country, most of who live in the hill states of Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, and form an overwhelming majority of the population of these states. The tribal population constitutes about one-fourth of the population of the region. In four states, i.e., *Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh*, the tribal people comprise a majority of the population. The NER has been a unique one endowed with abundant natural resources. The forest cover in the region constitutes 52 per cent of its total geographical population (NEC, 2008). This part of India is marked for its rich cultural diversity but has witnessed regional economic disparity since long. The socio-political context of the society had displayed tremendous diversities in terms of caste, class, race, ethnicity, region etc. The society has also portrayed a culture of both patriarchy and matriarchy (Samantroy, 2012).

Nevertheless, in spite of being endowed with vast natural resources in terms of forests, biological diversity, hydroelectricity, the region has remained largely underdeveloped. A key constraint to the growth has been poor infrastructure and limited connectivity, both within the region as well as with the rest of the country. The region is connected to the rest of India by a narrow stretch of land called the 'chicken's neck', needs infrastructure to support and ensure significant investments and developmental aids<sup>7</sup>. While poverty and underdevelopment in the NER primarily lies in the self-content subsistence mode of production of the indigenous people, it is aggravated by lack of enabling environment for growth. The higher concentration of

<sup>5</sup> Government of India (2002) National Human Development Report, 2001, Planning Commission, New Delhi.

<sup>6</sup> For detail please see <http://dspace.nehu.ac.in/jspui/bitstream/1/2699/1/Human%20Development%20Reports%20on%20North-East%20India-%20A%20Bird's%20Eye%20View.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> For details please see ([https://www.pwc.in/assets/pdfs/publications/2013/north-east\\_summit-2013.pdf](https://www.pwc.in/assets/pdfs/publications/2013/north-east_summit-2013.pdf)).

poor among the self-employed in agriculture is the reflection of the poor performance of agriculture economy in six out of the eight NER states namely; Arunachal Pradesh (66.8 percent), Assam (33.6 percent), Manipur (77.3 percent), Meghalaya (63.6 percent), Mizoram (93.1 percent), Nagaland (na)<sup>8</sup>, Sikkim (67.7 percent) and Tripura (15.5 percent)<sup>9</sup>. However creation of gainful employment opportunities is probably the single most critical problem in NER, because this region still portrays the combined outcome of dominance of subsistence agrarian economies, poor industrial base, lack of infrastructure, significant dependence on public sector employment, political insurgency and violence and gross negligence by the centre and respective state government towards overall development (Sahu, 2012).

### 1.3 Review of Literature

There has been ample evidence on the recognition of women's unpaid work and time-use patterns in wide-ranging feminist discourses. Feminist economists have argued for unpaid care work to be taken into account in statistics and in policy making (Elson, 2000; Hirway, 2012; Hirway and Jose, 2011; Jain, 2008). The feminist concept of labour unravels the notion of time to be burdensome labour for women. The reduction of the time spent in commodity production does not lead to more freedom for women, but rather to more housework, more non-wage work in household production, more emotional and consumption work. While Mies explain that the construction of women as mother, wife and housewife was the trick by which 50 per cent of human labour was defined as a free resource, it was female labour (Mies, 1998). Some group of scholars revealed that unpaid work is the main hurdle for women empowerment and around the world, most unpaid work is performed by women. The unequal distribution of unpaid care work between women and men represents an infringement of women's rights and also a break on their economic empowerment (Leahy and Doughney, 2006; George *et al* 2009; Ferrant *et al*, 2014). Many Marxist feminist scholars, particularly in the disciplines of Sociology and Anthropology have done cross cultural and historical studies in the earlier forms of kinship and economy and the role of sexual division of labour in supporting or undermining women's social power. Further, they have tried to explore the relationship between the organisation of sexuality, domestic production, household and how housework oppressed women (Mies, 1998; Barret, 1980). Feminist anthropologists have argued that other variables in addition to women's role in production are key to understanding women's social status and power (Sanday 1981; Leghorn and Parker, 1981)<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> not applicable

<sup>9</sup> For detail please see ( [http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/Cover\\_Page9550048814.pdf](http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/Cover_Page9550048814.pdf))

<sup>10</sup> For detail please see: at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-class/>

Similarly, studies in the NER on women's unpaid work and time-use patterns have highlighted on the unequal division of labour within the household and increasing participation of women in household activities. On the basis of an analysis of the time use patterns of women and men, Shimray concludes that men's responsibility of household activities is shrinking. At the same time, women's work responsibilities are expanding, including activities like caring for children, sick and elderly persons, knitting and weaving (Shimray, 2004). Upadhyay who studied work participation and time-use pattern of women in rural Arunachal Pradesh found that women in the villages of the hill district performed all the work in the family farm, collected forest produce, and also participated in *jhum* cultivation as the men folk moved out to work as construction labour. The degradation of forests had also increased the time burden of women since they had to walk longer distances to collect firewood, medicinal plants, vegetables etc (Upadhyay, 2013). Some scholars also point out that the shift from family and community labour to wage work for extraction of forest products for market use as well the interdependencies between farming and forest related activities alters the intra-family distribution of work as well as opportunities for men and women. The transformation of the agrarian economy from collective/subsistence to individual/commercial agriculture has turned women in many of these communities into peasants without land rights, while increasing their overall work burden (Mishra, 2007).

In discussing the impact of the Supreme Court ban on timber logging on the people of North-East India, Nongbri points out that although logging is basically a masculine activity with women having little to do with its actual operations; the effect of the ban falls more heavily on women. Women selling forest produce in the Khasi-Jaintia region had to shut their shops, which in turn, affected the household economy. Driven by the economic crisis that afflicts their household, in some parts of the hills women are increasingly pushed into road construction, a task they had previously stayed away from. Given the hard physical labour involved in construction and the easy availability of male labour, women rarely get a fair deal in these activities. As women construction workers often represent the poorest of the poor, with little option open to them for alternative employment, they often have to put up with sexual advances of their male colleagues, many of whom happened to be non-tribals (Nongbri, 2000). Sinha, in her study of 400 men and women entrepreneurs from the North East India found that traditional activities such as handicrafts and handloom still predominated types of activities taken by women entrepreneurs. Very few women entrepreneurs opted for non-traditional occupations. Securing of loans to set-up and expand business

was a problem faced by both men and women entrepreneurs. However, this was more of a problem for women as women entrepreneurs were unable to provide collateral security against loans because property was mostly controlled by male family members (Sinha, 2003). Some other studies in Manipur revealed that Manipuri women have always engaged in economic activities that have led them to accumulate not only wealth, but also property and titles. Working or spending time in the market is a task delegated to women, which has allowed them to play a vital role in the market economy and exert control over certain resources like rice, paddy, fish, vegetables and fruits (Devi and Singh, 2013). In his study of the 'Status of Women in Bishnupriya Manipuri Society, Sinha recommends that the Government should support the people, especially women through micro-finance, education and training in the development of their skills to give more employment opportunities (Sinha, 2013).

While discussing women's position in Naga society, Shimray mentions that the rigid hierarchical structures based on caste such as in Hindu society, are non-existent in Naga society. There is a marked sense of equality based on community participation irrespective of sex and in social, cultural and religious matters; all participate in their own right. Generally, we speak of better social status for women in tribal rather than in caste based society. In tribal society, the status of women is generally measured in her 'freedom of choice', types of taboos, role in the family and clan, role in household work and customary status. Even though Naga society is patriarchal, the father is the head of the family and only male members of the household can inherit ancestral property women and girls enjoy considerable freedom and play an important role in the family as well as in the community life (Shimray, 2004). Women have a greater range of responsibility in Naga society starting from household maintenance to various agricultural activities, and they have greater work burden in both as well. It was observed that there is no clear cut demarcation in the gender division of labour in agricultural activities. During the agricultural season, the wife and the husband along with their children (depending on their availability) go to the field. They both participate in activities like transplantation, reaping, thrashing and winnowing. Household tasks like cooking, caring for children, cleaning and washing, weaving and knitting, husking and pounding and taking care of the home garden are mostly managed by women. However, it is evident that the region is marked with tremendous diversity in female labour force participation rates and contribution to household work.

Within, this background, it becomes apparent that non recognition of women's work in statistical sources, additional burdens of women's unpaid responsibilities and social and cultural practices constraints them

from accessing social protection and social security provisions available in the country. In fact, women are subjected to a life-cycle of risks and vulnerabilities emanating largely from gendered division of household tasks, poverty and deprivation in the household, customary laws and social practices restricting women's mobility amongst others (Samantroy, 2013). However, the NER has not received much attention from scholars on issues related to understanding women's agency in the North East, particularly in terms of access to employment and choice of employment, intra-household gender relations specifically participation in household and other non-market activities that deprives them of adequate social security provisions.

In this context, the present work tries to analyze the gendered dimensions of employment in North East India and explores the dynamics of women's employment, thereby enabling a critical understanding about the reasons for gender differentials in the working lives of men and women. It also tries to understand the inter-linkages between education, skill and labour market participation. There is also an attempt to analyze women's unpaid work with specific emphasis on their participation in household and related activities i.e., Domestic Duties (DD)<sup>11</sup> thereby exploring intra-household dynamics and role of socio and cultural norms, ethnic identities and regional disparities for interpreting gender relations in the household. The study also tries to provide policy recommendations for improving women's work and economic participation in the NER.

#### 1.4 Objectives

- To analyze the changing patterns of women's work in North East.
- To understand the linkages between education, skill and labour market participation in the region.
- To understand the dynamics of employment, household division of labour and participation of women in domestic duties thereby exploring the role of social and cultural norms in allocation of household tasks.
- To analyze the existing policies for women's economic participation and also to explore policy initiatives to be undertaken to encourage women's participation in the labour market.

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<sup>11</sup> NSS has captured domestic duties in the following codes namely; Code 92-attended to domestic duties only, 93- attended to domestic duties and was also engaged in free collection of goods (vegetables, roots, firewood, cattle, feed, etc.), sewing, tailoring, weaving, etc. for household use.

## 1.5 Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data from several governmental sources including the Census, National Sample Survey (NSS) and the Time Use Survey 1998-99. The study largely draws from NSS Report on Participation of Women in Specified Activities along with Domestic Duties (DD) 2014. The NSSO data for employment estimates of the 15-59 age group is taken for all kinds of analysis. For this purpose the concept of Usual Principal Subsidiary Status (UPSS) has been taken into consideration. Various rounds of NSS including the 2004-05, 2009-10 and 2012- is analyzed for the present study. Since the study is based on theNER, separate estimates for the region has been taken through NSS unit level data. Further, the unit level data is also used to generate information on a disaggregated level. The study has made use of official records and published government reports from the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE), Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD), Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Ministry of Development of North-Eastern Region (MODONER) and Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) etc. It has also used various other secondary sources such as books, journals and reports of international organizations including the International Labour Organization (ILO), World Bank (WB), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations (UN) Women.

## 1.6 Outline of the Study

The second chapter provides a brief overview of the complex labour market situation prevailing in North East Region and highlights the gender differentials observed in the employment trends for men and women. This chapter also tries to explore the linkages between education and labour market participation. The third chapter tries to reflect on the dynamics of unpaid care work and family life within the context of household division of labour and cultural practices thereby exploring the role of social norms, cultural factors etc in allocation of household tasks etc. The last chapter examines the existing policies for women's economic participation and gives recommendations for policy initiatives for North-East India that can encourage women's participation in the labour market.

## **Education, Skill and Labour Force Participation: A Gender Perspective**

### **2.1 The Context**

It is generally believed that literacy has an intrinsic relationship with employment but the trend is not the same in India. There has been a growing concern among economists, feminist scholars and women studies specialists about women workers being crowded in low paying and unskilled jobs further giving way to a plethora of ongoing debates on why employment and education are moving in opposite directions as far as females are concerned? Though developmental efforts have increased in the recent past yet the work participation rate for females do not reveal that a greater proportion of literate women becoming workers as evident in the case of men. The same holds true for NER underlining the phenomena that social and economic development have not been gender neutral. Many feminist scholars, gender advocates etc. have questioned the assumptions on which economic policies are anchored and the methodologies that limit an understanding of economic problems.

Historically, the study of the female experience in work and education has focused on comparisons (with males) and on the unequal nature of female-male experiences in terms of occupation, pay, promotion, and so on and the devaluation of traditional 'female' occupations (Prince, 1993). It is also evident that though there is a change in attitude towards gender roles, an increase in numbers of women acquiring higher education and joining the workforce in advanced industrialized countries culminating in the resistance for equality, yet women and men continue to work in different occupations, with women concentrating in a relatively small number of female-typed occupations such as teachers, secretaries nurse etc. It has been argued that horizontal and vertical segregation at the workplace are principally cultural and institutional phenomena that reflect two ideological tenets. The first, gender essentialism, represents women as more competent than men in service, nurturance, and social interaction. The second, male primacy represents men as more status worthy than women and accordingly more appropriate for positions of authority and domination. When employers and personnel managers internalize such stereotypes, they tend to hire fire and promote in accord with such stereotypes. Essentialist beliefs also affect how workers come to understand their skills and abilities; women tend to regard themselves as

less competent than men at male-typed jobs, even when objectively they are just as competent (Charles and Grusky, 2004). All these factors then, prevent women from occupying or transitioning to well-paid positions and positions of authority. In this context, it becomes important to understand the complex relationship between education, skill and labour market participation.

Coming to the NER, the relationship between education, skill and labour market participation for women has been extremely complex and varies across different states of the region. Some of the micro studies conducted in the region have reflected on differential dimensions of female education and its relationship with labour market participation. Female literacy in the North-Eastern States has increased substantially in the last five decades and the gender gap in literacy has shown declining trend (Lama, 2013). Based on their research on women's education and work participation in the Dhemji district of Assam, Goswami *et al*, (2008) pointed out that women have very little access to education and majority of women had education up to primary level and below. Even though female literacy among the tribal women in Assam is better than those of their counterparts in India, still it is not significant and a major part of Assam lags in literacy and education than many other parts of the country. Their level of education is directly proportionate to their share of main workers. While female members of the poor and less educated families were engaged in paid work, less women in better-educated families took up work outside their homes. The scholars argue that the impact of education is found in a larger social change as is evident in late marriage, less fertility, less mortality rate etc. They found that very few tribal women of Dhemji district were involved in activities other than agriculture except weaving and sericulture. One of the reasons for less diversification of occupational structure of women workers in Dhemji district was related to women's family and domestic responsibilities, women preferred to work closer to their homes. Moreover, sense of social security, lack of industrial activities, poor communication systems etc. contribute to lesser diversification of women's work involvement.

In this background, the present chapter tries to understand the relationship between education and labour force participation of women in NER. It tries to explore an overview of the labour market trends in North East India and highlights on the gender differentials. The chapter also tries to understand the participation of women in different sectors. There is also an attempt to understand complex concerns of occupational segregation by exploring on issues related to skill development, particularly vocational training for women in the NER.

## 2.2 Education

An analysis of the trends in literacy rate in the table below (Table 2.1) provides a comparative picture of education of men and women in the NER. The literacy rate of women and the decadal difference in the NER shows that the gender gap has been obvious in almost all states of NER over the years. Though Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland showed very less gender gap in literacy i.e. 3.39, 4.32 and 6.60 respectively. Yet a question which arises is whether such positive changes have contributed to an improvement in labour force participation of women?. The gender gap in education is due to many reasons including parents' lack of interest in female education, girls' responsibility in domestic work, more preference for education of sons etc. (Ray and Ray, 2008). But there is no denying fact that the gender gap in literacy rates is less in almost all North Eastern States when compared to all India average which showed 16.68 per cent in 2011. However this does not address the larger question of whether increased education levels would contribute to higher work participation rates? Also it is difficult to state why relatively high female literacy can be treated as an indicator of high status when there is declining sex ratio and unchanging female work participation rate (Ray and Ray, 2008). Such questions also uncover the myth of gender egalitarianism prevalent in predominantly tribal societies of the NER.

**Table 2.1 Literacy Rates and Decadal Difference in Literacy Rates by Sex: 2001-2011**

State/ UT Code	India/ State/ Union Territory	2001		Gap Literacy Rate	2011		Gap Literacy Rate	Decadal difference in Literacy Rates	
		Male	Female		Males	Female		Male	Female
1	Sikkim	76.04	60.40	15.64	87.29	76.43	10.86	11.25	16.03
2	Arunachal Pradesh	63.83	43.53	20.30	73.69	59.57	14.12	9.86	16.04
3	Nagaland	71.16	61.46	9.70	83.29	76.69	6.60	12.13	15.23
4	Manipur	79.54	60.10	19.44	86.49	73.17	13.32	6.95	13.07
5	Mizoram	90.72	86.75	3.97	93.72	89.40	4.32	3.00	2.65
6	Tripura	81.02	64.91	16.11	92.18	83.15	9.03	11.16	18.24
7	Meghalaya	65.43	59.61	5.82	77.17	73.78	3.39	11.74	14.17
8	Assam	71.28	54.61	16.67	78.81	67.27	11.54	7.53	12.66
9.	India	75.26	53.67	21.59	82.14	65.46	16.68	6.88	11.79

Source: Census 2011

**Table 2.2: Percentage Attendance Rates in Educational Institutions of Different Age Groups for Each State**

State/UT	Age Groups							
	5-14		15-19		20-24		25-29	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<b>Rural</b>								
Arunachal Pradesh	70.2	68.0	59.6	55.0	23.3	14.0	5.6	4.7
Assam	86.4	87.6	56.1	49.3	19.1	9.5	2.8	0.2
Manipur	91.3	91.4	75.4	71.3	36.8	29.0	2.4	6.7
Meghalaya	94.3	92.5	62.0	73.8	19.8	14.9	0.9	7.8
Mizoram	92.8	95.9	75.4	41.0	4.9	6.1	1.0	2.5
Nagaland	97.4	99.4	62.0	77.8	29.8	23.3	0.8	2.4
Sikkim	98.1	98.5	57.4	84.3	17.0	18.2	0.6	6.1
Tripura	94.7	88.6	81.2	63.0	12.3	5.6	4.9	1.2
All-India	87.2	84.2	58.7	47.3	18.6	8.2	2.4	1.4
<b>Urban</b>								
Arunachal Pradesh	80.1	79.9	80.8	75.7	56.2	37.5	13.1	17.0
Assam	94.1	94.4	81.9	70.1	41.1	44.6	0.5	13.3
Manipur	94.8	93.3	90.6	85.1	55.0	37.0	11.6	9.7
Meghalaya	89.9	80.6	73.2	72.7	54.6	42.1	12.1	11.4
Mizoram	96.6	96.9	79.7	83.5	33.4	25.1	6.3	5.3
Nagaland	95.0	96.1	90.3	92.0	57.9	44.7	3.1	1.1
Sikkim	100.0	90.9	88.9	31.8	12.1	32.5	0	1
Tripura	92.2	94.5	78.1	68.9	21.7	19.6	2.0	3.0
All-India	91.2	90.9	68.8	66.9	32.5	24.0	5.2	3.8

*Source: Status of Education and Vocational Training in India, NSS 66<sup>th</sup> Round. 2009-10*

An analysis of attendance in educational institutions for different age groups reveals that in rural areas though primary education has shown remarkable progress in the North Eastern States, secondary and higher education still has less concentration of both males and females. On the contrary, urban areas show better attendance of females across different age groups. According to the Table 2.2, the attendance for females was higher for all the North-Eastern States compared to the All-India figures in the primary age group of 5-14 years. While the all India average on girls

attendance in educational institutions recorded in rural areas was 84.2 per cent, some of the North Eastern States like Nagaland (99.4 per cent), Sikkim (98.5 per cent), Mizoram (95.9 per cent), Meghalaya (92.5 per cent), Manipur (91.4 per cent), Tripura (88.6 per cent) and Assam (87.6 per cent) recorded very high female attendance in educational institutions beyond the all India average. On the contrary, Arunachal Pradesh (68.0 per cent) showed school attendance rates for females as lower than the all India average among 5-14 age groups.

In urban areas of North East, similar trends were reported with higher female attendance in educational institutions in certain states of North East in the age groups of 5-14 exceeding the all India average (90.9 per cent). States like Mizoram (96.9 per cent), Nagaland (96.1 per cent), Tripura (94.5 per cent), Assam (94.4 per cent), Manipur (93.3 per cent) and Sikkim (90.9 per cent) recorded very high female attendance in educational institutions. In the case of males, Sikkim reported 100 per cent attendance rates in urban areas, followed by Mizoram (96.6 per cent), Nagaland (95.0 per cent), Meghalaya (89.9 per cent) and Arunachal Pradesh (80.1 per cent). Attendance rates for this age group in all North-Eastern States except Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh were higher than all-India figures (91.2 per cent).

However, in the higher age groups of 20-24, the female attendance in educational institutions decreased gradually and the gender gaps became more pronounced. In the rural areas, the all India attendance in educational institutions for females was 8.2 per cent whereas for males it was 18.6 per cent thereby reflecting on gender differentials in access and continuance in education. For example, in rural areas of Tripura in 20-24 age group, it was revealed that while 12.3 males attended educational institutions, it was only 5.6 per cent for females. Such gender differentials in attending higher education were also evident in States like Assam (male: 19.1 per cent female: 9.5 per cent), Meghalaya (male: 19.8 females: 14.9) and Arunachal Pradesh (male: 23.3 per cent female: 14.0 percent). However, some states showed less gender gap in attending higher educational institutions like Manipur (males: 36.8 per cent females: 29.0 per cent) and Nagaland (male: 29.8 females: 23.3 per cent) which reported fewer gaps.

Contrastingly, Sikkim (Male: 17.0 per cent females: 18.2 per cent) and Mizoram (male: 4.9 per cent females: 6.1 per cent) showed better participation of females in comparison to males. The impact of Christianity in the spread of literacy irrespective of sex has been more pervasive in the states of Mizoram and Nagaland than in Meghalaya (Kar, 2002). One of the reasons can be attributed to increase in educational institutions in Sikkim and also encouragement for female education. Sikkim has a strong

network of 781 government schools, 421 private schools, 71 monastic schools, 25 local body schools, 11 Sanskrit schools and 3 Islamic schools. The state is also experimenting with alternative and innovative models of education. Sikkim became the second state in India to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Quality Council of India on 27 March 2011 for developing accreditation standards towards quality government schools. Notwithstanding this, the entry of females in non-traditional courses and higher degrees is indicative of the new trend against gender stereotypes and of the fact that women are making their presence in all streams. Although disparities still exist, the gradual transformation and more representation of girls in higher education in both professional and non-professional courses is gaining momentum (HDR, 2014).

Given this situation, many micro studies on North Eastern States have highlighted on the educational status of women in North East and stated that there are various hurdles for female education. In spite of increase in literacy rates, it is also observed that female drop-outs, percentage of failure in examination in primary, secondary, college and university levels are higher when compared to male students as is seen in other parts of the country (Sinha and Sinha, 2013). However, it would be also important to find out about the people not attending educational institutions and the reasons for their non-attendance.

**Table 2.3: Percentage Distribution of Persons of Age 5-29 Years Who Were Currently not Attending Any Educational Institution by Broad Reason for Non-Attendance for NER**

State/UT	Reason for Not Attending Educational Institution											all
	School too far		has to supplement HH income		Education not considered necessary		has to attend domestic chores		others			
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	100	
<b>Rural</b>												
Arunachal Pradesh	9.9	11.8	26.4	11.2	5.7	5.9	10.6	23.9	47.5	47.1	100	
Assam	0.4	1.1	44.5	4.4	5.4	10.6	7.6	24.9	42.1	59.1	100	
Manipur	1.5	1.7	35.3	12.3	2.8	5.5	10.1	35.2	50.3	45.3	100	
Meghalaya	1.5	0.8	68.3	43.8	6.4	0.7	1.7	30.1	22.0	24.6	100	
Mizoram	2.6	1.3	30.7	21.5	9.7	4.7	3.8	20.1	53.2	52.4	100	
Nagaland	0.5	0.5	8.7	7.0	0.5	1.1	4.8	7.9	85.5	83.6	100	
Sikkim	1.0	1.8	42.7	10.8	2.0	1.8	3.1	42.0	51.0	43.8	100	

Tripura	1.7	2.8	66.1	9.6	6.5	7.6	4.2	51.1	21.5	28.8	100
All-India	2.7	3.8	54.4	9.7	12.5	18.4	4.4	39.3	25.9	28.7	100
<b>Urban</b>											
Arunachal Pradesh	6.3	10.9	33.1	11.2	3.3	3.9	12.8	35.5	44.5	38.5	100
Assam	0.4	0.5	36.4	7.5	5.2	12.1	2.4	21.7	55.6	38.2	100
Manipur	3.2	1.3	50.9	16.4	17.1	4.4	4.9	46.1	35.5	31.8	100
Meghalaya	1.1	0.5	44.3	23.1	5.4	0	0.9	29.4	43.7	47.0	100
Mizoram	0.3	0.8	20.2	9.0	10.0	1.8	7.4	21.2	68.9	67.2	100
Nagaland	0	0	15.0	4.4	3.2	0	2.0	13.5	83.0	82.1	100
Sikkim	0	0	95.4	27.2	0	0	1.3	40.2	3.3	32.5	100
Tripura	0	0	70.1	11.9	3.5	4.0	0	56.2	26.4	27.9	100
All-India	1.3	1.6	61.0	11.0	8.0	43.6	3.3	51.2	26.4	29.8	100

*Source: Status of Education and Vocational Training in India, NSS 66<sup>th</sup> Round 2009-10*

In spite of increase in overall literacy rates for women in many North Eastern States over census periods; it is quite contradictory to find out that women are not attending educational institutions due to their engagement in domestic chores in between the age group of 5-29 (Table 2.3). In fact, a larger percentage of women reported this reason, as compared to men. For females in rural areas, the highest percentage for not attending educational institutions due to domestic chores was reported in Tripura (51.1 per cent). This was followed by Sikkim (42.0 per cent), Manipur (35.2 per cent), Meghalaya (30.1 per cent), Assam (24.9 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (23.9 per cent), Mizoram (20.1 per cent), and Nagaland (7.9 per cent). Compared to the all-India average (39.3 per cent), Tripura and Sikkim reported a higher percentage of females giving this reason in rural areas. This is also reflected in greater participation of women in domestic duties in Tripura and Sikkim in the 15-59 age group which is discussed in the next chapter. Contrastingly, Tripura has shown a marked increase in literacy rates for females from 64.91 per cent in 2001 to 83.15 per cent in 2011 with a gender gap of only 9.03 per cent between males and females. It is evident that though literacy has improved, the continuance in education for females still remains a major challenge in the State.

In urban areas of NER, Tripura (56.2 per cent) reported the highest percentage of females not attending educational institutions due to the responsibility of domestic chores. This was followed by Manipur (46.1 per cent), Sikkim (40.2 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (35.5 per cent), Meghalaya (29.4 per cent), Assam (21.7 per cent), Mizoram (21.2 per cent) and Nagaland (13.5 per cent). Tripura was the only state with a percentage

higher than the All-India figure (51.2 per cent). Among the other reasons highlighted by females for not attending educational institutions was the distance of school, education not being compulsory for some of them, had to contribute in household income and others. For some hill states like the Arunachal Pradesh, issues of geographical location became prominent when females in rural areas (11.8 per cent) reported that they were not attending school due to issues of proximity which was higher than the all-India average (3.8 per cent). The hilly and mountainous regions mostly affected by landslides, other natural disasters and lack of appropriate transport and communication contribute in constraining people from attending educational institutions. For females in urban areas 10.9 per cent in Arunachal Pradesh gave the reason of proximity to school for not attending any educational institution. However, the same reason on '*school too far*' was also reported by 6.3 per cent males in urban areas of Arunachal Pradesh. Gender stereotypes in terms of participation in paid economic activities became more prominent when the reason on '*has to supplement household income*' was reported by males and '*has to attend domestic chores*', became more prominent for females as per the report of the National Sample Survey (NSS).

Apart from the above reasons, the female literacy, on the other hand, is found to be far from satisfactory in the socio-economic factors in the much backward areas of the region. This is more so in almost all the parts of Arunachal Pradesh, and some parts of Assam, Manipur Meghalaya and Tripura where there is dominance of certain socially backward populations groups like that of the tribes professing tribal religion in Arunachal Pradesh, certain tribal and Muslims communities in Assam, Garos and Jaintias in Meghalaya and certain tribal and non-tribal communities in Manipur and Tripura. All these diverse factors and other associate phenomena made the picture of females' literacy topography in the region varied and complex (Kar, 2002). However, access of women to better education can contribute in overall empowerment of women in the region. It was apparent that though literacy had improved in the NER for women, yet there are inter-state variations in the region on access to education and participation in domestic duties occupied a prominent place in the life of the women of North East India. While the domestic sphere became important for women and they were constrained to attend educational institutions, for men the male bread winning role became more important as they had to supplement to the household income as reported by the NSS.

In this context, it becomes pertinent to explore the relationship between education, skill and labour market participation. The structural and institutional arrangements have acted as serious impediments in women's education. In spite of various developmental efforts the social structure

has not undergone much transformation and the majoritarian tribal social structure of NER is not an exception to this. In order to understand the impact of education on labour market participation, it is also important to contextualize the participation of men and women in educational and vocational training institutions.

### 2.3 Vocational Training and Occupational Segregation

Gender stereotypes became evident in formal vocational training as an analysis of various trades under the vocational training scheme of the government revealed the prevalence of gender stereotyped skills where females were engaged in trades like *Textile related work* and *Artisan/ Craftsman/ Handicraft and Cottage* based production work, in all India and also in the NER. In rural areas in the 15-59 age groups, 24.5 per cent females were engaged in textile related work in all India and 20.7 per cent females in the NER were engaged in the same (Table 2.4). Similar trends were reflected in urban areas where males were engaged in trades like *Driving and motor mechanic work training*. While 15.9 per cent males in rural areas and 10.6 per cent males in urban areas received formal vocational training in driving and motor mechanic work in all India, similar trends were revealed in NER (all states) i.e. 24.9 per cent males in rural areas and 10.0 per cent males from urban areas received formal vocational training on driving and motor mechanic work. Such stereotypes became even more pronounced with women being concentrated in training like *beautician, hairdressing and related work and also work related to childcare, nutrition, pre-schools and crèches* both in rural and urban areas of the NER.

**Table 2.4: Percentage Distribution of Persons of Age 15-59 Years Who Received Formal Vocational Training by Field of Training, Status of Education and Vocational Training in North-East and India, NSS 66th Round**

Rural				
Field of Training* (code)	India		North East All	
	M	F	M	F
Mechanical engineering trades	14.1	0.3	1.5	0
Electrical and electronic engineering trades	18.7	1.2	8.8	0.2
Computer trades	18.1	21.7	25.7	35.9
Civil engineering and building construction related works	4.6	0.8	1.2	0
Chemical engineering trades	0.2	0	0	0
Leather related work	0	0	0	0

Textile related work	1.3	24.5	1.1	20.7
Catering, nutrition, hotels and restaurant related work	1.4	0	0	0
Artisan/ craftsman/ handicraft and cottage based production work	1.2	3.3	2.6	11.9
Creative arts/ artists	0.6	0.9	1.4	0
Agriculture and crop production related skills and food preservation related work	1.2	0.2	0.2	0
Non-crop based agricultural and other related activities	0.4	0.9	2.4	0
Health and paramedical services related work	4.8	14.8	0.7	7.6
Office and business related work	2.7	5.1	13.1	3.2
Driving and motor mechanic work	15.9	0	24.9	0
Beautician, hairdressing and related work	0	5.2	0	2.7
Work related to tour operators/ travel managers	0	0.1	0.7	0
Photography and related work-	0.1	0.4	0	0
Work related to childcare, nutrition, pre-schools and crèche	0.4	4.9	1.0	1.5
Journalism, mass communication and media related work	0.1	0	2.3	0
Printing technology related work	0.1	1.0	0.4	0
Other	11.0	13.7	7.3	3.0
n.r.	3.0	1.0	4.8	13.2
All	100	100	100	100
<b>Urban</b>				
	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>
Mechanical engineering trades	11.7	0.9	5.5	2.2
Electrical and electronic engineering trades	18.9	3.3	25.5	3.3
Computer trades	29.4	29.9	30.7	12.0
Civil engineering and building construction related works	5.9	1.4	2.0	1
Chemical engineering trades	0.8	0.6	1.3	0
Leather related work	0	0	0	0
Textile related work	0.9	16.9	0.5	16.8
Catering, nutrition, hotels and restaurant related work	1.1	0	0	0

Artisan/craftsman/handicraft and cottage based production work	0.4	2.4	1.9	10.4
Creative arts/ artists	0.4	1.1	0.5	2.0
Agriculture and crop production related skills and food preservation related work	0.3	0.6	1.0	0
Non-crop based agricultural and other related activities	0.2	0.1	0.0	0
Health and paramedical services related work	6.3	9.0	4.4	5.4
Office and business related work	3.5	6.0	5.9	1.5
Driving and motor mechanic work	10.6	0	10.0	0
Beautician, hairdressing and related work	0.3	8.0	0.4	5.6
Work related to tour operators/ travel managers	0.2	0.1	0	0
Photography and related work-	0.7	0	3.2	0
Work related to childcare, nutrition, pre-schools and crèche	0.3	3.6	0.3	2.2
Journalism, mass communication and media related work	0.6	0.3	1.7	0
Printing technology related work	0.5	0.4	1.0	0.5
Other	6.5	14.7	3.7	37.2
n.r.	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.4
All	100	100	100	100

*Source: Status of Education and Vocational Training in India, NSS 66<sup>th</sup> Round.2009-10n.r.: not reported cases*

Such stereotyping of work often leads to a high level of occupational segregation or 'gendered jobs' that often push women to low-paying jobs with less scope for upward occupational mobility. Women and men continue to work in different occupations, with women crowding into a relatively small number of female typed occupations such as teachers, secretaries, nurse. Vertical division of labour is pronounced in respect of gender. Women occupy jobs which are lower paid, more insecure, less likely to bring promotion than men (Charles and Grusky 2004). Their concentration in service work, the 'caring' professions and socialized forms of domestic service as many feminists have pointed out that distribution of women in employed workforce bears a striking resemblance to the division of labour in family. Education and training systems operate in such a way as to reproduce systematically a division

of labour between men and women in wage work and also reinforce division of labour at home (Barret, 1980).

In 2008, the World Bank launched the Adolescent Girl Initiative (AGI) to promote the transition of young women from school to productive employment. The program is being piloted in eight low-income countries (Afghanistan, Haiti, Jordan, Lao PDR, Liberia, Nepal, Rwanda and South Sudan) and is currently reaching some 17,000 girls. Each program is individually tailored to the country context, with a common goal of discovering what works best in programming to help adolescent girls and young women succeed in the labour market?. With new knowledge of what works, successful approaches can be replicated and brought to scale. It becomes evident that the promotion of gender stereotypical skills pushes women to low paying jobs and deprives them of many social security benefits<sup>12</sup>.

It was found that at the all-India level, 14.7 per cent females in the 15-59 age group in rural areas and 13.3 per cent in urban areas, who received formal vocational training reported the training as helpful in getting a job (self-employment), 21.7 per cent in rural areas and 35.2 per cent in urban areas reported to have received wage/salaried employment. On the contrary, 47.2 per cent women in rural areas and 32.4 per cent in urban areas reported that the training was not helpful in gaining employment (NSS0, 2011). This clearly brings out the relevance of appropriate vocational training with the current requirements of the labour market.

#### **2.4 Women's Participation in Labour Force**

The labour force indicates the proportion of the population that is economically active, including the employed as well as those unemployed and actively seeking jobs. With regard to female Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPR), India has been witnessing declining trends and NER is not an exception. The overall NER (all States) showed a decline in female Labour Force Participation (LFPR) in rural areas from 38 per cent in 2004-05 to 30.4 per cent in 2009-10 and further declined to 27 per cent in 2011-12 thereby showing a decline below the all India average of 37.8 per cent in 2011-12 in the 15-59 age group.

Further, State-wise trends of the rural NER (Table 2.5 and Fig 2.1) revealed fluctuating and differential trends with many states reporting a decline in female LFPR (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram

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<sup>12</sup> For detail please see <http://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/adolescent-girls-initiative>

and Manipur) and some others showing increasing trends (Sikkim and Tripura). In rural areas of Sikkim, LFPR for females was 47.9 per cent in 2004-05 which slightly decreased to 47.5 per cent in 2009-10 but increased considerably to 70.6 per cent in 2011-12. In Tripura, rural LFPR for females was 18.7 per cent in 2004-05 which increased to 33.6 per cent in 2009-10 and further increased to 40.2 per cent in 2011-12. On the contrary, states like Arunachal Pradesh and Assam showed declining trends in female LFPR across three NSS rounds i.e., (Arunachal Pradesh 64.9 per cent in 2004-05, which declined to 44.7 per cent in 2009-10 and further decreased to 43.1 per cent in 2011-12). Similarly rural Assam reported (34.1 per cent female LFPR in 2004-05 which decreased to 25.6 per cent in 2009-10 and further declined to 18.9 per cent 2011-12). However, states like Nagaland showed a major decline in rural female LFPR (75.2 percent in 2004-05 to 48.8 per cent in 2009-10 and further decreased to 47.9 percent in 2011-12). Further states like Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram revealed fluctuating and differential trends.

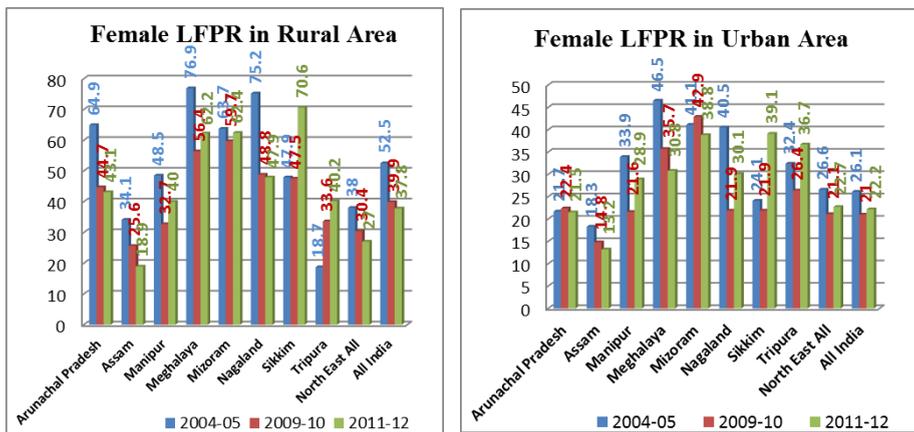
**Table 2.5: Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for Persons Aged 15 to 59 years by Usual Status in NER**

States	Year	Rural		Urban		Rural + Urban	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Arunachal Pradesh	2004-05	81.3	64.9	73.7	21.7	80.3	59.2
	2009-10	75.4	44.7	70	22.4	74.3	39.9
	2011-12	74.4	43.1	69.9	21.5	73.5	39.1
Assam	2004-05	88.7	34.1	86.1	18.3	88.4	32.5
	2009-10	87.3	25.6	80.6	14.8	86.5	24.3
	2011-12	85.7	18.9	83.3	13.2	85.4	18.2
Manipur	2004-05	76.3	48.5	72.3	33.9	75.3	45.1
	2009-10	79.6	32.7	78.3	21.6	79.3	29.8
	2011-12	77.7	40	78.1	28.9	77.8	37.1
Meghalaya	2004-05	90.5	76.9	72.5	46.5	88	72.1
	2009-10	83.8	56.4	72.3	35.7	82	52.4
	2011-12	81.2	62.2	69.5	30.8	78.7	55
Mizoram	2004-05	87.5	63.7	74	41.1	82.2	54.2
	2009-10	90.3	59.7	78.1	42.9	84.9	51.9
	2011-12	89.7	62.4	76	38.8	83	50.2
Nagaland	2004-05	81.8	75.2	76.1	40.5	80	64.2
	2009-10	74.6	48.8	68.3	21.9	72.9	42
	2011-12	81.6	47.9	72.8	30.1	78.3	41.8

Sikkim	2004-05	81.7	47.9	78.9	24.1	81.4	45.1
	2009-10	82.1	47.5	87.8	21.9	82.8	44.4
	2011-12	82.7	70.6	85.4	39.1	83.2	64.9
Tripura	2004-05	88.1	18.7	84.8	32.4	87.6	20.8
	2009-10	88.8	33.6	82.8	26.4	87.7	32.2
	2011-12	87.4	40.2	83.4	36.7	86.8	39.6
North East (Combined)	2004-05	87.7	38	82	26.6	87	36.5
	2009-10	86.2	30.4	78.9	21.1	85.1	29
	2011-12	84.8	27	79.9	22.7	84.1	26.4
All India	2004-05	88.6	52.5	83.4	26.1	87.1	45.4
	2009-10	84.8	39.9	80.9	21	83.6	34.5
	2011-12	83.5	37.8	81	22.2	82.7	33.1

Source: Computed from NSS Unit level data of Round 61<sup>st</sup>2004-05, 66<sup>th</sup>2009-10 and 68<sup>th</sup>2011-12.

Figure 2.1: Female LFPR in 15 to 59 Age Group by Usual Status in NER



Source: Computed from NSS Unit level data of Round 61<sup>st</sup>2004-05, 66<sup>th</sup>2009-10 and 68<sup>th</sup>2011-12.

In urban areas, similar trends were reported like in Assam, female LFPR was (18.3 per cent in 2004-05 which decreased to 14.8 per cent in 2009-10 and further declined to 13.2 per cent in 2011-12) in Meghalaya, female LFPR was (46.5 per cent in 2004-05 which decreased to 35.7 per cent in 2009-10 and further declined to 30.8 per cent 2011-12) and in Mizoram female LFPR was 41.1 percent which increased to 42.9 per cent and later on decreased to 38.8 per cent. The above trends revealed that gender differentials became prominent in rural areas of Assam; more so in urban Assam. However in Assam, females are generally engaged in household domestic work or other unorganized sector of economy and therefore, they are not included in the working population by the

census of India (Goswami, 2014). On the contrary, states like Sikkim and Tripura recorded an increase in female LFPR in urban areas. In Sikkim, the LFPR was 24.1 per cent in 2004-05 which decreased to 21.9 percent in 2009-10 and later on increased to 39.1 percent. Similarly, in Tripura the LFPR for females was 32.4 percent in 2004-05 which decreased to 26.4 percent in 2009-10 and later increased to 36.7 percent in 2011-12. States like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur showed differential trends which remained fluctuating.

One of the possible reasons for the fluctuating female LFPR in rural and urban areas of the North East can be attributed to geographical disparity, lower mobility due to unequal gender division of labour in the household and socially constructed gender roles assigning to women with the roles of household and care responsibilities. As some of the scholars working on the region reiterate that the lower female LFPR may be attributed to continuing with education and not joining the labour market or improvement in their economic conditions or they have been locked out of labour market due to their inadequate access to human capital or are it a reflection of discouraged workers' effect (Sahu, 2012).

## **2.5 Women's Participation in Workforce**

In the rural areas of some of the North Eastern States, declining female Workforce Participation Rates (WFPR) were reported across various NSS rounds. As reflected in table 2.6, in States like *Arunachal Pradesh* (64.5 per cent in 2004-05 which decreased to 44.3 per cent in 2009-10 and further declined to 42.4 per cent in 2011-12), *Assam* (33.1 per cent in 2004-05 which declined to 24.1 per cent in 2009-10 and further decreased to 17.8 per cent in 2011-12) and *Nagaland* (74 per cent in 2004-05 which decreased to 42.9 per cent in 2009-10 and further declined to 39.7 per cent in 2011-12) have reported a decline in female workforce participation rate (WFPR). An analysis of the relationship between education and labour market participation may provide some insights into the above trends. As explained earlier (see table 2.2 ) on the percentage attendance of different age groups in educational institutions it was found that in States like Assam, Arunachal and Nagaland, more rural women were attending educational institutions and the gender gaps seem to be lesser in comparison to other north eastern states. This may be one of the reasons for the decline in female WFPR. While in states like Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram, the trends were fluctuating. Contrastingly, states like Sikkim and Tripura showed an increase in female WFPR while they continued to attend educational institutions. However, the NER (combined) also revealed declining trends with female WFPR declining from 36.6 per cent in 2004-04 to 28.5 in 2009-10 and further declining to 25.2 per cent in 2011-12.

In the urban areas of NER, female WFPR revealed similar trends with decrease in many states and increase in some states while the overall average of the NER (combined) showed fluctuating trends. In the States like Assam, female WFPR declined from (16.6 per cent in 2004-05 to 13 per cent in 2009-10 and further declined to 12.2 percent in 2011-12). Similarly, in Meghalaya, WFPR for females declined from (44.8 per cent in 2004-05 to 32.4 per cent in 2009 -10 and further decreased to 29.7 per cent in 2011-12) across all three rounds of the NSS. Some of the studies have highlighted that in Assam, low rate of female work participation both in rural and urban areas is mainly due to the low female literacy rate and low educational attainment level which resulted in the low percentage of employment in services (Goswami, 2014). On the contrary, States like Tripura and Sikkim reported higher female WFPR but the gender gaps still remained prominent. States like Manipur, Mizoram, Sikkim and Meghalaya have reported higher female WFPR in comparison to all India average. However, such differential trends necessitates the need for further investigation through empirical studies in the region.

**Table 2.6: Workforce Participation Rate (WFPR) in 15 to 59 Age Group by Usual Status in NER**

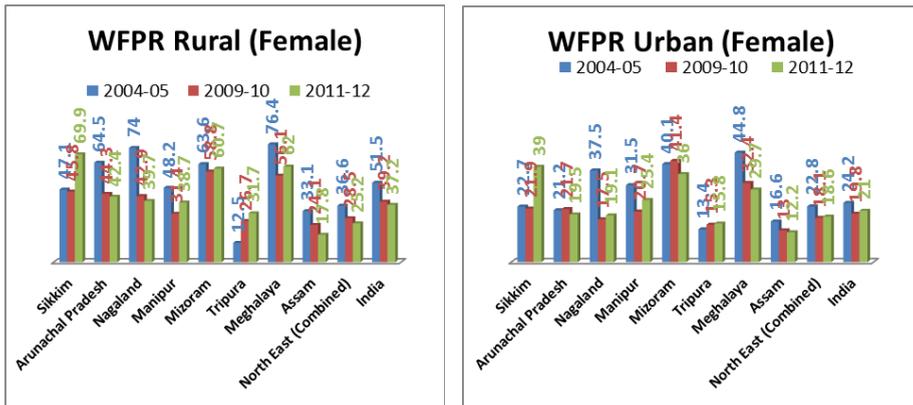
States	Year	Rural		
		Male	Female	Male+ Female
Arunachal Pradesh	2004-05	80.3	64.5	72.8
	2009-10	74.5	44.3	60.6
	2011-12	73	42.4	58
Assam	2004-05	86.5	33.1	61.1
	2009-10	84.1	24.1	55.1
	2011-12	81.8	17.8	50.7
Manipur	2004-05	75.1	48.2	61.4
	2009-10	76.3	31.4	54.1
	2011-12	75.6	38.7	57.6
Meghalaya	2004-05	90.5	76.4	83.5
	2009-10	83.5	56.1	70.5
	2011-12	80.8	62	71.5
Mizoram	2004-05	87.1	63.6	75.8
	2009-10	89.1	58.8	74.4
	2011-12	88.5	60.7	75

Nagaland	2004-05	79.8	74	76.9
	2009-10	66.8	42.9	54.9
	2011-12	68.7	39.7	54
Sikkim	2004-05	79.2	47.1	64.1
	2009-10	78	45.8	63.2
	2011-12	81.8	69.9	76.8
Tripura	2004-05	79.3	12.5	46.8
	2009-10	83.7	26.7	55
	2011-12	81.6	31.7	56.8
North East (Combined)	2004-05	85.1	36.6	61.8
	2009-10	82.9	28.5	56.6
	2011-12	81	25.2	53.7
All India	2004-05	87.1	51.5	69.4
	2009-10	83.4	39.2	61.5
	2011-12	82	37.2	59.8
<b>States</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Urban</b>		
		<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male+ Female</b>
Arunachal Pradesh	2004-05	72.9	21.2	48.3
	2009-10	67.8	21.7	45.8
	2011-12	67.3	19.5	45.5
Assam	2004-05	80	16.6	49.9
	2009-10	77.3	13	45.5
	2011-12	78.7	12.2	46.5
Manipur	2004-05	68.3	31.5	49.8
	2009-10	74.2	20.7	47.8
	2011-12	73.4	25.4	49
Meghalaya	2004-05	69.9	44.8	56.6
	2009-10	70.1	32.4	49.9
	2011-12	67.7	29.7	47.8
Mizoram	2004-05	72.8	40.1	56
	2009-10	76	41.4	58.4
	2011-12	72.8	36	54
Nagaland	2004-05	72.5	37.5	55.5
	2009-10	64	17.5	41.3
	2011-12	58.8	19.1	39.7
Sikkim	2004-05	76.2	22.7	51.6
	2009-10	87.6	21.9	57.9
	2011-12	82.9	39	63.1

Tripura	2004-05	70.4	13.4	41.5
	2009-10	74.9	15.3	44.6
	2011-12	73.2	15.8	43.8
North East (Combined)	2004-05	74.5	22.8	76
	2009-10	18.6	18.1	22.8
	2011-12	46.9	18.6	50.1
All India	2004-05	80.2	24.2	53.6
	2009-10	78.5	19.8	50.5
	2011-12	78.4	21	50.8

Source: Computed from NSS Unit level data of Round 61<sup>st</sup>2004-05, 66<sup>th</sup>2009-10 and 68<sup>th</sup>2011-12

Figure 2.2: Female WFPR in 15 to 59 Age Group by Usual Status in NER



Source: Computed from NSS Unit level data of Round 61<sup>st</sup>2004-05, 66<sup>th</sup>2009-10 and 68<sup>th</sup>2011-12.

Thus, it may be seen that in the case of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland the rural-urban differentials in female work participation is very high. It may be mainly due to the fact that the economic opportunities for the tribal women are highly limited in the urban areas. The states of Assam and Tripura, on the other hand, experience a noticeable low differential as the participation rate among the non-tribal women is significantly low both in rural and urban areas. Accordingly, it is clear that hilly states with high proportion of tribal population have higher women work participation than that of plain states with predominantly non-tribal population (Kar, 2002). However, such trends provide a very complex picture about female LFPR and WFPR in the region thereby necessitating investigation for establishing causality for such differential trends. Though some of the micro studies in the region have pointed out at various reasons, but it becomes important to understand every North Eastern State as a different category and not as a part of a unified entity under the NER.

## 2.6 Sectoral Participation and Status as Workers

With regard to sectoral participation of women, it was revealed that though primary sector emerged as predominantly engaging women, some states like Manipur and Tripura have recorded the highest percentage share of female workers in secondary and tertiary sectors respectively. In Manipur, it is evident that women's contribution to economy of Manipuri society is witnessed by the large participation of women in the *Ima* Market or Mother Market, the only women market in Manipur where many women are engaged from rural areas (Sinha and Sinha, 2013).

**Table 2.7: Sectoral Distribution (per 100) of Worker in 15-59 Age Group in NER**

Rural									
States	Male			Female			Male+ Female		
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Assam	57.8	13.7	28.5	79.1	6.7	14.1	61.5	12.5	26
Aunachal Pradesh	69.8	8.0	22.3	90.1	1.4	8.5	77.1	5.6	17.3
Manipur	53	18.6	28.4	21.9	62.6	15.5	42.8	33	24.2
Mizoram	75.6	7.6	16.8	73.9	14.7	11.4	74.9	10.4	14.7
Meghalaya	59.4	15.2	25.4	72.9	6.4	20.7	65.2	11.4	23.4
Nagaland	66.1	6.3	27.6	89.7	4.2	6.1	75	5.5	19.5
Sikkim	60.8	16.9	22.3	85.1	5.4	9.5	71.8	11.7	16.5
Tripura	34.1	43.6	22.3	19.5	69.5	11	30.1	50.8	19.2
Urban									
States	Male			Female			Male+ Female		
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Assam	3.5	23.5	73	7.7	13	79.3	4	22.2	73.8
Arunachal Pradesh	9.9	16.4	73.8	32.3	9.8	57.9	14.3	15.1	70.7
Manipur	19.8	22.7	57.5	8.9	48.9	42.2	16.9	29.6	53.5
Mizoram	21.3	15.5	63.2	35.2	4.7	60	26.1	11.9	62.1
Meghalaya	3.3	19.7	77.1	7.6	8	84.4	4.7	15.9	79.4
Nagaland	12.8	14.2	73	30.4	16.2	53.5	16.8	14.7	68.5
Sikkim	0.7	24.9	74.4	2.7	9.9	87.4	1.2	20.7	78
Tripura	2.5	23.4	74.2	4.3	18.5	77.2	2.8	22.5	74.8

*Source: NSS Unit level Data , NSS 68<sup>th</sup> Round , NIC 2008*

The above table (2.7) showed sectoral distribution for male and female workers in the 15-59 age group of rural and urban areas of North Eastern States. In rural Arunachal Pradesh 90.1 per cent females and 69.8 per

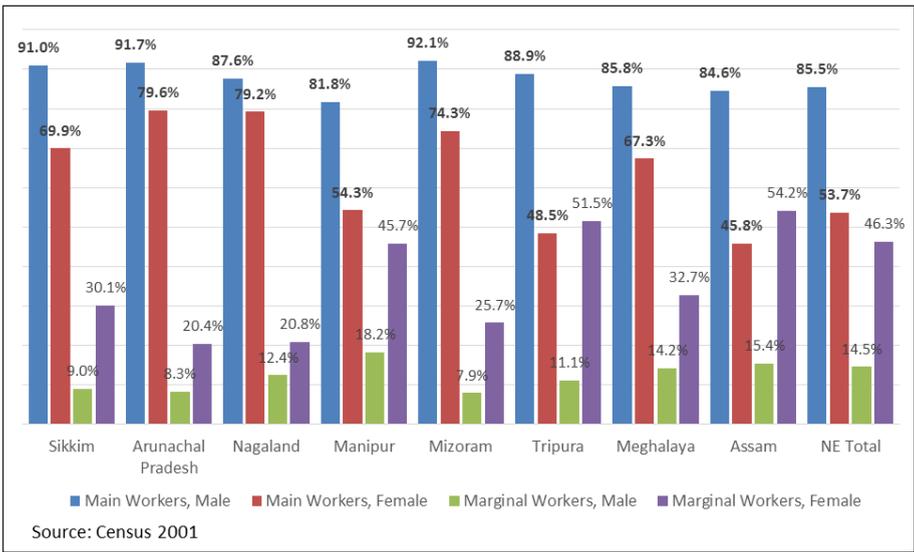
cent males were engaged in primary sector. While in urban areas, 32.3 per cent women and 9.9 per cent men participated in the primary sector. The Human Development Report of Arunachal Pradesh reflected that the region has a substantial proportion of female workers engaged in agriculture (HDR, 2006). Since north east economy is based on agriculture and farming, therefore women workers in rural areas are particularly engaged in agriculture and other allied activities. There are several reasons for this, firstly most agricultural operations are simple and do not require any training or skills. Secondly, in agricultural activities the wages paid to women workers are generally less than the wages paid for men labourers and final and the most important reason that it may be easier to take a child along with them to an agriculture job than to an office or factory. The nature of the agriculture occupation is such that the household responsibilities can be easily combined with productive work (Bhadra, 1991). Nevertheless in hilly regions, large numbers of men were engaged in secondary or tertiary sector, and usually women had contributed in the primary sector. Women's role in agriculture operations is very significant in the hill economy. These women participated in almost all the agriculture operation, viz, land preparation, sowing, transplanting, weeding, and carrying the produce from farm to home, storage of food grains and so on (Pande, 1996).

In rural Nagaland 89.7 per cent women and 66.1 per cent males were involved in primary sector. Since women in the villages of the hill district performed all the work in the family farm, collected forest produce, and also participated in *jhum* cultivation as the men folk moved out to work as construction labour. The work burden of women in hilly areas was much more compared to that of the plain district (Upadhyay, 2013). In urban Nagaland women's participation in tertiary sector is recorded as 53.5 per cent whereas participation of males was 73.0 per cent. Usually, structural changes lead to increasing employment opportunities, higher output productivity, exploitation of new resources and improvement in technology. Such structural changes may begin with the transfer of population from primary to secondary and then subsequently to tertiary employment and a progressive decline in primary sector (Jamir, 2002).

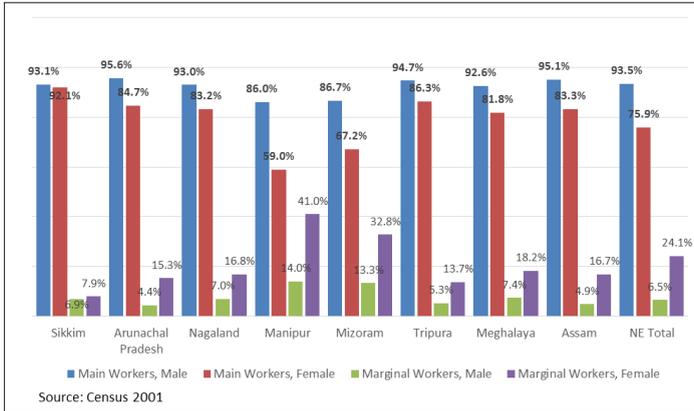
In rural Sikkim, 85.1 per cent females and 60.8 per cent males were engaged in primary sector. In Sikkim, women are more preferred by the employers because they can be employed on low wages and are more committed. Also they can be easily convinced for the unauthorized deduction from wages, as well as delayed wages because of their subservient nature and low level of education and awareness (Bhadra, 1991). In urban Sikkim, in the tertiary sector, the contribution of females (87.4 per cent) was higher

than males (74.4 per cent). The Sikkim Human Development Report states that with the enhancement of educational opportunities and opening up of employment avenues in the state, the dependence on the primary sector has decreased drastically over the past forty years (HDR, 2014). In rural Assam, 79.1 per cent females and 57.8 per cent males were engaged in the primary sector. Similarly, in urban Assam, participation of women in the tertiary sector (79.3 per cent) was higher in comparison to males (73.0 per cent). While among all North Eastern States, Manipur (48.9 per cent) and Tripura (18.5 per cent) has women participation higher in secondary sector compared to other sectors. It was revealed that in Tripura most of the women were engaged in production of various bamboo products. Most of the women artisans work from their household based at rural areas and linked to traders/buyers, in unorganized manner (Ray, 2014). Industries based on local forest and natural resources generally provide livelihood to a large number of rural women of the state. In this state most of women employed are engaged in agriculture and its allied activities in the region, even in the household industries their participation is considerably high in comparison to men but their percentage share decreased in employment in secondary and or tertiary sector. This shows that women usually work in the lower activities, as they find it easier to carry out this work intermittently between domestic chores (Chakraborty, 2008). In the urban areas of the NER the shift was prominent towards the tertiary sector, particularly they were moving from agriculture towards tertiary sector.

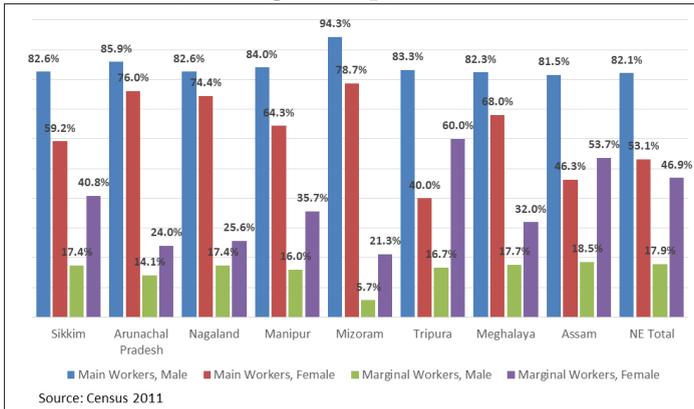
**Figure 2.3: Workforce Composition: Gender Distribution (15-59 Age Group) Rural, 2001**



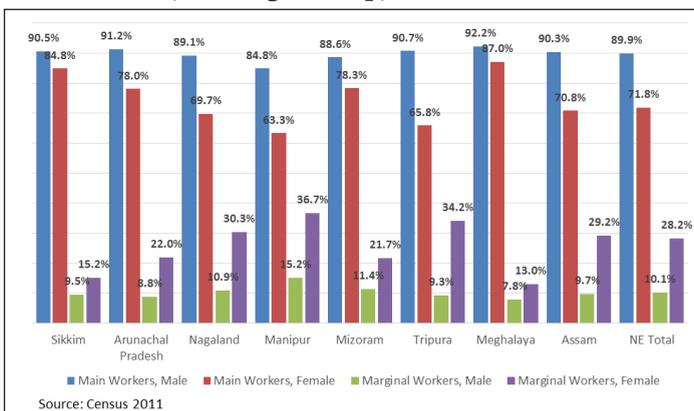
**Figure 2.4: Workforce Composition: Gender Distribution (15-59 Age Group) Urban, 2001**



**Figure 2.5: Workforce Composition: Gender Distribution (15-59 Age Group) Rural, 2011**



**Figure 2.6: Workforce Composition: Gender Distribution (15-59 Age Group) Urban, 2011**



The census figures of 2001 and 2011 reported that across the NER women were mainly engaged as marginal workers<sup>13</sup> in comparison to men in the working age population of 15-59 age groups. Out of total male workers in rural areas in 2001, 85.5 per cent were main workers and only 14.5 per cent were marginal workers in the NER. On the contrary, out of total female workers in 2001, 53.7 per cent were main workers and 46.3 per cent were marginal workers in the rural NER. Similarly, in 2001, in the urban areas of the NER, 93.5 per cent were males were engaged as main workers and only 6.5 per cent were Marginal Workers. On the contrary, out of total females, 75.9 per cent were engaged as Main Workers and 24.1 per cent females were engaged as Marginal Workers. The gender differentials in workforce composition of males and females became quite prominent with more women working as marginal workers in comparison to males.

Surprisingly, the marginal status of women increased in Census 2011 in both rural and urban areas. In rural areas, it increased from 46.3 per cent in 2001 to 46.9 per cent. While in urban areas, it increased from 24.1 per cent in 2001 to 28.2 per cent in 2011. As per Census figures, the concentration of women as marginal workers become more pronounced and increased considerably in States like Tripura (51.5 per cent in 2001 to 60.0 per cent in 2011) and Assam (54.2 per cent in 2001 to 53.7 per cent in 2011) in rural areas respectively. The increasing concentration of women as marginal workers is much higher in comparison to males. The greater participation of women as marginal workers and increasing concentration of women in domestic duties in the NER reflects not only on unequal division of labour within the household but also explains the constraining factors for engagement of women in full time paid employment. The unpaid domestic burden in the region coupled with additional forest related activities in hilly areas often constraints women to continue in employment for a longer period of time. The increase in marginal status of women workers in the north eastern region also raises pertinent questions on the available employment and skill development opportunities and access to adequate income generating opportunities in the region.

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<sup>13</sup> Those workers who had worked for the major part of the reference period (i.e. 6 months or more) are termed as Main Workers. Those workers who had not worked for the major part of the reference period (i.e. less than 6 months) are termed as Marginal Workers.

## **2.7 Summing Up**

The present chapter tried to provide a brief overview of the social and economic status of women in the NER. It also explored the reasons, kinds of geographical, social and cultural factors that have been responsible for constraining women to get enrolled in higher education and also, how women's labour force and workforce participation rates are affected by these phenomena. Further, issues of high level of occupational segregation became prominent with concentration of women in gender stereotypical jobs often pushing women to vulnerable employment with marginal status as workers. It is evident that there is a discouraging relationship between education and labour market participation. The factors impacting women's employment also interact among themselves making it tricky to disentangle their effect. As some of the studies have pointed out, the impact of education, for example, will depend on both economic opportunities available and cultural perceptions that govern women's work norms (Swaminathan and Lahoti, 2013).

## **Socio-Cultural Norms, Gendered Responsibilities and Women's Participation in Unpaid Work**

### **3.1 The Context**

Women's unpaid work and care work have been central to many feminist discourses on promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. There has been invisibility, non-accountability, and non-remuneration of household work in national accounting statistics of India. The gendered division of labour within the context of household has occupied a central position in many feminist debates that questioned the non-recognition of housework. Marxist-feminists like Mies have analyzed the role of housework within the context of patriarchy and capitalism (Mies, 1998). In the contemporary period there is growing recognition to unmask the statistical invisibility of unpaid work and the National Statistical offices have increased their attempt to recognize women's work by asking probing questions that seek to establish women's involvement in economic activity. It is observed that women tend to spend more time on housework and other care responsibilities across cultures. However, this is still defined to include only participation in work for the household farm or enterprise and does not include housework, childcare, care of the sick and old, and related activities associated with social reproduction. The burden of unpaid work on women not only constraints women from participation in labour market opportunities but also creates innumerable challenges for women to access economic opportunities.

Feminist economists have led the call for unpaid care work to be "counted" in statistics, "accounted for" in representations of the economy and "taken into account" in policy making (Elson, 2000). The non-recognition of unpaid care by the policy makers is reflected in various studies on missing labour force conducted in India (Hirway, 2012; Hirway and Jose, 2011; Jain, 2008). These studies have been critical of the labour force surveys including NSSO in capturing women's work accurately. It must be recognized that work is not only a way to livelihood, it defines the conditions of existence, more so for women as they bear the responsibility of social reproduction as well as some kind of productive work whether or not their work gets adequately captured as such in official data discourses (Raju, 2010).

Further, women tend to do different activities across varied a geographical terrain which remains under counted and has significant impact on their labour force participation. In the North Eastern Region, many studies

have pointed out that women on an average spend more time in animal husbandry, forestry, fetching water, firewood, fodder and fruits and vegetables, climbing the hilly terrains to collect forest produce than their male counterparts. But this contribution of women has not been acknowledged adequately in national accounting statistics. Also, women's social class location has a strong impact on their economic activities, access to agricultural land, employment opportunities, gender relations within the household, and intra household resource distribution. In India, this under enumeration should be attributed to two causes: cultural norms against women's labor force participation, and the frequently held view that the activities women engage in are not economically productive (Desai, 1994).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the female work participation in the NER has witnessed fluctuating and differential trends across NSS years. In 2011, female work participation declined sharply in all North Eastern States except the states of Tripura and Sikkim. Similar trends were found in urban areas as recorded by NSS 68<sup>th</sup> round 2011-12. However, poor work participation rates by women was recorded in many North Eastern States. Nevertheless, the gendered nature of households, kinship practices, social and cultural norms, domestic and care responsibilities play an important role in altering the power dynamics in the household thereby restricting women's entry into the labour market leaving them with limited choices (Samantroy, 2012).

In this regard the present chapter tries to reflect on the dynamics of unpaid and care work in households within the context of household division of labour and cultural practices thereby exploring the role of social norms, cultural reasons etc in allocation of household tasks etc. The chapter focuses on the participation of women in DD in the 15-59 age groups in Usual, Principal and Subsidiary Status (UPSS). It also tries to explore the reasons for participation in domestic duties through disaggregation of data by household size, marital status and educational status.

### **3.2 Domestic Duties and Household Division of Labour in the North Eastern Region**

The gendered division of labour within the context of household has occupied a central position in many feminist debates that questioned the non-recognition of housework. Women tend to spend more time on housework and other care responsibilities across cultures. Craig argues that women are more likely than men to multitask in the domestic sphere because men have not increased enough of their share of housework and childcare following women's entry into paid work, leaving it to women

to manage responsibilities in both spheres (Craig, 2007). The nature of domestic work varies across diverse cultural groups in the NER. On account of gendered social norms that view unpaid care work as a female prerogative, women across different regions, socio-economic classes and cultures spend an important part of their day on meeting the expectations of their domestic and reproductive roles. This is in addition to their paid activities, thus creating the “double burden” of work for women.

However, women's participation in the economic activity is important from their personal advancement and their status in the society. Though in North Eastern society gender biases continue to be embedded not only in systems of kinship, family relation, religion, culture and law, but also in economic process as well as institutions such as labour markets. The occupational structure in the tribal society mainly consists of agriculture, cottage, and agro industry. Women play significant roles in agriculture from sowing and harvesting. Their participation in economic activities and their double burden of work are important dimensions to understand the overall well-being of women in the region (Samantroy, 2012).

In this context, the present section tries to discuss women's participation in DD in the North East. This section also tries to understand the need for spending time in DD in the region and the reasons for doing so. In fact, this section would provide an insight into the socio-cultural causes that have contributed in confining women to household activities.

**Table 3.1: Number of Females (per 100 females) Engaged in DD (according to the UPSS) by Age Group During 1999-2000 to 2011-12**

Age Group (years)	Number of Females (per 100 Females) Engaged in DD (According to the UPSS) by Age Group During 1999-2000 to 2011-12					
	Rural			Urban		
	61st round (2004-05)	66th round (2009-10)	68th round (2011-12)	61st round (2004-05)	66th round (2009-10)	68th round (2011-12)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
5-14	5.5	3.1	2.7	3.1	1.6	1.8
15-29	54.8	56.1	57.5	55.4	52.2	51.0
30-44	52.5	62.7	65.8	72.2	76.9	75.6
45-59	51.7	58.5	62.8	73.5	75.7	76.1
60 & above	39.7	44.2	46.2	46.7	51.9	52.0

65 & above	-	-	37.2	-	-	41.5
15-59	53.4	58.9	61.6	65.0	65.8	65.1
15-64	-	-	61.4	-	-	65.3
15+	51.8	57.2	59.7	63.1	64.2	63.7
5+	39.7	44.3	46.3	49.8	52.2	51.7
All ages (0+) (incl. n.r.)	35.3	40.1	42.2	45.6	48.2	48.0

*Source: Participation of Women in Specified Activities along with Domestic Duties, NSS various rounds*

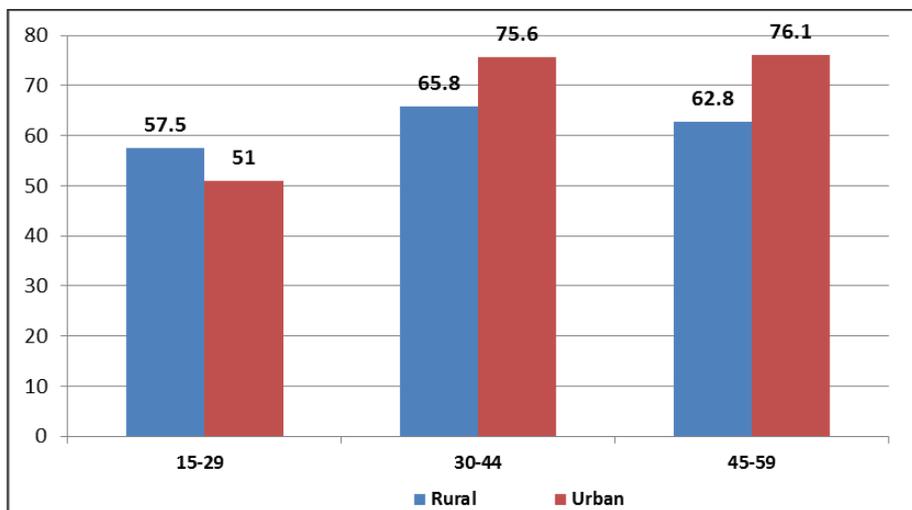
Note: 1. n.r.: not reported cases 2. For NSS 61st and 66th rounds, figures for the age groups 65 years and above and 15-64 were not tabulated and hence these cells are shaded

The National Sample Survey Report on ‘Participation of Women in Specified Activities Along with Domestic Duties’ 2014, gives us an idea about the proportion of women who were engaged in DD i.e., proportion of women with Usual Principal Activity Status codes 92 (attended domestic duties only) and 93 (attended DD and were also engaged in free collection of goods, sewing, tailoring, weaving, etc. for household use). It can be observed from table (3.1) that in 2011-12, 42.2 per cent of females in rural areas were engaged in DD- about 18.5 per cent with activity status codes 92 and about 23.7 per cent with activity status codes 93. During this period, 48.2 per cent of females in urban areas were engaged in DD- about 36.4 per cent with activity status codes 92 and about 11.6 per cent with activity status codes 93. A trend analysis of the various rounds (61<sup>st</sup>, 66<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup>) revealed that in rural areas, proportion of women engaged in DD increased by about 5 percentage points between 61<sup>st</sup> (2004-05) and 66<sup>th</sup> (2009-10) rounds which further increased by about 2 percentage points between 66<sup>th</sup> (2009-10) and 68<sup>th</sup> (2011-12) rounds. In the urban areas, the proportion increased by about 3 percentage points between 61<sup>st</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> rounds and remained almost unchanged between 66<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup> rounds. With regard to the 15-59 years age group, which is the age group taken into consideration for this study; it was found that in rural areas there was a 5 percentage point increase in women’s engagement in DD, from 53.4 per cent in the 61<sup>st</sup> round to 58.9 per cent in the 66<sup>th</sup> round. The 68<sup>th</sup> round showed a further increase with 61.6 per cent women in rural areas reporting engagement in DD.

In urban areas, the percentage of women engaged in DD was higher for all rounds, with slight fluctuations in the three rounds. While 65.0

per cent reported engagement in domestic duties in the 61<sup>st</sup> round, there was a slight increase in the 66<sup>th</sup> round (65.8 per cent). The 68<sup>th</sup> round shows a slight decrease with 65.1 per cent women reporting engagement in DD.

**Figure 3.1: Percentage of Females Engaged in DD (according to the UPSS) by Age Group During 2011-12**



*Source: Participation of Women in Specified Activities along with Domestic Duties, NSS 68<sup>th</sup> Round (GOI 2014)*

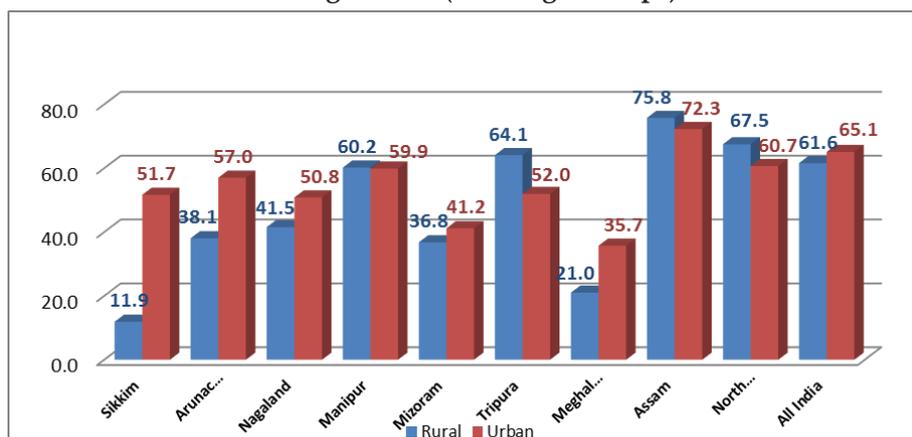
It was also significant that the proportion of women engaged in DD during 2011-12, was the highest for the age group 30-44 years in rural areas (65.8 per cent) and for the age group 45-59 years in urban areas (about 75.6 per cent). The higher proportion of women in these age groups reporting their engagement in DD could be attributed to the fact that women generally get married at this age group and tend to have younger children thereby having a life cycle of household and related responsibilities. In many cases women are engaged in paid employment, particularly paid employment outside their homes in their 20s, but quit their employment upon marriage or child-birth. Between 61<sup>st</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup> rounds, proportion of women of the age group 30-44 years engaged in Domestic Duties increased by about 13 percentage points (from 52.5 in the 61<sup>st</sup> round to 65.8 per cent to 62.7 in the 68<sup>th</sup> round) in rural areas. During this period, the proportion of women in the age group 45-59 years engaged in domestic duties increased by about 3 percentage points (from 72.2 per cent in the 61<sup>st</sup> round to 75.6 per cent in 75.6 per cent in 68<sup>th</sup> round) in urban areas (GOI, 2014).

**Table 3.2: Number of Females Engaged in DD (UPSS) per 100 Females During 2011-12 (15-59 Age Groups) in NER**

States	Rural	Urban
Sikkim	11.9	51.7
Arunachal Pradesh	38.1	57.0
Nagaland	41.5	50.8
Manipur	60.2	59.9
Mizoram	36.8	41.2
Tripura	64.1	52.0
Meghalaya	21.0	35.7
Assam	75.8	72.3
North East - All	67.5	60.7
All India	61.6	65.1

Source: NSS Unit level data 2011-12 (GOI)

With regard to engagement of women in DD in the age group of 15-59 years in 2011-12, it was revealed that the larger number of women (67.5 per cent) were engaged in DD in rural areas across the NER compared to all India average of (61.6 per cent). In contrast, urban areas in India had recorded higher (65.1 per cent) percentage of females engaged in domestic duties, than all North Eastern States which recorded (60.7 per cent) of women engaged in domestic duties. In rural areas, States like Assam (75.8 per cent), Tripura (64.1 per cent) and Manipur (60.2 per cent) have reported to have the highest percentage of women engaged in domestic duties in 2011-12. While, in the urban areas, states like Assam (72.3 per cent), Manipur (59.9 per cent) and Arunachal Pradesh (57.0 per cent) have reported to have greater percentage of women engaged in DD

**Figure 3.2: Number of Females Engaged in DD in UPSS per 100 Females During 2011-12 (15-59 Age Groups)**

Sources: NSS unit level data 2011-12

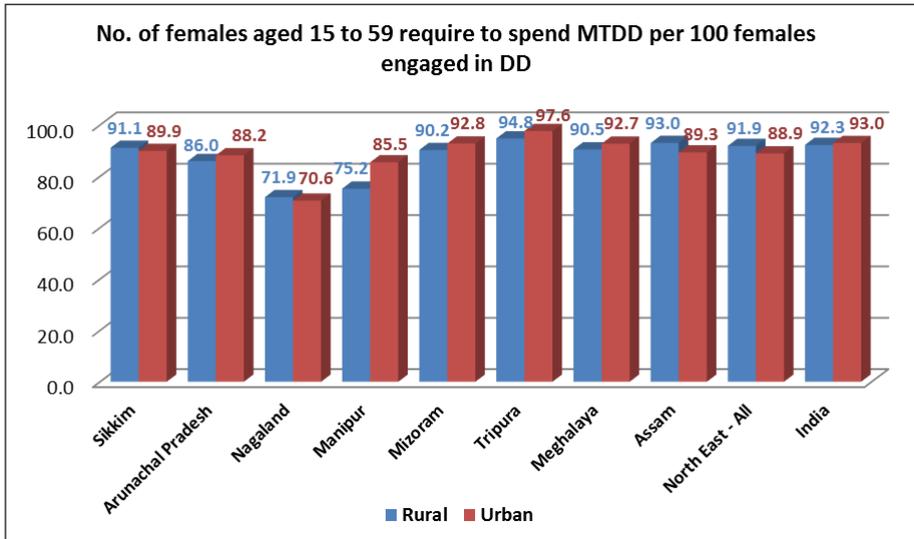
In the hilly regions of rural Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram women were also engaged in DD to a considerable extent ie; (41.5 per cent), (38.1 per cent) and (36.8 per cent) respectively. In Meghalaya 21.0 per cent women were engaged in DD and in Sikkim the DD participation for women was the lowest with 11.9 per cent. The Sikkim Human Development Report revealed that, in this State rural women are now increasingly involved in income-generating activities like food processing, trading agricultural production, handicrafts and weaving. In urban areas, women are making their mark in new fields such as consultancy, marketing, interior decoration, beauty clinics, handicrafts, food processing and readymade garments (2014). However, in urban areas the trends for Sikkim increased with greater percentage of women (51.7 per cent) attending to domestic duties and in Meghalaya (35.7 per cent) were attending to domestic duties as per 2011-12. In Meghalaya, due to the prevailing matriliney among the Khasis, the women in large numbers are engaged in the urban - based economic activities like trade commerce and other services (Kar, 2002). However in comparison to urban NER, the participation of women in DD was greater in rural areas.

**Table 3.3: Number of Females Aged 15 to 59 Required to Spend MTDD (Most of the Time in Domestic Duties) per 100 Females Engaged in DD**

States	Rural	Urban	Total
Sikkim	91.1	89.9	90.5
Arunachal Pradesh	86	88.2	86.5
Nagaland	71.9	70.6	71.4
Manipur	75.2	85.5	77.9
Mizoram	90.2	92.8	91.6
Tripura	94.8	97.6	95.2
Meghalaya	90.5	92.7	91.2
Assam	93	89.3	92.6
North East - All	91.9	88.9	91.5
India	92.3	93	92.5

*Source: NSS Unit Level data 2011-12*

**Figure 3.3: Number of Females Aged 15 to 59 Required to Spend MTDD (Most of the Time in Domestic Duties) per 100 Females Engaged in DD**



Source: Unit Level data 2011-12

With regard to time spent on DD, it was revealed that in rural Tripura (94.8 per cent) and Assam (93.0 per cent) women were required to spend Most of the Time in Domestic Duties (MTDD) compared to all North Eastern States in rural areas (91.9 per cent). Similarly in urban Tripura (97.6 per cent) women were required to spend MTDD compared to North East all (combined) i.e. 88.9 per cent. The reason for this can be attributed to the existence of socio-cultural norms that emphasizes male domination and female subordination which is translated in to labour processes. In such societies paid employment or engagement in economic activities become the sole prerogative of men and women are confined to household tasks. Some of the governmental sources also highlighted that most of the work that women usually perform are excluded from the purview of economic activity<sup>14</sup>. The other states which followed included, rural Meghalaya with 90.5 per cent women spending MTDD and 92.7 per cent in urban areas. In rural Mizoram 90.2 per cent women and 92.8 per cent women in urban Mizoram were spending MTDD. Furthermore, 91.1 per cent women were spending MTDD in rural Sikkim and 89.9 per cent women in urban Sikkim. While, in rural Arunachal Pradesh 86.0 per cent and 88.2 per cent females in urban Arunachal Pradesh were spending MTDD. However, in rural areas of Nagaland (71.9 per cent) and Manipur (75.2 per cent) were

<sup>14</sup> For details see <http://planningtripura.gov.in/>.

spending MTDD. On the contrary, the urban areas of Nagaland (70.6 per cent) and Manipur (85.5 per cent) were spending MTDD. In this context, it becomes imperative to understand the time distribution patterns of women to know about the activities they are engaged in. There is a need to unmask the statistical invisibility of the activities undertaken by them and also to have an understanding about the reasons for their confinement to household DD.

### 3.2.1 Reasons for Spending Most of the Time in Domestic Duties

The table below (3.4) presents the percentage of females of different age groups who had to spend most of their time in DD at the all-India level. It was found that in rural areas, a large proportion of women in the 30-44 age groups (94.3 per cent) spent most of their time on DD. A major proportion of women in this age group (54.0 per cent) said that they did so as there were no other members in their household to carry out DD 19.9 per cent women in this age group attributed their engagement in DD to social/religious norms. Socio-cultural norms and women's responsibilities of domestic work and child care often prevent groups of women in India from taking up paid employment outside the home. 17.2 per cent of women in this age group gave 'other reasons' for their primary engagement in DD. 9.0 per cent women in this group said that they had to take care of domestic tasks as they could not afford hired help.

**Table 3.4: Number of Females Engaged in DD (According to the UPSS) Who were Required to Spend MTDD and their Distribution by Reason for Each Age Group and Sector**

Age Group (years)	No. of females required to spend MTDD* per 1000 females engaged in DD#	Per 1000 no. of such women giving reason (code **) for spending MTDD* as			
		1	2	3	9
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<b>Rural</b>					
5-14	79.0	32.5	13.4	22.7	31.4
15-29	91.5	54.0	9.0	19.9	17.2
30-44	94.3	68.7	7.8	12.8	10.5
45-59	89.9	58.4	9.1	14.5	17.9
60 & above	86.3	52.6	10.4	13.9	23.1

15 & above	91.7	60.1	8.7	15.8	15.5
5 & above	91.5	59.7	8.7	15.8	15.6
<b>Urban</b>					
5-14	81.1	17.3	9.6	48.0	25.2
15-29	91.2	56.6	9.3	18.4	15.7
30-44	95.0	72.3	7.8	11.1	8.7
45-59	92.0	63.3	9.5	14.3	12.9
60 & above	85.1	54.9	9.9	13.5	21.6
15 & above	92.2	64.1	8.8	14.2	12.9
5 & above	92.1	63.8	8.8	14.4	12.9

**Source:** Participation of Women in Specified Activities along with Domestic Duties, NSS 68<sup>th</sup> Round (GOI 2014).

**Note:**

1. Figures in column 2 for a specified age group given in Statement 3.2 and Statement 3.3 may not add up to 1000 owing to exclusion of not recorded cases.
2. Sum of the entries in columns 3 to 6 is not 1000 owing to exclusion of not reported cases.
3. \* MTDD: most of the time in domestic duties
4. #DD: Domestic Duties
5. \*\* code-1: no other member to carry out the domestic duties; code-2: cannot afford hired help; code-3: for social and / or religious constraints; code-9: other reasons

In the age group of 15-29 years, 91.5 per cent women in rural areas reported that they spent most of their time in DD. 54.0 per cent of these women did so due to the *absence of other members* to take care of DD, 19.9 per cent due to *social/religious norms*, 17.2 per cent due to '*other reasons*' and 9.0 per cent reported that *they could not afford hired help to take care of domestic chores*. In the age group of 45-59 years, 89.9 per cent women in rural areas reported that they spent most of their time in DD. While 58.4 per cent did so due to the absence of other members to take care of DD, 17.9 per cent gave '*other reasons*', 14.5 per cent attributed their engagement in DD to *social/religious norms* and 9.1 per cent said that *they could not afford hired help*. In 5-14 age group, 79.0 per cent girls/women in rural areas reported that they spent most of their time in domestic duties. While 32.5 per cent said that they did so due to the absence of other members to take care of domestic duties, 31.4 per cent gave '*other reasons*', 22.7 per cent attributed it to *social/religious norms* and 13.4 per cent said that *they could not afford hired help for domestic work*.

For women in urban areas, just as was evident in rural areas, a large proportion of women in the age group of 30-44 (95.0 per cent) reported

that they spent most of their time in DD. While 72.3 per cent of them did so due to the absence of other members to take care of DD, 11.1 per cent due to *social/religious norms*, 8.7 per cent due to 'other reasons' and 7.8 per cent reported that *they could not afford hired help to take care of domestic chores*. In the age group of 45-59 years, 92.0 per cent women reported that they spent most of their time on DD. While 63.3 per cent did so due to the absence of other members to take care of DD, 14.3 per cent due to *social/religious norms*, and 12.9 per cent due to 'other reasons' and 9.5 per cent reported that *they could not afford hired help to take care of domestic chores*. In the age group of 15-29 years, 91.2 per cent women/girls reported spending most of their time in DD. While 56.6 per cent did so due to the absence of other members to take care of DD, 18.4 per cent attributed it to *social/religious norms*, 15.7 per cent due to 'other reasons' and 9.3 per cent reported that *they could not afford hired help to take care of domestic chores*. In the age group of 5-14 years, 81.1 per cent girls reported spending most of their time in DD. While 48.0 per cent did so due to *social/religious norms*, 25.2 per cent gave 'other reasons', 17.3 per cent cited the absence of other members to take care of DD, and 9.6 per cent said that *their households could not afford hired help to take care of domestic chores*.

**Table 3.5: Reason for Spending Most of the Time in Domestic Duties (MTDD) in 15-59 Age Group in NER**

	Reason for spending Most of the Time in Domestic Duties (MTDD)											
	No other member to carry out the domestic duties	Can-not afford hired help	for social and/or religious constraints	other reasons	No other member to carry out the domestic duties	Can-not afford hired help	for social and/or religious constraints	other reasons	No other member to carry out the domestic duties	Can-not afford hired help	for social and/or religious constraints	other reasons
	Rural				Urban				Rural+Urban			
Sikkim	90.7	0.5	3.4	5.4	86.7	0	0.7	12.6	88.8	0.3	2.1	8.9
Arunachal Pradesh	61.2	11.2	4.0	23.6	74.2	3.2	2.9	19.6	64.6	9.1	3.7	22.6
Nagaland	38.8	4.8	7.1	49.3	31.2	3.5	9.1	56.2	35.8	4.3	7.9	51.9
Manipur	58.9	5.9	14.0	21.3	64.9	2.2	6.6	26.4	60.6	4.8	11.8	22.7
Mizoram	87.2	1.8	0.4	10.6	88.3	5.9	0	5.9	87.8	4.0	0.2	8.0
Tripura	83.2	6.5	7.6	2.6	82.5	11.7	4.0	1.9	83.1	7.3	7.1	2.5
Meghalaya	68.9	8.7	3.4	19.1	73.4	8.8	2.0	15.7	70.4	8.7	2.9	18.0
Assam	58.9	5.8	14.6	20.7	62.1	7.1	10.7	20.1	59.3	5.9	14.2	20.6
India	60.8	8.6	16.0	14.7	64.9	8.7	14.3	12.1	62.1	8.6	15.4	13.9
North East - All	61.3	5.9	13.4	19.3	65.7	6.7	8.1	19.5	61.9	6.0	12.7	19.4

Source: NSS unit level data 2011-12

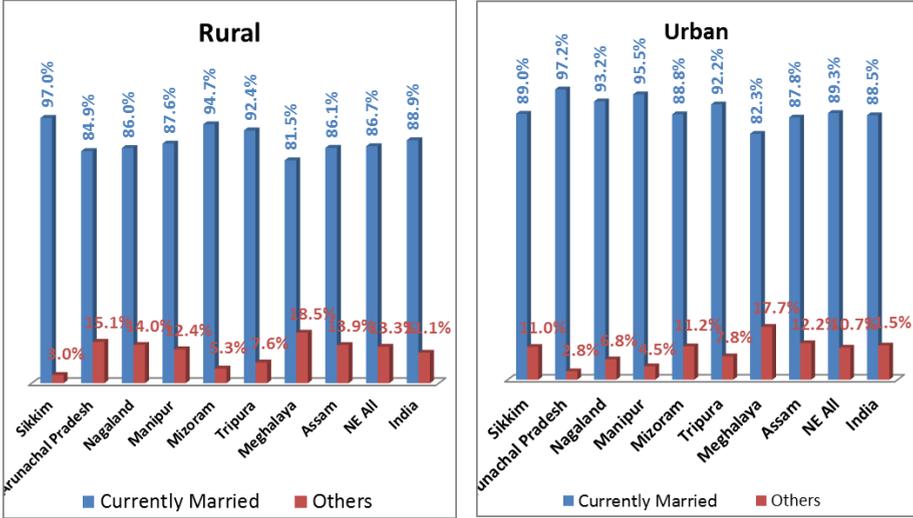
Thus, the prominent reasons highlighted by women for participation in DD in 2011-12 in NER in 15-59 age group included *no other household member carry out the domestic duties* and *social and cultural reasons*. The other reasons included *no hired help and others*. It was striking to note that in rural Sikkim, 90.7 per cent women reported that there was no other member to carry out Domestic Duties hence they had to do it themselves. The Sikkim Human Development Report revealed that women in rural areas, were involved in agricultural operations from sowing to harvesting. It has been their responsibility traditionally, to collect fuel wood and fodder for the family, and fetch water from *dharas* (springs) in vessels which they carry in a *doko* (basket) on their backs. They are responsible for all domestic tasks including the caring for domestic animals (HDR, 2014). While majority of the North Eastern States report that there is *no other member in the household to carry out domestic work*, states like Nagaland report *other reasons* for participating in domestic duties. Women in Nagaland face a number of barriers such as poor infrastructure, poor road condition and connectivity, lower mobility due to gender division of labour, socially constructed roles assigning women in reproductive sector and care economy, lack of access to training and marketing information due to low literacy rate and denial of access to productive resources due to cultural factors (HDR, 2004).

### 3.3 Women Engaged in Domestic Duties by Marital Status, Education and Household Size

The disaggregated analysis of women engaged in DD by marital status revealed that majority of them were *currently married*. In the NER (combined) 86.7 per cent women were *currently married*, while in all India the percentage was 88.9 per cent in the rural areas. In the urban areas of NER 89.3 per cent were currently married. Some states like Sikkim (97.0 per cent), Mizoram (94.7 per cent) and Tripura (92.4 per cent) recorded higher percentage of women who were currently married. The increasing engagement of women (married) in domestic duties and decline in labour market participation are quite self-explanatory reflecting on participation in DD as a deterrent to paid employment. Such a situation also reiterates the need for an investigation into the constraints married women face while they plan to enter the labour market and why they fail to participate in paid employment?

However, states like Tripura and Sikkim have reported an increase in female work participation and quite contrastingly an increase in DD which again calls for the need to further investigate into the nature of employment in which women are engaged and particularly, their status as workers. However, their marginal status as evident in the Census reports corroborates this fact and reflects on the vulnerability of these women workers who continue to remain in employment but as marginal workers.

**Figure 3.4: Percentage Distribution of Women Engaged in DD by Marital Status**



Source: NSS Unit Level Data of Round 68<sup>th</sup> 2011-12

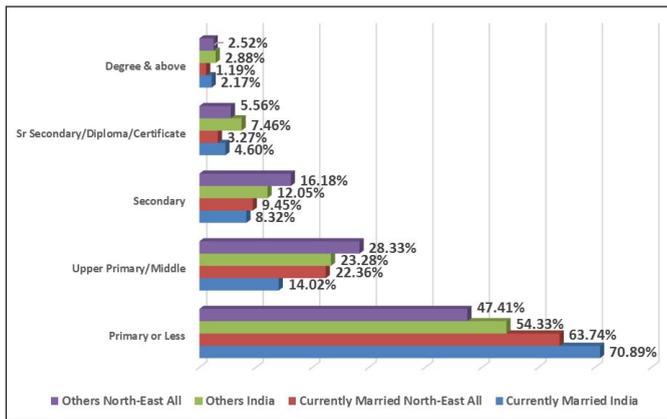
Further, disaggregated analysis of the relationship between participation in DD and marital status, it was revealed that 86.7 percent were *currently married* in rural North East and 89.3 per cent were *currently married* in the urban areas of the NER who were engaged in DD. In rural areas, the States which showed a greater percentage of married women engaged in DD were Sikkim (97.0 per cent), Mizoram (94.7 per cent), Tripura (92.4 per cent), Manipur (87.6 per cent), Assam (86.1 per cent), Nagaland (86 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (84.9 per cent) and Meghalaya (81.5 per cent). However in urban areas, the highest proportion of married women engaged in DD were in states like Arunachal Pradesh (97.2 per cent), Manipur (95.5 per cent), Nagaland (93.2 per cent), Tripura (92.2 per cent), Sikkim (89.0 per cent), Mizoram (88.8 per cent), Assam (87.8 per cent) and Meghalaya (82.3 per cent).

The above trends can be explained with the work participation rates of women in the North Eastern States which shows widespread variations. In the rural areas, States like Mizoram, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland show a decline in work participation rates of women on the one hand and concentration of women in domestic duties on the other hand. Such a situation raises many pertinent questions related to unequal household division of labour, the burden of unpaid and care work on women and other social and cultural constraints that restrict women to participate in paid employment and demands an in depth probing and empirical studies. Further, Sikkim and Tripura emerge as two States showing the highest number of married women engaged in DD and also

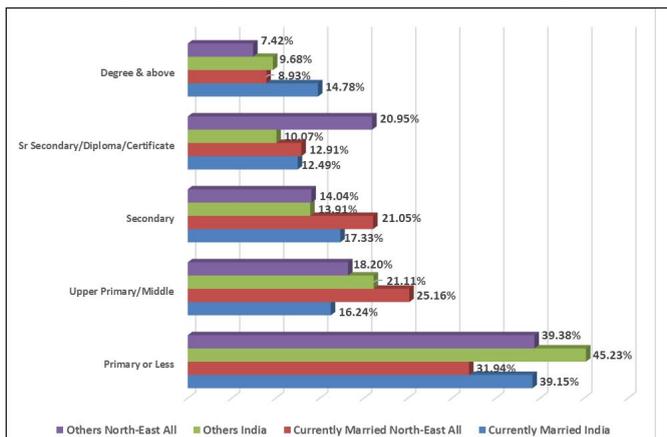
the work participation of women in these states has increased with more women employed as marginal workers. However, States like Manipur and Meghalaya portray fluctuating work participation rates for women.

In urban areas, states which show greater participation of women in DD like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland have shown a dramatic decline in work participation rates<sup>15</sup> showing an excessive burden of DD on married women. However, marriage also entails greater responsibility on women for child bearing which could have been one of the factors for these women to confine themselves more to DD.

**Figure 3.5: Percentage Distribution of Women Engaged in DD by Education and Marital Status in 15-59 Age Group in Rural NER and India by UPSS**



**Figure 3.6: Women Engaged in DD by Education and Marital Status in 15-59 Age Group in Urban NER and India by UPSS**



Source: NSS Unit Level Data of Round 68<sup>th</sup> 2011-12

<sup>15</sup> See table 2.6 on Workforce Participation Rate

With regard to DD participation, level of education and marital status for the year 2011-12 in the age group of 15-59, it was revealed that in the rural areas of the NER, 63.74 percent women who were currently married and attending to DD, were educated up to the primary level. 22.36 per cent were educated up to upper primary level, 9.45 per cent up to secondary level, 3.27 percent were educated up to senior secondary and only 1.19 per cent per were graduates. In the urban areas, a larger percentage (31.94 per cent) of women who were currently married and attending to DD were educated only up to primary level or even below primary level. 25.16 percent were educated up to upper primary or middle level, 21.05 percent were educated up to secondary level. Only 12.91 were educated up to senior secondary level and 8.93 per cent were graduates and above. The above figures (3.5 and 3.6) clearly reflect on the discouraging relationship between education and marital status as a greater percentage of women who were married and engaged in DD were educated only up to primary level. This raises many policy concerns on the need to understand the constraints faced by women in access to educational institutions, the need to provide skill training and redistribution of household work with public provisioning of care services.

**Table 3.6: Household Size by Reason for Spending Most of the Time in Domestic Duties (MTDD)**

States	Rural					Urban				
	No other member to carry out the domestic duties	Cannot afford hired help	for social and/or religious constraints	other reasons	Total	No other member to carry out the domestic duties	Cannot afford hired help	for social and/or religious constraints	other reasons	Total
Sikkim	4.0	3	5.8	6.4	4.1	4.04	.	6	5.7	4.3
Arunachal Pradesh	4.7	5.5	6.8	5.2	5.0	4.34	5.5	4.3	5.7	4.7
Nagaland	4.8	4.2	5.6	5.2	5.0	4.6	4.7	5.1	4.7	4.7
Manipur	5.1	5.7	4.6	5.6	5.2	4.9	5.7	5.2	5.1	5.0
Mizoram	4.2	5.7	5.7	5.1	4.3	4.9	5.8	.	6.6	5.0
Tripura	4.1	5.1	6.0	5.2	4.3	3.9	5.1	6.6	5.9	4.2
Meghalaya	5.1	6.6	6.2	6.2	5.5	5.0	4.5	7.0	6.1	5.1
Assam	4.6	5.7	6.2	6.2	5.2	4.1	6.3	5.4	5.8	4.7
India	4.7	6.2	6.8	6.6	5.4	4.4	6.1	6.8	6.2	5.1
North east	4.6	5.7	6.1	6.2	5.1	4.3	5.8	5.4	5.6	4.7

*Source: NSS Unit Level Data 2011-12*

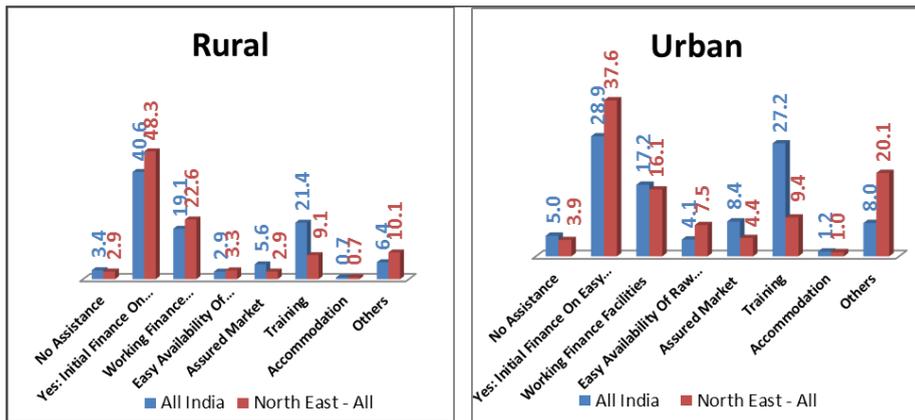
It was also interesting to understand the participation of women in DD as per household size. Overall NER showed that larger household size

reported *social and religious constraints* as the main reason for spending most of the time in DD. In the States like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Assam which reported *social and cultural reasons* for participating in domestic duties had at least 6-8 members in their household in rural areas. Similarly trends were reflected in the urban areas. The larger size of the household necessitates further investigation to understand the household gender relations in terms of division of labour within the household.

### 3.4 Willingness to Work in Household Premises and Type of Assistance Required

With regard to distribution of females in age 15- 59 years engaged in DD (in usual principal status) and willingness to accept work in the household premises by type of assistance required, 2011-12, it was reported that those who were willing to accept work in the household premises reported to be provided financial assistance (initial level) and training to get engaged in paid activities in household premises. The other kinds of assistance reported by women included *working finance, availability of raw materials, assured market, accommodation and others*. However such trends reflect on the need for provision of employment avenues like microfinance and other Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Lack of skills as an essential pre-requisite for participation in paid employment is adequately highlighted.

**Figure 3.7: Percentage Distribution of Females between Age 15 - 59 Years Engaged in DD (UPSS) and Willingness to Accept Work in the Household Premises by Type of Assistance Required, 2011-12 in Rural and Urban Areas**



Source: NSS Unit Level Data of Round 68<sup>th</sup> 2011-12

An analysis of kind of work acceptable at the household premises by women engaged in DD varied across different north eastern states .In the rural areas of NER most of the states were willing to accept the work of spinning and weaving, animal husbandry followed by poultry, dairy, food processing, etc .While in urban areas, the most prominent type of work acceptable were dairy, spinning and weaving, food processing, poultry and others (GOI, 2014)

**Table 3.7: Percentage Distribution of Females (15-59 age group) Usually Engaged in DD (UPSS) and Willing to Accept Work in the Household Premises by Type of Assistance Required for all North Eastern States**

Type of Assistance Required									
Rural									
State	No Assistance	Initial Finance On Easy Terms	Working Finance Facilities	Easy Availability of Raw Materials	Assured Market	Training	Accommodation	Others	Total
Sikkim	14.59	26.10	10.48	0.00	0.00	29.02	0.96	18.85	100
Arunachal Pradesh	9.19	20.05	12.88	3.94	8.45	19.27	2.20	24.03	100
Nagaland	13.59	30.91	6.87	0.07	4.51	3.47	0.00	40.58	100
Manipur	15.46	30.19	20.35	0.90	3.26	4.66	0.52	24.65	100
Mizoram	13.40	21.46	21.53	8.14	2.64	5.46	4.55	22.82	100
Tripura	0.86	49.49	37.31	0.61	0.28	4.84	2.35	4.27	100
Meghalaya	7.79	34.88	28.26	0.18	0.32	17.32	0.00	11.25	100
Assam	2.02	50.67	21.18	3.97	3.20	9.70	0.52	8.74	100
NER Total	2.90	48.49	22.70	3.36	2.91	9.14	0.75	9.75	100
All India	3.40	40.70	19.13	2.86	5.65	21.44	0.71	6.11	100
Urban									
State	No Assistance	Initial Finance On Easy Terms	Working Finance Facilities	Easy Availability of Raw Materials	Assured Market	Training	Accommodation	Others	Total
Sikkim	0.00	34.75	11.98	0.00	19.10	28.33	0.00	5.83	100
Arunachal Pradesh	5.98	18.96	5.64	2.47	2.92	13.78	0.47	49.77	100
Nagaland	9.59	37.90	9.50	0.00	4.78	1.16	0.00	37.07	100
Manipur	11.06	21.48	38.14	1.74	0.00	6.89	1.93	18.76	100
Mizoram	8.09	16.49	28.72	3.50	9.87	7.25	0.00	26.09	100
Tripura	0.00	56.53	25.83	0.82	0.19	3.32	1.45	11.87	100
Meghalaya	11.63	16.70	40.49	0.00	4.51	9.20	0.00	17.48	100
Assam	2.12	42.91	11.97	12.13	4.95	11.80	1.29	12.84	100
NER	4.05	38.70	16.59	7.75	4.55	9.63	1.03	17.71	100
Total	4.99	29.03	17.31	4.07	8.43	27.32	1.16	7.69	100

*Source: NSS Unit Level Data of Round 68<sup>th</sup> 2011-12*

The above table (3.7) presents the percentage distribution of females (15-59 age group) in North Eastern States usually engaged in DD (UPSS)

and willing to accept work in the household premises by type of assistance required. It was revealed that in rural areas, majority of women (48.49 per cent) in the NER wanted initial finance on easy terms and working finance facilities (22.70 per cent) to work. The other types of assistance required included training(9.14 per cent), others (9.75 per cent), easy availability of raw materials(3.36 per cent) and assured market (2.19 percent). Similarly, in urban areas, access to easy finance (38.70 per cent) and working finance (16.59 per cent ) emerged as important priorities of women to get engaged in paid employment.

**Table 3.8: Percentage Distribution of Females (15-59 age group) Usually Engaged in DD (UPSS) and Willing to Accept Work on the Household Premises by Nature of Work Acceptable**

State	Rural			Urban		
	Regular - Full Time	Regular - Part Time	Occasional	Regular - Full Time	Regular - Part Time	Occasional
Sikkim	63.53	33.74	2.73	21.05	68.62	10.33
Arunachal Pradesh	26.30	60.62	13.08	52.63	33.57	13.80
Nagaland	57.38	24.40	18.22	57.82	25.83	16.34
Manipur	32.37	57.66	9.96	44.02	52.87	3.11
Mizoram	66.27	27.82	5.91	45.90	39.65	14.45
Tripura	26.93	71.05	2.02	33.72	64.85	1.44
Meghalaya	50.42	46.52	3.06	41.03	54.58	4.39
Assam	20.95	66.72	12.33	29.20	59.25	11.56
NER Total	23.62	65.40	10.97	35.35	54.17	10.47
Total	21	74	5.41	24.73	70.00	5.27

Source: NSS Unit Level Data of Round 68<sup>th</sup> 2011-12

With regard to willingness to work in household premises it is interesting to note that in rural NER, a significant number of women (65.40 per cent) who were engaged in DD preferred to be engaged in part time work .While 23.62 per cent women preferred to be engaged in regular full time work, 10.97 percent women preferred to go for occasional work. It was evident that 71.05 per cent women engaged in DD in Tripura preferred part time work, while only 26.93 per cent preferred regular full time work. The other States where a majority of women preferred part time employment included Assam (66.72 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (60.62 per cent), Manipur (57.66 per cent). On the contrary, in States like Mizoram (66.27 per cent), Sikkim, (65.53 per cent), and Nagaland (57.38 per cent) greater proportion of women preferred regular full time employment.

Similarly, in urban areas (NER), 54.17 per cent women engaged in DD preferred part time work, 35.35 per cent women preferred regular full time employment

and 10.47 per cent preferred occasional employment. Sikkim (68.62 per cent) and Tripura (64.85 per cent) emerge as prominent states where most of the women preferred part time employment. It is evident that the increasing participation of women in DD and other household responsibilities compel women to opt for part time work. Such a trend reflects on constraints faced by women to participate in full time paid employment. It is also important to understand the socio-cultural contexts where women are located and in what kind of activities women generally spend most their time?

In this context, the time use statistics<sup>16</sup> becomes extremely relevant as they can capture both the market and non-market activities of women and provide an estimate of time spent in each activity. Such statistics not only help in understanding the household division of labour but also throw light on how much time is available with women specifically in hilly and mountainous regions to participate in income generating activities.

### 3.5 The Relevance of Time Use Surveys in Understanding Women's Work

It was revealed that unpaid care work across all economies and cultures is performed by women. It is therefore not at all that surprising that feminist economists have led the call for unpaid care work to be "counted" in statistics, "accounted for" in representations of the economy, and "taken into account" in policy making (Budlender, 2010). Over the years many official documents such as the Towards Equality Report, the Report of the Time Use Survey etc have reflected on the invisibility of women's work and reported that women do spend enormous time spent in unpaid activities which is an indicator to understand the overall well-being of a person and human development of the country.

One of the North Eastern States that were included in time use survey was Meghalaya. With regard to time distribution patterns and classification of activities<sup>17</sup>, in rural Meghalaya Extended System of National Accounts

<sup>16</sup> Time use statistics are quantitative summaries of how individuals allocate their time over a specific time period-typically over 24 hours of a day or over the seven days of a week on different activities and how much time they spend on each of these activities.

<sup>17</sup> The Classification of activities is followed from the Time Use Statistics (1998-99) conducted in India that classifies various activities as the following: *System of National Accounts (SNA). Activities: I. Primary Production Activities include Crop farming, kitchen gardening, etc. Animal husbandry, Fishing, Forestry, Horticultural, Gardening Collection of fruit, water plants etc., storing and hunting. Processing & Storage, Mining, Quarrying, digging, cutting etc. II Secondary Activities, Construction Activities, Manufacturing Activities, III Trade, Business and Services. Extended SNA Activities include household maintenance, Management and Shopping for Own Household, Care for Children, the sick, elderly and disabled for own household, Community Services and Help to other Households. Non SNA Activities include Learning, Social and Cultural Activities, Mass Media, etc. personal care and self-maintenance (GOI 2001).*

(Ex-SNA) activities for females were recorded as 20.57 hours while males worked for only 4.18 hours. Similarly in urban areas women worked in Ex SNA activities for 20.47 hours and males worked for 4.74 hours only. On the contrary, System of National Accounts (SNA) activities for females was lower in comparison to males in both rural and urban areas. In rural areas while females worked for 17.33 hours, males worked for 28.74 hours. Even in the urban areas, contribution of males (21.08 hours) was higher as compared to females (8.58 hours) in SNA activities. Further, in rural areas Non -SNA activities for females was recorded as 62.09 hours and males was 67.08 hours and in urban areas females were engaged in Non -SNA activities for 70.98 hours while males were engaged for 74.17 hours (GOI, 2008). The survey revealed that women spend maximum time in extended SNA activities which constrains them from participating in the labour market activities. However, in the case of women in North East the double burden is more visible since they have to travel in the hilly terrains to collect fuel or water for their domestic use. In the coal mining areas of Jaintia Hills, West Khasi Hills and Garo Hills in Meghalaya where forests have been degraded through the rat hole mining, drinking water sources have dwindled women have to travel long distances for collecting water (Mukhim, 2010).

The relevance of time use statistics becomes imperative for regions with rich geographical diversity and socio-cultural history. Time use statistics are important indicators to analyze women's contribution and time spent in activities like fetching water, fuel, firewood, forest produces etc. in mountainous regions. However, it is crucial to bring women from unpaid work to more gainful employment. Women's lower levels of labour force participation relative to men, and their concentration in the poorest segments of highly gender segmented labour markets reflect the intersection of the gender-specific constraints reflecting the rules, norms, roles and responsibilities of the intrinsically gendered relations of family and kinship with the 'imposed' constraints embodied in the rules and norms of the purportedly gender neutral institutions of states, markets and civil society as well as the attitudes and behaviour of different institutional actors (Kabeer, 2012).

### **3.6 Summing Up**

The chapter has discussed on the gender relations in the context of women's participation in DD. In this regard the census and NSSO data revealed that in NER large number of women were engaged in domestic and care responsibilities. However, women's participation in economic activity is essential for their personal advancement and protecting their well-being. In view of the above discussion, it can be stated that over representation

of women as unpaid workers makes them vulnerable in terms of their socio-economic status depriving them of many rights. Nevertheless, unpaid workers therefore fail to get the attention they deserve from the government and are inevitably left out of pension schemes and other programs to support workers. However, the Time Use Survey conducted in 1998-99 recorded that women in rural Meghalaya spend 20.57 hours in DD whereas in urban areas they spend 20.47 hours (GOI, 2001). The above survey revealed that in Meghalaya women spent MTDD which largely remains statistically invisible. Since India has a higher share of women workers as unpaid workers, there is a need to unmask the statistical invisibility pertaining to such kind of work. In India, most of population is engaged in informal sector, therefore, it becomes imperative to redesign time use survey to capture effectively the working lives of women. Moreover, the surveys should be formulated in such a manner that it takes into account the cultural impediments across regions which institutionalize the invisibility of women's work (Samantroy and Khurana, 2015).

## 4

### Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Women constitute roughly half of the global population and thus, potentially, half of its workforce. As a group, women do as much work as men, if not more. However, the type of work they do, as well as the conditions under which they work and their access to opportunities for advancement, differ from that of men. Women work less than men in labour market but more within households on domestic activities. In the labour market women are more disadvantaged than men (UN, 2015). Thus the concept of labour is usually reserved for men's productive work under capitalist conditions, which means work for the production of surplus value. Though women also perform such surplus-value-generating labour, under capitalism the concept of labour is generally used with a male or patriarchal bias, because under capitalism, women are typically defined as housewives that means as non-worker (Mies, 1998).

In this context, the present study tried to explore women's work and address the statistical invisibility of women's work in North Eastern society. The study tried to identify the socio-cultural causes, which is responsible for gender segregation of workforce and labour force participation rates among all North Eastern states. However, levels of development as well as gender differences in varied spheres such as educational, socio-cultural and economic have been taken into consideration. The study thus, highlighted on pertinent issues with regard to gendered nature of housework, workforce participation, division of labour and women's position in North Eastern Region (NER) of India.

The study was divided into three chapters which may be summarized as follows:

The first chapter contextualized the study by highlighting the role that women play as primary caregivers in families across all North Eastern Regions. In this region, women on an average spend more time in animal husbandry, forestry, fetching water, firewood, fodder and fruits and vegetables than their male counterparts. However, this contribution of women has not been acknowledged adequately in national accounting statistics. The chapter outlined the objective, methodology, and secondary data collected from several governmental sources including the Census, National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and Central Statistical Organizations (CSO) (Time Use Survey) data.

The second chapter provided a brief overview of the relationship between education and employment trends of women and men in NER.

In addition, it has also discussed occupational segregation by exploring issues related to skill development, women's work and complex labour market situation in NER and also highlighted the gender differentials observed in the employment trends for men and women. Though, census 2011 showed that the age group of 5-14 years female attendance in educational institutions of north east was higher as compared to other age groups. On contrary, in the age groups of 20-24 years the attendance in educational institutions decreased gradually and the gender gaps became more pronounced.

Further, the female Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPR) in NER has been witnessing declining and fluctuating trends. The rural NER revealed fluctuating and differential trends with many states reporting a decline in female LFPR (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Manipur) and some others showing increasing trends (Sikkim and Tripura). In Sikkim, rural LFPR for females was 47.9 per cent in 2004-05 which slightly decreased to 47.5 per cent in 2009-10 but increased considerably to 70.6 per cent in 2011-12. In Tripura rural LFPR for females was 18.7 per cent in 2004-05 which increased to 33.6 percent in 2009-10 and further increased to 40.2 per cent in 2011-12. Although, in urban areas, similar trends were reported like in Assam, female LFPR was (18.3 per cent in 2004-05 which decreased to 14.8 per cent in 2009-10 and further decline 13.2 per cent in 2011-12) and in Meghalaya, female LFPR was 46.5 per cent in 2004-05 which decreased to 35.7 per cent in 2009-10 and further declined to 30.8 per cent 2011-12).

Similarly Workforce Participation Rates (WFPR) recorded declining trends in rural NER. States like *Arunachal Pradesh* (64.5 per cent in 2004-05 which decreased to 44.3 per cent in 2009-10 and further declined to 42.4 per cent in 2011-12), *Assam* (33.1 per cent in 2004-05 which declined to 24.1 per cent in 2009-10 and further decreased to 17.8 per cent in 2011-12) and *Nagaland* (74 per cent in 2004-05 which decreased to 42.9 per cent in 2009-10 and further declined to 39.7 per cent in 2011-12) have reported a decline in female Workforce Participation Rate. In urban areas of NER female WFPR revealed similar trends with decrease in many states and increase in some states while the overall average of the NER (combined) showed fluctuating trends. In states like Assam female WFPR declined from (16.6 per cent in 2004-05 to 13 per cent in 2009-10 and further declined to 12.2 per cent in 2011-12). In the same way, Meghalaya WFPR for females declined from (44.8 per cent in 2004-05 to 32.4 per cent in 2009 -10 and further decreased to 29.7 per cent in 2011-12) across all three rounds of the NSS. Thus, the above analysis revealed that in some States of North East region women's contribution have been marginalized in labour force

and workforce participation as compared to men. In this regard the census figures of 2001 and 2011 reported that across the NER women were mainly engaged as marginal workers in comparison to men in the working age population of 15-59 age groups.

The third chapter focussed on understanding the dynamics of unpaid work and family life within the context of household division of labour and cultural practices thereby exploring the role of social norms in allocation of household tasks. It was found that the responsibility of household and domestic duties were mainly undertaken by women. Women in the NER spend most of the time in domestic chores such as cooking; washing clothes and also in agriculture and forest related work. With regard to engagement of women in DD in the age group of 15-59 years in 2011-12, it was revealed that the larger number of women (67.5 per cent) were engaged in DD in rural areas across the NER compared to all India average of (61.6 per cent). Contrastingly, in urban areas of NER 60.5 per cent of females were engaged in domestic as compared to all India average of 65.1 per cent. One of the prominent reasons highlighted by women for participation in domestic duties in 2011-12 included no other household member carry out the domestic duties and social and cultural reasons. The other reasons included no hired help and others.

From the discussion and analysis in the study as summarized above, it is evident that women have often found it difficult to negotiate within the gendered structure of social relations. Their traditional roles as caregiver were reinforced since the division of labour within the household remained unequal. Even within the region, there is a vast geographical diversity, which is well reflected in the time women spend in unpaid work through the National Time Use Survey conducted in one of the north eastern states; namely Meghalaya in the year 1998-99. Though, the bulk of these women workers are engaged in the farming sector and hence mostly accounted as self-employed workers. Again, of those employed, only a relatively small proportion of them get paid in money. Such unpaid family labour wherein women often act as the reserve army of labour employed seasonally where they are only temporarily part of the labour force cannot be seen as an improvement over non-participation (Ferrant *et al* 2014). Hence there is need for reforming of appropriate gender-sensitive policy measures that not only aims at addressing unpaid care work through extension of state-sponsored care facilities, but also emphasize on redistribution of unpaid care and domestic responsibilities, thereby altering gender relations that get institutionalized through social and cultural norms.

## Policy Recommendations

The following are some of the recommendations that have emerged from the study:

- **Gender Mainstreaming of Labour Force Surveys:**

The labour force surveys need to be adequately gender mainstreamed with probing questions on region specific reasons for engagement of women in specific activities. The special reports like *Participation of Women in Specified activities along with Domestic Duties 2014* by the NSSO provides relevant information on the household division of labour. Such surveys need to be encouraged with proper disaggregation of data and adequate probing questions that reflect on social realities of the lives of men and women.

- **Redistribution of Time-Conducting Time Use Surveys:** In the NER the domestic work burden needs to be reduced; investments to ensure universal provision of drinking water, sanitation, electricity and cooking fuel need to be stepped up. However, women work more hours than men, their relatively limited participation in the labour force is symptomatic of the imbalanced sharing of care responsibilities and expectations that serves to circumscribe options (UNDP, 2015). In this regard the results of gender division of labour in the household will emerge comprehensively when time-use studies are carried out at regular intervals.

- **Emphasis on Education and Skill Training:** Adequate focus on promotion of gender non- stereo typical skills that promote upward mobility of women. In the north eastern region, there is a need to encourage vocational training for the women in hilly and mountainous regions who spend long arduous hours in collecting forest produce and not being able to participate in paid employment. In the NER, there is a need to promote skills that contribute in encouraging women to participate in regular employment with adequate upward mobility. Since most of the women engaged in domestic duties were married and were educated upto primary level, it becomes extremely essential to invest in adequate skill training for employment.

- **Provision of Transport and Better Infrastructure:** The study revealed that in NER, due to lack of transport infrastructure women spend most of time in unpaid work. However the time spent travelling to work in hilly and mountainous regions is often not accounted and workers are discouraged to work due to bad transport facilities. There is a need to provide better transport to workers in order to enable them to continue and sustain in the labour market. Since the time use

surveys have the potential for capturing time spent in travelling, such surveys can immensely contribute in informing governmental policy to strengthen infrastructural facilities in the region.

- **Approach to Policy Implementation:** Policies need to be implemented keeping in view specific requirements of different states across the NER. The approach to implementation of policies needs to be particularistic since the region has vast geographical diversity with and certain policies are not equally beneficial for each region that remains geographically and culturally different from each other.
- **Strengthening Gender Budgeting:** Budgeting is a powerful tool for achieving gender mainstreaming so as to ensure that benefits of development reach women as much as men. It is not an accounting exercise but an ongoing process of keeping a gender perspective in policy/ programme formulation, its implementation and review. Gender Budgeting entails dissection of the Government budgets to establish its gender differential impacts and to ensure that gender commitments are translated into budgetary commitments. Among the North-Eastern states, Nagaland and Tripura have taken initiatives towards adopting and implementing Gender Budgeting. Nagaland officially adopted Gender Budgeting in 2009 and set up a Task Force for “Engendering State and District Plans” headed by Additional Chief Secretary in 2009 with members from Departments of Health and Family Welfare, Finance, Rural Development, Development Commissioner, State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Administrative Training Institute (ATI), Nagaland University and Additional Director, Women Development as the member secretary. The state also constituted a Gender Budgeting Cell under Planning and Coordination Department. The Task force has also developed a Gender Budgeting manual customized to local requirement in collaboration with UNDP<sup>18</sup>. Nagaland has brought out a Gender Budgeting Manual, an in-house production by the State’s Department of Planning & Coordination, supported by the Planning Commission, Government of India and United Nations Development Programme. The manual is intended for elected representatives, policy makers, administrators, decision makers, officials, technical experts, academicians and all those who are closely associated with the process of planning and implementation at various levels. The manual also contains tools and indicators to help in gender based planning and implementation of programmes and plans across the various departments. In order to ensure gender equality at the policy making level, there is a need for strengthening of gender budgeting across the NER by adopting the

<sup>18</sup> For detail please see <http://wcd.nic.in/> accessed on 14.8. 2015.

good practices and learning from the experience of states that have incorporated gender budgeting in policy making.

In the context of heavy dependence of North East tribal women on forests for supplementing their inadequate resources for household it is important to focus on income generating activities and delve deeply into issue like saving time and energy from household activities. Withdrawal of women from labour force also needs to be studied in relation to the segmented labour market for women. Due to increasing domestic responsibilities women generally tend to get confined to household and often pull themselves out of the labour market. Gender economists must lift the veil of statistical invisibility of the unpaid 'care economy' managed by poor women and highlight the equality & efficiency dimension and transform macro-policies so that they become women friendly (NEC, 2008).

However the time use patterns of north eastern women, time used for travelling in hilly terrains and time in household activities are important parameters to understand women's participation in the labour market and also enable one to uncover the reasons for women's withdrawal from the labour market. In the context of human development, though economic production and accumulation of wealth is important, development of human capabilities is equally an integral part of overall development.

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