

Chapter 4

DECISION MAKING AND THE WOMEN

The most important criteria of the social status of women is the social structures, cultural norms and value systems that influence social expectations regarding the behaviour of women and determine their roles and position in society. Such social expectations also determine the decision making role of women in various social institutions such as decent, family and kinship, marriage and religious traditions. Decision-making is an important factor to understand the social status of women in family as well as in society. Equal participation of women with men in decision-making and participation in community life brings recognition of women in society. The decision making power of the women in the Karbi and Kuki communities has been studied under three categories of activities; namely, economic, social, and political, especially in family.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ECONOMIC DECISION MAKING

Tribal women are basically considered the main workforce of tribal economy. They are generally involved in almost all economic activities actively along with their menfolk or otherwise. Besides their active involvement in almost all economic activities, the Karbi and Kuki women participate in deciding the matters of economic importance, such as daily expenditure, investment, saving, borrowing etc in family. The patterns of their participation in economic decision making in family are being drawn here.

Domestic Expenditure

Routine expenditure generally includes the domestic expenditure of a family. Almost all villages are located in the remote areas; hence people depend on the nearest weekly market for the essential domestic commodities particularly food items. Also most of the families of both the communities directly or indirectly depend on the nearest market, as their agricultural, forest or handcraft

products are sold in this market. Thus, members from most of the families move to the market for purchasing essentials, sailing their products or both. The following table shows the participation level of women of the two tribal communities in decision-making for domestic expenditure:

Table 4.1
Participation Level of Respondents in Decision Making for Domestic Expenditure (Percentage in Parentheses)

Who took decision?	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Self	87 (30.63)	71(32.57)	158 (31.48)
Herself along with Husband/Father	111 (39.08)	92(42.20)	203 (40.44)
Husband/Father	58 (20.44)	48 (22.02)	106 (21.12)
Other family members	28 (9.86)	07(3.21)	35 (6.97)
Total	284 (100)	218 (100)	502 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during June 2014 - December 2015.

The above table reveals that two fifths (40.44%) of the total respondents decide for domestic expenditures along with their husbands or fathers, followed by one third (31.48%) who are fully independent to decide for daily expenditures. For over one fifth (21.12%) of the respondents, their husbands or fathers decide the matters of domestic expenditure. For a small fraction (6.97%) of the respondents, the domestic expenditure is decided by the family members other than husband / father like siblings, father-in-law, son etc.

Thus, nearly three fourths (71.92%) of the respondents have a say in the matter of domestic expenditure in their families. Almost similar pattern is observed among the respondents of both the communities. The Kuki women who participate in the decision making for domestic expenditure in family are a little more than the Karbi women. The family expenditure included the expenditure on domestic items, cloths, child's education, treatment etc.

However, extent of decision making among women in the matter of domestic expenditure varies from time to time and occasion to occasion. The following table reflects the extent of decision making in respect of domestic expenditure among the respondents:

Table 4.2
Extent of Decision Making for Domestic Expenditure among the Respondents
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Extant of Decision Making	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Always	67 (33.84)	44(26.99)	111 (30.75)
Sometimes	101(51.01)	65(39.88)	166(45.98)
Rarely	30(15.15)	54 (33.13)	84 (23.27)
Total	198 (100)	163 (100)	361(100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during June 2014 - December 2015

The above table reveals that about half (45.98%), the largest number of the respondents take decision on the expenditure sometimes, followed by those who take decisions regularly (30.75%), about one fourth (23.27%) of the respondents rarely participate in the decision making about the expenditure.

Comparatively over one third (33.84%) of the Kuki respondents and over one fourth (26.99%) of the Karbi respondents always enjoy the decision making. But the largest number of the respondents makes decision sometimes: over half (51.01%) in Karbi and about two fifths (39.88%) of the Kuki respondents. Then, 33.13% of the Kuki and 15.15% of the Karbi respondents participate rarely in decision-making about daily expenditure.

Thus, about one third (30.75%) of the respondents have always a say in the matter of the expenditure and near about half (45.98%) of the respondents sometimes participate to decide family expenditures, that is, on the occasions like festivals and ceremonies. Comparatively the Karbi women are better positioned in the matter, perhaps due to their more involvements in economic activities. The Karbis keep their womenfolk more involved in household activities with decision making in expenditure than the Kukis.

Family Investment

Investment by women for various purposes is not noticed regularly, though they are involved in all economic activities. In both the communities, generally investment in traditional fields like purchasing of animals, taking few livestock or land on lease etc. are preferred. But there are some instances where

people of the two communities are seen to be investing their earning in fixed deposit in a bank or Post Offices. Of the respondents, 91 Karbi and 54 Kuki who are unemployed cannot make any investment. The following table exhibits the participation of women in decision-making for investment among these earning respondents:

Table 4.3
Participation of Women in Decision Making for Investment
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Decision taken by	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Herself	42 (21.76)	23 (14.02)	65 (18.21)
Herself along with husband/father	55 (28.50)	31 (18.90)	86 (24.09)
Husband/father	57 (29.53)	83 (50.61)	140 (39.22)
Other family members	39 (20.21)	27 (16.46)	66 (18.48)
Total	193 (100)	164 (100)	357 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during June 2014 - December 2015.

The above table reveals that near about three fifths (57.70%) of the respondents has no role in investment and father or husband or other family member take decision for any investment. If this segment of decision makers for investments is disaggregated, then in case of two thirds (39.22%) of the respondents, it is husband or father who decides to invest for family while in case of about one fifth (18.48%) of the respondents, it is family members other than husband or father who decide to invest. Where the respondents are unmarried, father takes the decision and where they are married the husband decides. But when father is missing due to death or otherwise and a woman is still unmarried, the decision is taken by other family members.

However, the rest (42.30%) of the respondents have a role for investment of money in their families. When this segments of the respondents disaggregated, one finds that one fourth of the respondents participate to decide for investment of family's money along with husband or father or both, while near about one fifth (18.21%) of the respondents are fully independent to decide any matter of

investment for their families. These respondents are the women who are the major earners in their families.

As compared, over two thirds (67.07%) of the total Kuki respondents have no say in the family decisions taken for investment against the figure of half (49.74%) of the Karbi respondents falling in this category. Furthermore, in case of over half (51.61%) of the Kuki respondents against the figure of about one third (29.53%) for the Karbi respondents, it is husband or father only who decides for investment. The proportion of the respondents who participate in decision making for investment is more in case of the Karbi respondents (50.26%) than in case of the Kuki respondents (32.92%). Even the respondents taking independent decision for investment are more (21.76%) in the group of Karbi respondents than in the Kuki group (14.02%) of the respondents.

Thus, majority (57.70%) of the respondents have no say in the decisions taken in family for investment. Comparatively the Karbi respondents have more roles (50.26%) in the decision making as compared with the Kuki respondents (32.92%). This difference between the two communities owes to the urban impact on Karbis, as most of the Karbi villages are located near Kalain town areas on the Assam-Meghalaya highway, and also they have close association with the nontribal people; the attitudes of the Karbi families towards their women folk is seen to be changing gradually and even a small portion of the Karbi people is having positive attitude for economic empowerment of their womenfolk.

Furthermore, decision making in investment by the respondents of both the tribal communities is quite less. The extent of the respondents' decision making for family investments in both the tribal communities determines the attitude of the women folk in their respective community. Only 97 Karbi and 54 Kuki respondents are involved in investment. Therefore, the extent of the women's decision making in investment is shown in the following table:

Table 4.4
Extent of the Respondents' Decision Making for Family Investments
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Extent of Decision Making	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Always	22 (22.68)	13(24.07)	35(23.18)
Sometimes	37(38.14)	22(40.74)	59(39.07)
Rarely	38(39.18)	19(34.19)	57(37.75)
Total	97(100)	54(100)	151 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from June 2014- December 2015.

The table reveals that about two fifths (39.07%) of the respondents sometimes participate in decision for investment in traditional ways like lease-in of land, purchase of animals etc. or modern ways like deposits in bank, Post Office etc. or both. Almost similar trend is observed in both the communities. At the same time, about two fifths (37.75%) of the respondents rarely involve in any investment. Nonetheless, about one fourth (23.18%) of the respondents always participate to invest by purchasing of family livestock etc. A similar pattern is observed in both the communities. An insignificant difference between the two tribes owes to their very small investment as the income is not sufficient. However, Kuki respondents seem to be having greater extent of decision-making for investments than the Karbi respondents. This is mainly due to impact of education as well as awareness regarding investment for the educated Kuki families. Let their savings be examined to understand the role of women in decision-making.

Family Savings

Generally, traditional savings are practiced in both the tribal communities. In almost every house of both the communities, there are certain ways of saving money. They keep their income in a pot, box, bamboo hole etc. for a specific period. Saving with government and-semi government agencies is also found in both the communities. In both the communities there are good numbers of women account holders. However, maximum number of accounts of women is opened at zero balance. Of the respondents, 91 (32.04%) Karbi respondents and

54 (24.77%) Kuki respondents have no saving at all. The following table shows how the women participate in decision making for savings in their families:

Table 4.5
Participation of the Respondents in Decision Making for Family Saving
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Decision taken by	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Herself	32 (16.58)	23 (14.02)	55 (15.41)
Herself along with husband	58 (30.05)	41(25)	99 (27.73)
Husband/father	69 (35.75)	82 (50.00)	151(42.30)
Other family members	34 (17.62)	18 (10.98)	52 (14.56)
Total	193 (100)	164 (100)	357 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during June 2014 - December 2015.

The above table reveals that nearly three fifths (56.86%) of the respondents have no say in the matter of saving of money and the rest (43.14%) have a say in one way or the other. Similar pattern is observed in both the communities.

In case of the respondents having no role in the matter of saving in family, it is largely husband or father (42.30%) who decides about saving as compared to other family members (14.56%). On the other hand, over one fourth (27.73%) of the respondents decide any matter of saving in any family along with husband while 15.41% of the respondents independently decide any matter of saving. Similar pattern is observed in the two communities. Thus, majority of the women have no participation in the matter of the savings and husband/father or any other family members decides. This situation prevails over the two communities.

Savings by the respondents is found very less with government and semi-government agencies. For savings only 90 Karbi and 64 Kuki respondents are involved and the rest of the Karbi and Kuki respondents have no say in the matter of saving. The following table shows the extent of decision making among those respondents who have a say in respect of family savings:

Table 4.6
Extent of the Respondents' Decision Making for Family Saving
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Extent of Decision Making	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Always	22(24.44)	13(20.32)	35(22.72)
Sometimes	33(36.67)	18(28.13)	51(33.12)
Rarely	35(38.89)	33(51.55)	68 (44.16)
Total	90 (100)	64 (100)	154 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during June 2014 - December 2015.

The above table reveals that over two fifths (44.16%) of the respondents have rarely a say in matters of saving and about one third (30.68%) of the respondents have a say in some times in the matter of saving. Only over one fifth (22.72%) of the respondents have always a say in the matter of family savings.

Comparatively, more Karbi respondents have a say always (24.44%) or sometimes (36.67%) than the Kuki respondents (20.32% and 28.13% respectively). Conversely, more Kuki respondents (51.55%) than the Karbi respondents (38.89%) have rarely a say in matter of family saving.

Thus, of the respondents who participate in decision making, over two fifths (44.16%) have rarely a say in the matter of family savings.

The Karbi respondents have say in the matter of family savings are more than Kuki respondents. This is due to the locations of the Karbi villages where people can easily access to the financial institutions than the Kuki people. Secondly, gender bias in the Kuki families is perceived comparatively more than in the Karbi families.

For making their economy strong and managing any unexpected situation in family, tribal people generally take private loans, initially, from their fellow villagers. So, borrowing is the part of tradition in both the tribal communities.

Family Borrowing

Borrowing in family is also a part of tradition in both the communities. Borrowing with or without mortgage is traditionally practiced in the communities. However, every family doesn't encourage borrowing. 161 (56.69%) Karbi and 122 (55.96%) Kuki families of the respondents participated in the decision for family borrowing. Participation of women in decisions for borrowing is shown in the following table:

Table 4.7
Participation of Women in Decisions for Family Borrowing
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Decision Taken by	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Herself	27(16.77)	18(14.75)	45(15.90)
Herself along with husband/father	32(19.88)	21(17.21)	53(18.73)
Husband/ father	74(45.96)	76(62.30)	150 (53.00)
Other family members	28(17.39)	07(5.74)	35(12.37)
Total	161 (100)	122 (100)	283 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during June 2014 - December 2015.

The above table shows that over three fifths (63.37%) of the respondents don't participate in the decision taken for borrowing by their families and the rest (34.63%) take part in one way or the other. In case of those who do not participate in decisions for borrowing, it is husband/father (53%) or other members of family (12.37%) who take decisions for borrowing. More Kuki respondents (62.30%) than the Karbi respondents (45.96%) are found in the matter of the decision is taken by husband / father, while a reverse pattern is observed in case the decision is taken by other family members. The respondents who participate in the decision making are divided into two classes: who decide along with husband / father (18.73%) and who decide independently (15.90%). This pattern is similar in the two communities.

Thus, majority (65.37%) of the respondents do not participate in decision making for family's borrowings. Majority of the borrowings in the Kuki respondents (62.30%) are decided by husband / father whereas it is 45.96% of the

Karbi respondents. Due to strong hold in the family economy, the Karbi women are more capable of taking decision on borrowing as compared with the Kuki women.

Though borrowing is an ageold tradition in both the communities, women are generally not encouraged to participate in this matter. Hence, a small number of women are involved in decision-making for borrowing. 59 Karbi and 39 Kuki respondents participated in decisions taken for borrowing in their families. Let the extent of their participation be known. The following table reflects the extent of decision making for borrowing among the respondents:

Table 4.8
Extent of the Respondents' Decision Making for Family Borrowing
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Extent of Decision Making	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Always	12(20.34)	07(17.95)	19(19.39)
Sometimes	27(45.76)	15 (38.46)	42(42.86)
Rarely	20(33.90)	17(43.59)	37(37.75)
Total	59(100)	39(100)	98 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during June 2014 - December 2015.

The above table reveals that over two fifths (42.86%) of the respondents sometimes decide for borrowing. The same pattern is observed in both the communities. Then, nearly two fifths (37.75%) of the total respondents rarely involve in the decision-making for family borrowings. Only one fifth (19.39%) of the respondents always involve in the decision making for the borrowing.

Thus, extent of the women's involvement in decisions for family borrowing is quite less. According to the customary law of both the tribal communities, property is distributed among male children and therefore in all decisions taken in important economic matters like borrowing, women have the least role. In spite of having active participation in their traditional economy, women have the least role in family borrowing. Due to comparatively stronger hold in the family economy, the Karbi respondents have better involvement in borrowing than the Kuki respondents.

Like economy, decision-making in social sphere is important to understand the status of women. Let it be examined.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL MATTERS RELATED TO DECISION MAKING

For children's schooling, various decisions are taken in families. Men and women variously participate in such decision making. Women generally are deprived there due to patriarchy. Of the total respondents, 46 Karbi and 22 Kuki respondents have either no child or unmarried and the rest have concerned about the children's education. Therefore, the following table depicts the participation of women in decision making for children's education:

Table 4.9
Participation of the Respondents in Family Decision for Children's Education
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Decision taken by	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Herself	43(18.07)	48(24.49)	91(20.97)
Herself along with husband	89(37.39)	77(39.29)	166(38.25)
Husband	78 (32.78)	64(32.65)	142(32.72)
Other family member	28(11.76)	07 (3.57)	35 (8.06)
Total	238 (100)	196 (100)	434 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during June 2014 - December 2015.

The above table reveals that, of the respondents who are married and have children, about two fifths (38.25%) take decisions along with husband about the education of their child, and the same pattern prevails in both the communities, while one fifth (20.97%) of them decide themselves for their children's education. Women who are educated, guardians and the principal earners of their families mainly belong to this category. On the other hand, about one third (32.72%) of the respondents have no decision making role in their children's education as either husband alone takes all decisions largely (32.72%) or other family members take the decision (8.06%). Husband's role in taking decision for children's education is equally observed in two communities while the role of

other family members in children’s education is observed less among the Kuki respondents than the Karbi respondents.

Thus, more than three fifths (63.78%) of the Kuki respondents and over half (55.46%) of the Karbi respondents have a say in deciding their children’s education. Hence, the Kuki mothers have more decision-making role in their children’s education as Kuki (males and females) are generally more educated than their Karbi counterparts. However, number of the respondents having independent decision-making is quite low. Furthermore, the decision-making among the respondents varies in terms of its extent. Here, 132 Karbi and 125 Kuki respondents have participated in decision making. Extent of their decision making needs to be analysed. The following table highlights the extent of decision making among the respondents in their families with regards to children’s education:

Table 4.10
Extent of the Respondents’ Decision Making for Children’s Education
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Extent of Decision Making	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Always	34(25.76)	47(37.6)	81(31.52)
Sometimes	71(53.79)	62 (49.6)	133(51.75)
Rarely	27(20.45)	16(12.8)	43(16.73)
Total	132 (100)	125 (100)	257 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during June 2014 - December 2015.

The above table reveals that 132 Karbi and 125 Kuki respondents are involved in decisions for their children’s education. Over half (51.75%) of these sometimes involve in family decisions for their children’s education. The pattern is by and large similar across the two communities. On the other hand, about one third (31.52%) of the respondents always take decisions for children’s education. Then, over one tenth (16.73%) of the respondents rarely involve in the decision-making, wherein the Karbi respondents (20.45%) found more rarely involve in the decision-making than the Kuki respondents (12.8%).

Comparatively Kuki respondents are involved a little more than Karbi respondents in children's education. Due to the effect of Christianity, Kuki community is more aware about children's education as well as mother's role in proper education of children. Like education, health is also one of the major areas of decision- making and affecting status of women in family. Let it be analysed.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN HEALTH RELATED DECISION-MAKING

Generally, for minor health problems, people of both the tribal communities depend upon their medicinemen and medical stores of a nearby market. But in order to avail better medical treatment, the tribal people have to move in health institutions like health centers, Civil Hospital, Medical College, nursing homes etc in Silchar town. Family decides about the health institutions where a sick person is to be taken for medical treatment. The participation of women members in the decision making process also varies time to time and family to family. The following table exhibits the patterns of decision making among the respondents for treatment:

Table 4.11
Respondents' Participation in Decision Making for Treatment
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Decision Taken by	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Herself	41(14.43)	27(12.38)	68(13.55)
Along with husband/father	113(39.79)	85(38.99)	198(39.44)
Husband/father	82(28.87)	83(38.07)	165(32.87)
Other family members	48(16.90)	23(10.55)	71(14.14)
Total	284 (100)	218 (100)	502 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during June 2014 - December 2015.

The above table reveals that in the field of health, tribal women are not independent to decide to avail the medical treatment at advanced health institutions generally located in towns. About two fifths (39.44%) of the respondents decide about treatment along with their husbands or fathers and this pattern is observed across the two communities, while over one tenth (13.55%) of them decide independently. Besides, about one third (32.87%) of them fully depend on father's or husband's decision and over one tenth (14.14%) of them

fully depend on other family members. The respondents, who are widows or unmarried without parents, have to depend on other family members.

Comparatively, more Kuki respondents (38.07%) than the Karbi respondents (28.87%) fully depend on husbands or fathers in decision-making about health matters.

Thus, in the health related decision-making in family, the respondents of both the communities have the least role. However, Karbi respondents have some edge over the Kuki respondents in the decision making. Even respondents who are found somehow involved in decision making for treatment don't have the same extent of involvement as 134 of the Karbi and 96 of the Kuki respondents are not involved in the decision making, at all. The following table shows the extent of decision making among the respondents who are involved in the decision-making for treatment:

Table 4.12
Extent of the Respondents' Decision Making in Treatment
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Extent of Decision Making	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Always	46(29.87)	35(28.69)	81(29.35)
Sometimes	77(50.00)	59(48.36)	136(49.28)
Rarely	31(20.13)	28(22.95)	59(21.38)
Total	154(100)	122(100)	276 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during June 2014 - December 2015.

The above table finds that about half (49.28%) of the respondents sometimes involve in the decision-making for health care and the same pattern is found in both the communities while nearly one third of them (29.35%) always involve themselves. On the other hand, over one fifth (21.38%) of the respondents rarely involve in the decision-making process.

Thus, both the tribal communities have almost similar attitude towards women's role in health related matters. Kukis seem to be more orthodox in allowing women to decide their health care as compared with their Karbi counterparts.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

In any democratic country like India, political awareness and exercising various duties and responsibilities in political arena are very important as there is no place for gender bias in Indian constitution. Generally it is believed that tribal women enjoy equal status in all respects with men. But, practically, in political sphere tribal women are also facing various constraints in availing of their rights. Voting is the most basic right and duty for a citizen. 25 Karbi and 16 Kuki respondents are found as non-voters. Here, the nature of women's involvement reveals their status. The following table shows the participation of women (461) in decision making for vote casting:

Table 4.13
Participation of the Respondents in Decision Making For Vote casting
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Decision Taken by	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Herself	37(14.29)	24(11.88)	61(13.23)
Along with husband/father	43(16.60)	31(15.35)	74(16.05)
Husband/father	138(53.28)	124(61.39)	262(56.83)
Other persons (relatives or non-relatives)	41(15.83)	23(11.39)	64(13.88)
Total	259(100)	202 (100)	461(100)

Source: Field Survey conducted from June 2014 -December 2015.

The above table tells that vote casting in elections among about three fifths (56.83%) of the respondents is decided by their fathers or husbands and over one tenth (13.88%) of them cast their votes as per direction of their relatives or non-relatives. In all, 70.71% respondents' vote casting is decided by others (husband, father, relatives and non-relatives). On the other hand, only over one tenth (13.23%) of the respondents exercise their voting right independently. These patterns are observed across the respondents of the two communities.

Thus, in the matter of decision-making for vote casting the respondents of both the communities have minimum freedom. However, Karbi respondents seem to have a little edge over the Kuki respondents due to a better level of awareness

which they (Karbi) acquire through their contacts with urban area and non-tribal people.

A very less number of the respondents cast their votes in elections according to their own political knowledge and decision. Voting is generally not exercised democratically in both the communities, particularly in case of their womenfolk. Of the respondents, only 80 Karbi and 55 Kuki respondents involve partially or fully to exercise their voting right with decision making roles. Hence, the maximum of the respondents are passive voters. This indicated their limited political awareness and power. The following table shows the extent of decision making for vote casting among the active voter-respondents:

Table 4.14
Extent of the Respondents' Decision Making for Vote Casting
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Extent of Decision Making	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Always active	21(26.25)	14(24.45)	35(25.93)
Sometimes active	36(45.00)	22(40.00)	58(42.96%)
Rarely active	23(28.75)	19 (34.55)	42(31.11)
Total	80 (100)	55 (100)	135(100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during June 2014 - December 2015.

The above table reveals that over two fifths (42.96%) of the total active voter-respondents sometimes decide to cast their vote while one fourth (25.93%) themselves always active to cast their vote. By and large the pattern is similar in the two communities. On the other hand, one third (31.11%) of the respondents are rarely active to decide themselves for casting their votes. Here, Karbis (28.75%) are less than Kukis (34.55%) among the rarely active respondents, which indicates that Karbi women have greater decision-making power than their Kuki counterparts.

Thus, by and large, both the communities have similar role for taking decision to cast their vote in elections. However, Karbi women are found little better than their Kuki counterparts.

DECISION MAKING IN SELECTION OF LAND AND CROPS

Both the tribal communities depend on cultivation for their livelihood. Both, shifting and settled cultivation, are practiced in the Karbi and Kuki villages of the Cachar district. But, practically, in shifting cultivation selection of proper crops and cultivable land before cultivation is very important task. Similarly, selection of crops is also very important in settled cultivation. Let us probe into their role in decision making for land use.

The following table reflects the participation of women in decision-making for land use.

Table 4.15
Participation of the Respondents in Decision Making for Land Use
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Decision Taken by	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Herself	33(11.62)	26(11.93)	59(11.75)
Along with husband	61(21.48)	51(23.39)	112(22.31)
Husband/father	162(56.04)	134(61.47)	296(58.96)
Other family members	28(9.86)	07(3.21)	35(6.97)
Total	284(100)	218 (100)	502 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from June 2014 to December 2015.

The above table reveals that only over one tenth (11.75%) of the respondents actively decide the selection of land and crop for cultivation while over one fifth (22.31%) of them decide it along with husbands, and not independently. In all over one third (34.04%) of the respondents have a role in deciding the land and crop for cultivation. This pattern is observed among the respondents of both the communities.

On the other hand, about two thirds (65.93%) of the respondents depend on the decision of their husband/father (58.96%) and the other family members (6.97%) for land uses. Here, more Kuki respondents (61.47%) than the Karbi respondents (56.04%) depend on husbands/fathers. Majority of the Karbi (55.90%) and Kuki (64.68%) respondents have no role in cultivation related decision making. That is, for about two thirds of the respondents, the decisions are generally taken by the male members (father, husband and others). The major

reason found behind this is the land ownership of males, resulted in gender bias of the communities towards their womenfolk. Let us analyse the extent of the decision making among the respondents for selection of land and crop.

Land for shifting cultivation is generally prepared and selected to fulfill the need of the family. Womenfolk of both the communities constitute the main workforce in traditional jhum cultivation and they take active part in settled cultivation also. In spite of their active role in almost all economic activities in family as well as all domestic activities for selection of crops and land for cultivation women are generally not given the importance. In the study, 94 Karbi and 77 Kuki respondents are found involved in the decisions for land selection and the rest are not. The decision-making extends differently among the respondents. The following table presents the extent of the respondents' decision-making in land and crop selection for cultivation:

Table 4.16
Extent of the Respondents' Decision Making for Land and Crop Selection
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Extent of Decision Making	Karbi Respondents	Kuki Respondents	Total Respondents
Always	24(25.53)	17(22.08)	41(23.98)
Sometimes	29(30.85)	22(28.57)	51(29.82)
Rarely	41(43.62)	38(49.35)	79(46.20)
Total	94 (100)	77 (100)	171 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from June 2014 to December 2015.

The above table reveals that about one fourth of the respondents (23.98%) have a role in selection of land and crops while over one fourth (24.82%) of them sometimes decide for cultivation. The rest, nearly half (46.20%), have no role in the decision-making for cultivation. The pattern is observed across the respondents of the two communities. However, the Karbi respondents have a little better position in this respect than the Kuki respondents. Over two fifths (43.62%) of the Karbi and about half of the Kuki (49.35%) cultivator-respondents rarely participate in the decision-making for cultivation.

Thus, women's role in decision-making for cultivation is also quite restricted as only about one fourth (23.98%) of the respondents who involve in decision making have always takes decision for cultivation.

Now, major findings are drawn from the discussion and presented below:

1. In general the women are not involved in decisions taken for family economy. Two fifths (40.44%) of total respondent involve in the decision-making for daily expenditures along with their husband or father, followed by about one third (31.48%) who independently decide for domestic expenditures. Thus, nearly three fourths (71.92%) of the respondents altogether somehow involve in the decision making. Almost the similar pattern is observed in both the communities. However, the Kuki women are more involve in the decision making for domestic expenditure than the Karbi women.

2. Of the respondents, about two fifths (37.65%) make decision sometimes, followed by about one third (29.88%) who participate in the decisions rarely and one fourth (25.50%) who always participate in the decision making. The rest (6.97%) do not have power to decide anything about the expenditure. Comparatively, over one fourth (27.98%) of the Kuki respondents and about one fourth (23.59%) of the Karbi respondents participate in the decision making regularly. But over one third (35.56%) of the Karbi and over two fifths (40.37%) of the Kuki respondents involve in the decision-making sometimes, whereas about one third (30.99%) of the Karbi and over one fourth (28.44%) of the Kuki respondents rarely participate in the decision making. Thus, one fourth (25.50%) of the respondents have always a say in the matters of expenditures and the rest do not. Comparatively the Karbi women are positioned better in the matter, perhaps due to their more involvement in economic activities. The Karbi community keep their womenfolk more involved in household activities along with their role in decision-making for expenditure than the Kukis.

3. Of the respondents only about one fifth (18.21%) independently decide for all investments in their families, whereas about one fourth (24.09%) of the

respondents participate in the decisions along with father or husband. The rest, about three fifths (57.7%) have no role in the decision-making for investment. Hence, over two-fifths (42.30%) of the respondents have role in the decision-making process for family investments. Here, half (50.26%) of the Karbi and about only one third (32.92%) of the Kuki respondents are involved in the decision-making totally or partially. Due to the external urban impact in the Karbi community, the women are more engaged in decision-making role for investments than the Kuki women.

4. Of the respondents who involve in the decision-making for investment, about two fifths (39.07%) sometimes make investment in traditional or modern or both ways. Almost the same trend is observed in the two communities. But about two fifths (37.75%) of the respondents rarely involve in any investment, whereas, only about one fourth (23.18%) of the respondents regularly invest in purchasing of livestock, leasing-in of beetle-nut garden, making fixed deposit of money in Bank or Post Offices etc. Almost the same trends are observed in the two communities.

5. Of the respondents, only about one third (31.69%) of the Karbi and over one fourth (29.36%) of the Kuki families were found involved in any kind of savings. Only about one seventh (15.41%) of these respondents have a role in decision making for savings, whereas over one fourth (27.73%) of the respondents involve in the decision-making along with their father or husband. The rest, about three fifths (56.86%) have no involvement at all in the decision making for family savings. However, over two-fifths (43.14%) of the respondents are involved in the decision-making of savings: about half (46.63%) of the Karbi and about two-third (39.02%) of the Kuki respondents. Karbi women always enjoy a greater role in savings than the Kuki due to the location of Karbi habitation near urban area.

6. Of the respondents who are involved in investment, 44.16% have rarely any role in family investments: 38.89% Karbis and 51.55% Kukis, whereas

33.12% of them invest occasionally: 36.67% Karbis and 28.13% Kukis. However, only about one fourth of the respondents invest regularly: 24.44% Karbis and 20.32% Kukis. Thus more Karbi respondents have a role to decide for savings than their Kuki counterparts. Due to the location of the Karbi villages, these people have comparatively easier access to the financial institutions than the Kuki people. Besides, greater gender bias in the Kuki family also discourages the Kuki women's involvement in family savings.

7. Borrowing is practiced in families of both the communities; however, the women are not widely involved in decision making for borrowing. But due to comparatively a strong hold in family economy, Karbi women are a little more capable of taking decisions for borrowing than the Kuki respondents. Over half (55.59%) of the respondents' families are involved in borrowing: 56.69% of the Karbi and 55.96% of the Kuki respondents. But about two thirds (65.73%) of the respondents has no role in family borrowing: 63.35% of the Karbi and 68.04% of the Kuki respondents. But about one fifth (18.73%) of them are involved in the decisions for borrowing along with their father or husband: 19.88% of the Karbi and 17.21% of the Kuki respondents. Only 15.90% of the respondents can take decisions for borrowing independently: 16.77% of the Karbi and 14.75% of the Kuki respondents.

8. Of the respondents who are involved in borrowing, over two fifths (42.86%) occasionally involve in decision-making. This pattern is observed in both the communities. About two fifths (37.75%) of the respondents rarely involve in the decision-making for borrowing. Only about one fifth (19.39%) of the respondents are involved regularly in decision making for family borrowing. According to the customary law of the two tribal communities, property is distributed among male children only and, therefore, their women have the least role in all important economic matters like borrowing.

9. Of the respondents who are married and have children, over two-fifths (40.78%) have no decision-making role about education of their children, and in

their case where either husband or other members of the family take the decision: 44.54% of the Karbi and 36.22% of the Kuki respondents. About two fifths (38.25%) of the respondents take decisions along with husband about education of their children. The same pattern is observed in the two communities. However, over one fifth (20.97) of the respondents enjoy full liberty in decision making for children's education: 18.07% of the Karbi and 24.49% of the Kuki respondents. Thus, due to the impact of education and Christianity, comparatively Kuki mother-respondents have more decision-making role for education of their children than their Karbi counterparts.

10. Of the respondents, over half (51.75%) have occasionally decision making role in their children's education: Karbi -53.79% and Kuki - 49.6%. However, about one third (31.52%) of the respondents regularly take decisions for children's education: 25.76% of the Karbi and 37.6% of the Kuki respondents. About one fifth (16.73%) of the respondents rarely involve in decision making of children's education: one fifth (20.45%) of the Karbi and over one tenth (12.8%) of the Kuki respondents. Comparatively more Kuki respondents are involved in their children's education than the Karbi respondents. Due to the impact of Christianity and education, Kuki community is more aware about children's education as well as the role of mother for proper education of children.

11. Of the respondents, about half (47.01%) have no role in decision-making pertaining to their health. The women in both the communities have practically the least role in decisions taken about their own health. About two fifths (39.44%) of the respondents take decisions for their own health along with husband or father. However, only over one tenth (13.55%) of the respondents have freedom to take decision about their own health. The same pattern is observed in the two communities. However, due to the location of Karbi habitation and the effect of urbanization, Karbi respondents have a little more decision-making role over Kuki respondents in respect of their own health.

12. Of the respondents, about half (49.28%) occasionally involve in the decisions taken about their own health; about one third (29.35%) of the respondents always take decision about their own health and over one fifth (21.38%) of them are rarely involved in the decision-making. Almost the same trend is observed in the two communities. Thus, both the tribal communities have almost the same pattern of women's involvement in decisions for their own health. However, Kuki community is found more orthodox about the health of their womenfolk and hence, allow the least of decision-making role to them.

13. Of the respondents who have voting right, about three fifths (70.72%) have no role to decide vote casting in favour of a candidate or political party and they cast their vote as passive voters. Almost the same trend is observed in the two communities. About one fifth (16.05%) of them are partially involved in decisions for vote casting whereas only over one tenth (13.23%) of the respondents exercise vote casting independently: 14.29% of the Karbi and 11.88% of the Kuki respondents. Thus the Karbi respondents have better role in the decision making as external / urban contact makes the community more aware about the political rights of individuals than the Kuki respondents.

14. Of the respondents, over two fifths (42.96%) sometimes participate in decision-making for vote casting; about one third (31.11%) of the respondents are rarely involved and only over one fourth (25.93%) of them have their own decisions. Almost the same pattern is observed in the two communities. Due to more urban contact, Karbi respondents have greater role in the decisions taken for casting of vote.

15. Both the communities are mainly dependent on agriculture and womenfolk are the major workforce, but only over one tenth (11.62) of the respondents participate actively in decision making for selection of land and the type of crop to be raised. On the other hand, over one fifth (22.31) of the respondents decide jointly with husband to choose land and crop for jhum cultivation. The rest, about two thirds (66.07%) of the respondents, have no say

in the decisions taken for cultivation. Almost the same trend is observed in the two communities. However, the Kuki women have been availing more decision-making in this respect than the Karbi respondents. In both the communities, women are generally deprived from landed property of the families, resulting in their deprivation from the decision-making.

16. Of the respondents, about one fourth (23.98%) participate regularly in the decisions taken for selecting land and crop for cultivation and about one third (29.82%) of the respondents occasionally join such decision-making. The Karbi respondents are marginally ahead of their Kuki counterparts in this respect. In all, about half (46.20%) of the respondent rarely participate in the decision-making. Comparatively, the Karbi community gives more space to their womenfolk in selecting land and crop for cultivation.

In brief, due to comparatively a better location of habitation, one perceives effect of urbanization clearly on the Karbi respondents' decision-making role and its extent in social, economic, health and political matters in their families. Karbi women have been availing more decision-making role than their Kuki counterparts. However, despite a less decision-making role in investment, more Kuki respondents are found participating regularly than their Karbi counterparts. The reason behind is the effect of education. Due to adoption of Christianity, the Kuki community is more conscious about education and western ideology. Hence, regarding child's education, Kuki women have been availing more of decision-making role than the Karbi women.
