

SECTION - 1

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation has been defined in different ways. These range from a narrow focus on the global production and marketing of goods by multi national enterprises and the accompanying foreign direct investment to the broader perspective on the political, technological and cultural aspects of globalisation as well as its economic causes and consequences. At a minimum, globalisation involves the creation of a world economy which is not merely the sum of its national economies, but rather a powerful independent reality, created by the international division of labour and the world market which in the present epoch predominates over national markets. Large-scale, long-term flows of capital, commodities, technology and labour across national boundaries define the process of globalisation (Petras:1999). It is important to recognise that when we talk about globalisation, we refer to a process and not a state of being. It is a move or a series of moves towards what may be described as a global economy (Shroff :1999). Globalisation, in its broader sense, refers also to the situation where ordinary human beings experience and get enriched by influence emanating from all over the world. In this sense, it is said to have existed throughout human history. If it is taken in the narrower sense of peoples of all continents and regions becoming aware of one another and trading objects and commodities, plants and techniques with one another, then it can be said to have existed since the sixteenth century and the contemporary globalisation process can be said to have started in the 1970's, since when there were drastic changes in the rules of the game (Bagchi:2004).

The official declaration of the New Economic Policy in 1991 is generally regarded as the beginning of the present phase of globalisation in the country although some of those policy prescriptions came under force since the mid eighties This phase of globalisation differs from the earlier ones because of the special policy prescriptions for trade liberalisation triggered by the World Bank and the IMF (Bannerjee:2004). These policies were introduced with the expectation that these will contribute to a faster growth of the economy because such policies proved to be successful in many other developing economies.

It has however been evident that women in the developing countries, both as consumers and producers are placed at a disadvantage under the new regime of globalisation The incidence

of income poverty among women is said to be increasing compared to that among men. Globalisation has been blamed to have increased the incidence of unemployment and under employment among women and also have given rise to many forms of discriminations in the labour market. Some women might have gained better access to the labour market but the majority of them are staying locked in at relatively low levels of pay and skills, becoming increasingly discriminated against. Globalisation also has the scope of widening the wage gap between men and women and also increase inequalities of income. (Shiva: 1989, Elson:1996, Hale:1999, Bannerjee:2004, Sudersan:2004, Bagchi:2004,)

Globalisation has been identified also as a contributor to the feminisation of international migration as well as migration from rural to urban areas in search of jobs.

The impact of globalisation on health has proved to be different for the rich and the poor countries and people, because the rich have greater resources to take advantage of opportunities and defend themselves from health risks. Women in the developing countries being already at a disadvantage in relation to their access to health services have become still more vulnerable. The impact of globalisation upon health are complex often acting upon the underlying determinants of health. It is therefore important to attempt to define how each process of globalisation affects health and in particular the health of the women.

If the developing countries have to face a threat in the international market due to the globalisation process, within the country, the disadvantaged regions are more at stake. Assam, a far eastern state of India, had many disadvantages even at the beginning of the globalisation era. Its low infrastructure, geographical and topographical conditions, inadequate communication facilities etc. always leaves it far behind the rest of the country. The state had experienced the perennial problem of floods and the large bouts of immigration for a long period. On the top of all this, there has also been political turmoil in the state. In the era of globalisation where the market rules and competition prevails, these obstacles to the free movement of goods and services will obviously have very adverse impact. This has been reflected in the state economy which did not fare well during the last one decade. In this perspective, how did the women do? Did they have any impact of globalisation? Has their plight improved or deteriorated during the period?

1.1. To assess the situation, the present study is being done with the broad objectives of finding out the impact of globalisation on the lives of women in the state with respect to their development and well being.

The specific objectives are to find out the changes in

- i. the consumption pattern
- ii. employment and wages.
- iii. poverty
- iv. access to different forms of resources including education and health and
- v. participation in public life.

1.2. The study is basically analytical and descriptive.

Both primary and secondary sources of data have been explored. The secondary sources of data are the Census reports and NSS reports and also the Statistical handbooks and other statistical publications of the government. Published and unpublished books/theses and the internet sources have been used for the background materials.

Focus Group Discussions, in –depth interviews and sample surveys have been employed for collecting the primary data.

A multi stage mixed sampling procedure has been followed in selecting the sample. The number of villages selected from each block has not been uniform because attempt was made to include women from different occupations.

1.3. The study has covered 450 women in 16villages spread over 9blocks in four districts of Assam and 150 urban women spread over these four districts, 75 from Guwahati in Kamrup district and 75 from the other 3 districts taking 25 from each. The list of villages included is given in Chart1.

Among the four districts selected, three, viz., Dhubri, Kamrup and Lakhimpur are from the Brahmaputra Valley and one, i.e., Hailakandi is from the Barak Valley. Three districts have been selected on the basis of Female Work Participation Rates (FWPR). Lakhimpur has the highest FWPR among the 23 districts of the State and Dhubri has the lowest, while Hailakandi has the highest FWPR among the districts in the Barak Valley. Kamrup has been selected as Guwahati, the capital city of the State and gateway to the North East, is in this district, it also has the largest urban population. The blocks and villages have been selected on the basis of a–priori information regarding the demographic composition and occupational pattern of the villages.

Chart 1 : The distribution of the selected villages by districts and blocks

Name of the District	Name of the Block	Name of the Village
Dhubri	Dharmasala Debitola Rupsi	Bogulamari Asarikandi Phulkumari Saraldanga
Hailakandi	Katlichera Lala	Rangpur Rangabag Dhanipur Lalapur
Lakhimpur	Dhakuakhana Naobaicha	Jalbhari Hiloidhari Karunabari No. 2 Lakhimeegaon
Kamrup	Rani Soalkuchi	Sajjanpara Pub-Soalkuchi Madhya-Soalkuchi Paschim-Soalkuchi Bongshor

SECTION - 2

THE ECONOMY OF ASSAM IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALISATION

The economy of the State provides the background for the well being of both men and women residing there. In this section, we analyse the trend in the State economy in the post liberalisation era.

The trend in the per capita State Income both at current and constant prices for 1980-81 to 2000-01 shows that the per capita State Income in Assam continued to be lower than the all India average per capita income in both the pre and post liberalisation period. It is visible that in the pre-liberalisation decade of 1980-81 to 1990-91, there was a definite reduction in the gap between the per capita income in the State and the all India average per capita income. In 1992-93, the difference was only of Rs.198.00, the all India average per capita income being only 9.81 per cent higher than the per capita income in Assam. In the post liberalisation decade, the difference widened so much that in 2000-01, an average person in the rest of India has been found to be enjoying a per capita income of Rs. 16,487.0 against Rs. 10,198.0 in Assam at current prices and Rs. 10,254.0 against Rs.6,157.0 in Assam at constant prices. The all India per capita income at current prices is Rs.61.67 per cent higher than the per capita income in Assam and at constant prices, it is 66.54 per cent higher. This only shows the growing economic distance between the state and the rest of the country.

Agriculture is the mainstay of more than 70 per cent of the State's population. As such, the performance of this sector contributes to the well being of the masses. Can we observe any perceptible improvement in the agricultural sector in the nineties which may be regarded as a gift of globalisation? The State of Assam comprising 21 plains and districts and 2 hill districts fall under high potential zone for increasing agricultural productivity. In the fifties, the share of agriculture in State Income was approximately 60%, in the eighties it declined to about 50-55%. In the nineties, that is in the post liberalisation period, it has been only around 35%. In the first two years of the present decade, however, the share of agriculture in the State Income has once again moved up to 40-41%. The annual production of rice has maintained an upward trend but the total production was far less than the amount required for providing food security to the people.

The production of food grains, oilseeds and other important crops in the State has been reported to be far below the targeted level during the 9th plan period. The productivities of the food grains were lower than the all India average rates also. Inadequate irrigation facilities, floods and traditional agricultural practices are identified as the major causes of low production and productivity in agriculture in the State (Planning and Development Department, Govt. of Assam: Draft Tenth Five Year Plan & Annual Plan: 2002-2003)

The State which is always regarded as having the potential for industrial development has not been able to make much headway even in this sector. In the industrial map of the country is abysmally low. The total number of factories in the State account for only 1.23 percent of the country's total. The total value added by the factories is only 0.9 percent of the total value added by the same sector at the all India level.

No perceptible improvement has been observed even in the nineties. While the number of factories increased by 5.5 per cent between 1993-94 and 1994-95, and there is also an increase in fixed, working and invisible capital, the overall scenario is bleak as there is a negative turn in the net income accompanied by a very high rate of increase in the outstanding loan.

Whether the liberalisation process has aggravated the problem of poverty or has contributed to its amelioration is a debatable topic. According to the Planning Commission estimates, in 1999-2000, the percentage of people below poverty line in India was 26.10 and the percentage was 10 points higher in Assam with 36.09. Assam being the fourth State in terms of poverty ratio, next only to Orissa, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. This is however a reduction compared to the estimates as per the 50th round of NSSO in 1993-94, which was 45.01 against 40.86 for the Country as a whole

As reported in the Draft Tenth Plan of the State, the incidence of poverty in the State is even higher. It is stated that as per report prepared by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics on the basis of a Census on people below poverty line, conducted during the year 1998, 59.43 per cent of the total rural households of Assam was living below the poverty line. On the basis of this figure, the total number of people living below poverty line in Assam has been estimated at 111.54 lakh, which is 49.77 Per cent of the total population of the State.

According to the latest estimates published by the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of Assam, Goalpara with 75.25 per cent has the highest PC of BPL families in the State, followed by Dhubri with 75.03 per cent. Jorhat and Tinsukia prove to be the two richest districts with 41.00 per cent and 41.31 per cent persons below poverty line respectively, although these figures also are alarming.

It is to be noted that there has been a decrease in the incidence of urban poverty in the State over time and it has also been lower than the all India average, but the incidence of rural poverty

continues to be higher than the all India average and has not also shown any sign of improvement over time.

Other indicators of poverty like Monthly per capita consumer expenditure, the proportion of expenditure on food to total expenditure and level of food security also place Assam at a much lower level than the all India average.

According to NSSO 58th Round data, the average monthly per capita consumer expenditure in Assam is marginally higher than the all India average but is the lowest among the North –Eastern States. For rural Assam it is Rs.532.00 as against the all India average of Rs. 531.00 and an average of Rs. 628.00 for the North Eastern States.

For Urban Assam, the average monthly per capita consumer expenditure with Rs.947.00 is much lower than both the national average and the average for the N. E. States, the two figures being respectively Rs. 1,012.00 and Rs.1,069.00

Generally, the proportion of expenditure on food to total expenditure is higher among the low income groups. As per the NSSO 58th Round figure, Assam has a much higher percentage of expenditure on food to total expenditure than the average all India percentage both in the rural (Assam: 64.13, India: 54.99) and urban (Assam : 49.21, India: 42.47) areas, the percentage being higher in the rural areas.

As per the NSSO 58th Round figures, the food availability status in rural Assam is the lowest among all the states of India with only 943 households per thousand getting enough food throughout the year against the all India average figure of 982. The number of households not having enough food in no month of the year is also highest in Assam with 46 per thousand. The all India average in this category is as low as 5. In the case of urban Assam, however, all the sample households reported to be having enough food throughout the year, while the all India average is lower than that of Assam, with 995 per thousand.

The poverty scenario in the State thus shows a gloomy picture especially in the rural areas. The seriousness of the problem can be better appreciated if we also look into the employment-unemployment situation in the state.

As per Census data, the percentage of total workers to total population shows a slight decline from 36.1 in 1991 to 35.9 per cent in 2001. This trend is more significant in case of main workers, which show a decline from 31.2 percent in 1991 to 26.6 percent in 2001. The percentage of main workers has decreased among all groups except in the case of urban female. The percentage of rural female main workers decreased from 13.3 to 9.9, while that of men decreased from 48.1 to 41.5. There has however been an increase in the percentage of marginal workers among both men and

women. This is true for both rural and urban areas. The percentage of rural male marginal workers increased from 1.2 to 8.3, while that of female from 10.0 to 12.4. This phenomenon is but a reflection of casualisation and informalisation of labour under globalisation, which has been experienced by all those countries that have undergone the process of globalisation. This phenomenon has been observed at the all India level as well.

The incidence of unemployment continued to be higher than the all India average and increased considerably between 1983 and 1993-94, i.e., in the first phase of liberalisation. Between 1993-94 and 1999-2000, the incidence of unemployment showed a decline, but continued to be higher than the pre-liberalisation rate. The growth rate of employment of the rural female in the State slowed down in the period between 1993-94 to 1999-2000 but for the urban female it was somewhat better. (NSS 55th round).

It is evident from the trend in the macro economic indicators discussed above that the economy of the state did not gain from the globalisation. The expected changes in the industrial scenario or in the case of food production did not take place, rather, some negative impacts like casualisation of labour, slow or declining growth rate of employment, increased food insecurity and increased poverty could only be perceived.

Globalisation brings with it consumerism and aspirations for an ever improving standard of living, changes in the lifestyles etc. a fall out of this is a sense of frustration that lead to suicide and domestic violence like rape and dowry deaths, etc. As such, the increased incidence of crime against women in the state can, to a great extent also be attributed to globalisation. The crime rates in the state have increased by nearly 36 per cent between 1997 and 2002(NCW:2005).

SECTION - 3

PROFILE OF THE DISTRICTS

The districts selected for the present study together comprise more than 35 percent of the total population of the State, showing a marginal increase between 1991(36.35 per cent) and 2001 (36.65 per cent). Each of the four districts are more populous than the State average as is evident from the figures of density of population. While Kamrup has the highest share in the State population (12.78 per cent), Dhubri has the maximum density (584 per sq. Km.)

The rate of growth of population had shown fluctuations in each of the selected districts. On an average, it had an increasing trend between 1951 and 1991. The trend decelerated in the last decade. Three of the four districts, viz., Dhubri, Hailakandi and Kamrup continued to have a higher rate of growth than the State average even in the last decade.

The sex ratio in the State showed an upward trend between 1991 and 2001 Census. All the districts under survey, except Dhubri, also showed upward trends in the sex ratio, with the rate of improvement in urban Lakhimpur being commendable, 801 to 879. In Dhubri, although the urban sex ratio has improved, **there was a decline in the rural sex ratio**, from 953 to 945, which also pulled down the total sex ratio.

Between 1991 and 2001, in the State, the child sex ratio declined by 1.1 percent. In the selected districts also, except in rural Dhubri and Urban Hailakandi, the child sex ratios had gone down. The decline is very significant in rural Hailakandi with 8.9 percent followed by urban Kamrup (5.9 per cent). This phenomenon might be the result of the modern reproductive technology, which is a part of the globalisation process.

Cent per cent literacy is yet to be achieved in the State with a literacy percentage of only 64.28, which is anyhow only 1.10 per cent lower than the national average rate. The male female literacy gap in the State is lower than that of the all India average. Among the districts covered, Dhubri happens to be the least literate district with lower levels of both male and female literacy compared to the State average. The literacy rates in the district have improved between 1991 and 2001. This has reduced the distance from the State average literacy rates and also narrowed the gap between male and female literacy. As per 2001 Census figures the male female gap in literacy

rate in Dhubri is below the State average. The other districts have higher literacy rates than the State average, but the male female gap persists, which is more in the rural areas. This is a vulnerable point for rural areas. To gain from the changes that are coming with globalization, literacy is indispensable. Low literacy leads to low access to information. Incomplete information results in market failure. In the case of Hailakandi, the literacy rate improved between 1991 and 2001, but it fell below the State average in 2001 whereas it was above the State average in 1991. This may be because, Hailakandi was not under any special literacy campaign as it had a good literacy level earlier and left to automatic forces, the literacy rate could not keep pace with the other districts of the State which had special literacy programmes. The health sector is facing tremendous changes and further changes are awaited with the progress in the process of globalisation. The existing health infrastructure in the State is not sufficient to provide a safety net to the people. There is less than one hospital per lakh of population in the State and also in three out of the four districts covered, viz., Dhubri, Hailakandi and Lakhimpur. Only Kamrup has more than 151 hospital beds per lakh of population, the State average being only 48.38 and for the other three districts it is even less.

Female work participation rates have increased in all the four districts, between 1991 and 2001. The ranks of the districts in terms of FWPR remained the same in the two years for three districts with Dhubri at the 23rd, Kamrup at the 18th and Lakhimpur at the first position. Hailakandi slipped down to the 20th position in 2001 from the 15th in 1991. As in the case of the state, Hailakandi experienced an increase in the percentage of both male and female marginal workers in both rural and urban areas. But, at the same time, there was also an increase in the percentage of both rural and urban main workers. In urban Lakhimpur, female main workers increased but female marginal workers decreased. In urban Kamrup and urban Dhubri, both main and marginal female workers increased but in rural Kamrup and rural Dhubri, female main workers increased and marginal workers decreased. During the same period, male marginal workers increased in all the four districts and percentage of male main workers decreased in all the four districts except in urban Lakhimpur.

For competing with the market that has been opened up, one has to be well equipped. The status of the State and also the districts under consideration in terms of the basic amenities of life is extremely poor. As many as 34.75 per cent of the population in the State did not have either electricity, safe drinking water or toilet facilities and in the rural areas it was still higher at 38.85 per cent. In rural Lakhimpur, 53.57 per cent of the population did not have any of these facilities in 1991. The other three districts are in better position than the State average but rural areas are worse off than the urban areas in each of the district.

SECTION - 4

SURVEY FINDINGS

General Observations : This section analyses the survey findings. The analysis starts with a few general observations regarding the sample respondents and then proceeds to analyse the findings by districts.

It has been mentioned in the case of secondary information that there has been an increase in the number of women in paid occupations in all the four districts surveyed. During the survey, it was observed that the women have become very much visible in public spaces, particularly at work places. Female workers can be seen equally in the fields and on roads and in factories. However, majority of them were in low paid occupations. The distribution of the respondents by occupation and income shows that they are mostly engaged in low paid occupations in farms, handloom,sericulture, factories, jute craft, terracotta and pottery, pith craft, brick kiln, silk industry and sometimes as petty traders, vendors and saleswomen. Thus it can be observed that women are still in traditional occupations like agriculture and allied activities although there is an increase in the number of women factory workers. Women wage earners are increasing, but they do not have control over the process of production, number of self employed female being very low.

The women get employment in the avenues which are abandoned by the men. For example, in Soalkuchi, a weavers' village established under the sponsorship of the Ahom Kings, unlike in other places of Assam, men rather than women used to sit in the looms. All members of the household including women and children are engaged in different activities related to weaving. With development and change, men are increasingly going out of the village in search of other occupations and also taking up white collared jobs even within the village. This has paved the way for more women from different parts of the State to get employment in the industry. The inflow of the tribal women, who are skilled weavers in traditional looms but were not used to weaving the silk yarn thronged into the village since the days of the Assam movement and soon mastered the art. Now, these women form the majority of the weavers in Soalkuchi, although for some local boys and girls also this is the sole and/or subsidiary source of sustenance.

In the urban areas however, women can be seen to have entered into quite a few non-traditional occupations like that of beauty parlour, computer works, PCOs, photostat centres, tailoring etc. Even in these occupations, gender difference in the role division still exists. Women are mostly

engaged in typing, data entry etc. while men are doing the hardware related works. The ownership of business establishments lies with men and women only work under them.

Women who own beauty parlours or are engaged as tailors in the urban areas are reported to be making profits in all the districts covered. This is an instance of traditional male activity being taken over by women, which can be said to be a direct impact of the changing market conditions due to the liberalisation process. This speaks of not only the changes that are occurring in the occupational pattern between the man and the women, but also is reflective of the lifestyle changes and changes in the attitude due to globalisation. Traditionally, there used to be religious taboos even for men in going to the barber's shop for a hair cut, but now this has become commonplace even for girls to queue in the beauty parlour to get a hair cut and she can also be the one who cuts the hair. Increased number of tailoring houses, run by women also shows the vast changes that has occurred in the cultural pattern in our society. If sewing, embroidery etc. were regarded as ornamental virtues of a women, now these are but earthly needs that can provide her a living, at the same time, it is also true that it is the market which had triggered such changes. A modern woman no more is satisfied with the traditional home made dresses. In the context of Assam, this bears particular significance. Traditionally, weaving happened to be a household activity for every woman in Assam. She used to weave the clothes for day to day use for herself as well as the other members of the family. The dress pattern happened to be such that after weaving, the dresses did not need much stitching, which could even be done at home. This was specially true of women's clothes. It is obvious that interaction with different cultures impacts upon the dress patterns, but the rapid change in the dress code of the young generation particularly the girls in the recent years created a demand for more tailoring houses. If women in yesteryears did their tailoring and embroidery within the four walls for themselves and their families and some also to earn a living or as hobby but within one's own premises, these days the business is coming up more visibly. This trend is also increasing the market for milled clothes.

The number of women is also on the rise in the home based works like small scale catering, computer related works, tailoring, embroidery and allied works like button stitching, stitching saree falls etc. which are outsourced on contractual basis by established business concerns.

In more ways than one, lives of women are getting affected by the changes triggered off by globalisation. They are getting exposed to the sudden changes unaware. The women who are getting wage employment are unaware that they are employed on casual and informal basis and may have to lose the job as and when the employer so desires. Although there is an increasing number of women in paid occupations, this does not seem to ensure their well being and an improvement of quality of life. Women are being used only as a source of cheap labour. In these new types of employment, the burden on the women get multiplied. They do not even have the trade union rights.

1. DHUBRI

In Dhubri, three blocks Viz., Debitola, Dharmasala and Rupsi were covered Data were collected from four villages viz., Bogulamari, Asarikandi, Phulkumari and Saraldanga and 25 households were selected at random from urban areas

Work participation rate

Contrary to the secondary information regarding the Female work participation rate in hubri, the total work participation rate among the sample respondents in Dhubri has been quite high with 93.9%. The female work participation rate is higher than the male work participation rate of 82.9 per cent.

Occupation, Nature of work and Income

In rural Dhubri, the sample respondents included daily wage earners, workers in the incense factory, jute craft, terracotta and pottery, Brick kiln, agriculture and allied including farm labour, while in urban Dhubri, respondents were service holders, petty traders, pith craft workers, terracotta artisans and pottery makers. Pith craft, terracotta works etc. are regarded as household enterprises and the head of the household is the producer and the owner. The others including the women members in the family are also involved in the activity, but not regarded as workers. As such women engaged in these activities are not reported as workers but only as helpers. Of course, a few households could provide a rough estimate of a woman's average earning.

Even in the case of factory workers and construction workers, all members, sometimes the children also work in the same factory /work site. These groups could provide information on their wages.

In Dhubri, bidi making is the main occupation among some immigrant Muslim population. Bidi making is done by the women and children. As such, the incidence of child labour is also quite high among them. They have regular earnings as bidis have a ready market. They get the raw material from the local market and the finished product is collected by the traders from home. They feel that although they get regular earnings, the profit margin has reduced because the prices of raw materials have increased more than in proportion to the increase in the price of the finished product.

There is an increased difference in the prices paid and prices received by these poor artisans.

The disproportionate increase in the price of raw materials has reduced the profit margin also of other home based products like hand woven clothes, handicrafts etc.

Some households especially in the urban areas depend solely on pension for sustenance (mainly those households which are headed by widows) while some others in both rural and urban areas earn

rent income. Few households have agriculture as their main occupation though the number of women cultivators is very small.

The women who reported their income separately, earned, on an average between Rs. Rs.800 and 1,000, while in urban areas, the range of income is Rs. 1,000-1,500/-. The income earnings are marginally higher in the case of the service holders and those who are self employed in some business crossed this limit. In the households where more than one person earns, the household income goes up. This means that all the female headed households, the women being the only earning member, are living below poverty line. The incidence of such households is on the increase.

In fact, to earn even a hand to mouth living in the face of growing prices, the entire household including the children join one or the other paid work

In rural Dhubri, most of the workers are casual workers except in the incense factory where a majority of the workers are regular. Jute craft, Terracota and pottery comprise both casual and regular workers, the percentage of casual workers being higher than the regular workers. For other working groups mentioned, majority are casual labourers. The wage rate structure is reportedly same for both men and women in incense factory, jute craft, terracotta and pottery but is biased in favour of males for brick kiln workers, other daily wage workers etc.

As compared to the past, 5 years back, income of almost all workers engaged in different types of work mentioned, has increased. In female headed households, where the head of the household is a widow or is divorced or separated, the household income has shown a decline.

The working condition of the labour in incense factory is better than that of the other workers, though on absolute terms, the condition is not at all encouraging. The state of working conditions of the brick kiln workers is pitiable. They are neither provided any kind of exemption from work nor do they get medical expenses even in case of accidents at their place of work. In cases of such unforeseen expenditure, they have to borrow the required money from the contractor and repay with interest.

The brick kilns, growing in number with the building boom in the urban areas, are posing another threat to the rural areas. These brick kilns encroach upon agricultural land. Poverty, increased prices, ever increasing consumer needs etc. lure the poor peasant to sell their agricultural land to get petty cash. In return, they not only are rendered landless but also become unemployed, because these agricultural workers are not always hired for work in the brick kilns, the type of work being very different from the work in the fields. These brick kilns also lower the fertility level of the agricultural land around.

In the urban areas in Dhubri, the average monthly household income of pith craft workers, pottery makers and terracotta artisans is more or less the same. The household earns on an average

Rs. 1500 to 2500 or 3000 depending on the number of persons employed per household. Majority among them are casual workers.

Other groups comprising maid servants, vendors etc also earn on an average Rs. 800 to 1000 monthly. Domestic help (or maid servants) is exclusively a woman's profession. Those engaged in petty business or other private services are financially a little better off than the above mentioned working groups.

Those engaged in govt services or have been able to expand their business recently have relatively higher incomes.

Self employed women who own beauty parlours or are engaged as tailors or in embroidery work in the urban areas are reported to be making profits.

A few housewives interviewed in Dhubri, reported to be facing crises due to ever increasing prices, particularly the cost of education and health.

In Dhubri, family planning programmes are said to have shown much success, the low family size in both rural and the urban areas which is respectively 3.5 and 3.2, proves the fact. This has contributed also to the improvement of other aspects of life like literacy, women' participation in income earning activities etc.

Land and assets

In Dhubri a large number of households among factory workers, jute craft workers and terracotta workers are reported to be having their own land though the land area is on an average is just around 1 to 2 kathas. The daily wage labourers and brick kiln workers are landless.

In urban areas many of those engaged in services, pith craft workers, earthen ware makers possess their own land but the size of land holdings is very small – 1 katha or less.

The maid servants or vendors and other daily wage earners do not report to be having their own land or even other assets., not even in the place of their residence.

Even those households who own land seldom the ownership is in the women's name.

The access to media of the sample workers both in rural and urban areas is nearly nil. Their illiteracy and poverty come on the way. They cannot read newspapers and cannot afford TV, VCR etc. As such, the world outside is totally closed for them. Not only TV, VCR etc. these people do not even possess any other asset like that of a bi-cycle.

Consumption and savings

In the rural areas, in Dhubri, the respondents are grossly dependent on the market for the commodities of their day to day use. Paddy, mustard oil etc of the local variety are available in the

market. The branded varieties of cosmetics -powder, cream etc are however available and are purchased by the rural consumers. They could not specify the brands of the products they use. They purchase whatever the shopkeeper gives..

The shopkeepers even in rural areas and the young teen aged girls are aware of most of the brands like Amway, Fair and Lovely etc. The fairness creams are the most popular product among the young girls. In fact, the consumption choices and the lifestyles getting determined not by requirements set by cultural or physical needs, but are directed by the market.

In urban areas however, the respondents were found to be aware about the brands they were using. The branded articles of consumption specified are KRT rice, Tata salt, Annapurna Atta, Kisan Atta, Lux soap, Surf Excel washing powder, Pepsodent, Neem toothpastes, Ponds powder and cream. Some households with relatively higher incomes in the urban areas purchase Amway products also.

Modern consumer items, posters announcing admission into MBA, spoken English and other professional courses can be seen even in remote villages.

In rural areas, the overall habit of savings is observed to be quite low among all the respondents. In majority of the households, the expenditure surpasses income. The habit of savings is observed to some extent among jute craft workers terracotta and pottery makers. Those who save, generally save in SHG's. However, they reported that they can save only small amounts as it is difficult to save in the face of increasing prices.

As regards the urban areas, households engaged in private or government services or those engaged in some sort of business generally save in banks, post offices etc. In spite of being in the urban area, the habit of savings among workers in pith craft and earthen ware making is rarely reported. They reported that they cannot manage to save as they earn very little and the prices of the items they require are soaring up.

Indebtedness

Majority of the rural households are indebted. In rural areas loans were mainly taken from village shops, money lenders or contractors for treatment, social functions and sometimes to meet consumption expenditures.

Health and Wellbeing

Health gets neglected because of poverty. Although doctors, generally the allopathic practitioners, in the Health Sub-centres or pharmacies within/near the village are approached whenever necessary, it is not always possible to complete the treatment. In rural areas, all prescribed medicines are not always available and majority of the respondents opined that medicines have become costly and they cannot afford to undergo the full course of treatment.

On the other hand, in the urban areas, usually medicines prescribed are available but households undertook the full course of the treatment only sometimes. Many could not afford and others tend to neglect once the severity of the ailment reduces.

Participation in Public Life

Participation in public life among women is observed to be very less in both rural and urban areas in Dhubri. In the urban areas participation is in fact hardly present while in rural areas women involved in jute craft and Terracota and Pottery making are members of SHG's. Other women workers in Dhubri do not have any such forum of support. Women as members of Mahila Samity or other such organizations were not found among the respondents.

Literacy and Education

The literacy rate is lower in the rural areas than in the urban areas and the overall literacy rate is as low as 47%. This is even below the average literacy level of the district (49.9%). Among the respondents interviewed, the literacy rate is the lowest among daily wage earners and brick Kiln women workers in the villages of Phulkumari and Saraldanga. Most of them are illiterate or at the most read up to the primary level. In Bogulamari and Asarikandi villages, among workers in the dhoop (incense) factory, jute craft and terracota and pottery workers, the level of literacy is relatively high with many of them having read up to HSLC level.

It has been observed that, the sample figures of male literacy rate of 35% is below than the State male literacy rate of 50.6%, but that the female literacy rate of 51% is higher than the district figure of female literacy rate which is 42.6%. As per the sample, the female literacy rate is higher than the male literacy rate. According to the secondary information, the female literacy rate is lower than that of the male. However, the census figures are for the 2001 Census and the present survey was conducted between June and September, 2004, a gap of three years. This may be the result of an increase in female literacy rate, that might have happened due to government intervention or the impact of the literacy programmes with special emphasis on women/girls, Dhubri being one of the target districts of DPEP, Asom Mahila Samakhya etc. The literacy drives are a part of the governmental effort to improve the quality of life of the people, taken up in the wake of globalisation. The low male literacy rate is however alarming and can at best be attributed to the fact that the sample consists mostly of the immigrant labour class where literacy levels remain low. Moreover, special literacy drives target women more specifically and as such the male illiteracy continue to remain so. The highest level of education attained by a male or female member in the rural areas in various occupations mentioned above is generally high school. Most of them have read upto the primary level or are illiterates Even in the urban areas majority of the women engaged in pith craft, earthen ware making, maid servants etc are either illiterates or have studied only upto primary level.

In the urban areas, the highest level of education attained is expectedly higher. Among both males and females, graduation was found to be the highest level.

Crimes against women

In the group discussions among different groups of women, a few issues emerged. They complained that the liquor menace is making their lives miserable. Earlier, people feared to take the liquor made within the village as there were some restrictions. Now that the indigenous liquor production has been given permission, liquor is openly used. The incidence of wife battering is increasing. The men not only waste their own earnings in liquor but sometimes also make the women pay for that. For the women who do not earn, it is becoming difficult to run the home.

Another problem coming up more visibly in the recent years is dowry. Whereas dowry was not there earlier, these days, heavy sums are demanded as dowry.

A number of property related disputes, scandals and trafficking of girls were also reported. They feel that all this are on the rise.

2. HAILAKANDI

In Kamrup, two blocks viz Lala and Katlichera have been covered. Data were collected from four villages viz., Rangpur, Rangabag, Dhanipur and Lalapur. 25 households from urban areas were also selected.

Work Participation Rate

Among the four districts surveyed, work participation rate among the sample population is the lowest in Hailakandi which is only 51.4%. The male work-participation rate in Hailakandi (69.6%) is way above the female work-participation rate (32.6%). These low average female work participation rate is because the sample covers two blocks with very different characteristics. Of the two blocks Lala and Katlicherra, the Lala block is more affluent. In this Muslim dominated block, the purdah system prevails and the women remain within the confines of the house and the man is the main bread earner of the family. Therefore the work-participation of females under the Lala block is minimal. This explains the low female work participation rate among the sampled respondents in Hailakandi.

Occupation, Nature of Work And Income

In Hailakandi, two distinct income groups emerge from the sample in the rural areas. In the villages, Rangpur and Rangabak under Katlicherra block, the households are very poor living on a hand to mouth existence while in other two villages, Lalapur and Dhanipur under Lala block, the economic condition of the people is comparatively good.

In the urban areas the economic condition of the people is quite high as compared to their rural counterparts.

Main occupational categories in the rural areas included in the sample are Daily Wage Labour, Agricultural labour, Cultivators and Business while in the urban areas the sampled occupation categories are Services, business and 'others ' which including rickshaw pullers, porters, pension holders, teachers, tailors etc.

In the two villages under Katlicherra block, most of the women work both as daily wage labour and agricultural labour. They live in abject poverty and also get a raw deal in terms of wages. The wage rate structure is biased in favour of males and they work on a purely casual basis. The average income of the households is around Rs.1000. A few, who have their own land and work as cultivators, or are engaged in some kind of petty business have incomes higher than these casual workers group. In the case of cultivation and business, however, the income is not shown separately for individuals and shown only as household incomes of which the headship is with male members. The average income of cultivator households is around Rs. 2000 but the income varies with the size of cultivated area. Those in business generally have an average income of Rs.3000. In the other two villages under Lala Block, most of the households are engaged in business. The income of the households from business or cultivation is usually higher than in the Katlicherra block. Some of the households having their own business earn Rs. 5000 to Rs. 8,000. The households have relatively higher income than in Katlicherra block but not a single woman was found to be engaged in income earning work. They remain in purdah and do not work outside. Even among the fhh, the head of the household remain within the confines of the house while male members work. In the Katlicherra block, however, no such system exists even among muslim community. They are engaged as daily wage labour and agricultural labour.

In the urban areas, most of the women in the sample are engaged in services (both govt and private). Those women engaged in govt services generally earn much higher than women in private services. A few housewives were also included in the sample, who are not engaged in any sort of income earning activity. Few women are engaged in business but the number is very low as compared to men engaged in business activity. The average income of households where the main source of income is business activity is around 3000 to 3500. Women engaged in business are generally engaged in petty business and earn lower than the average business income specified.

Though pension is not considered as income some fhh thrive solely on their pension.

The average household size in rural Hailakandi is 6.2 and in urban Hailakandi is 3.5, whereas very few families have more than one worker. Hence the per capita income in Hailakandi happens to be the lowest among the four districts surveyed.

Another notable feature in Hailakandi is the striking inequality of income and well being even within the rural areas. This inequality will continue to rise as the process of globalisation advances, if proper care is not taken. Because, if market forces are allowed to function on its own, the rich and the advantaged gain, while the poor and the ignorant get marginalised.

Land and Assets

In the rural areas, under Katlicherra block very few households have their own land. Most of them are landless casual labourers. The average size of land holdings in Katlicherra was around 1.25 to 1.5 kathas, while in Lala, it was 2.5 kathas.

In the urban areas most of the households were found to be having their own land with the average size of land holdings being 2 to 2.5 Kathas

The poor casual labour in the rural areas did not possess any valuables or assets. Some households which were a little better off possessed a television or a bicycle.

In the urban areas TV was very commonly found while some households also possessed refrigerator, bikes, other valuables like jewellery etc. The access to media is limited only to the affluent section only.

Consumption and Savings

All the households in both rural and urban areas were unanimous in their observation that expenditure has increased over the last five years and items of consumption have become costlier. It has become difficult even to purchase the educational requirements of the children. Medicines also have become costlier.

In rural Hailakandi under the Katlicherra block the women are not aware of modern consumer items. They still do not use even toothpaste and other commercial products of daily use, for majority of them cannot expend for such things or have not even heard of those. In Lala block in Hailakandi, where the people are somewhat better off, the purdah system prevails and the women could not provide any information about their consumption details. They could only say that they use face cream, powder etc but could not give details.

In the urban areas all households consumed branded articles like KRT rice, sunflower oil (not specified), Tata salt, Surf excel washing powder, Dove, breeze soap, Sunsilk and other brands of Shampoo etc.

In the two villages of Rangpur and Rangabak under Katlicherra block, instances of rural savings is almost nil. SHGs or other credit and thrift societies also do not function here. In Dhanipur and Lalapur villages under Lala block however, households save in SHG's banks, postoffices,. Some of them have also started depositing their savings in 'Sahara'.

In the urban areas also saving is commonly done in banks, post offices and Sahara, LIC policies etc.

Indebtedness

As observed, among the four districts surveyed, rural indebtedness is the highest in Hailakandi. Most of the daily wage labour and casual agricultural labour thrive on loans taken from local shopkeepers for running their daily household expenditure.

In the urban areas, loans were generally taken for purchasing land or other consumer durables.

Health and Wellbeing

In the rural areas it was reported that in the case of ailments, the nearby pharmacy or the sub-centre is approached but all prescribed medicines are not always available and the full course of the treatment can seldom be completed, especially among casual labourers. In the urban areas, medicines were more or less available and the full course of treatment pursued. In the rural areas in Hailakandi, malnutrition is very common among children and T.B poses a serious problem among the adults. Other ailments include fever, hepatitis B, diarrhoea etc. The picture of state supported health amenities, as is mentioned above (SecIII) is dismal in all the districts, with Hailakandi being the worst affected.

Participation in Public Life

Participation in public life is minimal among rural women and almost nil among urban women. Under Katlichera block, women's participation in public life is very poor. Presence of SHG's is not significantly felt in the villages and women are also not members of other women's organization except in some stray cases. However, in Lala block, the SHG's are quite vibrant.

Literacy and Education

The rural literacy of the sample is shown as 77% which is not bad as compared to the district average. If the literacy figures are disgregated by blocks/villages, stark inequalities in the rates can be perceived. In Rangpur and Rangabak villages under Katlicherra block, most of members are illiterates followed by those read up to the ME or primary level both among men and women. In Lalapur and Dhanipur under Lala block, both males and females in every household are literate. The highest level of education attained is graduation. School enrolment of both girls and boys is universal in Lala, but not in Katlichera. As to the education of the children, the respondents in Katlichera told that they can never dream of sending their children to school as it is very expensive. On the other hand, the respondents from Lala block informed that they send both girls and boys to school, they donot want their children to remain iliterate and/or uneducated like themselves. This reflects that

with globalisation education has become too costly a commodity to be consumed by the poor, now education is only for the rich and the advantaged.

In the urban areas, most of the members are literates and the highest level of education attained is Post Graduation. Some men have also undertaken professional degree or diploma courses. No women were reported to have completed any such course.

In Hailakandi, The sample male literacy rate of 79.3% is above the district figure of 68.5%. Again in case of female literacy too, the sample figure of 70.2% is way above the corresponding district figure of 50.7%. But for both the sample figures and the district figures, the male literacy rate is higher than the female literacy rate. The difference between the sample and the district figures is seen primarily because the present study takes a small sample and the district figures are based on Census data, that too published before three years. Again literacy among both men and women in one of the blocks is much higher than in the other block.

The specific problems in Hailakandi were the abject poverty and illiteracy among the casual labourers and non participation of women in public life in all the areas, a high incidence of malnutrition and TB among the poor casual labourers only prove that the district has not experienced any positive impact of globalisation. All the prevailing characteristics only point out the negative impacts.

3. KAMRUP

In Kamrup, two blocks viz Sualkuchi and Rani have been covered. Data were collected from five villages in Kamrup viz., Pub- Soalkuchi, Madhya- Soalkuchi, Paschim- Soalkuchi Bongshor and Sajjanpara.

Since Kamrup is the most urbanized of the four districts, 75 households from urban areas were selected.

Work Participation Rate

Among the sample households in Kamrup, the total work-participation rate is 62.1%. The male work-participation rate of 77.3% is higher than the female work-participation rate of just 47.4%.

Occupation, Nature of Work And Income

Main occupations in the sample are Weaving & weaving related work, Cultivation, Daily wage earner, farm labour, service, factory workers, vendors, shop keepers, domestic servants and educated women working as casual workers.

Sualkuchi being the hub of the silk industry of Assam, weaving and weaving related activities are common among women there. Traditionally, The average income of a hired weaver has been

reported to be around Rs. 3000 per month, depending on volume of work done, the quality, design and marketability of the product. Some weavers can earn even more. Although weavers are hired, silk industry is basically a household enterprise with ownership lying with the household head, mostly men. Monthly income of some of these households is even above Rs 10,000. In such situations, women's labour goes unpaid although they are entitled to the benefits as a member of the household. People associated with the silk industry in Sualkuchi reported that during the last five years, there has been a fluctuating increase in their sales. These days sales are good as the people spend a lot of money on dresses during festivals and other ceremonies. However, the wages and working conditions of the workers do not reflect the fact. Weaving is also done in a small scale in Sajjanpara (Rani Block) but most of the households do it at a subsistence level.

Among the cultivators in Sajjanpara, the average income is around Rs.2,500 but many households are subsistence farmers, who cultivate their own land but do not sell their produce. They were not able to give an estimate of the imputed earnings. Those among them who owned large areas of land reaped profits selling their produce. Some say that the rate of profits has increased as compared to the past while others give a contrary view altogether.

Women also work as daily wage and farm labour only for certain months of the year and earn an average monthly income of around Rs. 800 to 1000 depending on the volume of work done, land area sown etc.

In Sajjanpara village under Rani block, a cold drink plant has been set up which is an important avenue of employment for the poor villagers. Both men and women are employed there, majority being men and women

In both rural and sub-urban areas, there are a large number of women factory workers. They get casual employment. The workers working even upto 6/7 years are not given permanent status. Their average income is around Rs.1,000 to 1,500 per month per person. In the case of leave even due to ailments, there is wage cut. Hence, there is no certainty about the actual amount of monthly wage. Gender division of work and wage disparities are common and the women accept that as natural. In the factories, the wage difference between a man and a woman is Rs. 15-20 per day. Such wage differences exist also in the case of construction workers.

In a few exceptional cases, women have been able to successfully fight for equal wages. To cite an example, one woman, who was working as helper to a mason, mastered the art of masonry and constructed her own house all by herself. While working with the master mason, she does not confine herself to the works like carrying ricks, water etc. which are commonly assigned to women, but shares the work done by the male labourers. In spite of that, initially she also used to earn less than that of the men, but now she claims and gets the same rate.

In the case of domestic servants, (This occupation being exclusively women dominated) in the urban areas the range of income is between 200-2,000, average monthly income being around 1,200. Vendors, earn around Rs.1,500 on an average.

One of the most vulnerable groups of women that has emerged of late in the urban areas is the large educated (often in non-technical disciplines) unemployed and casually employed women workers. They are usually employed in low paid jobs and often work below their potential and capacity. Their mean income ranges between 1,500 and 2,500 and no state sponsored support system exists for meaningful sustenance of these women. Those who save among them save in banks.

Among the sample respondents, family size in urban Kamrup with 4.9 is higher than in rural Kamrup with 4.3. This is mainly because here urban Kamrup is represented by Guwahati, the capital city of Assam, where the density of population is very high.

Land and Assets

In the rural areas under Sualkuchi block, the size of land holding is usually quite small. Households own small plots of land but the average size varies from 1 to 2.5 kathas.

Under the Rani block in Sajjanpara village, the average size of land holdings is around 5 to 10 kathas. Moreover many households were found having much larger size of land holdings, almost 15 to 20 bighas, but the land lies fallow because of the menace caused by elephants.

Some factory workers in sub-urban areas live in occupied government land and some own land between 1.5- 2.5 kathas. The domestic servants, hired weavers etc. and vendors seldom own land. Among the educated class of women some own plots of land, even in their own names, while others live in rented houses.

In the rural areas, assets comprise looms, livestock, bicycle and other consumer durables etc while in the urban areas assets comprise of Television, Refrigerator, bikes, cars etc. Women in kamrup have better access to media than in the other three districts. The electronic media is more popular among the educated. The working class in rural areas enjoy the mobile theatres.

Consumption and Savings

All the households in both rural and urban areas agreed that expenditure has increased over the last five years and items of consumption have become costlier.

The sample respondents in both rural and urban Kamrup purchase almost all products from the market and were aware of the brands they bought. In the rural areas, the brands specified are Tata salt, Punjab rice, Lux soap, surf excel washing powder, Anupam Mustard oil, Colgate, Babool toothpastes, Ponds' powder and Fair and Lovely cream. In fact, they purchase whatever is available in the market and suits their pockets.

In the urban areas households were generally found to be more brand conscious articles like KRT rice, sunflower oil (not specified), Anupam, Dhara Mustard oil, Tata salt, surf excel washing powder, Dove, breeze soap, Sunsilk, Clinic plus shampoo etc Lakme, Amway products Lotus and other herbal products are commonly used. A growing tendency towards buying consumer durables, particularly kitchen gadgets, latest varieties of luxury items and cosmetics is seen among the economically better off households in the urban areas.

Expenditure on food taken outside the home has been on the increase. This is because people have to go long distances to their workplaces, both men and women work outside. Quite often, this is also because of the change in the lifestyle of some sections of the population particularly the youngsters.

Even in rural areas, the women are conscious about savings but reported that they cannot afford to save as their expenditures are higher than their incomes. Those who save, save mostly in the post offices, informal women's groups, which they call a 'Society'. Some of them also households also save with SHG's. Through SHGs, women also explore new business ventures to sustain themselves.

In urban areas, those women who can save generally save in banks. Some also make insurance policies. Some maid servants, hired weavers and other hired workers save with their employers.

Indebtedness

Rural indebtedness was much less pronounced in Kamrup than in Hailakandi or Dhubri district. Some of them were found to have borrowed money locally, either from their employer or from some other person in the vicinity.

Health and Wellbeing

In the rural areas, households on an average said that prescribed medicines were sometimes available in the local chemist's shop but very few of them have ever completed the full course of the treatment. In fact villagers in Sajjanpara opined that doctors were rarely available in dispensaries and they had to rush to the city even in case of emergencies. Only of late, with the efforts of Bharat Sevashram Sangha one doctor made weekly visits in the local dispensary (mobile Chikitsya Sewa). Sualkuchi- In rural Kamrup malaria, jaundice etc are the common diseases. The occurrence of diseases are reportedly increasing day by day in and around Sualkuchi. In Sajjanpara in Kamrup, also the same diseases are found though of late, the incidence of malaria is said to have decreased because of the installation of the water treatment plant nearby.

Now people of Sajjanpara have some access to clean water. The sub-urban areas are also prone to malaria. The women in these areas generally depend on the Sub-centre or sometimes on

Guwahati Medical College and other Government hospitals in the City. They also find it difficult to pursue the full course of the treatment.

In the urban areas, prescribed medicines were always available and a greater percentage pursued the full course of the treatment as compared to rural areas.

Participation in public life

The state of participation in public life reflects almost the same picture in all districts. The married and the elderly women are members of Mahila Samities and Credit and Thrift societies. In rural areas women participate to some extent by organizing themselves as members of SHGs, some are also members of Mahila Samities and Panchayats. In some of the SHGs, adolescent girls are also members. Otherwise, there is no public participation of these younger groups of women. In the urban areas, not only the adolescent girls but the educated young women also are absent from public participation.

As to the literay rates among the sample respondents, the rural literacy rate in Kamrup has been higher than the urban literacy rate. This is because, the sample comprises mostly the illiterate factory workers and wage earners in urban areas. In Sualkuchi block most of the members among both men and women are literates. Most of them are educated upto the HSLC or HS level but they do not study further. A few of the respondents are also Graduates. In Sajjanpara, the percentage of illiterates is higher than in Sualkuchi. Majority of the women have read upto the primary level while the maximum level of education among the women being HS and among men Graduation and Post graduation.

In the urban areas, the largest percentage of illiterates has been found among maid servants. Some of them have read upto the primary level, the maximum level of education being read upto the HS standard. Among the class of educated urban women the highest level of Education was post A number of graduate and post graduate degree holders were also among the respondents in urban areas.

Literacy and Education

The total literacy of the sample has been estimated at 78% while for the district it is 74.7%. The sample male literacy rate of 80.5% is slightly lower than the district male literacy rate of 81.3%. In case of the female literacy rate too, the sample figure of 66.5% is slightly lower than the district figure of 67.3%. Both the sample figures and the district figures show that male literacy in Kamrup is much higher than the female literacy.

4. LAKHIMPUR

In Lakhimpur, two blocks viz Dhakuakhana and Naobaicha were covered. Data were collected from four villages viz., Jalbhari, Hiloidhari, Karunabari No.2 and Lakhimeegaon. 25 households from urban areas were selected.

Work-Participation Rate

Among the sample respondents in Lakhimpur, the total work-participation rate is 62.2%. The male work-participation rate of 71.5% is higher than the female work-participation rate (48.5%)

Quite a number of women are engaged in unpaid agricultural activities hidden as household work.

Occupation, Nature of work and Income

In the rural areas of Lakhimpur, the average income earned by daily wage labour and the farm labourers is around 1000. Women are also engaged as daily wage labour here and the wage rate is reportedly same. Among the daily wage labour, no gender disparity in wage rates has been reported, but in the case of farm labour, such biases exist. The nature of work, in both cases, is mainly casual

It has been observed from the data obtained that average income of cultivators is quite high in Lakhimpur. Some of the cultivators with large areas of land earn monthly income upto Rs. 6000 to 7000 per month.

Petty businessmen in rural areas earn an average monthly income of around Rs. 2000.

Weaving and sericulture are practiced as household activities by many women and the earnings of such households range between 2000 and 3000. Weaving is exclusively done by women though sericulture is practised by both men and women. These women did these activities in addition to household work so these activities are often referred to as sub occupation by them.

In the urban areas, both men and women are engaged in both govt and private services. The average income from services is around 4000 though the income from private services is relatively lower than in govt services.

In the urban areas, most women who do not go out to work do not also take up any activity like weaving in the house.

Business activity is dominated by men though few women are engaged in business. The average income earned from business activity is around Rs.3000 per month.

The daily wage labour earn around 1200 to 1500 though these rates differ from person to person.

The family size among the sampled respondents in rural Lakhimpur is 5.4 and in urban areas it is 4.8. This lowers the per capita income.

Land and Assets

From the data in the sample it is observed that most of the households possess their own land in both rural and urban areas. In rural areas, the average size of land holding is around 3 bighas. Some of the households possess land area measuring upto 15-20 bighas.

In urban areas also most of the households in the sample possess land though the average size of land holdings is comparatively small. Land and Assets are in the name of the head of the household, i.e., a male.

Consumption and Savings

In rural Areas, people use to depend on home grown or locally available food products like rice, vegetables and fish and as such are not completely dependent on the market for such items. However, for other household goods they have to depend on the market and reported that the prices of all such items have increased during the last few years. For selling their home produced woven items, they also have to depend on local purchasers, NGOs or other middlemen.

In the urban areas, people normally save in banks while in the rural areas, people save with SHG's. In Lakhimpur SHG's are reported to be quite actively engaged in development works. Also the rate of savings of most of the households in the rural areas is said to have increased.

Indebtedness

Instances of indebtedness are not commonly reported. Some cases which have actually been reported show that loans have been taken primarily for treatment purposes.

Health and wellbeing

In the rural areas, doctors in the nearby areas are generally approached, the well todo take their patients to Guwahati or elsewhere. The medicines prescribed by the doctors are not always available in the local market, but majority of the households reported that that they pursue the full course of the treatment. In the urban areas medicines are generally available and they pursue the full course of the treatment.

Participation in public life

In the rural areas women's participation in public life was more prevalent than in other districts primarily under the Dhakuakhana block. Women were involved in decision making collectively by being actively involved in SHG's. Some women were also members of Women's organizations and some credit and Thrift societies.

Literacy and Education

Rural Lakhimpur occupies an enviable position with 80% literacy rate among the sample respondents. The highest level of education is also quite A few of the women respondents were also graduates while the majority was educated upto higher secondary or HSLC level.

Urban areas of Lakhimpur has been even better with 94.2 per cent literacy rate among the sample respondents. There wer also a few post graduates among the respondents.

Comparing the sample literacy rates and district literacy rates of **Lakhimpur** it is observed that the total literacy of the sample (81.8%) is higher than the district total literacy rate (69.6%). Both the male literacy rates (83.9%) and the female literacy rates (76.3%) of the sample are higher than the average district male literacy rate (78.3%) and female literacy rate (60.5%). In both the,i.e., for both the district and the sample the male literacy rates are higher than the corresponding female literacy rates.

SECTION - V

A FEW CASES

- One woman, who was working as helper to a mason, mastered the art of masonry and constructed her own house all by herself. While working with the master mason, she shares the work done by the men. Initially she also used to earn less than that of the men, but now she claims and gets the same rate.
- A designed cloth produced in the handloom that sells for Rs.150/-, yarn worth Rs.100/- and the weaver has to work for 2 and a half days. The producer doesnot know that the value of her labour is also to be calculated to arrive at the actual cost of production. She takes fifty rupees to be her profit, whereas she actually sells the product at loss.
- Sajjanpara is a tribal dominated village under Rani Block in Kamrup district. The inhabitants here are basically dependent on agriculture but very few of them have landed property. In Sajjanpara, a member from an SHG narrated a story about their survival strategy in the face of crises. She is a member of a Self Help Group. The group consists of 11 members. They had taken a loan from the Central Bank for piggery. As it took quite some time to get the loan, they had already purchased the pigs with their own collected funds. With the loan amount, they helped build the infrastructure of piggery, cover expenses of fodder and also helped a cultivator to purchase land. They sold the pigs at a profit and rendered their physical help in sowing in the land purchased by the cultivator with their funds. In exchange, arrangements were made with the land owner to supply them with paddy grown in the land. Now they are repaying the bank loan regularly.
- In Dhubri, one woman, read upto high school level and married to a daily wage earner, joins a Self Help Group. After some time, she borrowed some money from the self help group and purchased a rickshaw for her husband. Now she sends her children to school. Being a little educated, can also teach her little children at home. She is now repaying the loan regularly.
- In every place, in the group discussions with women, a common problem that emerged was the liquor menace. Liquor being easily available, the men folk, the young and the old alike, drink freely, waste their hard earned money, sometimes even exercises force to extract whatever little the womenfolk earn.

- The liquor menace has also increased the incidence of wife battering. The dowry problem is also reported to have increased in the recent years. Elderly women from different areas particularly in Dhubri complained that these days people have started to demand dowry openly
- Brick kilns are posing environmental as well as economic threat. These brick kilns are taking over agricultural land, destroying the fertility of vast agricultural areas. They do not provide any security to their labour and employ only on casual and informal basis.
- They do not get medical check up of their workers regularly and hence pose the threat of spreading diseases.
- In a number of sub-urban areas, environmental hazards posed by the establishment of different factories have been mentioned. While at one place, the complaint was that the ground water level has gone down, their wells are getting dried, at another place, the complaint was that grow vegetables or keep pet animals due to the pollution created by these factories and are suffering from lung problems more frequently.
- At the same time, those factories also get support from some inhabitants as those factories happen to be the only avenue of employment for the inhabitants in the vicinity.
- Some had also observed that with the renovation of the highways, the residential areas/villages in the vicinity have started getting inundated in the rainy season.
- Increasing vehicular traffic is also posing a threat to the common people.
- Unplanned construction of walls and buildings, fly-overs being made, multistorey buildings etc. have increased health hazards and also many localities fall under the grip of artificial floods because of these. These construction activities do not even create adequate employment avenues as most of the works are done by machines
- The less educated girls working as vendors and/or marketing agents for different companies and also the highly educated (often in non-technical disciplines) young women also have to work at low rates on casual and informal basis. The first group is extremely low paid, have to work on commission basis and are mostly employed on casual basis. The other group is mostly unemployed and/or underemployed. They, being skilled by virtue of their education and training are hired by employers but appointments are casual and informal. One such respondent, who happened to have a good MBA degree holder told that she was asked to work in a prestigious and expensive school in the city and was also told that she will be given permanence if her work is found satisfactory, but she could never procure any appointment letter from the authorities. One such respondent had to leave a better job in a prestigious concern and opt for a lower category job at another place as it became impossible for her to continue in the former concern for the sexual harassment meted to her by some of the colleagues. They are usually employed in low paid jobs and often work below their potential and capacity.

Section - VI

Summary of findings and concluding observations

The analysis of the impact of globalisation in Assam with respect to four districts, viz., Dhubri, Hailakandi, Kamrup and Lakhimpur has been done after giving the condition of the State economy during the post liberalisation era and also a profile of the four districts. The findings are summarised below:

- The performance of the State economy is not encouraging during the post liberalisation period.
- The density of population in all the four districts is higher than the state average.
- The decadal growth rate of population is also higher than the State average in all the districts except Lakhimpur.
- The sex ratios in each of the 4 districts have improved between 1991 and 2001. In 2001, the sex ratio in Kamrup in both rural and urban areas and in rural Hailakandi has been lower than the State average.
- The child sex ratio in the state declined from 975 in 1991 to 964 in 2001. Perceptible decrease in child sex ratio has been observed also in urban Dhubri, rural Hailakandi, both rural and urban Kamrup and rural and urban Lakhimpur. In rural Hailakandi the sex ratio decreased by 89 points.
- The literacy rate in the State as well as in all the 4 districts improved over the last one decade.
- Female literacy rate is the lowest in rural Dhubri, followed by rural Hailakandi.
- Health infrastructure is very poor all over the state. In terms of hospitals, primary health centres dispensaries and hospital beds per lakh of population, Hailakandi is the poorest among all the four districts, followed by Dhubri, both the districts being below the State average. In terms of rural family health centres per lakh of population, all the four districts are below the state average, with Lakhimpur at the lowest position. Sub-centres per lakh of population is the lowest in Dhubri, which is lower than the state average, the other districts are better than the state average.

- Lakhimpur has the highest female work participation rate (fwpr) and is far above the other districts.
- The fwpr increased between 1991 and 2001 in all the four districts.
- There has been an increase in the percentage of marginal workers in all the districts except in rural Dhubri and rural Kamrup, where there is a marginal increase in the percentage of main workers. In Lakhimpur, there has been significant increase in both main and marginal workers.
- In the state, there has been an upward trend in the unemployment rate of women between 1983-84 and 1993-94, but there was a marginal decline after that, although the unemployment rate remained higher than the 1983-84 level. The intensity of the problem has been more pronounced in the urban areas.
- The consumption pattern in the rural areas showed that nearly all the households are spending more than they earn. In other words, all are in debt.
- There is a tendency to purchase newly introduced consumer products, fast food, soft drinks, cosmetics etc.
- In rural Hailakandi, the women do not use even tooth paste and other commercial products of daily use, for majority of them cannot afford such things or have not even heard of those.
- In Lala block in Hailakandi, where the people are somewhat better off, the purdah system prevails.
- In the case of the urbanites, the branded articles get preference. A lot of new items of consumption, hitherto unknown have entered into the consumption basket of the urbanites.
- Expenditure on food taken outside the home has been on the increase.
- Most people have to depend on the market for consumption goods as they either do not have land for growing those, or they cannot cultivate anything due to pollution and/or floods etc.
- The general comment about consumer expenditure is that it has increased considerably during the last few years.
- Education and medicines have become costlier. Prescribed medicines are not always available in the local market.
- Majority of the respondents do not have the habit of savings as they do not have sufficient income to save.
- Nearly in every household, one or the other women is working outside the home and/or for payment.

- Although there is an increasing supply of women workers, the demand is not commensurate with the same. Hence, most women can find employment only on casual and informal basis.
- Baring a few, other factories donot provide good working conditions to the workers.
- The jute craft factory comprises both regular and casual workers with no great difference of income between the two.
- There is no significant difference in wages among regular and casual workers, but wage gap exists between men and women.
- The gender disparity in the wage rate structure still persists in a number of occupations.
- The condition of brick kiln workers is very bad. They are not provided any kind of benefit like leave, medical allowance etc.
- SHGs have become popular in all the four districts but in different degrees.
- SHGs have enabled many poor women to evolve survival strategies to suit their needs.
- With the application of new technology in road construction and related works, scope for employment has decreased.
- The less educated girls working as vendors and/or marketing agents for different companies and also the highly educated (often in non-technical disciplines) young women also have to work at low rates on casual and informal basis
- Nearly all the women respondents except the service holders and a few women engaged in the silk industry in Soalkuchi, self employed in Emroidery, knitting etc. live in abject poverty.
- The workers in the informal sector have only a hand to mouth living. In fact many of the respondents could not provide information about any visible source of income.
- Majority of them donot possess any consumer durables or any other asset in their names and/or in the household.
- But for a minimal few, that too mostly widows or single, none of the women own any resource in their own names.
- Sub-urban areas are facing environmental problems due to the pollution emitted by some factories.
- With more and more walls getting erected, highways and fly- overs being made, multistorey buildings being constructed, many localities fall under the grip of artificial floods and have other environment related problems.

- On an average, Participation in public life is low. SHGs are becoming popular among some women while many of them are still ignorant about it. Mahila samities also give an opportunity for women to participate in public life.
- The Self Help Groups are giving an opportunity to form women's collectives but the treatment meted to them by the representatives of power is not always conducive.
- The SHGs are engaged in different types of economic activities but in small scale. They do not have information about the market and hence no control over it.
- Segregating the data according to head-ship of households, incidence of fhh have been found to be quite high in the three districts of Dhubri, Hailakandi and Kamrup.
- Sexual harassment at work place is very much alien to the villagers and no such report was received from any respondent from rural areas.
- Wife battering is but a common problem faced by the domestic workers and also by other workers in the informal sector. They consider liquor to be the main cause of all this.

In conclusion, it can be said that, the impact of globalisation on the lives of women in Assam is becoming increasingly visible. Changes have been observed in

- Increased female work participation rate
- Entry of more women into private, low- paid, informal and casual types of jobs.
- Educated women in non- technical subjects emerging as a socially vulnerable group.
- Move towards consumerism leading to popularity of non sustainable modes of consumption and production.
- Unusual rise in the price level resulting in increased consumer expenditure and decreased savings.
- Emergence of new types of work avenues for women like that of beauty parlour, fast food restaurants, front office jobs, work in the electronic media etc.
- Weakening of traditional avenues of employment, particularly the agriculture and allied sector.
- Environment related problems.
- Increase in the cost of educational and health.
- Emergence of a new working class women who do not have control over the process of production, no security and safety.

- Emergence of Self Help Groups.
- Expansion of home based work avenues for women may eventually work as the withdrawal of women from the social domain, which may pave the way for further exploitation of women.

Recommendation:

A number of recommendations emerge from the above analysis. The most urgent ones are:

- ❖ Identification of gender issues in the process of globalisation and negotiating with the concerned parties.
- ❖ A well formulated State Policy for Women.

TABLE II.1 : Per Capita Income of Assam and India (in Rupees): 1980-81 to 1992-93

Year	At Current Prices				At Constant (1980-81) Prices			
	Assam	India	Difference (India- Assam)	Difference in per cent	Assam	India	Difference (India- Assam)	Difference in per cent
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)= (4)/(2)*100	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)= (8)/(6)*100
1980-81	1200	1630	430	35.83	1200	1630	430	35.83
1981-82	1474	1681	207	14.04	1307	1693	386	29.53
1982-83	1641	2004	363	22.12	1367	1691	324	23.70
1983-84	1777	2304	527	29.66	1375	1760	385	28.0
1984-85	2182	2504	322	14.76	1457	1811	354	24.30
1985-86	2313	2730	417	18.03	1483	1841	358	24.14
1986-87	2520	2962	442	17.54	1474	1871	397	26.93
1987-88	2589	3285	696	26.88	1521	1901	380	24.98
1988-89	2772	3842	1070	38.60	1516	2059	543	35.82
1989-90	3179	4354	1175	36.96	1650	2160	510	30.91
1990-91	3932	4964	1032	26.25	1719	2213	494	28.74
1991-92	4230	5582	1352	31.96	1915	2167	252	13.16
1992-93	5310	6249	939	17.68	2018	2216	198	9.81

Source: (i) GOI: Economic Survey, 1993-94 (ii) C.S.O. and (iii) GOA: Statistical Handbook(s)

TABLE II.2 : Per Capita Income of Assam and India (in Rupees): 1993-94 to 2000-01

Year	At Current Prices				At Constant (1993-94) Prices			
	Assam	India	Difference (India- Assam)	Difference in per cent	Assam	India	Difference (India- Assam)	Difference in per cent
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)= (4)/(2)*100	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)= (8)/(6)*100
1993-94	5,715.0	7,698.0	1,983.00	34.70	5,715.0	7,698.0	1,983.00	34.70
1994-95	6,493.0	8,876.4	2,383.40	36.70	5,737.0	8,087.6	2,350.60	40.97
1995-96	7,001.0	10,160.3	3,159.30	45.13	5,760.0	8,498.5	2,738.50	47.54
1996-97	7,394.0	11,600.9	4,206.90	56.88	5,793.0	9,035.9	3,242.90	55.99
1997-98	7,966.0	12,771.5	4,805.50	60.33	5,796.0	9,287.9	3,491.90	60.25
1998-99	8,826.0	14,712.4	5,886.40	66.69	5,664.0	9,733.1	4,069.10	71.84
1999-2000	9,720.0	15,562.0	5,842.00	60.10	5,978.0	10,067.0	4,089.00	68.40
2000-01	10,198.0	16,487.0	6,289.00	61.67	6,157.0	10,254.0	4,097.00	66.54

Source: Government of Assam: Economic Survey, 2001-2002

TABLE II.3 : Percentage of total Workers, main workers and marginal workers to total workers by residence and sex: Assam 1991 and 2001

State/ District	Total/ Rural/ Urban	Persons/ Male/ Female	Percentage to total population					
			Workers					
			Total Workers		Main Workers		Marginal Workers	
			1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001
Assam	Total	Persons	36.1	35.9	31.2	26.6	4.9	9.3
		Male	49.4	49.9	48.4	42.3	1.1	7.6
		Female	21.6	20.8	12.6	9.7	9.0	11.1
	Rural	Persons	36.7	36.4	31.3	26.1	5.4	10.3
		Male	49.3	49.8	48.1	41.5	1.2	8.3
		Female	23.3	22.3	13.3	9.9	10.0	12.4
	Urban	Persons	30.9	32.0	30.4	29.6	0.5	2.4
		Male	50.5	51.0	50.2	48.2	0.3	2.8
		Female	7.5	10.3	6.7	8.4	0.8	1.9

Source: Census of India 2001. Assam Provisional Population Totals. Paper-3 of 2001

TABLE II.4 : Incidence of Unemployment Assam and India: By area (As a percentage of labour force)

States/UTs	1983			1993-94			1999-2000		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Assam Rural	1.9	1.9	1.9	4.5	8.1	5.3	3.2	6.6	3.9
Urban	4.2	10.8	4.8	5.5	27.8	8.7	7.7	18.9	9.7
All India Rural	1.4	0.7	1.1	1.5	0.8	1.2	1.7	1.0	1.5
Urban	5.0	5.2	5.1	4.1	6.6	4.6	4.5	5.7	4.7

Source: The 38th and the 50th Rounds of the NSSO Report on Employment and Unemployment Situation in India.

As presented in NATIONAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT, 2001

NSSO Report on Employment and Unemployment Situation in India 55th Round, Report No.458(55/10/2)

Table III.1 : Size of Population by Districts : 1991-2001

Districts	1991 Population	2001 Population	Density per Sq. Km., 2001
1. Dhubri*	1324404 (12.31)	1634589 (12.72)	584
2. Hailakandi	449048 (4.17)	542978 (4.23)	409
3. Kamrup	1385659 (12.88)	1642420 (12.78)	579
4. Lakhimpur	751517 (6.99)	889325 (6.92)	391
Assam	10,756,333 (100.00)	12,850,608 (100.00)	340

Note: figures in brackets indicate percentage to total State population.

Source: Census figures

Table III.2 : Decadal Growth rate of Population

Sl. No.	Districts/State	Decadal Growth Rate								
		1901-11	1911-21	1921-31	1931-41	1941-51	1951-61	1961-71	1971-91	1991-01
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
1	Dhubri *	+29.97	+26.92	+15.76	+14.83	+9.25	+27.44	+40.45	+56.47	+23.42
2	Hailakandi	+16.09	+7.59	+7.08	+10.29	+17.48	+27.23	+23.61	+45.94	+20.92
3	Kamrup	+11.10	+7.06	+9.38	+19.21	+17.17	+37.73	+38.80	+65.72	+25.75
4	Lakhimpur	+26.29	+34.07	+23.91	+22.70	+17.95	+50.46	+43.39	+56.29	+18.34
	Assam	+16.99	+20.48	+19.91	+20.40	+19.93	+34.98	+34.95	+53.26	+18.85

Source: Census figures

TABLE III.3 : TREND IN THE SEX RATIO: By DISTRICTS 1971-2001.

(Per 1000 males)

State/Districts	Area	1971	1991	2001
ASSAM	TOTAL	896	923	932
	RURAL	912	934	940
	URBAN	744	838	878
1. Dhubri	Total	930	950	944
	Rural	944	953	945
	Urban	824	927	942
2. Kamrup	Total	855	879	894
	Rural	898	925	929
	Urban	706	791	835
3. Hailakandi	Total	923	929	933
	Rural	924	928	931
	Urban	906	944	954
4. Lakhimpur	Total	895	931	952
	Rural	910	941	958
	Urban	656	801	879

1981 census was not conducted in Assam

@ Worked out on the basis of interpolated figures of Assam

SOURCE: Census of India 2001: Assam: Provisional Population Totals. Rural-Urban Distribution. Paper-2 of 2001. Census of India 1991: Assam State District Profile 1991.

TABLE III.4 : Child Sex ratio:By districts : 1991-2001

State/Districts	Area	Sex ratio of child population (0-6) age group. (Per 1000 Male Child)		
		1991	2001	Gain(+)/loss(-)
1. Dhubri	Rural	979	986	+7
	Urban	968	956	-12
2. Hailakandi	Rural	989	900	-89
	Urban	948	959	+11
3. Kamrup	Rural	978	959	-19
	Urban	947	888	-59
4. Lakhimpur	Rural	974	965	-9
	Urban	947	921	-26

Source: Census of India 2001; Assam; Provisional Population Totals; Rural Urban Distribution ; PAPER-2 of 2001.

TABLE III.5 : Literacy Rates by Sex in India and Assam (1961-2001)

State/ India	Assam			India			Male Female Gap	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Assam	India
1991	61.87	43.03	52.89	64.13	39.29	52.21	18.84	24.84
2001	71.93	56.03	64.28	75.85	54.16	65.38	15.9	21.70

Source: Census Reports

TABLE III.6 : Literacy Rates by sex: by districts (1981-2001)

Districts	Area	1991			2001		
		Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1. Dhubri	Total	38.36 (-14.53)	47.38	28.79 (-18.59)	49.86 (-14.42)	56.61	42.64 (-13.97)
	Rural	33.55	42.74	23.82 (-18.92)	45.73	52.52	38.46 (-14.06)
	Urban	69.36	76.75	61.31 (-15.44)	78.20	84.77	71.21 (-13.56)
2. Hailakandi	Total	53.07 (0.18)	64.08	41.04 (23.04)	59.84 (-4.44)	68.47	50.65 (-17.82)
	Rural	50.19	61.80	37.47 (-24.33)	57.10	66.22	47.38 (-18.84)
	Urban	85.30	89.96	80.35 (-9.61)	87.34	91.31	83.17 (-8.14)
3. Kamrup	Total	65.04 (12.15)	73.67	55.01 (-18.66)	74.69 (10.41)	81.24	67.31 (-13.03)
	Rural	56.88	66.95	45.83 (-21.12)	67.68	75.77	58.92 (-16.85)
	Urban	80.57	85.51	74.16 (-11.35)	86.61	90.07	82.43 (-7.64)
4. Lakhimpur	Total	58.96 (6.07)	68.28	48.85 (-19.43)	69.59 (5.31)	78.26	60.47 (-17.79)
	Rural	57.74	67.29	47.51 (-19.78)	68.67	77.64	59.29 (-18.35)
	Urban	75.46	80.57	68.87 (-11.7)	80.78	85.40	75.50 (-9.9)

Note: (i) figures in brackets in col nos. (3) and (6) represent the gap (+/-) between the literacy rate in the district and the State

(ii) figures in brackets in col nos. (5) and (8) represent the gap(+/-) between the male and female literacy rates

Source: Census Reports

TABLE III.7 : Ranking of Districts by female work participation rate : 1991 and 2001

Rank in 2001	District	Work Participation rate		Rank in 1991
		2001	1991	
1	2	3	4	5
1	Lakhimpur	62.1	47.5	1
15	Hailakandi	16.5	12.0	20
18	Kamrup	14.8	13.9	18
23	Dhubri	8.0	8.2	23

Source: Census of India 2001. Assam Provisional Population Totals. Paper-3 of 2001

TABLE III.8 : Percentage of female total Workers, main workers and marginal workers by residence and sex: Assam: by districts: 1991 and 2001

State/ District	Total/ Rural/ Urban	Persons/ Male/ Female	Percentage to total population					
			Workers					
			Total Workers		Main Workers		Marginal Workers	
			1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001
1. Dhubri	Total	Persons	29.4	28.9	27.2	24.5	2.3	4.4
		Male	49.6	48.6	49.3	43.7	0.3	4.7
		Female	8.2	8.0	3.8	4.1	4.4	3.9
	Rural	Persons	29.8	28.8	27.3	24.2	2.5	4.6
		Male	50.0	48.5	49.7	43.3	0.3	5.2
		Female	8.6	8.1	3.8	3.9	4.8	4.2
	Urban	Persons	27.1	29.1	26.2	26.7	1.0	2.4
		Male	46.9	49.2	46.5	46.3	0.4	2.9
		Female	5.8	7.8	4.2	5.9	1.6	1.9
2. Kamrup	Total	Persons	32.6	32.6	28.7	26.7	3.9	5.9
		Male	49.0	48.6	48.3	43.4	0.7	5.2
		Female	13.9	14.8	6.4	8.1	7.5	6.7
	Rural	Persons	32.3	32.8	26.7	24.8	5.6	8.0
		Male	47.2	48.6	46.4	41.8	0.9	6.8
		Female	16.1	15.8	5.4	6.4	10.7	9.4

State/ District	Total/ Rural/ Urban	Persons/ Male/ Female	Percentage to total population					
			Workers					
			Total Workers		Main Workers		Marginal Workers	
			1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001
	Urban	Persons	33.3	32.4	32.9	30.3	0.4	2.1
		Male	52.3	48.6	52.0	46.1	0.3	2.5
		Female	9.2	12.9	8.7	11.3	0.6	1.6
3. Lakhimpur	Total	Persons	42.9	56.1	32.1	32.3	10.7	23.8
		Male	47.5	62.1	45.3	45.1	2.3	17.0
		Female	37.8	49.9	18.0	19.0	19.8	30.9
	Rural	Persons	43.3	57.7	32.2	32.3	11.4	25.4
		Male	47.4	62.6	45.0	44.5	2.4	18.1
		Female	39.7	52.5	18.7	19.6	21.0	32.9
	Urban	Persons	31.3	36.6	30.8	33.1	0.5	3.5
		Male	49.7	55.3	49.4	52.3	0.3	3.0
		Female	8.4	15.3	7.7	11.3	0.7	4.0
4. Hailakandi	Total	Persons	31.5	33.3	29.1	25.4	2.4	7.9
		Male	49.6	49.0	48.9	41.6	0.7	7.4
		Female	12.0	16.5	7.8	8.1	4.2	8.4
	Rural	Persons	31.8	33.7	29.2	25.3	2.5	8.4
		Male	49.8	49.0	49.1	41.2	0.7	7.8
		Female	12.3	17.2	7.8	8.2	4.5	9.0
	Urban	Persons	28.3	29.8	27.5	26.8	0.8	3.0
		Male	47.2	48.7	46.8	45.2	0.4	3.5
		Female	8.2	10.0	7.0	7.4	1.2	2.6

Source: Census of India 2001. Assam Provisional Population Totals. Paper-3 of 2001

TABLE III.9 : Health Infrastructure (Per lakh of population): by Districts, 2000-2001

Assam/Districts	Hospitals	Primary Health Centres	Dispensaries	Beds	Rural Family Welfare Planning Centres	Sub Centres
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1. Dhubri	0.67	1.41	0.73	33.71	0.43	18.54
2. Hailakandi	0.37	1.47	0.37	14.73	0.74	20.63
3. Kamrup	1.16	3.11	2.56	151.43	0.79	30.44
4. Lakhimpur	0.79	2.59	0.67	35.53	0.45	19.79
Assam Total Per lakh of population	0.60	2.29	1.21	48.38	1.01	19.21

Note: Last row estimated from the totals for Assam

Source: Statistical Handbook Assam, 2002

**TABLE III.10 : Availability of electricity, Safe Drinking Water and Toilet Facilities to Households,
1991 : Assam : By Districts**

Assam/Districts	Total/ Rural/ Urban	Total No. of Households	Percent Households Having				
			Electricity	Safe Drinking Water	Toilet	All The Three Facilities	None of The Three Facilities
ASSAM	TOTAL	3798360	18.74	45.86	37.43	9.25	34.75
	RURAL	3326700	12.44	43.28	30.53	4.50	38.85
	URBAN	471660	63.21	64.07	86.06	42.69	5.90
1. Dhubri	Total	NA	11.77	56.10	29.64	5.43	32.22
	Rural	NA	6.67	56.28	23.79	2.36	34.86
	Urban	NA	47.64	54.84	70.77	27.09	13.62
2. Hailakandi	Total	77925	19.03	18.54	60.97	8.73	32.10
	Rural	71915	14.50	13.48	58.17	4.19	34.57
	Urban	6010	73.21	79.12	94.59	63.06	2.50
3. Kamrup	Total	345685	33.82	57.71	49.76	18.58	20.30
	Rural	217800	13.82	58.82	26.40	5.40	29.59
	Urban	127885	67.83	55.82	89.47	40.98	4.48
4. Lakhimpur	Total	119950	13.83	29.03	24.88	2.66	49.84
	Rural	110255	10.18	29.14	19.44	1.60	53.57
	Urban	9695	55.31	27.84	86.80	14.74	7.42

Note NA – Data not available, Source: Census of India 1991: Assam State District Profile 1991

TABLE IV.1 : Distribution of sample respondents by Occupation and income: Dhubri

Rural							Urban				
Main Occupations							Main Occupations				
	Daily Wage Labour	Incense factory	Jute craft	Terracota and Pottery	Brick Kiln	Agricuture and allied	Service	Business	Pith craft	Terracota and pottery	Rent, pension
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Average monthly income	850	800-1000	900	900-1000	700-800	700-1000	1200 & above	1200 to 1500 & above	1000	1000	500-1500

Source: Survey finding

TABLE IV.2 : Distribution of sample respondents by level of literacy : Dhubri

	RURAL	URBAN	TOTAL
LITERACY RATE	38.03%	69%	47%
Number of households	75	25	100

Source: Survey finding

TABLE IV.3 : Distribution of sample respondents by Occupation and income: Hailakandi

Rural					Urban		
Main Occupations					Main Occupations		
	Daily Wage Labour	Agricultural labour	Cultivator	Business	Service	Business	Rent, pension etc.
Average monthly income	1,050	1,000	2,500	3,000	4,500	3,500	3,000

Source: Survey finding

TABLE IV.4 : Distribution of respondents by level of literacy- HAILAKANDI

	RURAL	URBAN	TOTAL
LITERACY RATE	77.4%	94.3%	80.2%
Number of households	75	25	100

Source: Survey finding

TABLE IV.5 : Distribution of sample respondents by Occupation and household income: Kamrup

Rural							Urban			
Main Occupations							Main Occupations			
	Weaving & weaving related	Cultivator	Daily wage and farm labour	Service	Vendors and shopkeepers, pension holders	tailors	Factory workers	Vendors and shopkeepers	Educated women working as casual workers	Domestic Servants
Average monthly income	3,200	2500	1000	1,300	1,200	1,300	1500	1000	2,400	1,500

Source: Survey finding

Table IV.6 : Distribution of sample respondents by level of Literacy: Kamrup

	RURAL	URBAN	TOTAL
LITERACY RATE	79.6%	72.8%	78%
Number of households	75	75	150

Source: Survey finding

TABLE IV.7 : Distribution of sample respondents by Occupation and household income : Kamrup

Rural							Urban			
Main Occupations							Main Occupations			
	Weaving & weaving related	Cultivator	Daily wage and farm labour	Service	Vendors and shopkeepers, pension holders	tailors	Factory workers	Vendors and shopkeepers	Educated women working as casual workers	Domestic Servants
Average monthly income	3,200	2500	1000	1,300	1,200	1,300	1500	1000	2,400	1,500

Source: Survey finding

Table IV.8 : Distribution of sample respondents by level of Literacy: Kamrup

	RURAL	URBAN	TOTAL
LITERACY RATE	79.6%	72.8%	78%
Number of households	75	75	150

Source: Survey finding

TABLE IV.9 : Distribution of respondents by Occupation and Income: LAKHIMPUR

Rural						Urban		
Main Occupations						Main Occupations		
	Daily Wage Labour	Agricultural labour	Cultivator	Business	Teaching, other govt. and private services	Service	Business	Teaching, other govt. and private services
Average monthly income	1000	1000	3000	2000	900-6000	4000	3000 to 3500	1000-6000

Source: Survey finding

TABLE IV.10 : Distribution of respondents by level of literacy: Lakhimpur

	RURAL	URBAN	TOTAL
LITERACY RATE	80%	94.2%	81.8%
Number of households	75	25	100

Source: Survey finding

IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON THE WOMEN OF ASSAM

Study conducted by

DR. ARCHANA SHARMA

Reader in Economics
and Director I/C



**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
NEW DELHI**

CONTENTS

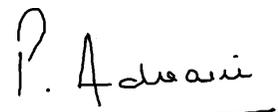
	Foreword	(i)
	Preface	(iii)
	References	(v)
Section-I	Introduction	1
Section-II	The economy of assam in the context of globalisation	5
Section-III	Profile of the Districts	9
Section-IV	Survey Findings	11
Section-V	A Few Cases	31
Section-VI	Summary of findings and concluding observations	33
	Tables	38

FOREWORD

The Government of India announced its New Economic Policy in 1991. That paved the way for globalisation. This was done with the main objective of achieving trade linked growth. The policy objectives also include improvement of the quality of life of the poor and the marginalised and particularly women. However, the globalisation process has seemed to have made contradictory impacts on the lives of women. Export augmentation, modernisation of agriculture through technological inputs and the free play of MNC's have adversely affected women's lives. Their livelihood strategies, employment opportunities and health are under threat. The increased consumerism and changed lifestyles accompanying the globalisation process have been found to have pressurised women's lives and also are exposing them more to violence. At the same time, more women are getting the opportunity and the freedom to participate in paid activities and in public life.

To ensure the well being of the women in the face of the threats coming with globalisation, it is essential to ensure policies that can National Commission for Women, in collaboration with various organisations conducted a few public hearings in Karnataka, West Bengal, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. The public hearings were aimed at documenting the experience of rural women in the background of globalisation and WTO agreement. The public hearings also aimed at mobilising the solutions from among the affected women themselves, which could constitute an important input for formulating pro-women agricultural development policies. In those public hearings, the rural women voiced their grievances arising out of the provisions of WTO. They narrated their sufferings that had occurred due to the imposition of certain norms by the MNCs. The State also could not do anything to protect these women as the policies are centrally formulated and implemented.

In Assam, no such public hearing could be conducted. However, the present study proposed by Dr. Archana Sharma was supported by the NCW. This study is based on primary data collected from four different districts viz., Dhubri, Hailakandi, Kamrup and Lakhimpur. The four districts have varied characteristics and hence could represent the conditions of women in different occupations.



Dr. Poornima Advani

Chairperson

National Commission for Women

Place : New Delhi

Dated : January, 2005

PREFACE

More than a decade has elapsed since the process of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation was formally launched in the country through the New Economic Policy. Now the country is on the verge of the next phase of globalisation. I am grateful to the National Commission for Women and its Chairperson Dr. Poornima Advani for sponsoring this research study at this crucial point of time.

I thank all those who were associated with the study including the investigators who were engaged for collection of the field data. Ms. Debabani Chakravorty helped me through the analysis of the data, I gratefully acknowledge her contribution. I take this opportunity also to offer my deep gratitude to all the respondents in the study without whose co-operation this study would never have taken shape.

Globalisation is an ongoing process and it has its impact on different aspects of life also is spread over time and space. As such, it is not possible to assess the impact of globalisation completely within the limitation of a time bound study. However, attempts have been made, in the present study, to get an idea of the type of the impact so far felt by the women in Assam. I have tried to avoid errors and omissions in each stage of the study and beg apology for any undesired flaws that might have crept in unknowingly.

I hope this report motivates the policy makers to adopt some more gender friendly policies in the next phase of reforms. Such policies are required to create an enabling atmosphere for the women to take the opportunities and face the challenges of globalisation.

Place : Guwahati
Dated : 25.12.2004

Archana Sharma

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