

# Educational Status and Role in Rural Economic Development of Mising Women in Assam: A Case Study in Golaghat District, Assam, India

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**Abstract**— Misings, the second largest tribal population of Assam, are mainly the rural inhabitants. Like other womenfolk of developing nations most of the Mising women are engaged in primitive economic activities and work hard to fulfill the day to day necessity and to uplift their economic status. This paper highlights the findings of a case study conducted on educational status and participation of womenfolk in farm and non-farm activities like agriculture, animal husbandry, poultry, fishery, sericulture, horticulture and other activities such as weaving etc. in Bokakhat West Development Block of Golaghat District, Assam. Respondents have been selected randomly. During field observation it was revealed that outdated agricultural practices, lack of basic infrastructure, lack of proper marketing mechanism, exploitation of middlemen, lack of credit system, village money lending system, lack of economic empowerment, lack of leadership quality, illiteracy, poor health status, and natural calamities like perennial flood are the main obstacle to the rural economic development in the study area.

**Index Terms**— Mising women, rural economy, farm and non-farm activities, Golaghat district.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Women in a tribal society play a vital role in their social, cultural, economic and religious ways of life and are considered as an economic asset in their society. But they remain backward due to traditional values, illiteracy and many other social and cultural factors. The participatory role of the tribal in maintaining their living conditions by fully exploring the natural endowments and the alternative uses to find an appropriate place towards a strategic approach. Mising women are mainly engaged as labourers or workers in agriculture and allied activities. Many of them migrate in search of work and generally to earn their bread and butter from the unorganized sector like brick industries, road construction, stone cutting and construction. They also find local works in household industries, social and traditional forestry, sericulture, weaving and handicrafts, but they do not find regular work throughout the year and work as marginal workers. Out of the total marginal workers 85% are females. Tribal women spend considerable time in the collection of fuel, food, fodder and water. The Mising women play a very active role in the economy, but they have an unequal status compared to men in their society. They play more active role than men in family activities including financial income, but they cannot claim property rights after getting married. Agriculture is a source of income of the Mising women. They

get a plot of land, where they can cultivate vegetables and cash crops such as black pulses, mustard, paddy and potatoes etc. They remain active round the clock and show keen interest in various economic activities like-agriculture, cattle rearing, fishing, weaving and other allied activities, but the modes of operative of these economic activities are primitive in nature. The causes behind these primitiveness is due to, lack of literacy, lack of backward social living, problem of food security, health status and other traditional socio religious beliefs.

In the context of the economic development of the rural sector of the Mising community of Assam, it is very urgent to study the problem of women education and their role in uplifting the rural economy. Hence, this case study has been taken with following objectives,

- To study the educational status of the Mising women
- To study the role of Mising women in economic activities
- To study the factors hindering women's participation in such operation.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is based on primary data. To collect primary data from sampling unit, a sample survey has been made and for this purpose a suitable questionnaire is made to collect information from the sample villages. The field survey was conducted by selecting four representative villages (Upper Temera, Gulung Daital, No.1 Pathori and Bokuli Chpori) under Mising dominated area of Bokakhat sub division of Golaghat district, Assam. Out of total household of the representative four villages we have selected 10 (ten) household from each villages  $(10 \times 4) = 40$  and a total of 117 respondents were selected as sample respondents for case study. Out of 240 of total number of family household of four representative villages we have purposively selected this four villages and 40 (fourty) household because of their representative character of Mising women.

## III. ANALYSIS OF DATA

### Sex ratio

In sample survey the sex ratio of the respondents has been taken into account as it can affect the socio-economic condition of the female section of the society. Specially in this community nearly half of the total population is female so they can take a decisive role not only in family but also in economic development of the society as a whole.

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**Table 1: Sex ratio of Mising women in the representative villages**

Sex	No. of persons	Percentage
Male	123	51.25
Female	117	48.75
Total	240	100.00

In our sample survey, the ratio of male and female in family have taken into account by measuring sex ratio of the respondent household which shows 51.25% represented by male and 48.75% by female as depicted in the table no. 1.

**Educational status**

Education can be an effective tool for economic development, it enables the tribal acquire knowledge for improving and empower their tasks and all field. But the level of education of tribal women in general and study area were very low.

**Table: 2 Educational status of Mising Women in the representative villages**

Education Quality	No. of respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	20	17.09
Can just read & write	26	22.22
Primary school passed	24	20.51
Middle school passed	18	15.38
H.S.L.C.	16	13.67
H.S.S.L.C.	9	7.69
Graduate & above	4	3.41
Total	117	99.97

From the case study it was observed that the majority of respondents can just read and write (22.22%) and 17.51% illiterate and only 3.41% graduate. Though they have no higher education but their knowledge and capability are very strong in comparison to the women of other societies.

**IV. CHANGING OCCUPATIONAL PATTERN OF MISING WOMEN**

Economic development creates various types of employment opportunities in economy. In underdeveloped countries majority of the population still remain in agricultural activities and allied sector.

**Table: 3**

Sl. no	Occupation	Present	Past
1	Agriculture and allied activities	50%	62%
2	Rice bear selling (business)	18%	15%
3	Weaving	12%	10%
4	Daily labour wage	12%	8%
5	Services & other member of SHGs, Bandhan group, RGVN etc.	8%	5%
Total		100	100

During the case study it was observed that about half of the respondents are engaged in agriculture and allied activities whereas remaining are engaged in selling rice bear (18%), weaving (12%), daily wage labour (12%) and least in service and other member of SHGs, Bandhan group, RGVN etc (8%). But if we compare the present structure of occupation with the occupation of past generation then it would be clear that 62% women were engaged in agriculture, 15% in business and 10% in services and only 5% respondents belonged to daily wage labour and member of SHGs, Bandhan group, RGVN and service sector in the past (table 3).

**V. ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES TAKEN BY MISING WOMEN**

Increase of income enhances the rate of savings, investment, and production and consumption behavior of the society at a multiplier process. But in the rural area of India generation of income is very slow as maximum people are engaged in agricultural activities where productivity is very low. An attempt has been made to know about the various sources of income of Mising women of Bokakhat district of Assam as shown in table 4 which indicates various types economic activities as income sources of the women in Mising community of Assam such as agriculture, weaving, poultry, piggery, small scale business, service, traditional industries and wage labour. Among these activities traditional industries like handicraft, weaving, preparation of traditional wine, piggery and poultry are considered most prestigious culture of the Mising community which is prevailing mostly in the rural areas. Such types of activities are generating a good amount of income for the family but the rate of income generation in such activities is not satisfactory as compare to modern farming.

**Table: 4 Economic activities of Mising women**

Sl. no	Villages	Agriculture	Cattle rearing	Weaving	Business (Rice bear etc.)	Leadership & SHG's member	Wage labour	Family planning & decision making	Percentage
1	Pathori gaon, no 1	56%	22	12	2.8	1.3	3.4	2.5	100
2	Gulung Doital	54%	21	7.0	9	1	6.5	1.5	100
3	Upper Temera	57%	20	7.8	6.4	2.1	5.6	1.1	100
4	Bokuli Chapori	55%	24	11	2.3	1.3	4.4	2	100
Total		55.5%	21.75	9.45	5.13	1.43	4.97	1.77	100

The study shows that majority of the respondents generated their income from agricultural activities (55.5%) and cattle rearing (21.75%) whereas earning less income from weaving (9.45%), business (5.13%), leadership & SHG members (1.43%) and wage labour (4.97%). It was observed that very few respondents were well aware about the family planning (1.77%). Moreover, very few women were allowed to take part in decision making among the sample study.

During field survey various hindrances of development were observed. The main hinders are as follows:

**Lack of education:** Lack of basic education and skills as well as training particularly for self employment and family encouragement are not fully upgrading but instead most of the illiterate parents are expected to learn weaving, spinning, domestic chores and helping in their field and given little importance to education for girl child.

**Lack of Institutions:** There is a scarce or no vernacular medium school in many areas dominated by Mising communities. Moreover, there is negligence in appointing Mising language teacher which hamper good communication and real learning among the child in primary schools.

**Lack of financial support:** Economic conditions of Mising people are very poor. So, they are unable to afford their fees for the higher education.

Wage labour of female has no sufficient social security because they are unorganized and falling under informal sector.

Amongst the Mising women organizing capacity and leadership quality is very poor.

Lack of agro-based industries and rural industries for the income generation and employment to tribal women.

Hinders in implementation of patriarchal society of women rights for sharing family property.

For achieve the goal of economic development of Mising women following strategies need to be implemented by state government, Mising Autonomous Council, NGOs and community. Government and NGO should prepare the special plan and programme for the economic empowerment of tribal women in particular. Agriculture and allied sector development should be promoted to create the household job opportunity for the women. Mising language school must be setup from primary to post graduate level and vocational training in the Mising dominated area. Manual wage worker should be provided with an appropriate wage to tribal women under the government employment generation scheme like MGNREGA. Health status and health care system are not satisfactory in Mising dominated areas. So, health care service and health insurance is necessary. Through SHGs government should implement micro financing properly and provide them financial support and raise awareness programme about economic empowerment. Effort should be made to solve the drop out problem of girl child education. The technical, vocational education and training facilities should be needed so that women of that society will get better chance to be specialized in this field. MAC should ascertain the proper utilization of fund allocated to autonomous body & monitoring and equal distribution of resources is needed. Special should be implemented for Mising women in Mising areas for overall development of the community.

## CONCLUSION

In concluding remarks we can say that the Mising women are not fully empowered economically as well as socially. Economic independence and education of Mising women will go a long way in making the women self-reliant. Therefore there is an urgent need for the settlement of infrastructure, awareness, education, competition, willingness, confidence, self motivation, mindset and encouragement from family and society, is essential for the upgrading of economic development of Mising women specially in the river bank and flood prone areas of Golaghat district.

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