CHAPTER - V

ECONOMIC ROLE OF WOMEN IN SINGJAMEI ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY MANIPUR
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Economic Role of Women in Singjamei Assembly Constituency Manipur

Empowerment of women has become a very important issue in the development process of a country since the middle of 1970s. With the declaration of 1975 as International women's year and 1975 to 1985 as women's decade, many important policies and programmes have been taken up by the Central and State government in India. It is believed that real empowerment will be possible when women are economically free and independent.

Manipuri women always share a great responsibility in shaping the economic life of their families. This chapter aims to study the economic activities of women in Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur. The analysis is based on the information collected from 300 women through questionnaire, 100 from each ward i.e. Ward No. 15, 16 and 17. In order to study the financial status of women, their families have been divided into five categories on the basis of monthly income.

Table - 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.no</th>
<th>Monthly income of families</th>
<th>No. of families</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Below Rs. 5000</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Rs. 5001 - Rs. 10,000</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Rs. 10,001 - Rs. 15,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Rs. 15,001 - Rs. 20,000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Rs. 20,001 - above</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second group with monthly income of Rs. 5001 to Rs.10,000/-

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1. Data and information collected from 100 women, Ward No. 15, Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur.
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Table - 1
Monthly income of the 100 households in Ward No. 15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.no.</th>
<th>Monthly income of families</th>
<th>No. of families</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Below Rs. 5000</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Rs. 5001 - Rs. 10,000</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Rs. 10,001 - Rs. 15,000</td>
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<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Rs. 15,001 - Rs. 20,000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second group with monthly income of Rs. 5001 to Rs.10,000/-

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1. Data and information collected from 100 women, Ward No. 15, Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur.
constitute the highest percentage i.e. 48 percent. It shows that majority of the families in Ward No. 15 do not enjoy good financial condition. Thus women in Ward No. 15 of Singjamei Assembly Constituency face financial problems.

The occupation of women is an important area for the study of economic role of women in general. The following shows the occupation of women in Ward No. 15 of Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur.

Table - II

Occupation of Women in Ward No. 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.no.</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>No. of women</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Govt. Employee</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Non-Govt. Employee</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Vendor</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above it is found that majority of women constituting about 47 percent are housewives. Some housewives earn a little income by knitting, weaving, making incense sticks at home during their free time. On the other hand many housewives have no source of income and depend on family or husband’s income.

The number of Government employees form 24 percent. Being

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2. Data and information collected from 100 women through questionnaire in Ward No. 15, Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur.
full-fledged Government employees, these women enjoy financial security. These women are also active and can take their own decisions due to their financial independence. Respondents who are the employees of private establishments and NGOs admitted of meagre and irregular income. Most of them work as teachers in private schools, colleges and private financial institutions. According to them, the private establishments demand some amount of money as security deposit at the time of joining. When the employees want to give up the job mainly due to unsatisfactory financial conditions, they fail to obtain the deposited amount in time. These women constituting 17 percent face financial difficulties due to irregular income.

Another group is the women vendors constituting 12 percent of the collected data. Most of them are not able to make proper profit due to fluctuation in their income. So they are bound to take loans mostly from private banks to invest in their trade. Thus they do not enjoy financial independence, partly due to the fluctuation of their income and partly due to financial maintenance of their families.

The housewives though found as highest in number, have no independent source of income. According to a young respondent, both her husband and she earn nothing and depend on her father-in-law’s business. Another woman admitted of depending on her brother and

sister-in-law who are Government employees. Economic dependence especially among women makes them virtually a slave as they are unable to live and lead a life of their own liking.

Again, a young housewife admitted of helping her father-in-law in his business of money lending. It may also be noted that some housewives engaged themselves in embroidery work at home, weaving, tailoring, money lending, making agarbatti, organising marup etc. in order to earn money. A respondent who organised marup admitted of going around to collect money from the members who failed to pay in time. Here the co-operation of the husband and the family members is a necessity.

From the above analysis, we can conclude that only the full fledged Government employees enjoy financial independence. The rest of the women suffer financial difficulties in one form or another in Ward No. 15 of the Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur.

7. Incense sticks.
Table - III

Monthly income of 100 households in Ward No. 16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.no.</th>
<th>Monthly income of families</th>
<th>No. of families</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Below Rs. 5000</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Rs. 5001 - 10,000</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Rs. 10,001 - 15,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Rs. 15,001 - Rs. 20,000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Rs. 20,001 - above</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second category having a monthly income of Rs. 5001/- to Rs. 10,000/- constitute 47 percent of the collected data. So the families belonging to this category is more or less similar to the percentage found in Ward No. 15. However the difference from Ward No. 15 is the percentage of families having a monthly income of Rs. 5000/- and less. In Ward No. 15 it is 18 percent and in Ward No. 16 it is 25 percent. Again families having a monthly income of Rs.20,001/- and above in Ward No. 15 is 13 percent and in Ward No. 16 it is only 5 percent.

Table - IV

Occupation of Women in Ward No. 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>No. of Women</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Govt. employee</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Non Govt. employee</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Vendors</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here also the housewives constitute the highest percentage. As in

9. Data and Information collected through questionnaire from 100 women in Ward No. 16, Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur.
10. Data and Information collected through questionnaire from 100 women in Ward No. 16, Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur.
case of Ward No. 15, women in Government services have admitted of financial independence. On the other hand, the employees of private establishments and NGOs constitute only 3 percent. With the exception of a few, the private establishments in Manipur fail to function effectively in the long run and cannot provide financial security to the employees' expressed by some of the respondents. The real cause of the problem in case of the private bank is that the invested amount along with the interest cannot be collected in due time due to poor and irresponsible response from the loanees. In such a case, the employees are not able to enjoy a regular and adequate salary.

Women vendors belonging to different trades constitute 10 percent in Ward No. 16. They also admitted same financial problems like those of Ward No. 15. The trade of one woman respondent is selling grocery items. She goes up and down to Moreh once a week to collect her items of trade. According to her, the business is no longer profitable as bandhs, general strikes, extortion by unlawful persons and even by the security forces hamper the business.

The next group is the housewives and they constitute 57 percent. Most of them depend on husband and other members of the family financially. On the other hand some of them earn incomes through various means like weaving, knitting, embroidery, stitching mosquito net etc. Such

11. Interview with Ingudam (o) Memton Devi, Chingamakha Maisnam Leikai, Imphal, Manipur, 16-6-07.
nets are supplied directly to the market or sold in the locality according to the demand. An elderly housewife admitted of rearing chickens at home. She spends her time in taking care of the chickens. She could earn about Rs. 1500 to Rs 2000 per month by selling the eggs.

Table V

Monthly income of the 100 households in Ward No. 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.no</th>
<th>Monthly income of families</th>
<th>No. of families</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Below Rs. 5000</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Rs. 5001 to Rs. 10,000</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Rs. 10,001 to Rs. 15,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Rs. 15,001 to Rs. 20,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Rs. 20,001 to above</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Like the previous two wards, the second category constitute the highest percentage i.e. 46 percent of the families. The last category is in the lowest percentage having a monthly income of Rs. 20,001 and above. The families having a monthly income of Rs. 5000/- and less constitute the second highest percentage of 22 percent. It shows that the financial condition of majority of the families is not sound.

12. Interview with Maisnam (o) Bimola, Chingamakha Maisnam Leikai, Imphal, Manipur, 14-6-07.
13. Data and information collected from 100 women in Ward No. 17, Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur.
Table - VI\textsuperscript{14}

Occupation of the women in Ward No. 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>No. of Women</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Govt. employee</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Non Govt. employee</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Vendors</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Housewives constitute the highest percentage of women in Ward No. 17 of the Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur. Generally no major difference could be seen when compared with the two wards, 15 and 16. The fact is that the housewives occupy the highest percentage in all the three wards of Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur.

According to the study, 28 percent of women in Ward No. 17 are employees in different Government establishments. They have admitted that they enjoy independent financial status and even at times the other members of their families depend on them financially. On the other hand, the employees of private establishments have admitted that they most of the time face financial problems. These women are not able to enjoy adequate and regular salary. So they are bound to depend on other members of the family financially.

Most of the women vendors are unable to estimate their daily profit. Whatever they earned, are used in the maintenance of their families.

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Data and Information collected from 100 women in Ward No. 17, Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur.}
Regarding the housewives, most of them have no income. It is certain that in all the three Wards i.e. Ward No. 15, 16 and 17 only a small section of women do not have financial problem. For the majority of women in the three wards, Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur, they always face financial problems in one form or the other.

**Economic Contribution of Women Working in Government Sectors:**

About two decades back, the number of women employed in the Government establishment were very few in number. The recent years witnessed the increasing number of women employees in Government, semi-government services. The following Table shows the number of public sector establishments and the number of employee as on December 1990.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.no</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>No. of establishment</th>
<th>Total Emp.</th>
<th>Female Emp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Central Govt.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3574</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>State Govt.</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>44,289</td>
<td>6747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Quasi Central</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2646</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Quasi state</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Local Bodies</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3423</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>54,396</td>
<td>8391</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of women employees in Government services keep on increasing. It is a sign of improving the economic condition of women.

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women as well as the growth of educated female in Manipur. Table II shows the increasing number of women employees in public sector as on April, 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.no</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>No. of establishment</th>
<th>Total Emp.</th>
<th>Female Emp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Central Govt.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3615</td>
<td>738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>State Govt.</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>60,978</td>
<td>14,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Quasi Central</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>4601</td>
<td>1050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Quasi state</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3260</td>
<td>754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Local Bodies</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3913</td>
<td>1170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>76,367</td>
<td>18,511</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that female employment is increasing. But it should also be noted that the increasing number is not yet satisfactory taking into account the increasing population and growing literacy rate of women in Manipur. The educated working women in public sector contribute a lot in the financial maintenance of their families as well as in their economic empowerment.

A study is made to know the economic status of the educated working women of Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur. Data and information relating to the three wards of the said constituency have

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been collected from a sample of 300 women, 100 from each ward. It is found that women working in public sector constitute 24 percent in Ward No. 15, 30 percent in Ward No. 16 and 28 percent in Ward No. 17. The following Table III shows the income status of educated working women in public sector in the three wards.

Table III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.no</th>
<th>Income category per month</th>
<th>Percentage of women (ward wise)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ward No. 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Below Rs. 5000</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Rs. 5001 - Rs.10,000</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Rs. 10,001 - above</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The working women in the Singjamei Assembly Constituency are divided into three categories depending on their monthly salaries. For them, the salary is the only source of income and they are not involved in any trade. In the three wards, the second category of women constitute the highest percentage. It may also be noted that it is difficult to ascertain their exact monthly salary as none of the respondents admitted accurate information and gave only the approximate estimate of their income.

The salary of the women belonging to the three categories is spent mainly on family maintenance like food, clothing, education of children and other expenses like financial help to husbands, other members of the

17. Data and Information collected from women Government employees of Ward No. 15, 16 and 17.
family, socio-religions rites, donations and so on. In fact the expenditure includes everything from the smallest to major requirements of the family.

Due to the prevalent socio-religious practices in Manipur, a lot of money is spent on different occasions all the year round. Therefore socio-religious rites of neighbours, friends and relatives always meant additional expenditure. Donations to local clubs and other organisations for various developmental works form another expenditure.

The educated Indian mother has realised that without being progressive enough she and her daughter cannot accept the new challenges overtaking the country. Education is essential for it. Thus another important area in which educated working women invest a huge sum of money is the education of their children. Here the responsibility of the women is not less than the husbands. According to the survey, majority of the women are very much concerned about the education of their children. As they have a regular source of income they manage to send their children to the best private institutions for education. School fee, van fare and other means of transportation to the school, tiffin, uniforms, tuition fee etc. requires a lot of expenditure.

Most of the educated working women are unable to help their children in their studies due to household work and office work. When

the children go for higher classes, then it is difficult for the parents to help in their studies. So keeping private tutors at home or sending to the coaching centres have become common. According to a woman working as a Lecturer at a Government Higher Secondary School, she sends her children for tuition three times a day. Many of them sends their children outside Manipur for further studies mainly due to the deterioration of law and order problem in Manipur. All these means huge expenditure from the parents. It is clear that women of this group extend financial help starting from the needs of the kitchen to fields which require big money.

At the same time, the pensioners continue to help their families financially. According to them, they had already invested a lot on the education of their children. However their children still depend on them due to the problem of unemployment. In addition there are also some women who are the sole earning member of the family. They are widows, divorcees and having husbands with no income. Here these women bear the entire responsibility of family maintenance. These groups of women are found in the three wards i.e. Ward No. 15 - 4 percent, Ward No. 16 - 7 percent and Ward No. 17- only 1 percent.

Generally none of the women admitted of satisfactory financial condition of their families. There is always financial problem for one purpose or the other. Although they seem to be having a regular source of income, they still face financial problem due to various needs and requirements of their families.

19. Interview with Irom (o) Mema Devi, Singjamei Chirom Leikai, Imphal, Manipur, 10-12-2006.
Moreover according to the survey, the number of women earning above Rs. 10,000 per month is very less in all the three wards. One thing is certain that these women are also not free from household works. Even though the women of Manipur are now encouraged to become working women and bring silver coins for the family, they are not relieved off from their normal duty which they are supposed to perform even when they are not working women.20

Economic Contribution of Educated Women Working in Private Sector and NGOs:

Unemployment is a major problem in Manipur. A large number of people fail to get employment in Government sectors. So many are bound to work in NGOs and private establishments. The table below shows a report on the issue of unemployment in Manipur.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.no.</th>
<th>Year as on 1st April</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>2001 - 2002</td>
<td>3,04,015</td>
<td>1,05,637</td>
<td>4,09,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2002 - 2003</td>
<td>3,08,687</td>
<td>1,08,651</td>
<td>4,17,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>2003 - 2004</td>
<td>3,33,450</td>
<td>1,14,985</td>
<td>4,48,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>2004 - 2005</td>
<td>3,65,036</td>
<td>1,26,440</td>
<td>4,91,476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>2005 - 2006</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>2006 - 2007</td>
<td>4,23,738</td>
<td>1,64,691</td>
<td>5,88,429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures in the above table shows the number of registered applicants

22. Sangai Express (Manipuri), 26th August, 2007, P-4..
or job seeking persons in the Live Register of the Employment Exchange, Lamphelpat, Manipur. No doubt many literate women join the group of job seekers. The number keep on growing and the number in the Live Register upto January 2008 has gone up to 6,00,949. The number of males reach 4,32,130 and females 1,68,819.23

The problem of unemployment seriously affect the women of Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur. Many of them are found to be employed in private establishments. By working in private establishments, these women extend contribution in the financial life of their families.

According to the study 17 percent of women in Ward No. 15 are working in private or Non-Governmental establishments. Generally their income varies from Rs. 1000, Rs. 1500 and Rs. 2000 per month. It is need less to say that their income is not sufficient to provide the basic needs of their daily life. Most of them work as teachers in private schools. According to a respondent, she draws a mere sum of Rs. 1,000 per month after completing ten years of teaching in a private school.24

It is questionable how the women of this category support their families financially. As the income is less and irregular they cannot maintain proper family budget. Their earnings are spent on basic family maintenance. It includes

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24. Interview with Aribam (o) Latabi Devi, Chingamathak Nameirakpam Leikai, Imphal, Manipur, 20-11-06.
food, clothing, education of children, helping the husband in business, socio-religious rites relating to births, deaths, marriages etc. If the husband is understanding and has a regular source of income, then the women extend only a helping hand and do not have to bear the entire responsibility. On the other hand, women with irresponsible husband suffer most financially. It should also be noted that some women take up the initiative to organise enterprises with no link with the Government. Some of the enterprises function successfully and contribute a share in improving the economic life of a large number of women by giving employment.

In Ward No. 16, only 3 percent of women are working in the private establishments. According to an employee of a Private Bank, her income is utilised on the education of her three children specially in paying tuition fee. Her income being meagre to run a family, her husband supports for other needs financially. The monthly salary is irregular as it depends on the co-operation of the loanees. The loanees do not pay interest of the loans invested by the bank properly in time. So employees have to face economic difficulties. She utilises her income mostly on the education of her three children.25

Formation of Self Help Groups to earn income has become popular among women of Manipur. Many women admitted themselves to be members of such groups. One women Self Help Group in Singjamei

25. Interview with Sagatpam (o) Leimahanbi Devi, Chingamakha Irom Leirak,Imphal, Manipur, 16-6-07
Assembly Constituency may be studied. The SHG is named as Anouba Asha (New Hope) located at Chingamakha Kshetri Leikai, Singjamei. It was established in 2002 with the objective of providing self employment to widows infected with AIDS.\textsuperscript{26} The Anouba Asha produce varieties of items of tailoring and embroidery works. The main products are mosquito nets called Mari Khaibi (the four faces of mosquito nets which could be separated), Chingkhatpi (mosquito nets which could be pulled upwards) etc., bed-sheets, shawls, petticoats, frocks, skirts and so on. The finished products are sold through various means like going around from house to house in different leikais (localities), keeping contact with organisers of marups and hostels. The items are sold even at places far from Imphal mostly at Ukhrul District, Manipur and Dimapur, Nagaland. Such activities no doubt provide a means for living to the women members of the group.

According to most of the women in Ward No. 16 who are working in the NGOs, they could draw between Rs. 1500 and Rs. 2000 as salary per month. Some are widows with the entire responsibility of family maintenance and bringing up of children. So it is a fact that they always face financial difficulties. In the present unemployment problem in Manipur, there is hardly any chance for Government service. So the circumstances forced these women to bear all the hardships. It is

\textsuperscript{26} Interview with Salam Shyama Devi, Chingamakha Kshetri Leikai, Imphal, Manipur, 13th November, 06
surprising that they somehow drag on and contribute a large share in the family maintenance and bringing up of their children.

In Ward No. 17, only 4 percent of women are found to be working in various Non-Governmental establishments. All of them are working as teachers and lecturers at private schools and colleges. Their income varies from Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2000 only per month. A woman lecturer at a private college admitted of earning Rs. 2000 per month as salary. For her, financial problem is not acute as her husband is also teaching at a Central School. The family being small with only one daughter, there is no financial difficulty. She joined the college only to support her husband in times of need. Besides supporting her husband, she somehow and to some extent depend on her own earning and not always on husband.

For those who work in private schools, generally the monthly income comes to around Rs. 2000 only. A young woman who is a teacher at a special school for the disabled at Porompat, Imphal admitted of having financial difficulty. She has to spend a lot on going up and down the school everyday while she earn a meagre income of Rs. 1500 - Rs. 2000 per month. She finds it difficult to afford. As there is no alternative she has to drag on with her everyday work.

A middle aged Headmistress of a private school, admitted of earning only Rs. 2000 per month. She utilises her earning in the requirements of her family and education of her children. According to her, she helps her husband in family maintenance, who takes main
responsibility of looking after the family with his pension. She finds happiness and satisfaction in contributing her share in the family.

From the analysis, it appears that most of the women working in private establishments in Ward No. 17 face financial problems. There are few cases of women with no acute financial difficulty. But generally, financial difficulty is a common problem for them. Maintenance of their own expenditure, family maintenance of various needs are the ways of utilising the income. In Manipur, the private establishments or Non-Governmental organisations fail to provide sufficient salary to the employees due to various reasons. Thus the women employees in such sectors suffer a lot financially.

It may be concluded that although their financial position is far from satisfactory, the women employees in the private sectors contribute their best in family maintenance. Despite various difficulties, problems and headaches in their work condition they still continue to work.

From the above study of the three wards, it is found that the number of women working in the Non-Governmental Organisations is not high in Singjamei Assembly Constituency. Moreover there is difference in the percentage of women in the three wards. In Ward No. 15 it is 17 percent, Ward No. 16, it is only 3 percent and in Ward No. 17, only 4 percent of women are employees of NGOs.

Despite the differences in the percentage, all of them presented more or less the same problem. Generally the problems include low and irregular salary, insecure service condition etc. Majority of these women
have admitted that they are always in debt. Despite the difficulties and 
problems they face, the women employees of private establishments 
extend responsibilities in the maintenance of their families. Economic 
contribution to the family is making the working women more powerful 
and she is going towards equality but has not yet achieved fully.27

Besides the Government employees and NGO employees, there is 
also a large section of women who belong to the category of housewives 
and vendors. It will be unfair to ignore the economic contribution of 
such women in the maintenance of their families. They engage themselves 
in various trades to earn income and whatever they earned have been 
spent in meeting the financial requirements of their families.

A Case study of Women Vendors of Singjamei Bazar:

The Singjamei Bazar in Singjamei Assembly Constituency is one 
of the oldest markets in Manipur. As in Khwairamband Bazar, it is also 
dominated by womenfolk although very few menfolk open small shops 
in between. The bazar or Keithel can be broadly divided into two parts 
as Mathak Keithel (upper market) and Makha Keithel (lower market). 
There is one separate shopping complex called the Singjamei Super 
Market. The Singjamei bazar is bounded by the Imphal River on the east, 
the National Highway No. 39 on the South and the dwelling houses of 
local people on the North and the West.

A large number of women vendors from far and near places carry out their economic activities in the market from early morning till late in the evening everyday. The women vendors sell various items and commodities of everyday use. In the Makha Keithel, there are vendors of every kind who sell vegetables of all the seasons, fruits, fresh fishes, dry fishes, fermented dry fish, salted fish, betel nuts, banana leaves, agarbatti or incense sticks, knives etc. There are also jewellers dealing in both gold and silver. Silver ornaments for children are also available here.

The upper market represents a mixture of vendors selling commodities from eatables like vegetables, fruits, fishes and other items like garments of various types, clothing for rituals, utensils of steel, brass and copper for religious rituals, jewellery items for deities, phanek, towels etc. Here one can also see women vendors who sell chengpak (beaten rice), kabok (sweetened puffed rice) and other home made sweets, flower vendors, kauna (water reed) mat vendors and so on. More over, there are two rows of small shops facing each other. These two rows are separated by a road leading to the Singjamei Bridge, Imphal. In these shops, the women sell readymade garments, shoes, sandals and set of bed items for babies relating to Swasti Puja.28 Most of the necessary daily items are available in the market. Thus in order to study their economic contribution a survey was conducted and collected information from the women vendors.

28. A religious Ceremony performed on the 6th day of the birth of a child.
Vendors of Jewellery Items used in Religious Rituals, Mathak Keithel or Upper Market, Singjamei Market, Imphal, Manipur

Women selling their wares at the roadside, Singjamei Market, Imphal, Manipur
The vegetable vendors occupy the largest number of women. These women besides supporting their families, some of them take full responsibility in the management of their whole families. They belong to poor families while some are widows with the entire burden of family and children. In order to make little profit, they invest some money and purchase vegetables from Khwairamband market, Imphal in the early morning. They sell these purchased vegetables and other items in the Singjamei bazar, Imphal.

According to a vendor from Khangabok Part I, she looks after her family consisting of herself and three children. She is a widow and the only earning member. Generally she goes to Khwairamband Bazar around 4.30 A.M. by the first bus. After purchasing vegetable from there, the items are brought back to be sold at Singjamei bazar, Singjamei. Then she spends the whole day at Singjamei bazar and even takes her food in the bazar. The profit she makes is a meagre sum of Rs. 20 to Rs. 40 a day. Whatever income she earns is spent on meeting the needs of her family.

Another vegetable vendor is an elderly woman aged about 60 years from Khangabok Part I. Being a widow, she looks after her two daughters.

Age cannot stop her from the trade as she is the only income earning member in her family.

As the market is a place for economic activities, women from far and near places indulge themselves in various ways. A vegetable vendor comes from a nearby place. She has been a widow for more than 20 years and she brought up her only child, a daughter by selling vegetables.\(^{31}\) According to her, she could earn about Rs. 2000 per month as her daily profit amounting to Rs. 50 to Rs. 60 a day. Sometimes if the sale proceed is good, she could make Rs. 200 as profit a day. She pays Rs. 200 per annum as rent of her shed to the Imphal Municipal Council. She is able to manage her family successfully with her income as a vegetable seller.

In the recent years one can see flower vendors in the markets. According to a flower vendor, she could earn Rs. 1500 per month and in times of religious festivals, she could make Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 a day as profit.\(^{32}\) Being a widow she is the head of her family and the only income earning member. All the needs and requirements of the kitchen are looked after by her. Another flower vendor admitted of struggling hard to run her family without anybody’s help.\(^{33}\)

\(^{31}\) Interview with Kshetrimayum Dashu Devi, Singjamei Wangma Kshetri Leikai, Imphal, Manipur, 21-12-2007.

\(^{32}\) Interview with Mayengbam Inakhirbi Devi, Singjamei Makha Mayengbam Leikai, Imphal, Manipur, 18-3-2008.

\(^{33}\) Interview with Kshetrimayum Premabati, Singjamei Kshetri Leikai, Imphal, Manipur, 18-3-2008.
Fruit vendors are another category of women vendors in the market. A large number of them sell seasonal fruits, some in the sheds, some in the shops while some in the open on the side of the footpaths in the market. Fruits of all the seasons are available in the market. One such vendor at Mathak keithel or Upper market admitted of purchasing her items from Khwairamband Bazar in the early morning to be sold the same at Singjamei market with little profit. She is the main income earner in her family. Nothing seem to disappoint her and she takes full responsibility of her family financially. At Makha keithel or lower market, there are fruit vendors in small shops. One of them admitted of selling fruits for the last 10 years. Being a widow, she acts as the head of the family and its maintenance is her full responsibility. According to her, the price of the items are so costly that she could hardly make any profit after selling Rs. 500 worth of fruits a day. Moreover, she has to pay Rs. 350 per month as rent and Rs. 13,000 as deposit security to the owner. She finds it difficult to carry on her trade in order to look after the family. So she is bound to take loan from a Private Bank. The biggest problem she face is without doubt, financial problems.

Fish vendors from far and near places come to the market for their transaction. One of them is from Sekmaijin. For her, varieties of dry

34. Interview with Arambam (o) Sanajaobi Devi, Thongju Part II, Imphal, Manipur, 19-3-2008.
35. Interview with Ingudam (o) Urirei Devi, Kakwa, Imphal, Manipur, 19-3-2008.
36. Interview with Moirangthem (o) Tombi Devi, Sekmaijin, Thoubal district, Manipur, 19-3-2008.
fishes are purchased from Wabagai market, Thoubal district at cheaper price and brought to be sold at Singjamei. Through her trade, she is able to earn Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 a day as profit. She is the main earning member in her family. Her most aspiring objective is to give proper education to her only child, a son. She regrets for herself being illiterate. So she makes the best effort to educate her child. This made her the main bread earner and the one who gives full attention to the education of her child. Her husband also helps her. The family being small, she faces no acute financial problem. Fermented fish vendors also engage in their trade in the market. The price varies according to the quality. Although fermented fish is the main item, most of the vendors keep varieties of dry fishes even from Moreh (a border town between Manipur and Myanmar). Most of them cannot estimate their daily or monthly profit as there is fluctuation in the trade process. One of them admitted of paying Rs. 500 as rent per month and Rs. 30,000 as security deposit to the owner. 37 She finds it too difficult to meet the family expenses from her meagre income. Still she somehow tries to cope with the situation and looks after her family financially.

A fresh fish vendor from Komlakhong 38 takes full responsibility of her family maintenance and education of her four children. Generally she makes a profit of Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 a day and sometimes Rs. 200 a

37. Interview with Huidrom (o) Thambalsang Devi, Yumnam Leikai, Imphal, Manipur, 19-3-2008.
38. Interview with Sorokhaibam (o) Tampak, Komlakhong, Thoubal district, Manipur, 19-3-2008.
Fish Vendor, Makha Keithel or Lower Market, Singjamei Market, Imphal, Manipur

Vegetable Vendor, Makha Keithel or Lower Market, Singjamei Market, Imphal, Manipur
day if the sale is good. Her most important attention is in the education of her children. She regrets her illiteracy and so a larger share of her income is spent on the education of her children. Thus she is the main contributor in the financial maintenance of her family as well as in the education of her children.

There are also a few women who engage themselves in selling betel leaves and nuts. Such vendors are seen mostly at the lower market or the makha keithel. It is quite surprising that they maintain their families through such trade. Somehow they are able to look after their families. One of them has been in the trade for about 10 years.\textsuperscript{39} Being a widow she looks after her 5 children without anybody’s help. She not only encourages her children for proper education but also gives full support in their aspirations. Two of her children are interested in Archery, a discipline of games and sports. In addition to family maintenance and education of children, she has to spend on their food items. The food requirements of the archers are expensive and sometimes she cannot afford it. However she manages somehow by borrowing money from others. In trying to meet these expenses she is always in debt. Another vendor of the same trade had also admitted financial problems. She is also a widow facing the burden of bearing the entire financial responsibility of family maintenance.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{39} Interview with Leitanthem (o) Bhanu Devi, Khongman Manjil, Imphal, Manipur, 19-3-2008.
\textsuperscript{40} Interview with Irungbam Rashmani Devi, Bamon Leikai, Imphal, Manipur, 19-3-2008.
La or banana leaves form another trade item sold in the market. Banana leaves are used in all religious rites and rituals. An old woman vendor has been in the trade for the last 40 years. According to her, she brought up all her children through her trade. Even old age cannot stop her because it becomes her everyday routine and still continue to help her family. Her profit ranges from Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 a day. Then she has to spend Rs. 30 a day as rickshaw fare and takes her food at a hotel almost everyday. Sometimes, when the sale is bad, the banana leaves being perishable are burnt at the river side of the market incurring heavy losses. Despite the problems she continues to help her family financially.

The use of Kauna (water reed) mats are very common in Manipur. Varieties of Kauna mats are used for various purposes. Therefore it is one of the important items sold at Singjamei market, Imphal. However the number of such vendors are very few in the market and they are seen on the side of the road that leads to the Singjamei bridge over the Imphal river. Varieties of kauna mats are available which includes mats used in the household, for socio-religious purposes and small mats known as prayer mats. According to a vendor, her trade is profitable as kauna mat vendors are few in the market. She is able to take the responsibility of providing all the daily needs of the kitchen.

41. Interview with Nameirakpam (o)Nganbi Devi, Haobam Marak Irom leikai, Imphal, Manipur, 19-3-08.
42. Interview with Bilashini Devi, Oinam Thingel, Imphal, Manipur, 18-3-2008.
Some women in the market are engaged in jewellery works. Trade in gold could make more money comparing with other trades but there is always financial problem. According to one such woman, she carried out her business with the help of her husband and earn Rs. 4000 to Rs. 5000 per month. She pays Rs. 500 per month as rent and Rs. 50,000 as security deposit to the shop owner. So it means a lot of money and there are no other means of earning additional income. So all her earnings are invested on the trade including the payment to the two goldsmiths on hiring basis and family expenditure.

Similarly a woman engaged in the trade of silver jewellery is facing the same financial problems. Her items include varieties of silver jewellery, the most common of them being a set of silver worn by children. It is a chain to be worn around the neck, bangles or khuji and khongji or anklet specially for children. She pays Rs. 300 as rent per month and Rs. 15,000 as security deposit to the shop owner. She takes main responsibility for the financial maintenance of her family.

At the mathak keithel or upper market, some women engage themselves in the trade of selling shoes. One such seller is an elderly woman who is in the business for a long time. Her items include sandals,

43. Interview with Irom (o) Mema Devi, Chingamakha Irom Leirak, Imphal, Manipur, 19-3-2008.
44. Interview with Ahongsangbam (o) Achoubi Devi, Heirangoithong Maibam Leikai, Imphal, Manipur, 19-3-2008.
shoes made of plastic and leather. The shop is her own and she could make Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 a day as profit. According to her all her earnings are spent on looking after the needs of the family like purchasing rice, vegetables and in mending other family expenditure.

The row of garment shops at the side of the road leading to the Singjamei Bridge exhibit another scene of the market. Here one can see women selling varieties of readymade garments hanging in front of their shops. Most of the garments are for children like baby suits, frocks, pants, T-shirts, tops, jackets, socks both Indian made and foreign made from Moreh, Chandel district, Manipur. Moreh chadar for women, socks and undergarments for men are also available here. The whole set of items of poorer qualities for infants like mattress, quilt, blanket, mosquito net, pillow etc. is also seen piling high in front of the shops.

A vendor of such items is an old woman whose shop is packed with all sorts of readymade garments.\(^{46}\) It is her own shop and financial condition of her family is affluent. But according to her, she cannot sit idle at home and whatever she earns is extra income of the family. It shows that most of the women in Manipur, whether rich or poor are not in the habit of sitting idle at home and still continue the culture of working hard of traditional Manipuri Women.

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While studying the economic activities of women in Singjamei market, it would be fair to take into consideration the activities of women shopkeepers of Singjamei Super Market. Here the market represents a different picture as the shopkeepers are a mixture of both men and women. Still quite a large number of women are found to be active in various trades. Opening readymade garment shops seem to be common for the women. A seller of readymade garment admitted that she could earn Rs. 2000 per month.\textsuperscript{47} Through her trades, she could afford to buy the requirements of the kitchen like vegetables, fishes and other eatables of the family.

For the women engaging in the trade of readymade garments, the monthly income seem to be more or less of equal amount. They earn about Rs. 2000 per month. Most of their shops are on rent basis and they have to pay monthly rent and security deposits to the shop owners. Moreover, their expenditure include family requirements including food items, financial contributions extended by all the shopkeepers whenever one of them or their family members expires and other socio-religious rites. Thus the financial contribution of women in the maintenance of their families and other walks of life is a significant one.

The study reveals that women in the Singjamei market, Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur are actively engaged in different trades.

\textsuperscript{47} Interview with Huidrom (o) Ibeyaima Devi, Khagempalli Huidrom Leikai, Imphal, Manipur, 19-3-2008.
In doing so, their main attention is focused on family maintenance and bringing up of their children and their education. Some take main responsibility in the financial set up of their families while some extend help to their husbands. Thus the traditional work culture of Manipuri women still continues. Majority of them admitted financial problems and are not able to make high profit despite their hard work. Sometimes they suffer losses in their business. Despite the difficulties there is no looking back and they always try to cope with any situation. Through one way or the other, they at their level best, contribute in the financial set up of their families.

The Singjamei market, Singjamei Assembly Constituency has become an important centre for economic activities of women from different parts of Manipur. Although majority are meitei women, one can see tribal women and muslim women mixed with the rest in harmony and carrying out their trade and transaction. The market remain active since early morning till late in the evening. All types of commodities for everyday life and occassions are available in the market. And it is the women who are responsible for making the market always active throughout the day.

Thus women in Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur have played an important role in the economic life of the people of the said Constituency. Though equally active in social, cultural and political activities, women always continue to contribute significantly in making their families financially sound.