CHAPTER IV

LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

People carry out diverse activities on the basis of livelihood capitals in the context of vulnerable factors, to achieve livelihood outcomes. In earlier discussions the status of livelihood capitals and different vulnerable factors are examined by secondary information. It gave a macro perspective on livelihood capitals of rural and urban Assam. The study started with the limited entry point as lined up by DFID model and gradually it is broadened up according to the objectives of the study. It is understood from review of literature that livelihood strategies has complex and diverse nature. Field survey is essential to know the livelihood in fullest sense. In this chapter emphasis is given to understand the diversity of livelihood. People generally take up range of activities for their living by using various capitals. It depends on their socio economic condition and on their underlying priorities. During the shock and stress period people take up coping and adaptive strategies which are also to be taken into account in sustainable livelihood approach. At the beginning of this chapter the present livelihood strategies and changes occurring in strategies are discussed by secondary data to get a broad idea on activities taken up in Assam and in country. Later the micro aspect of livelihood is analysed to understand the nature, linkages among livelihood factors and influence of ‘change’ in rural and urban Assam.

Livelihood strategies include how people combine their income generating activities, the way in which they use their assets, which assets they choose to invest in, how they manage to preserve existing assets and income (DFID). With time higher pressure of population on limited natural capital is making livelihood strategies more and more diverse. Members of the household either by staying at one place or by migrating temporarily or permanently carry out range of activities to attain self defined goals. The poor survive in their precarious state by employing a variety of livelihood or survival strategies (Chambers, 1995; Rakodi, 1997; and Wratten, 1995). Such livelihood strategies are multifaceted as men and women draw on their assets (DFID, 1998; UNDP, 1999; Moser, 1996; and DFID, 1998) which are both tangible and intangible (Chambers, 1995), and entitlements (Sen, 1992 and Moser, 1998).
Ian Scoones (1998) explained the connection between complex-dynamic process and outcomes of different strategies. He gave three core livelihood strategies to distinguish different dynamics and outcomes.

- **Agricultural intensification/extensification** – between capital-led (supported often by external inputs and policy-led) and labour-led (based on own labour and social resources and a more autonomous process) intensification.

- **Livelihood diversification** – between an active choice to invest in diversification for accumulation and reinvestment, and diversification aimed at coping with temporary adversity or more permanent adaptation of livelihood activities, when other options are failing to provide a livelihood. Diversification therefore may involve developing a wide income earning portfolio to cover all types of shocks or stress jointly or the strategy may involve focusing on developing responses to handle a particular type of common shock or stress through well developed coping mechanisms.

- **Migration** – between different migration causes (e.g. voluntary and involuntary movement), effect (e.g. reinvestment in agriculture, enterprise or consumption at the home or migration site) and movement patterns (e.g. to or from different places).

Livelihood strategies are becoming more multi locational for a variety of reasons ranging from worsening human land ratios and falling agricultural commodity prices on the one hand, to new economic opportunities in the urban economy and expanding manufacturing on the other. Globalisation is an important driver; both through push and pull processes people come out from their place of origin. Mobility has been greatly facilitated by improved roads and communication technology (Priya Deshingkar, 2004).

Most of the sustainable livelihood models (CARE, DFID, and IDS) stress the household as a key unit of analysis. By treating the household as an economic unit it can explore the sources of wealth and income, internal motives and external pressure and differences between different households. Household is made up of several members most of them provide the household labour force. The household survives by drawing on its range of assets and engaging in a variety of activities. Urban households can be defined as task or activity-based units. Non-resident family
members often make some contribution, for example, workers living away from home
in mining compounds, road construction gangs or live-in domestic service. Moreover,
rural family members might support urban households through production of
subsistence foodstuffs, supplying traditional medicines or through looking after the
children of older family members so that the middle generations can take up
employment, as well as making demands on urban family members for remittances
(Beall and Kanji, 1999). Without skill and qualification these migrant workers get very
easily absorbed in informal or unorganised sector

Macro aspects of the livelihood strategy are broadly discussed on the basis of
household type by the 61st and 63rd report of NSS on ‘Employment and
Unemployment’ and ‘Household Consumer Expenditure in India’ respectively. In the
next stage for in depth study the livelihood activity is observed by sources of income.
For this purpose 55th NSS Report ‘Sources of Household Income in India’ is referred.
To know about the change in activities during the time period the NSS report on
‘Employment and Unemployment situation of India’ of 1993-1994(50th round) and
2006 - 2007(63rd round) is taken into account (The lists of table are in Annexure D).
Micro aspects of livelihoods on the other hand are understood by field survey. In
addition to the individual household survey information are collected by focus group
discussion, key informant, interview method and by direct observation are referred to
understand the diversity of activities linkages and impact of changes.

4.1.1 Livelihood strategy: An overview

The most common livelihood activity in rural Assam is self employed. Among the two
categories of self employed- agriculture and non agriculture, the percentage of self
employed in agriculture (52%) is higher. 16% of the households are agricultural labour
in rural Assam. Rest comes under the category of other labour and ‘others’. In India
relatively the percentage of self employed in non agriculture, agricultural labour and
other labour is higher. The self employed in agriculture is significantly low in India as
compared to Assam (Table15.2). In India the occupation of agricultural labour is much
higher than Assam. In earlier discussion on condition of living it is observed that
agricultural labour lives mostly without electricity and poor cooking arrangement. The
position of asset holding is also very poor of this category. It can be understood that the
occupation of agricultural labour is obviously not by choice. With little human and physical capital these groups were left with no option but to take up low paid wage labour which helped them to just subsist. They are unable to secure even the minimally acceptable standard of living for himself and his family. This is mainly due to the seasonal nature of agricultural work where they do not receive full days of employment during the year. Further the wage rates for agricultural operation are very low so that the income needs of the labours are not met adequately. The consequence is the high level of poverty among the agricultural labour (Arjun Sengupta, 2007). In the decade (from 1993-94 to 2006-07) it is found that in India the agriculture labour remained same but in Assam the percentage declined by 7%. The self employed in agriculture marginally declined in the country but in Assam there is 10% increase in the category. In India other labour marks almost 3% increase whereas in Assam the percentage declined significantly and became half of the earlier period. The changes among the household types are more significant in Assam than India. Self employed became a very dominant occupation in Assam with a 10% increase (Table 15.2) whereas in India a marginal change is observed among all the categories.

In urban Assam almost equal percentage of self employed and regular/wage and salaried are present whereas in India the percentage of regular/wage and salaried is higher (41) than self employed (35). In India the percentage of casual labour is almost double than that of Assam. Casual labour tend to be least protected and have lowest levels of earning. In India during 2004-05 about 53% of casual labour was in the construction sector followed by 19% in the manufacturing sector. Within the manufacturing sector, textile industry was the largest employer of casual worker for both men and women. This was followed by other non metallic mineral products and food products. The former includes brick, kilns and pottery work (Arjun Sengupta, 2007). In Food Security Atlas of Urban India it is indicated that the casual employment and daily wage section in urban area are the most vulnerable group. The uncertainties of their avenues of income have a significant effect on food security of urban poor.

Based on MPCE it is found that agricultural labour and other labour in rural and casual labour and self employed in urban are relatively poorer. The percentage difference between the average MPCE of all type and casual labour is 75 which is much high as
compared to the rural categories (Table 15.3). Others and self employed in agriculture of rural and regular wage/salary earner and others in urban has higher consumption expenditure and thus relatively can be considered as richer.

*Land* is a major input in rural area utilised for livelihood strategies. The status of living thus has a direct relation with the size of land holding. In rural Assam high (60%) percentage of households are marginal landholders (Table 15.4). In Assam maximum household cultivated land size is within 0.41 to 2 hectare in agricultural year 2003-04. Insignificant percentage of households holds more than 4 hectare land size in Assam. Almost equal percentages of households in the state and in the country do not own land (7). Landless and marginal farmers are almost 20% more in India as compared to the state.

The livelihood strategy depends on the *educational background* and thus literacy is taken as major indicator for level of living. The literacy rate of urban male is very high (98) in Assam. The literacy rate of Assam is higher than all India average. Rural females of Assam are least literate in Assam. In the country almost half of the rural females are illiterate which portrays the gender discrimination in educational sector (Table 15.4.1).

The *employment status* shows that higher percentage of households in Assam only one male works but in rural India in most of the household one male and one female works. But the percentage of households with one male worker in urban Assam (62) is almost double of rural. In rural Assam with one male and one female employed is almost thrice of urban whereas in rural India twice of urban households one male and one female is worker. Both in the country and state, most rural and urban female headed households only 1 female is employed (Table 15.5). The Female work participation rate is less in Assam but it is noted that with time the participation is declining in the country whereas in Assam it marginally increased.

The population ratio of principal workers in rural (by person) is marginally higher as compared to urban. It is found that male worker population ratio of Assam is almost same in rural and urban but the female ratio in rural is marginally higher (Table 15.6). Arjun Sengupta (2007), in his report stated that share of self employed is much higher
among women than men in rural areas while in urban areas the share is more or less the same for men and women. The male worker ratio in rural is higher within the age categories of 10 to 44 years and again from 54 years till the last category. In between only 45 to 54 male of urban have higher working population. On the other hand in rural Assam except the age categories of 45-50 and 55-59 the female population ratio is higher as compared to urban. In urban India female worker population is higher only in the age category of 15-19 years. In urban area girls of this age category mostly work as domestic servant. Ratio of worker in India is higher than Assam but by sex it is found that male worker is higher in Assam. In India, female worker population ratio is 112 and 73 percentage higher than rural and urban Assam respectively.

On the basis of **broad industry division** (NIC 1998) agriculture is established as uniquely dominating principal status in rural area but in urban no such principal status could dominate. Though highest concentration is in public administration, education and commercial services is noted, but rest of the working status like trade, hotel, restaurant and transport etc. is also found equally significant.

In agriculture, women are in much higher percentage as compared to man. They are also sharing the working status of trade, hotel and restaurant in rural. In urban high concentration of women is found among the status of public administration, education and commercial services (74) whereas male shared the status of, trade, hotel, restaurant, transport etc. public administration, education and commercial services and also to some extent manufacture (Table15.7). In urban India the relative importance of manufacturing, construction and financial business etc is higher and in rural including the manufacturing, trade hotel and restaurant gained more employment. Arjun Sengupta (2007) estimated that in India regular worker consisted about 17% of non agricultural workers in unorganised sector. Regular men are distributed between manufacturing, trade and transport, storage etc. The women regular workers were concentrated in their services such as education and health and manufacturing (13% each). 54% of regular women workers in unorganised sector were hired by private households mainly in domestic services
Livelihood activities by sources of income

The sources can be classified into income accruing from economic activity and income accruing otherwise. The later includes income from rent, pension, remittances, interest and dividends. Economic activity includes wage/salaried employment (regular or casual) and household enterprise. The nine sources considered are wage/salaried employment, three types of enterprise, income coming from cultivation, fishing or other agricultural enterprise, and non agricultural enterprise and non gainful incomes namely pension, remittances, rent, interest and dividends and 'other sources' which was included in 1999-2000 only.

Receipt of income from different sources

In Assam on ranking the different sources of income in rural and urban areas on the basis of 'receipt of income' only similarity is, wage/salaried employment and non agricultural enterprises are the two sources which are within first three ranks (Table 16.1). In rural areas all the non gainful sources are ranked in last four but in urban they are relatively important source than rural thus placed between the lowest and highest ranked sources. In India though the ranking in rural area is same but significantly higher people earn from wage/salaried employment and remittances, interest and dividends and rent. Assam earns more from other sources, cultivation and non agricultural enterprises. In urban India people earn comparatively more from fishing and other agricultural enterprises, wage/salaried employment and cultivation. In rest of the sources Assam surpasses the national average.

Sources of income by household type

On distributing the different sources of income among the household type we find that more than half of the population (55%) in rural area is dependent on sources like cultivation, fishing and other agricultural enterprises. 62% of wage salaried employment source is for agricultural labour and other labour and they do not earn any income from rent and interest and dividends respectively. The non agricultural enterprise is a very significant source (87%) of income for the self employed in non
agriculture and agriculture other major sources of self employment are fishing/agricultural enterprises.

In urban areas highest income of casual labour is contributed by other sources. It accounts 30% of the source and marginally the source like wage and salaried employment and cultivation contributes. The major source of income for the self employed are non agricultural enterprises & fishing/agricultural enterprises. Regular wage and salary earner source of income is wage salaried employment. The type ‘other’ earns mostly from remittances and rent (Table 16.2).

To sum up

- In rural areas self employment in agriculture is the mainstay. Casual labour and agricultural labour is less in Assam as compared to national average. In the state the percentage of regular wage/salary earner, agricultural labour and other labour declined and self employed increased. Assam is dominated by marginal and small farmer. Land size of highest percentage of household is within 0.41 to 2 hectare. Landless farmers are comparably more in India. Male working population ratio is similar in rural and urban Assam but in rural the female working ratio is marginally higher. Women of within 10-14 years of age group work more in urban Assam and in India the age category is 14-19 years.

- None of the non-gainful sources are important source of income in urban Assam. Wage/salary employment and non agricultural enterprises are two important source of income in rural and urban. In India wage/salaried employment is relatively more important source of earning. Self employed in agriculture and non agriculture has ‘non agricultural enterprise’ as a significant source of income. Regular wage and salary earning type is dependent on wage salaried employment.

4.2 Livelihood strategy: Survey findings

Nagaon and Kamrup district is selected for intensive study of rural and urban livelihood respectively. It gives a detail account about the range of activities carried out in rural and urban areas by male and female members. Information about the coping and adaptive strategies is taken into account for knowing about the livelihood in the context
of vulnerability. Here the dynamic nature of livelihood strategy, the inter linkage between livelihood influencing factor, the micro element of society influencing livelihood and the changes occurring in the time period and its influence can be understood. As gender is considered as an important subject, women participation in livelihood activities and changes occurring in their life is also here an important subject matter.

4.2.1 Livelihood activities in the district of Nagaon

4.2.1.1 Village: Pachim Salpara

The predominant livelihood strategy of this village is agricultural labour and the next important activity is cultivation. According to Arjun Sengupta (2007), agricultural labours are the most marginalised group among the rural poor. They are among the rural poor who constitute the bottom layer in the poverty ladder. Household industry is almost not present in the village and very insignificant percentage is dependent on other source of earning. Dominant religion of the people is Muslim and linguistic group is Bengali. Some percentage of people from Boro/Kachari tribe also stays in the border of the village.

This is a flood prone village. Almost entire population gets affected by flood. A huge resource of forest is used by the people as adaptive strategy of living during flood. They sell firewood from reserve. Without any re plantation programme the area is getting barren with time. Thus people are switching over to other adaptive strategies like fishing, out migration for business of vegetables, betel nut and leaf, or to work as casual labour. During sickness or any other kind of crisis people generally sells land, cow or other livestock as coping strategy.

The young generation is in most dolorous condition as after getting education they do not want to engage in farming as it only supports in subsistence earning for the increasing expenditure and unfavourable weather. In addition to it process of work required in farming also lowers their self esteem. They do not have sufficient cash also to start a business by their own self and take up cultivation as last preference. The expectation of the young group is to get employed in a place which will require little
education less labour and better money. With the saved money of parents few of them are trying business and few of them earn interest by lending money. With education young group thinks they cannot work like their father in ‘pek aar pani’ (mud and water) though they have no option but will have to get into it.

Ordinarily women are not allowed to work in field but they are responsible to look after their house, children and livestock. Livestock only to the extent of self consumption remains in the hand of women but in financial dealings of livestock male members take it over. The widows or those who live alone under compulsion go to the field or travel out of the village to work in Sikni factory (The factory adds colour, tobacco etc. in the various step of processing betel nut where women works as peeler of betel nut cover). No gender differences are seen in the area of imparting education. They are educated mostly in the hope to get good husband with better financial status. Recently women are getting some earning from the organization like ASHA situated in Pub Salpara. Few young girls are trying to become financially independent but lack of Government assistant to deserving people is making them frustrated.

Role of social institution is meagre in the village, but there is a Masjid Committee with President and Secretary. Gaon Panchayat is only in name which makes less interference. There are two self help group of women which only works on micro finance. The youth group is Anchalik Kriya Sanga which organizes games among villagers. In outfit, language and way of living of the Boro/Kachari people the influence of Muslim community is clearly evident. There are two LP school and one ME school. Institutional credit has got no role to play in the village. The people are entirely dependent on private sources for credit.

Changes in livelihood

Earlier people were illiterate with time the importance of education is understood and almost all children go to school till 10-12 years. Thus drop out ratio of the village is more. Poverty due to the population pressure is the main cause of drop out. Each of the houses has 10-12 members. It is to be noted that couples within 25-30 years group now prefer to keep 2-3 children. This group mostly feel big family size of their parents are the root cause of losing land and other asset which ultimately pushed them to poverty.
In addition, distribution of land among the children declines the per capita land ownership—which automatically had a negative impact on agricultural production. (For example a cultivator when owns 20 bigha of land the production from land gives marketed surplus but when distributed among 10 sons each gets 2 bigha and production is not sufficient for anyone). Thus land fragmentation for population pressure lead to poverty at individual level and reduced output at market level. In past five years the high increase of expenditure on summer paddy with unfavourable weather is reducing the area of land cultivated and increasing the intensity of poverty.

Developmental activity is taken up in some limited sector. The school is repaired and a good surfaced road runs in front of the village connecting the major marketing points. This is influencing the young group to do something different from their parents.

People who had education in earlier period could get job are in better position but rest who were agricultural labour or casual labour are still in the same position. They could not bring any change in the asset position. Beside this in earlier period the environment was mostly favourable for agriculture and feeding of the family member was not a problem. Presently poverty became more intense for low per capita land availability, increasing expenditure and unfavourable environment. The declining trend of productivity and less marketed surplus is pushing away the young generation from cultivation. Almost 60% of young group have left working in land and only those who are uneducated and are very much in grip of poverty are still in cultivation. The farming practice is still carried out in spite of increasing trend of expenditure. Earlier it could be done for commercial earning but now it only provides subsistence living. The cash requirement is fulfilled by working as agricultural labour or casual labour at the wage rate of 40-60 rupees/day. ‘Whole year we have to run for food’ is the statement given by a farmer Abed Ali shows the plight of the people having agriculture as basis of living.

4.2.1.2 Village: Chakori Gaon

The dominant occupation of this village is cultivation. Almost 90% of the population is cultivator in the village and rests are dependent on other and household industry as source of income. Cultivation is gradually becoming subsidiary occupation mainly for
high expenditure structure and unfavourable climate. The religion of the people is Hindu and they belong to the linguistic group of Assamese. Negative impact of competition and poor marketing arrangement is found to have severely hit the income source of the villagers.

The elder sections are noticing rapid change among the young generation. The problem of alcoholism is found to be increasing and number of wine shop has also increased in past few years. The saved money of elderly service holder and cultivator is regularly under the threat of their own children who regularly demands money for drinking and creates disturbances in surrounding. After getting education the young generation wants good job with high salary. Their way of living is very high. Bike and mobile is common asset with them which is owned on the basis of father's income as they are yet to get a suitable income source. The quality of education imparted by Sarba Shiksha is not satisfactory. Poor basic education at primary level leads to failure in HSCLC exam. Young group are trying various businesses. Some of them by taking loan and few from saved money of parents. But almost all of them could not make it as a dependable source.

The status of women are found improving in the sense they are participating in much diverse kind of work- going to market, selling cloth etc. Earlier they only used to help their husband in field but now as most of them lost land all are trying alternative sources based on weaving. Girls are given equal opportunity for education which was not present in their childhood days. In decisions they are taken into account. Physical assault is carried out in some places mainly for drinking and such other activities. Women consider the young generations are wasting time. They find farming as a disrespectful and more tiring activity. On asking young generation to go to field they put the question, “How many boys of my age are going to field?” They consider that in farming practice, they are not respected in proportion to the hard work they do for the family.

The village is divided into 4 Khels and 3 Namghar. Namghar is a recognized institution in the village for social and religious activity. Recently a penalty of Rs.1001 is fixed by Namghar for anyone coming to religious function after drinking. People avoid giving cases to police in small matter. There is a library as a common property which is
managed by Secretary and President by villagers. In any problem people from Khel meets in Namghar and takes out solution with discussion which is accepted by all. All festivals and celebrations are carried out together with donation collected from households. People are very religious and they do all the needful activity like Naam of Gopini during August, beating drum in evening by Namgharia etc.

The self help group of women organised in 2001 has 40 members mainly work in micro finance but they want to extend the area. They have high expectation to do things like rearing livestock, weaving etc. from self help group. But lack of unity and for improper organization nothing comes out successfully. The youth group also had an organization but they used it for playing lottery which did not sustain as they did not reinvest the money. Eleven members of village have 15bigha land under cooperative and from Government they are given 60kg seeds of pulses (musur) and wheat. For the poor quality of seeds and for insufficient rainfall the expected output is very insignificant which only could be used for subsistence living.

Changes in livelihood

The summer paddy is not cultivated now for high expenditure and for the increasing requirement of high labour. "People cannot work that hard like earlier period" says Umakanta Kalita an aged cultivator. Earlier jute was cultivated in the area but limitation in accessibility to the market for distance forced the cultivator to sell it to middleman at lower price which reduced the profit margin. Lack of irrigation facility is major problem in the area for which the average productivity of the land is gradually declining. People cultivate paddy, sugarcane, mustard, potato and few vegetables mostly for subsistence living. Change in the weather is the root cause of the failure of all kind of crop and thus it is becoming less dependable source of earning.

The area under cultivation is low and thus the agricultural labours are in the most deplorable state as they have limited alternatives to earn their living. Few of them lost land for construction of road. Though they got some amount of compensation but they are uprooted from their own source of living. Sometime within the village or in town sources like painting, pulling rickshaw/thela, helper in construction work/electrical etc are taken up by the people. Business, casual labour and service has become more
dominant occupation in the region. Gradually as the cultivation is declining importance as source of livelihood these all have become their adaptive strategy. Earlier there was only one shop now there are ten shops. But as they are first generation worker as self employed or as labour in the field other than agriculture, they are finding very difficult firstly to get a work and secondly to get satisfactory payment. Competition from skilled worker (Town) and interference of middleman are two major problems for all of them who are trying other than farming. As coping strategy people take loan from the self help group or from friends and other known person.

4.2.1.3 Village: Koach Gaon

The dominant occupation of the people is business based on agriculture and others. The dominant business of the village is based on betel nut which is also locally called as 'Sikni supari'. In Rupahi there are almost 200-250 factory of sikni and in the village there are 10 factories. The percentage of the cultivator in the village is 45 and rest of the population is dependent on other and agricultural labour as main source of income. The religion of the people is Muslim and linguistic group is Bengali.

Adaptive strategy of the villagers are to out migrate and work as assistant (Jugali) in construction work, rickshaw/thela puller in Guwahati, Nagaon and such nearby places. 'Bidesh jai' is one answer for the group to overcome stress period. Coping strategy of the villager is selling land, livestock or taking loan at the rate of interest of Rs2/day or at Rs10/month. High indebtedness pressurises them to sell land at higher price and take land in interior villages for farming or migrate to urban areas and work as casual labour.

Young generation is very positive about the huge scope of business in the village as good road and communication have given them hope. After education they are opting job but do not think of giving up cultivation as it gives them secured two squares of meals every day at least for seven months. A section of young group showed disinterest in farming as the labour does not bring cash in their hand but it all goes in consumption.

From last two years the market price of jute is not rising high and deficiency of rain water for summer paddy has affected much in their two main source of earning. Farming has failed to support as a dependable source of living mainly for high
expenditure as the input requirement has increased in time period. (In the same land two
time paddy is cultivated and mustard and pulses are also cultivated) According to the
estimate of cultivator the expenditure per bigha is Rs.1800-2500 and turn out in best
grade of land is 17-20mon/bigha. During season the price declines to Rs.180/mon and
thus maximum Rs.3600 only is earned from a bigha. As lands are not of uniform quality
depending only on cultivation do not give a sufficient support of living. In travelling till
market extra expenditure of Rs.12 is to be incurred thus people prefer to sell it to
middleman. Huge loan is taken before cultivation but for not getting proper price most
of them could not return loan and thus they are thinking some alternatives.

The Sikni industry is a good source of earning for women. Mainly the widow or wife of
landless worker earn in the factory. For cleaning the betel nut they earn Rs.25/gunny
bag. This work is only done by female worker. Such work remains for 7months and
during this season period from other villages women migrate to the village and settle
down in the land of the factory owner. The education background of these migrant
women is very poor. husbands either work in the factory or as casual labour in village.
All of them are landless with almost no asset holding. Security of the village is not
good. Rearing livestock is one of the main activities of women but only when it is
reared for self consumption. They do not get any financial benefit from it. In most of
the female headed households husbands have left her for not being able to give birth to
children or he does not want to stay with her. These group of women got a way of living
with Sikni factory and somehow are living with children or living themselves.

Role of institution is insignificant in the living of the villagers. Panchayat members and
Masjid Committee are ineffective self help group are almost absent. The village does
not have health clinic and primary school is at the distance of one and half kilometre.
Free meal in school influences the children positively. Women worker of factory have
Atma Sahay gut working only on micro finance.

Changes in livelihood

People are found diversifying their source of income. Farming has become less
preferred occupation in recent years and thus it is becoming a subsidiary source of
earning. Both summer paddy and jute is cultivated in commercial scale in the village.
Vegetables like potato, brinjal, mustard and pulses are also cultivated. Self employed in non agriculture sector is more preferred strategy. Livestock is common in the village and it is not only reared for self consumption but also kept for commercial purpose. Few household sells beef, poultry is common in the village.

Constructions of surfaced road till the market and connecting the other villages have helped them to spread their business activity. Earlier with less number of sellers the yearly profit of the business in sikni factory was Rs.70-75 thousand. But with time the number of seller has increased and competition has led to decline in margin of profit. They are also facing competition from the products of foreign countries (Indonesia, Thailand) with low price and better quality. In the time period their raw materials have become substandard for variation in rainfall and for other environmental change, thus the products are not getting the expected price. Sometime the price does not cover the variable cost but still to keep the labour it is continued. Earlier the goods could be booked from Nagaon railway station but now days it has to be done from Guwahati railway station.

Earlier summer paddy was the more preferred source of earning but with increasing trend of expenditure working population is trying various alternatives. The moment business of particular thing is started by few of them- jute, betel nut etc. profit starts to flow but it continues for very short time as number following the same business increases and profit margin declines. Constant vigilance in the market and continuous change in alternative product for business is essential for sustainaing in the area.

4.2.1.4 Village: Bhakatgaon

The dominant occupation is ‘other’ in the village. Almost 51% of population is dependent on other source of income and rest is dependent on cultivation and agricultural labour. People from Hindu and Muslim community are settled here and few people from Kachari tribe also live in this village. People from linguistic group of both Assamese and Bengali are there. Beside making earthen pot people are also engaged in service, casual labour, business and farming.
Almost thirty years back pottery was the occupation of this village and it was dominated by 'Pal' family. Their livelihoods are almost perishing as substitute products with more tangibility and less price is taking away the market. Now there are very few houses living in pottery with too much of poverty. There was a time when people used to wake up in the sound of Chak and now in the whole village there is only one Chak and that also could only be used by the elderly person of the household. Son cannot use Chak as he was not interested and thus only looks after the marketing of the product. The stress period in their life is rainy season when the product does not get dried up. The people dependent on pottery are landless and they only have small land as homestead. Poverty have pressurised them to sell land and become landless thus now the village has people from diverse occupation. There is no support of cooperatives or other self help group for sustaining their livelihood.

The work is divided among the male and female group according to the kind of labour required. For example bringing land, preparing land (Perani) by feet, marketing is done by male member and rest of the work like giving shape, putting in oven, drying in sun etc is done by women. Women are not allowed to use 'chak' which is one of the factor for which pottery as livelihood strategy is perishing. Very poor condition of women is noted among the artisan group. Asthma is common sickness among the women as their work keeps them more in contact with water and earth.

In stress period as coping strategy they take loan from private individuals at high rate of interest Rs.10-20/month or buy the goods in credit. As adaptive strategy the young working group works as casual labour in nearby villages or works in shop/hotel at Rupahi.

There is a school and clinic within 1km. In village some widow got Government support for building houses. There is nothing called organisation for them.

*Changes in livelihood*

Child labour is common among the artisans and children are not sent to school regularly as they are used as helper- like putting the product in sun and changing their position with sun etc. Another reason which came out from discussion is that the woman who
cooks the meal in school is Muslim and they are Hindu so they do not feel like sending their children in school.

No one from young generation has taken up pottery in commercial scale as the work gives fewer surpluses in cash. Besides this, working with land is considered as dirty by them and they find it more tiring. By little savings of parents few started small shops and others are working as casual labour or stays in others house for cash and food. During puja or such other season few out migrate to make idols and in other time they work as casual labour or helper in shop.

4.2.1.5 Village: Kalapani (Buridua)

The dominant occupation is ‘other’ in the village where people make fencing of bamboo (Dhari) and other things by bamboo (Dala). The religion of the people is Hindu and they belong to Khatriya cult. The linguistic group is Bengali. People from both sexes take part in this activity.

From last 30 years the people of this village are actively working in bamboo. Bamboo is purchased from Kuritol at Rs.50-60. From a bamboo 4-5 dhari could be made (length-breadth 4-3 feet). Per dhari is sold at Rs.35-40. In money terms profit per dhari is Rs.10 and in dala it is Rs.6 only (without considering the wage). Every Thursday a middleman comes to buy the product and sells it in the Rupahi, Aambagan or in Sonalibali market. The entire work is done by family members. They are all landless.

Between the household work the female members whenever gets time works and male member in addition to their work as casual or agricultural labour makes fencing. In the village there is less requirement of labour so they have to cover 3-4km to get a work in other villages like Kuritol or Dighali Majuli. Mostly they cannot give cash money for bamboo which is purchased and thus they work as casual labour in the respective places from which the bamboo is purchased.

The stress period in their livelihood is during October-November (Kati) as bamboo are not sold as bamboo shoots (gajali) come out in this period and the rainy season, neither the business on bamboo could be done nor can work as labour. The money which is
saved during the season is used for consumption in this stress period or loan from shops or Mahajan/private individuals are taken at very high interest rate (10-15% per month).

Most of the households do not have toilet and the bamboo waste is used as fuel. Infrastructure status of the village is very poor. There is neither road nor any means of transport. From Aambagan- a market point, people walk for about 10-15km. Very narrow way between the bamboos trees connects the village to the market. The living condition of the people is worst. Gastric and body ache is common sickness for all working population and children mostly suffer from stomach disorder.

Changes in livelihood

People of this village do not find any change in their living condition. Though there is school within 1km but for poverty the children are not sent to school. The people are illiterate and the children are either staying in others houses or are helping parents to deliver the product in time. Livestock is almost not present in the village. In recent years people are migrating from other villages like Kuriluwa after selling their cultivable land. The cultivators during shocks and unfavourable situation sells their land assets to meet the increasing indebtedness and settles in such interior villages as landless farmers. They are forced to sale after repeated failure of cultivation in last five years and for high expenditure structure of farming. Adaptive strategy of the children or young worker is to be in others houses or in shop for little amount of cash and for secured support of food. Girls are more preferred as maid in nearby village and thus they give up education and stays in others place. Many do not get any cash but only stays for food. Taking loan from Mahajan or to buy the goods in credit from shop is the coping strategy.

4.2.1.6 Town- Nagaon

Among the three categories- self employed, casual labour and regular worker the self employed is found to be in much depressing state as compared to the others. Labours from nearby places like Rupahi, Lanka, Hojai come temporarily or permanently in the town. Due to the increase in wage they are in satisfactory state. And with time they bring their relatives or other fellow friends from village. They expect to get ‘good work’ which has less physical labour and high money but they end up as casual labour in the
In village no cash in hand pushes them to town and higher wage rate in town as compared to village makes them happy.

Changes in livelihood

Influence of increased competition has reduced the profit margin of self employed. Certain businesses which were very prospective in earlier time are now about to perish. For example traditional bell metal utensil which was well known in one period is now in the state of shut down. The addition in asset is mostly made by self employed in the earlier generation. Now they are just pulling the business with least profit. Earlier during festivals like puja, bihu, idd people used to make purchases from town now people easily come to Guwahati for purchase. They mostly bring things from Kolkata and sell at higher price in town but now for competition they had to sell in comparably lesser price. Women worker is found in very limited number in the town and all of them have come with their husband who is living in the town for some longer period.

4.2.2 Livelihood activities in the district of Kamrup

4.2.2.1. Village- Ganakpara

The dominant occupation of the people is agricultural labour. The male working population is almost twice of the female in this village. People of this village are settled from last twenty years as they are victim of natural calamity. They were originally settled in Gossaipara and Bortori area. They lost their cultivated land for repeated floods, soil erosion and for deposition of silt. Government granted them 1 bigha of homestead land to each of them in this village and since than they are settled here and dominant way of earning is to work as casual labour or agricultural labour. The homestead land is not used for any productive work. In very few household trees of betel nut could be seen.

Mc. Dowell Christoper made a study on involuntary settlement titled ‘Involuntary Settlement, Impoverishment Risks and Sustainable livelihood’ where he explained that in common many disaster affected population people as gets displaced their possibility of dream and return back is forever removed. Houses, land and familiar environment are lost beneath rising water, dismantled or built over. The sense of belonging is shattered.
as attachments to land and place are severed. It is recognised that involuntary resettlement is stressful in unique ways and that stress has wide implication over number of generation. Their securities are removed and vulnerability is suddenly and externally imposed. In the village Ganakpara such kind of unique stressful state is observed.

Earlier the village was covered with forest and there were no roads. Now narrow lanes are made within village but during rain communication disrupts. The village does not have electricity and there is only one LP school nearby but the high school is at almost 3km distance. Thus high school educated children is less in the village. Now children demands cycle to go to school and for poverty parents cannot afford that. They are reluctant to walk such a long distance thus drop out ratio is high.

There is a self help group of women working only on credit. In stress period the villagers take credit either directly from shop or from SHG. High expenditure is incurred in social ceremonies which are carried out by taking credit from private individuals at high rate of interest. The repayment is done either by selling livestock or by giving betel nut trees in adhi.

The status of health in village is very poor as sickness is very regular among the working population. Almost all women suffer from back ache for over stressing in weaving practice. Young girls also have back pain and problem of vision. TB, Malaria, Jaundice, problems related to bones and stomach disorder are common among the residing population. Despite initial successes of post-Independence malaria control programmes, and subsequently by the National Malaria Eradication Programme, the disease has not been controlled for any significant length of time. The successes have been temporary and not sustained. The re-emergence of the disease, even in areas where it had not been evident for decade long intervals, is partly attributable to resistant breeds of mosquitoes (Assam HDR, 2003)

The adaptive strategy of the people are to out migrate and work as casual labour or do any kind of work. Coping strategy is to give the livestock in adhi or take up weaving by women in adhi.
Change in livelihood

After limited education young generation do not want to work as casual labour nearby for self respect. Cultivation is not done in large scale near the village thus they do not get option to give labour in agricultural field. Beside this the uncertain nature of work made some to out migrate in Gujarat and others try small scale business. They are less interested to work in land. Opening up of shop with loan is not a dependable source as cash inflow in the village is less. Business with betel nut though at one period gave some earning but with time it declined. Some stay in others house and work in contract payment. In the village working population within 20 to 40 years category is less as most of them work in furniture mill of Gujrat as casual labour. The owner of the mill is from Rajasthan and the contractor who takes the worker stays near the village. After working for 10-15 years in the mill no change could be made by them in household regarding ownership of assets or others. They hardly come to the village and send less money for the family.

Women stay alone with children and somehow the cash requirement is fulfilled by weaving or working as agricultural labour. With infants, women are in most vulnerable state as neither can they weave nor they can go out leaving the children for work. It is very difficult to manage the minimum cash to purchase the PDS good for her and also most of the time she cannot give the school fees of school leading the children to be drop out. The impact of competition could also be seen in weaving practice. Thread for weaving is bought from Chaygaon and they sell the product to broker in Vijaynagar. Marketing is done directly by women. Taking the expenditure of thread and selling price the average earning from per cloth in Rs.300-400. During Bihu slightly more is earned. Many of them weave in adhi where the thread is given by owner and in turn she gets half of the produced cloth which is used by her for daily use.

4.2.2.2 Village- Dhopguri

The dominant occupation is Cultivation in this village. The people are from Boro/Kachari tribe. Household industry and agricultural labour is source of income for an insignificant percentage of population. Borgaon, Rajakata, Kadampara and Singra are the villages around Dhopguri.
There is no electricity in the village and one school is situated within the village but there is no clinic. Livestock is common in every household. Pig and poultry is most preferred livestock. Pair of bullock is present among the cultivators. But the pair is sold for coming out from stress or from credit. Again before the season it is purchased. Vegetable is cultivated but only for self consumption. Middle men pays very little price for the vegetables and thus huge section of household leave the land uncultivated. Bamboo is very richly present in almost all the houses but it is not used as source of earning as very less price is given for it. Thus they prefer to use it for different repairing work at homestead. Selling livestock, bamboo, betel nut, and local liquor is taken up as adaptive strategy. Fishing, working as casual labour is the coping strategy of the people. Women have SHG which again works on finance.

The health status is very poor in the village. From very tender age all starts drinking the local liquor which is prepared in most of the household. Jaundice and Malaria is common sickness in the households. The surveyed households has one case of jaundice or stomach disorder. Jaundice is common among the children. Poor health is affecting the working population.

*Change in livelihood*

From last few years the output from cultivation has become uncertain and thus young working population are opting to work as casual labour. Beside this the expenditure of cultivation is said to have doubled. Taking the increasing price of diesel, fertilizer, wages the expenditure have jumped to 60% from 30% of total income. There was a kind of farming called ‘Bao’ carried out in chait-bahag (Feb to April) which can’t be practised in present days mainly for unsuitable weather. At present only Sali and Boro could be done in the village. Newly a stone chip industry and nursery is set up in which a high percentage of young workers are getting absorbed. The per capita land availability for cultivation has also declined as parents have mostly used land for payment of credit taken during the crisis period. Thus few of them are taking up casual labour for non availability of land for cultivation. After education the young generation does not find cultivation as respectable way of living for the limitation of the cash flow. They want to get good job and wait for that. At time either they get into casual labour or comes to Guwahati and work under company or get into construction work.
Women mostly help in field work of own land or work as agricultural labour in others land. Cultivation is done all over the village thus enough work opportunity as agricultural labour remains. Weaving is practiced but not for commercial purpose but only for self consumption. Business of local liquor is carried out in various houses and it helps women to meet their daily cash requirements. Thus weaving remains as less preferred source of living. Wife beating is common in every household. Local liquor is commonly made in the village and after drinking such disturbances is common in village.

4.2.2.3 Guwahati city

The workforce participation rate (WFPR) as per the 2001 Census is computed at 33.4% for Kamrup District. The same for Guwahati Metropolitan Area and Guwahati Municipal Corporation Area are respectively 34.8% and 35.1%. According to the GMA estimates in 2001 other services and trade and commerce have highest concentration of workforce (35% to 31%) (Draft of Master plan of GMDA, Feb, 2007).

The livelihood of Guwahati is surveyed under three broad categories of occupation-
Casual labour
Regular worker
Self employed.

People from various places like Goalpara, Dhubri, Barpeta, Kochbehar and from other nearby villages comes at Guwahati in search of livelihoods. Women specially come to work as casual labour under compulsion in condition like – husband does not look after her, husband/father is sick or handicapped or widow. Almost 10% of them work to give education to children and to meet some extra expenditure or to overcome a stress period they work as a coping strategy. Self employed women are though mostly working under compulsion but also few of them are doing by own choice. Sicknesses like Jaundice, Asthma and Gastric is very common among the casual worker and that hampers them to work regularly. Good amount of expenditure is incurred for illness.

The casual labour working in Guwahati can be divided in two categories-
Permanent casual worker

131
Temporary casual worker.

The temporary workers take it as coping strategy of livelihood. They come to work during stress period or during the slack season in village. The young group (age 15-19 years) working as casual labours are the ones who have just come for change. They get attracted towards Guwahati for music, good road, lights in the street etc. They start working on the basis of some contact from his friends or family members and after making some cash money when they feel like going back they return back to village. They do not have fixed schedule to follow but they do not enjoy staying in Guwahati for long period. The temporary group prefers construction work as they get the place to stay and they can take good amount to village. The permanent group lives in the outskirt of the city or in the slum areas. In village at one time they had cultivable land but for credit and failure of crop most had to sell land and thus in village only they have homestead land or they lost that too. Migrants from Bihar, UP and such other places are mostly skilled work- carpenter, bamboo work, marble work etc.

Children between 8-10 years are also found making basket from bamboo. Mostly they have come from Bihar with their parents and feel satisfied here as they find as they find friends and money. They did not like to go to school and parents could not feed them so now at Guwahati they are having better life. Rakesh, a 7 year old child says that ‘We went to visit zoo yesterday with our own money and we liked it very much. We don’t want to go back as Guwahati is much beautiful with big roads and lots of lights’.

The self employed are from Nalbari, Barpeta and such other places and also from Bihar UP, Rajasthan etc. The newly arrived people are working temporarily and are trying in diverse area for example they start by pulling rickshaw and then sometime open shop of fruits and again work in buses or as middleman for selling land or other items produced in village. Thus they have uncertainty in their livelihood. Those who are for longer period have improved their living condition but the element of competition is seen affecting them. Qualities have become a significant matter of concern in the present day and for parallel competition the profit margin has also declined.

The regular workers are finding themselves in better condition than earlier period. They had to leave village as either they lost land for paying back credit or for treatment of
parents. Beside this few of them did not like to cultivate land and thus came to Guwahati for livelihood. Most of them initially worked as casual worker and gradually they became regular worker. Worker from Bihar, UP is originally very poor and the remittances are the only means by which family survives. Somehow they feed and live here and rest every week they spend 500-700 rupees to their home as there is no option to earn in the village. Underemployment is more clearly evident in urban. Most are working with very less salary. The scope is limited also for women thus in restricted area stiff competition pushes down the price and settles down at very low level of Rs 2500 to 3000 only.

It is to be noted here that in Guwahati all the three categories of worker do not keep single source for living. Simultaneously subsidiary source is constantly tried by them. Diversification in livelihood is very clearly evident here.

Thus it is found that in the informal sector the workers are mainly migrants from nearby villages or states. Many factors influence the rural urban migration. Though the primary factor is to make a living but there are other reasons like land dispute, make a higher level of living and for not preferring cultivation. Good transportation system encourages the working group to try various alternatives in the city. Consumerism also to some extent is pulling young group of population into the city/town. Thus we see both the push and pull factors approach for rural-urban migration is applied here.

It is now widely recognised that there exists an economic, social and environmental interdependence between urban and rural areas and a need for balanced and mutually supportive approach to development of the two areas. Now the old orthodoxy of a discrete approach to urban development as distinct from rural development no longer accords with reality. The complementary functions and flows of people, capital, goods and services, employment, information and technology between the two areas are to be considered now. Thus rural and urban areas are economically, socially and environmentally interdependent. The huge numbers of people that arrive every year to some cities – hundreds of thousands, approaching one million in per year in some Asian cities – signify the massive rural-urban changes that are underway in developing countries. Since urban dwellers are captive to rising prices, as they do not grow their own food, the problem of poverty, social discontent and political instability will become
pronounced. This has led policy makers to concur that urbanisation is a complex phenomena that cannot be simply curbed by policy making (UNDP, 1998).

Rakodi (1999) made an attempt to define livelihood strategies, or components of livelihood strategies, according to the nature of the activities that they involve.

- investment in securing more of an asset – this may promote security and also allow for diversification or intensification of activities;
- substitution of one asset for another – for example, compensating for the declining availability or quality of natural capital by increasing inputs of physical capital;
- disposal – the sale of assets such as livestock, land or jewellery, to compensate for a consumption shortfall or to release funds for investment;
- sacrifice – for example, not investing time and resources in fostering reciprocal social relations, thereby reducing future ability to draw on social capital; sacrificing children’s ability to earn adequate incomes in future by withdrawing them from school because of the inability to pay fees or need for their labour.

From the macro perspective of livelihood strategy it is understood that the percentage of agricultural labour and other labour declined and self employment is becoming a more preferred occupation. From the primary information we see that cultivation is now not as favourable livelihood strategy as it was, mainly for unsuitable weather condition from last five years and for high expenditure structure. This in turn is limiting the work option of agricultural labour. Migration is the easiest option and mostly migrate to nearby towns or cities. The difference between the agricultural labour dominated village of Kamrup and Nagaon district is that the labour of Kamrup mostly permanently out migrate to city or other state. But labours of Nagaon district mainly migrate temporarily to nearby village. This is because the village of Kamrup has better linkage (by transport and middleman) with city and states though at intra level the infrastructure condition of the villages are in poor state. For easy education of children and high living expenditure in urban they prefer to keep their family in village.

The self employed in village is found to be in better state and by secondary information we find they are in highest percentage in rural Assam. It is seen that the successful self
employed or cultivators are those which have followed diversification in livelihood strategy. Constant vigilance on the market and change accordingly is the pre requisite for sustaining any livelihood strategy. Influence of competition is very strongly understood in the rural and urban livelihood. With improved transport and communication mobility has increased and touched every activities of livelihood. Both in rural and urban area very few could add asset holding significantly as the earlier generation. Addition is done more in durables through various means (selling livestock, loan from friends, saved money of father) mainly for social status holding of productive asset is ignored. The artisans are seen to be most hardly hit among all the occupation by the wave of changes as poverty along with child labour is common in such villages. The skill which is asset for them is presently of less use now as easy availability of substitute product has taken away the market.

Age is found to be another determining factor influencing livelihood activity. The senior worker pulls on with the previous system as they can neither migrate nor can try new things. Thus they cannot add new assets but remain as they were. The middle age group by trying diversification in cultivation, business or other things could add asset and improve living condition. The young group which is called the future of the country is in most depressing condition in village of both districts. Almost all do not want to get into cultivation mainly as it demands hard physical labour and gives insignificant liquid in hand. After education they hope to get into white collard job in town or cities. The data on urban area shows that when they migrated to Guwahati they hoped such but ended up as casual labour. It is interesting to know that with this status they are happy as they are getting liquid in addition to the city life. They are least protected and they live also in very poor state in city. But only to do something except cultivation forced them to be in this state. Those who stay back in village lead a more frustrating life. It is seen that alcoholism is a major problem of this group in cultivator dominated village of Nagaon district.

Based on the religious background the livelihood strategy differed. Women in Muslim dominated village very scarcely perform any other activity in addition to household work. Girl child are given education to get good husband. But now slowly some young girls are found getting into some alternative means to earn. Weaving is common
practise in Assamese villages. But here also we see the influence of competition from substitute product also touched the livelihood of women. This is limiting their income. As a whole women feel to get now an improved status as they now alone handle the cash and they have a strong support of organisation. Compared to the earlier generation they find themselves to be in better state. It is to be noted that as far as violence is concerned they are still in poor state as wife beating is common in most of the villages. In the matter of imparting education no gender discrimination is observed.

Above discussion draws out following problems of livelihood strategies:

- Unfavourable weather, increasing expenditure structure, reduced size of cultivable land is making the livelihood of cultivators stressful. Lack of mechanisation is mainly responsible for such backdrop.
- Unemployment problem is frustrating the young generation which in some extent is responsible in increasing the problem of alcoholism. They mostly want to try something other than cultivation.
- Agricultural and casual labours are in the most stressful situation with minimum asset holding and reduced alternative work options. They get compelled to out migrate in this situation.
- Enough scope is noted in the development of self help group of women. They have strong urge to do something in organised manner.
- Artisans are in the most poor state of living where poor sanitation, child labour, indebtedness is common among the households.
- Organisational weakness and weak market structure lead to the active participation of middlemen which works as depressing factor in reinvestment and diversification.

The data on secondary and primary livelihood activity makes it clear that both in rural and urban self employed is gradually increasing. The poverty of agricultural labour is forcing them to take other occupation so its percentage has declined. Influence of liberalisation can be very clearly understood. Availability of variety, easy availability and price range of product has brought significant change primarily in rural livelihood activities. To sustain the livelihood it compelled the household by type and gender to be vigilant and diversify activity. The working population of all the types accepted that
livelihood is not as easy as it was during their previous generation. The major reason are unsuitable weather for cultivation, fluctuation of prices, competition from better/substitute/cheap products and lastly reluctant attitude of young generation towards livelihood activity of rural area. The inter dependence of livelihood in rural and urban is gaining importance and linkage is influencing the livelihood of rural and urban area both in positive and negative way.

The linkages among the factor influencing the livelihood strategy are presented by a flowchart. It points out the gap between the sustainable and unsustainable livelihood strategies.
Flowchart 2: Sustainable livelihood strategies

Flowchart 2 indicates clearly that diversification and credit support is essential for sustainable livelihood. The response to the subsistence earning has two diverse paths. One of the paths is the continuation of the strategy as earlier period, which leads to the unsustainable livelihood with less resilient to shocks and stresses. Other follows the path of diversification with credit support. Constant vigilance on the market structure and adopting change in positive manner is leading to higher security and sustainability of livelihood. In next chapter while analysing livelihood outcome the relation between the different elements of livelihood capital is examined by correlation matrix in detail to get a more closer view on linkages.