CONCLUSION

The study of livelihood in Assam indicated insignificant difference in sustainability of rural and urban areas. But in standard of living and livelihood capital urban households have scored more over rural households. It is due to visible rural-urban divide in terms of housing conditions and basic amenities and services as well as in terms of factors like literacy and access to credit. As compared to urban Assam and all India average rural Assam is found most vulnerable. Some targeted programme in rural definitely brought positive changes in health services and literacy but selling of assets, livestock and out migration mainly among the youth and labours are still common options used for livelihood. It could be seen that casualisation tends to increase in the face of flood, more within the primary sector, which in term tends to reduce income. Income is directly related with the amenities of decent living life like housing condition, electrification, sanitation and drinking water. Further, expenditure on health acts as significant income shock to households, particularly among the flood prone rural households. Size of homestead is related to creditability and decent living of the households while engagements in non-primary sector lead to higher income along with improved standard of living and quality of life.

Factors like repeated failure of crop for unfavourable weather, increasing expenditure structure for rise in wages and inputs prices and absence of subsidiary earning opportunity in the villages are pushing the labour to nearby urban centres for liquid money. Migrant labours working in urban areas though earns higher but their poor living condition, health hazards and absence of security in work keeps their livelihood in static state. In post liberalisation period uncertainty in weather and market condition, competition from substitute/ better/cheap product and increasing expenditure structure has relatively made livelihood tougher. Artisans are found in the most depleting state mainly for the open market, poor organisational support and for limited scope to out migrate. Uncertainty in price and climatic behaviour, Illiteracy and Competition are basic challenges which are leading to population pressure and indebtedness followed by fragmentation. These factors keep the economy bounded by a ‘vicious circle’ leading to subsistence earning. At this point livelihood strategy of one section gets into poverty trap and another recovers and attains better living. First group follows a static strategy
without any diversification and the second constantly diversifies and reinvests. Static strategy leads to insecurity, sickness, and low work participation ultimately leading to poverty trap and unsustainable livelihood. On the other hand with diversification and reinvestment by credit support, higher security and sustainable livelihood is attained both in rural and urban areas. In between, the vulnerable factor by shocks and stresses also force the less resilient livelihoods to take up coping and adaptive strategies like selling land, livestock, taking loan, migration, weaving in adhi, giving livestock and betel nut tree in adhi, mortgaging land etc. These strategies make the base of livelihood weaker and lead towards unsustainable livelihood. Diversification in the livelihood in the present scenario has become the key word for better living and for being more resilient to shocks and stresses.

Certain challenges like unemployment, low average holding, fragmentation, poor mechanisation, less agricultural credit and indebtedness kept Assam very low ranked as compared to the national average. The gender, health and food insecurity of rural Assam indicates the gap with urban livelihood which also needed to be narrowed down for sustainability. It is suggested that in the present scenario, the livelihood outcome must focus in Reinvestment, Wide income earning portfolios, Developed coping strategy, Adaptability to livelihood activities, Open to the market mechanism, Vocational Training, Organisational support and Infrastructural backup for sustainability in rural and urban Assam and for narrowing down the gap between rural and urban areas.