Conclusion

This study has attempted to identity the role of folk and mass media in creating awareness on the need of socio-economic development among rural married women in Karimganj district of Assam with special reference to health and education. In India nearly half of the human resources are women. A good number of them are illiterates and reside in rural areas. Hence there is an urgent requirement to disseminate useful technical know-how among rural women, to improve their socio-economic status and increase their knowledge level.

Media are supposed to act as the most popular source of information for the public (Hindin et. al.,2004). Television has been acclaimed to be the most effective media for disseminating knowledge and information to the masses but these are not working the expected role among the rural people due to the decline of public service broadcasting and recipients also suffer the problem of limited resources like illiteracy, poverty, lack of electricity and many others. The survey results found that majority of the rural women in Karimganj district are short of exposure to television and newspapers. The effectiveness of the role of mass media is constrained by such factors like limited financial resources, lack of electricity supply, religious beliefs,
scarcity of newspaper suppliers since media consumption is hugely dependent on disposable income as well as the realization of the need of information.

In Karimganj district, rural women with financial capability are seen to be using mass media for their enhancement of social, political and economic development. It was revealed from the survey that radio has the highest impact on the rural women for social development because about 61.42% of the respondents claimed that they listen to radio on a daily basis and also agreed that it made a greater impact on them. Similar findings of a study done by Shukla (2000) reported that the major source of information for rural people still happens to be radio (87%).

Regarding the sources of information, it was found that radio and interpersonal communication were the most preferred and trusted information sources for the rural women in Karimganj district. It was observed that a good share of rural women in villages are mostly dependent on health workers and are more interested in meetings and group discussions in comparison to utilizing other modern tools of media. These extension workers function as a bridge between policy makers and the people at grassroots level.
The folk media was assumed to have a very positive role in bringing social change and development. Several folk forms of entertainment prevalent in different parts of India are powerful motivator for public instruction and a unifying force for development. However it is revealed from the survey that the role of folk media in Karimganj district as a source of information is insignificant. Their viewership or utilization trend is slowing down. The existence of these folk forms is now confined to certain occasions and festivals. Similar findings of a study done by Balaswamy (2006) found that, traditional folk media functions are attended by 45% of the respondents. But the respondents are attending to these media only occasionally. The modern media should be used in line with the traditional mode of communication which people are more familiar with. These types of communication not only create participation but also enhance national development as well as help to retain the cultural legacy.

The channels of communication play a significant role in creating awareness and in influencing the activities of the individual. While the mass communication channels are important in creating awareness about the issues related to outside the individual’s immediate environment, interpersonal and group communication channels are more important in creating awareness and motivating the individual to act locally (Balaswamy, 2006). In addition to the above means of communication,
posters, calendars, hoarding, etc, also need to be used and must be designed in local dialects so that the rural people can understand the message. Not only government, but media organizations, NGOs, educational institutions, among others should accept their responsibility in helping to materialize the goals of development.

To sum up, both folk media and modern mass media are needed for rural developmental programs and should be integrated into developmental planning for use in development contexts. The audience for these media includes both beneficiaries and functionaries. It could be a force to generate respect between various cultural groups. This media combination can actually act and facilitate the fulfilment of specific development objectives.