Chapter – III

OPERATIONAL PROFILE OF THE ENTERPRISES

As mentioned earlier, our sample consisted of twenty co-operative enterprises belonging to five different categories of producers’ co-operatives. The operational profile of the sample enterprises as presented in the following paragraphs is based on the field survey and the information collected directly from the sample respondents.

3.1 FISHERY CO-OPERATIVES

The operational profile of the five selected fishery co-operatives is presented below.

3.1.1 Sanbeel Fishermen’s Co-operative Society Ltd.

The Sanbeel fishermen’s co-operative was registered in the year 1975. It is a natural water reservoir (Beel), located at Kalibari Bazar under the Ramkrishnanagar Block of Karimganj district. The area, comprising 39 villages, is mostly inhabited by the fishermen community (Kaibarta) who settled here after partition of the country. Fishing is their prime occupation. The villagers have a strong occupational as well as community bondage, as they belong to the same community and pursue the same occupation. Almost eighty percent of the Sanbeel area are marshy lands with water all through the year. Majority of the villagers are very poor. Nearly eighty percent of them are dependent on fishing and twenty percent on ‘Bura’ cultivation. Modern amenities of life and facilities like transportation, power, education, health care etc. are almost absent in most of the villages of Sanbeel area.

Prior to 1975, the fishermen of the area were dependent on a group of rich fishermen for their livelihood. They had no preferential right of fishing in the fisheries of Sanbeel. The few rich fishermen of the area used to take settlement of the fisheries of Sanbeel and employ the other fishermen on wage basis for fish catching. After independence the Government of Assam adopted a policy of according priority to fishery co-operatives while granting of leases of fisheries. This inspired a few enterprising fishermen of the area, namely, Jyotirmay Das, Anil Das, Subul Das, Prahlad Choudhury and Raghendra Das to come forward and initiate the process of formation of the
co-operative. By virtue of their command over the community they could convince and unite the fishermen of Sanbeel and successfully launched the co-operative in 1975.

The prime objectives of the Sanbeel fishermen's co-operative are as follows:

(a) to take settlement of Sanbeel on lease from the state government;
(b) to provide fishing facilities to the members in the Sanbeel;
(c) to procure fish from the members and arrange for sale of fish;
(d) to provide extension and support services to the member fishermen;
(e) to arrange working capital loan from the government agencies; and
(f) to promote thrift, self help and co-operation amongst the members.

As on 31.3.99, the co-operative had 2879 members residing in 39 villages and its fishing activities were spread over the 16 beels of Sanbeel area.

The primary business of the enterprise is taking settlement of the fisheries of Sanbeel on annual lease from the state government and sub-leaseing the sixteen beels among the member fishermen of the co-operative. The fishermen members of the co-operative take on sub-lease the group fisheries of the 16 beels from the co-operative against payment of annual rent determined by the Managing Committee of the enterprise. It also occasionally provides other support services like supplying boat, fishing net and other inputs to the members.

Structurally and operationally the co-operative is a linkage independent enterprise of the member fishermen. It is managed by a Managing Committee, constituted and elected by the members through democratic process. The secretary of the enterprise is the ex-officio member of the co-operative, who manages the day to day affairs of the enterprise.

The final accounts of the enterprise reflected that the co-operative has been functioning since 1975 with an accumulated profit of Rs. 1,71,882.00 as on 31.3.99. Further the composition of the share capital of the enterprise showed that the government's share in the capital of the enterprise had been much higher than the share of the members. As on 31-3-99, the Government's contribution to the total capital of the enterprise had been 94.1 per cent. Only 5.9 per cent of its capital came from the members of the co-operative (cf. Table 3.1).

The 16 Beels of Sanbeel consist of: Kalibari, Anandapur, Swastipur, Santoshpur, Khalepar, Debdwar, Nabingram, Tulakuna, Gopikanagar, Kalyanpur, Fakua, Khalbeel, Babutilia, Daluganj, Panchtkri, Kathakhal, Udergucha and Barkhal.
3.1.2 Dakshin Bihara Fishery Co-operative Society Ltd.

The Dakshin Bihara Fishery Co-operative Society of the fishermen of Dakshin Bihara, is located at Sarisakuri under the Kalain Block of Cachar district. About eighty percent members of the enterprise belong to Muslim Maimal (fishermen) community and the rest twenty percent are Hindu fishermen. The primary occupation of majority of the members of the enterprise is fishing.

The villages under the jurisdiction of Dakshin Bihara Fishery Co-operative are: Bihara Part IV, V and VI, Burunga Part III and IV, Govindapur Part I, Mohanpur Part I and Santipur Part III.

Nearly sixty per cent of the members of the enterprise are dependent exclusively upon fishing and the rest upon cultivation and day labour.

The fishermen in this area are generally very poor. Most of them are illiterate and live below poverty line. The area remains cut off from the district head quarter during most of the rainy season and has no pacca approach road to move to or from the villages. The area is 30 to 35 kms. away from the district headquarter.

Before promotion of the enterprise, the fishermen of the area had no regular fishing grounds nor had any exclusive right to catch fish in the natural fisheries and river mahals of their locality. After independence, when the Government of Assam adopted the policy of according priority to fishery co-operatives while leasing out fish mahals, some enterprising fishermen of the area, namely, Nurmuhammad, Mainur Rahman and others, who were economically relatively well off, took the initiative to form the co-operative in 1959. The co-operative came into existence initially with 147 fishermen as its members.

The main objectives of the enterprise are:
(a) to take settlement of first class fish mahals from the state government;
(b) to promote fish cultivation by making arrangement for excavation / digging of tanks, ponds etc.
(c) to take loans from the government agencies for fish cultivation;
(d) to take settlement of second class fisheries within the area of operation of the co-operative;
(e) to encourage thrift, self help and co-operation amongst the members;
(f) to purchase tools and implements for catching fish.

The co-operative takes settlement of government river mahals, anowa and beels from the state government on annual lease and make the fishing grounds available to
members for fishing on commission basis. Like other fishery co-operatives in the region, it is an independent and self-contained decision unit of the member fishermen. The enterprise is managed by a Managing Committee elected by the members. The secretary of the co-operative looks after the day to day operation of the enterprise and remains accountable to the Managing Committee for his activities.

The capital of the enterprise consists of the contribution of both the members and the government. The Balance Sheet of the enterprise as on 31.3.99 shows that the governments' participation in the total capital of the enterprise as on that date was 93.32 per cent. It also shows that the co-operative had an accumulated loss of Rs. 78,346 as on that date with 469 members within its fold (cf. Table 3.1).

3.1.3 East Katigorah Fishery Co-operative Society Ltd.

This fishery co-operative of the village Sripur, on the eastern side of the river Barak is located under the Katigorah Block of Cachar district. The catchment area of the co-operative covers eight villages, viz. Siddeswar, Katirail, Sripur, Ganigram, Fulbari, Kalinagar, Sibnarainpur and Sialtek.

The co-operative was promoted in the year 1968, at the initiative of some senior fishermen of the locality, namely, Bipin Chandra Namashudra, Upendra Namashudra, Khirod Namashudra and others. In fact, the government policy of giving priority to fishery co-operatives while leasing out the natural fishing grounds inspired the fishermen to form the co-operative in 1968. Initially 217 members joined the co-operative as primary members of the enterprise.

The villages lying within the catchment area of the enterprise are pre-dominantly inhabited by the Scheduled Caste fishermen community (mostly Namashudra and Patni) and Muslim Maimal community. Nearly seventy per cent of the members of the co-operative are Hindu fishermen and the rest thirty per cent are Muslims. Most of the fishermen are illiterate and fishing had been their traditional occupation. More than forty per cent of the fishermen are directly dependent upon fishing; another forty per cent of them are marginal cultivators, fishing being their seasonal occupation, while the rest twenty per cent are primarily dependent upon subsidiary occupations like, day labour, fish trading and other agro based activities.

The co-operative takes on lease the natural fishing grounds and fish mahals of the area from the state government and provides fishing facilities to the members on commission basis; supplies fishing tools, like boat, net etc. to the member fishermen; and
provides necessary support services to the fishermen. The co-operative has been operating as an independent enterprise of the members, managed by an elected managing committee. The secretary is an ex-officio member of the Managing Committee of the enterprise.

As on 31.3.99 the co-operative had 374 members and an accumulated loss of Rs. 1,93,455. The capital composition of the co-operative shows that the government contributed 97 per cent capital of the enterprise (cf. Table 3.1).

3.1.4 Dilkhush Fishery Co-operative Society Ltd.

Dilkhush is located under the Lakhipur sub-division of Cachar district. This co-operative society of the fishermen of Dilkhush and other four villages of the Lakhipur Block was promoted in the year 1973 with 163 members.

The area is predominantly inhabited by the Hindu Scheduled Caste (fishermen community) and the Muslim Maimal (fishermen) community.

Most of the members of the co-operative are poor and have no means of livelihood other than fishing and daily wage earnings. Like the other fishery co-operatives, the Dilkhush Fishery Co-operative also takes settlement of government fisheries and fish mahals on lease and provides fishing facilities to its members against commission. The other objectives of the co-operative are to provide fishing tools and support services to the member fishermen and to arrange working capital finance to the member fishermen.

Like other fishery co-operatives the enterprise is managed by the Managing Committee constituted by the members. The secretary of the enterprise is the ex-officio member of the Managing Committee. He manages the day to day operation of the co-operative. Operationally and structurally, it is a self-contained decision unit of the member fishermen. There is no structural integration of the enterprise with any federal body of the fishermen’s co-operative.

The operational result of the enterprise as on 31.3.99 shows that it had 190 members and an accumulated loss of Rs. 1,43,516.00 as on that date. Also the government’s share in the total capital of the enterprise as on that date was 94.5 per cent, which indicates that the enterprise like other fishery co-operative is dependent upon government for its capital requirements (cf. Table 3.1).
TABLE 3.1: OPERATIONAL PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE FISHERY CO-OPERATIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the enterprise</th>
<th>Year of registration</th>
<th>Number of members (as on 31.3.99)</th>
<th>Capital invested (as on 31.3.99)</th>
<th>Govt. participation %</th>
<th>Operating results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Share capital (in Rs.)</td>
<td>Borrowed Capital (in Rs.)</td>
<td>Total (in Rs.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sanbeel Fishermen's Co-operative Society Ltd.</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>2869</td>
<td>2,56,650</td>
<td>2,29,000</td>
<td>4,85,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Dakshin Bihara Fishery Co-operative Society Ltd.</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>35,580</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>68,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>East-Katigorah Fishery Co-operative Society Ltd.</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>91,740</td>
<td>83,500</td>
<td>1,75,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Dilkhush Fishery Co-operative Society Ltd.</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>94,885</td>
<td>1,11,000</td>
<td>2,05,885</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest rupee.
Source: Final accounts of the enterprises.
3.1.5 Operational profile of the Fishery Co-operatives: Summary of observations

To sum up, our survey of the operational profile of the four primary fishery co-operatives revealed the following:

1. All the sample fishery co-operatives in the three plain districts of South Assam were promoted between the year 1959 and 1975 after independence of our country. The members of the co-operatives being traditional fishermen, there had been an age-old occupational bondage among them. Fishing had been their prime occupation and most of the members belonged to the marginal income group.

2. The initiatives to form the co-operatives were triggered by a particular government policy that accords preferential treatment to fishermen's co-operatives in the matter of leasing of fish mahals and natural fishing grounds. Government also furthered the promotion of the co-operatives by contributing major share of the capital of the enterprises. Table 3.1 shows that government's participation in the total capital of the sample enterprises ranged between 93.3 per cent and 97.9 per cent.

3. In each of the cases studied, the promoters of the enterprises were found to be relatively well off among the members.

4. The main businesses of the co-operatives are to take settlement of government fisheries and natural fishing grounds on lease and make these fisheries available to the members for fishing. The co-operatives occasionally extend other support services to the members.

5. Although, out of the four sample fishery co-operatives studied by us three were found to be operating at a loss, they had been rendering vital services to their members, particularly by making available to them the fishing rights in the specified fishery mahals taken by the co-operative from government on lease. This explains to a large extent why the general members continued to take active interest in the affairs of the enterprises which in turn contributed to the survival of the enterprises.

3.2 DAIRY CO-OPERATIVES

The operational profile of the five selected milk producers' co-operatives are presented below:

3.2.1 Sribar Primary Milk Producers' Co-operative Society Ltd.

This village level primary milk producers' co-operative (PMPC) of the farmers of
The village is about 30 Km. away from the Silchar Town, the Headquarter of Cachar district. The village is pre-dominantly inhabited by Manipuri community. At the time of promotion of the enterprise, the village had a little surplus of milk, which they used to sell in the Lakhipur Town through milk vendors.

The primary occupation of the villagers is cultivation. About eighty per cent of them are traditional cultivators and a very few of them are traditional milk producer. There had been no traditional bondage of milk production among the villagers at the time of formation of the enterprise.

The initiative to form the co-operative was taken by the Officials of the Cachar District Co-operative Milk Producers Union (i.e. CAMUL) as a part of their scheme for replication of Anand pattern under Operation Flood II. Initially 104 farmers joined the enterprise each contributing minimum Rs. 10 towards the share capital of the co-operative. The District Milk Union (i.e. CAMUL) also contributed rupees three thousand towards the capital of the co-operative. The primary objective of the co-operative is to organise the milk producers of the area under the fold of the co-operative and to avail the support services extended by the District Milk Union (i.e. CAMUL). The District Milk Union (i.e. CAMUL) on the other hand had the scheme of extending input services, like supply of cattle feed, artificial insemination, veterinary services, high breed cattle etc. for improving production of milk by the primary societies.

Thus, the structure of operation of the enterprise is federal with the primary milk producers' co-operatives at the bottom and the Cachar District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union (here in after called CAMUL) at the top.

The Sribar Primary Milk Producer's Co-operative (here in after called PMPC) used to collect milk from the village level producers at a prescribed rate under two axis testing method and supply these to the Officials of CAMUL at a fixed time and at a central place every day.

The pricing of milk used to vary depending upon the fat contents of cow milk and buffalo milk. The CAMUL used to make payments of milk to the PMPC once in a week and the PMPC used to make payments to the producers every alternate day. In this way the practice of operation of the enterprise had been under the supervision of the CAMUL.

The Sribar PMPC had been a captive decision unit under the two tier integrated structure of operation of CAMUL. However, the management of the PMPC was vested
upon the Managing Committee constituted by the members. The Secretary of the enterprise was an ex-officio member of the Managing Committee of the co-operative and was accountable to the Managing Committee for his actions.

Our survey of the enterprise further revealed that initially for a few years CAMUL provided managerial subsidy to the enterprise at the rate of Rs 500 per month but this was discontinued after a few years of operation of the co-operative. The co-operative is now a non-functioning enterprise. The operational profile of the enterprise further shows that as on 31.3.1999 it had 108 members under its fold and government's contribution to its capital had been 73.5 per cent as on that date (cf. Table 3.2).

3.2.2 Bhorakhai Primary Milk Producers' Co-operative Society Ltd.

This society of the milk producers' of Bhorakhai garden, under Silcoorie Gaon Panchayat of the Sonai Development Block of Cachar district was registered in the year 1980.

The garden outskirt of Bhorakhai Tea Estate is a potential area of milk production. It is also very near to the Silchar Town and the central office of the District Milk Union (i.e. CAMUL). The area is inhabited by both tea garden labourers as well as by the ex-tea garden labourers of Silcoorie Tea Estate.

Most of the villagers of the area are marginal cultivators. More than eighty per cent people of the area belong to lower income group.

Before promotion of the co-operative almost every family of the area had milch cow or buffalo and used to sell their surplus milk in the Silchar Town. The initiative and inspiration to form the enterprise originally came from the Officials of the Department of Veterinary and Dairy Development, Govt. of Assam. At the instances and initiatives of the government officials, some local milk producers' of the area, namely, Lalmohan Kurmi, Abdul Salam, Putul Goala, Hiralal Nunia and six others took the lead for promotion of the co-operative in the year 1980.

Initially 30 members of Bhorakhai garden, Shiv tilla, Mahadev tilla and Silcoorie garden joined the co-operative as its primary members.

The co-operative had been a captive decision unit of the CAMUL under the two tier integrated structure of operation. The main business of the enterprise had been collection of milk from the primary producers and supplying these to the CAMUL at a fixed rate and at a fixed time, for which CAMUL used to pay commission to this primary level
co-operative (PMPC) at a fixed rate per litre of milk collected. CAMUL also used to extend other extension services like veterinary services, artificial insemination services, managerial subsidy etc. The co-operative was managed by a Managing Committee constituted by its members. The enterprise operated its business so long as the CAMUL continued to extend their support services. As on 31.3.99, it had 88 members and 72.7 per cent contribution of the state government in its total capital. The society although shown as functional in the list of the Registrar of Co-operative Societies was found as having no business during the last few years. At present it is a non-functioning enterprise of the primary milk producers' (cf. Table 3.2).

3.2.3 Harinagar Primary Milk Producers' Co-operative Society Ltd.

A primary village level co-operative of the milk producers' of Harinagar under the Jaipur Block of Cachar district was formed and registered in the year 1981, initially with 54 members within its fold.

It covers the entire Harinagar Gaon Panchayat of Jaipur Development Block. The area is pre-dominantly inhabited by Nepalee, Barman (Dimasa), Bengalee and Hindi speaking community.

More than sixty per cent members of the co-operative are from the Nepalee community and the rest are from other communities. The Nepalese are traditional milk producers and are primarily dependent upon farming and production of milk.

Before promotion of the co-operative the milk producers of the area used to sell their milk in the Lakhipur Town and its sub-urban areas. Some of the producers also used to supply milk to the Ghugoor Dairy Plant of the Government of Assam.

In 1981, the Officials of the Department of Dairy Development, Government of Assam by dint of their closeness to some of the milk producers of Harinagar induced them to form the co-operative under the Operation Flood II Scheme. At the initiative of the government officials, the co-operative was promoted at Harinagar in the year 1981. The prime objective of the enterprise is availing subsidies and other support services from CAMUL (A district level union of milk producers) for milk production. Like other PMPCs the enterprise had been a captive decision unit of the CAMUL. It operated its business under the supervision and directives of the CAMUL under two tier system of operation. Government of Assam contributed the major share of the capital of the enterprise.

Survey of the enterprise further revealed that the enterprise suspended its
business operation since 1994-95. Though official records shows it as a functioning enterprise, it is practically a non-functioning co-operative. As on 31.3.99 it had a membership of 167 milk producers. Government contributed 82.7 per cent of the capital of the enterprise as on that date (cf. Table 3.2).

3.2.4 Hathikhal Palonghat Primary Milk Producers' Co-operative Society Ltd.

This primary co-operative of the milk producers' of Hathikhal and Palonghat under the Palonghat Block of Cachar district was formed in the year 1982, initially with 40 members within its fold.

It covers an area of twenty villages of Kuchudaram part IV, Sundari part I, II, III and IV, Nutan Kanchanpur, Bowali Hawar, Rukni part I, II, III and IV, under the Palonghat Block of Cachar district.

The primary occupation of the members of the enterprise is cultivation and farming. Most of them belong to the lower income group of population.

The members of the co-operative include people from different community and castes. There are Bengalee Hindus, Bengalee Muslims, Tea garden labourers and also those belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The initiative to form the co-operative came from the Officials of the CAMUL, who initially organised the milk producers of the villages and impressed them to form the co-operative in the year 1982. Structurally it had been a captive decision unit of the CAMUL and operated its business under the direct supervision of the CAMUL. It stopped functioning since 1994-95 when the CAMUL stopped its operation. The final accounts of the enterprise as on 31.3.99 showed that it had 59 members within its fold and 83.6 per cent of its capital was contributed by the state government (cf. Table 3.2).

3.2.5 Englar bazar Primary Milk Producers' Co-operative Society Ltd.

This Primary Milk Producers Co-operative of the villagers of Harinadik and Englar bazaar under the Badarpur Development Block of Karimganj district was formed in the year 1985. It is one of the functioning co-operatives of Karimganj district, which inspite of all adversities has been found to be running its business since 1985.

The area of operation of the enterprise covers the villages of Harinadik and Englar bazaar. Majority of the members of the enterprise are primarily cultivators and farmers.
Dairying is not their prime occupation. More than eighty per cent of the members of the enterprise are marginal cultivators and belonged to the lower income group of population.

This co-operative of the above villages had initially 43 members within its fold. The main function of the co-operative had been to collect milk from the producers and supplying these to the CAMUL under two-tier system of operation. The initiative to organise the milk producers of the area to join the co-operative organisation was induced by the Officials of the CAMUL as a part of their scheme for replication of Anand pattern under operation Flood II. The Officials of the CAMUL in collaboration with the Dairy Development Department of the Government of Assam, established contact with some known persons of the Englar bazar and convinced them to form the co-operative. It was the initiative of the Officials of the CAMUL that actually prompted the producers' to form the co-operative in 1985.

Like other primary milk producers' co-operatives (PMPCs), it had been a captive decision unit of the CAMUL and operated its business under the two-tier structure of operation till 1994-95. The final accounts of the enterprise show that as on 31.3.99 it had 43 members in its record and 87.4 per cent of the capital of the enterprise was contributed by the Government of Assam (cf. Table 3.2).

3.2.6. Operational profile of the Primary Milk Producers' Co-operatives: Summary of observations.

To sum up, our survey of the operational profile of the five primary milk producers' co-operatives revealed the following:

1. All the primary milk producers' co-operatives (PMPCs) were promoted during the early eighties between 1980 and 1985, following the promotion of the Cachar District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union (i.e. CAMUL) by the Government of Assam.

2. The PMPCs came into being primarily at the initiative of the CAMUL. This whole exercise actually formed part of a government project of replicating the Anand pattern under the Operation Flood II scheme. Officials of the CAMUL, in collaboration with the Officials of the Department of Dairy Development, Government of Assam, identified the potential areas of milk production and organised the producers to form the co-operatives.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the enterprise</th>
<th>Year of registration</th>
<th>Number of members (as on 31.3.99)</th>
<th>Capital invested (as on 31.3.99)</th>
<th>Govt. participation %</th>
<th>Operating results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sribar Primary Milk Producers' Co-operative Society Ltd.</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>4080</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>No business (currently non-functioning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bhorakhai Primary Milk Producers' Co-operative Society Ltd.</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>6880</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Harinagar Primary Milk Producers' Co-operative Society Ltd.</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>9670</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hathikhal Palonghat Primary Milk Producers' Co-operative Society Ltd.</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>3590</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Englar Bazar Primary Milk Producers' Co-operative Society Ltd.</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3430</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>798 (Profit)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest rupee.

Source: Final accounts of the enterprises.
3. Government also assisted the co-operatives by participating generously in the share capital of the enterprises. As may be seen from Table 3.2, government’s participation in the total capital invested in the sample enterprises ranged between 72.7 per cent and 87.4 per cent.

4. The primary business of these co-operatives (PMPCs) had been to collect milk from the primary producers and supply these to the CAMUL. CAMUL also occasionally used to extend support services to the primary level co-operatives in the form of managerial subsidy, supply of cattle feed and arranging veterinary services etc.

5. All the primary milk producers’ co-operatives followed a two-tier structure of operation with the Cachar District Co-operative Milk Producers Union (i.e. CAMUL) at the top and the PMPCs at the bottom. The PMPCs thus, had been the captive decision units of the CAMUL. They had no independent authority of operation.

6. The field survey of the enterprises indicated that while launching the primary level co-operatives, the infrastructural condition of the area and the socio-economic realities of the producers were not properly considered. For instance, the Hathikhal Palonghat Primary Milk Producers’ Co-operative had a relatively giant coverage of twenty villages, many of which were not easily accessible, particularly during the monsoon. Poor accessibility was also a great hindrance in case of the Sribar Primary Milk Producers’ Co-operative. Not only the collection of milk under these conditions became extremely difficult but it also led to high cost of operation.

7. Another noticeable feature in case of the PMPCs was the heterogeneous composition of their membership. Members’ belong to different caste, creed and communities. More importantly, in most of the cases dairying had not been the prime occupation of the members. In four out of the five cases studied, majority members’ prime occupation was agriculture. Nevertheless, the publicity campaign by the concerned government department and expectation of subsidies under Operation Flood II scheme induced the members to join the enterprises. Many of these expectations of course remained unfulfilled.

8. The functional relationship between the CAMUL and the PMPCs were not properly worked out leading often to communication gap, operational problems and misunderstanding among the members. The CAMUL along with its captive primary level co-operatives practically became non-functional since 1994-95.

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3.3 INDUSTRIAL CO-OPERATIVES

The operation profile of the selected industrial co-operative is presented below:

3.3.1 Katakhal Patikar Co-operative Society Ltd.

The only industrial co-operative in our sample had been the Katakhal Patikar Co-operative Society, an oldest co-operative organisation of the Handicraft artisans of Kalinagar (Katakhal) under the Algapur Block of Hailakandi District. This co-operative was registered in the year 1954.

It was promoted by the local artisans, of the village Katakhal who had been traditional artisans and skilled workers of Sheetal Pati an indigenous variety of mat made from a kind of shrub called Mutra or Patidol. The promoters of the co-operative, Late Jogesh Chandra Dey, Late Radha Gobinda Mandal, Late Dayal Chandra Dey, Late Binode Chandra Dey had been skill and traditional artisans of Sheetal pati. Initially the co-operative was registered with 207 members within its fold.

Majority members of the co-operative belong to the same occupation. Nearly twenty percent members of the society belong to Scheduled Caste community and the rest belong to Other Backward Class community. As on 31.3.99 the enterprise had 844 members within its fold.

The co-operative is located at a distance of 20 km. west from Silchar town and 20 km. from North-East side of Hailakandi district with its head quarter at Katakhal. The area of operation of the society is spread over the villages Bakrihaor part VIII, IX, X, Kalinagar part III, VI, VII, Narainpur-I, Polarpar, Srikona-I and III, Dighar Srikona and Chibitabisia.

Since the producers were primarily artisans of Sital pati and the market of their product were spread over a vast geographical area of the county. So, they were dependent upon middlemen for marketing of their products, who used to take away the lion’s share of ultimate net gain.

Against the above back drop the co-operative was launched with the objective of availing the economies of collective production and distribution of the finished products.

The capital of the enterprise constitutes the share of the members and also of the government. The main business of the enterprise comprise the purchasing and also producing of patidol (raw material) and availing the patidol to the members for manufacturing Sheetal Pati against wages and remuneration. The enterprise produces patidol in their own land and processes them in their own workshed by employing the
member artisans on wage basis. The co-operative also arranges the marketing of *Sheetal pati* produced by the members.

The structure of operation of the enterprise is unitary. It is a self contained decision unit of the members, managed by Managing Committee. The managing committee is constituted by the members through election. The Secretary is the ex-officio member of the Managing Committee and is accountable to the Managing Committee for his activities.

The financial statement of the enterprise showed that the enterprise had an accumulated profit of Rs. 1,52,772 as on 31.3.98 and the government contribution to its share capital had been Rs. 72.6 per cent as on that date (cf. Table 3.3). The co-operative has been operating for the last 45 years and is a functioning enterprise.

3.3.2 Operational profile of the selected Industrial Co-operative: Summary of observations.

To sum up, the operational profile of the sample industrial co-operative revealed the following:

1. The co-operative was launched in the year 1954, just after independence of the country.
2. The initiative to form the co-operative sprang up from the perceived needs of the producers. Government of course facilitated the formation by extending advisory support and participating in the share capital. Government's participation in the total capital invested in the enterprise as on 31.3.98 was as high as 95.7 per cent.
3. The traditional artisans of the locality are the members of the co-operative and there had been an occupational and community bondage among the members.
4. The prime business of the enterprise is to arrange the production and the marketing of *Sheetal pati*.
5. The enterprise is an unitary structured and self contained decision unit of the producers. The members manage the affairs of the co-operative through an elected Managing Committee.
6. Members of the enterprise are primarily dependent upon the co-operative for marketing of their produce.
7. The operational results of the enterprise showed that its membership increased from 207 to 844 during the 45 years of its operation. The financial statements of the enterprises showed that as on 31.3.98 the enterprise had an accumulated profit of Rs. 1,52,772.
TABLE 3.3: OPERATIONAL PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE INDUSTRIAL CO-OPERATIVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the enterprise</th>
<th>Year of registration</th>
<th>Number of members (as on 31.3.98)</th>
<th>Capital invested (as on 31.3.98)</th>
<th>Govt. participation %</th>
<th>Operating results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Share capital (in Rs.)</td>
<td>Borrowed Capital (in Rs.)</td>
<td>Total (in Rs.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Katakhal Patikar Co-operative Society Ltd.</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>844</td>
<td>27550</td>
<td>1,48,776</td>
<td>1,76,326</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest rupee.
Source: Final accounts of the enterprise.
3.4 AGRO-PROCESSING CO-OPERATIVES

The operational profile of the sample agro-processing co-operative is presented below:

3.4.1 Fulertal Agricultural Products Processing and Marketing Co-operative Society Ltd.

This agro-processing co-operative society of the Hmar community of Marculin, Jirighat and Fulertal area was formed in the year 1969. The co-operative is located at Marculin near Fulertal under the Lakhipur Block of Cachar district.

Almost all members of the co-operative are from Hmar Tribal community. The Hmar people are traditional Jhum cultivators. Cultivation of pineapple, orange and other fruits are their traditional occupation. More than seventy per cent farmers of the enterprise are illiterate and live below poverty line. Cultivation of pineapple and orange is their prime source of livelihood.

The villages of the farmers are situated in remote hilly areas. There is no means of vehicular transportation for carrying the produce from the source of production to the place of marketing.

Before formation of the co-operative, the farmers used to sell their produce to the middlemen at very cheap rates. During the harvesting season the farmers often had to face exploitation by the middlemen.

The abundant production of pineapple and orange in the area and the role of middlemen in exploitation of the producers were brought to the notice of the government by some educated persons through the local political leaders of the area. Following this, the Government of Assam took initiative to induce the farmers for formation of the co-operative. In response to the encouragement coming from the government officials some educated farmers of the locality organised other farmers of the area in the year 1969 and formed the co-operative as an independent decision unit of the members.

Initially there had been 27 members within the fold of the enterprise which gradually increased to 414 till end of March 1996.

In the initial years of its formation the main functions of the enterprise had been the collection of pineapple, orange and other fruits from the member producers and selling these in the local market of Lakhipur, Fulertal and Silchar. Subsequently in the year 1980,
at the initiative of the Department of Industries, Govt. of Assam and with financial support from the National Co-operative Development Corporation and the Government of Assam, the enterprise procured machineries and equipments for processing of the agro-products.

It started commercial production of pineapple juice, slice, Titbit, Jam and Squash from June 1987. In the year 1989, the co-operative was registered as SSI unit under the District Industries Centre, Silchar.

Thus, initially it was a producers co-operative organised for collective farming and marketing of agro-products; but subsequently it extended its activity to processing, packaging and marketing of the value added products of the enterprise.

The management of the enterprise had been upon the Managing Committee constituted by the members. However, after 1993, the Department of Co-operation, Government of Assam entrusted the management of the enterprise upon an adhoc committee constituted by the Government, with an Official of the Department of Co-operation as its executive officer.

The final accounts of the enterprise as on 31.3.97 showed that it had an accumulated loss of Rs. 17,42,665 and an accumulated debt of Rs. 14,28,286 as on that date. Further the capital composition of the enterprise showed that 99.0 per cent of the capital of the enterprise had been financed by the Government. The Government of Assam had Rs. 22,91,500 and the National Co-operative Development Co-operation had Rs. 36,000 towards the share capital of the enterprise as on 31.3.97 (cf. Table 3.4).

Survey of the enterprise further revealed that the leaders of the enterprise took little initiative in exploring new markets or introducing new marketing channels for sale of the products of the enterprise. They were not aware of the competitive market condition and the latest technology innovation. Lack of professionalism among the leaders and absence of appropriate marketing channel ultimately led to non-functioning of the enterprise since the late nineties.

The co-operative practically suspended its processing activities since 1995-96 and the marketing activities since 1997-98.
### TABLE 3.4: OPERATIONAL PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE AGRO-PROCESSING CO-OPERATIVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the enterprise</th>
<th>Year of registration</th>
<th>Number of members (as on 31.3.97)</th>
<th>Capital invested (as on 31.3.97)</th>
<th>Govt. participation %</th>
<th>Operating results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Share capital (in Rs.)</td>
<td>Borrowed Capital (in Rs.)</td>
<td>Total (in Rs.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Fulertal Agricultural Products Processing and Marketing Co-operative Society Ltd.</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>23,50,630</td>
<td>14,28,286</td>
<td>37,78,916</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest rupee.

Source: Final accounts of the enterprise.
3.4.2 Operational profile of the sample Agro-processing co-operative: Summary of observations.

To sum up, the operational profile of the sample agro-processing co-operative revealed the following:

1. The co-operative was promoted in the year 1969. Members of the co-operative are from the local tribal (Hmar) community of Fulertal area under the Lakhipur sub-division of Cachar district. Initially 27 farmers joined the co-operative.
2. The co-operative is located in a geographically remote and topographically backward area of Cachar district.
3. All members of the co-operative are from tribal community. Jhum cultivation and agro-farming is their traditional occupation.
4. The government policy of encouraging and promoting co-operative enterprises in the agro-processing sector triggered the formation of the co-operative.
5. Government contributed nearly ninety nine per cent of the share capital of the enterprise; also extended technical support and subsidy in the form of working capital finance.
6. The structure of operation of the enterprise is unitary. Initially it managed its affairs independently through a Managing Committee constituted by its members. But subsequently after a few year of its commencement of the processing operation, government intervened into the affairs and appointed an adhoc body of management.
7. The main businesses of the co-operative in the initial years of its formation were the producing and the marketing of pineapple, orange, banana and other fruits. After the commissioning of its processing unit, it extended its business to processing, packaging and marketing of processed products through appointed distributors.
8. The co-operative discontinued its processing function since 1995-96 but continued its other businesses till the late nineties, at a cumulative accumulated loss. As on 31.3.97, it had an accumulated loss of Rs. 17,42,665 and a long term debt of Rs. 14,28,286. Presently it is a non-functioning enterprise in terms of its business activities.
3.5 HANDLOOM WEAVERS' CO-OPERATIVES

The operational profile of the nine sample handloom weavers' co-operatives are presented below:

3.5.1 Arunoday Bayan Samabay Samiti Ltd.

Arunoday Bayan Samabay Samiti Ltd., Silchar, was registered in the year 1952, as a co-operative society of the handloom weavers'. Most of the members of the co-operative are traditional weavers of handloom clothes and are the victims of partition of the country.

The co-operative started its operation in 1952 at Berenga, a village in the vicinity of the Silchar town. Initially all members of the enterprise were from the Bengalee “Debnath” (Yogi) community of the erstwhile East Pakistan. Later the society extended its activities among the weavers of other communities living in the surrounding localities. As on 31.3.99, the total membership of the society stood at 141.

The broad objectives of the society are:
(a) To arrange collection and purchase of raw materials (yarn and dye products) in bulk and supply the raw materials to the weaver members for weaving of clothes;
(b) To arrange marketing of the finished clothes;
(c) To provide tools and looms for weaving of clothes to the artisans on easy terms;
(d) To facilitate services of common work shed to the artisans with required number of looms and accessories for production of handloom clothes;
(e) To arrange easy loan for the artisan members for purchasing of looms and accessories;
(f) To arrange for housing facility to the weaver member in a central locality;
(g) To ensure regular and remunerative wage to the weavers for upliftment of their standard of living; and
(h) To arrange training of the weavers.

Our survey of the co-operative revealed that initially nearly ninety per cent of the weavers of the enterprise were solely dependant on the co-operative for their livelihood. Almost all members were traditional weavers of ordinary “Saree” and “Gamcha”. Only a few weavers had the aptitude and skill of weaving Designed clothes, ‘Mosquito’, ‘Bedsheet’, ‘Bedcover’, ‘Chaadar’ and ‘Laisampi’.
The promoters of the enterprise, namely, Kulendra Debnath, Roychand Debnath, Adharchand Debnath – and others were relatively well off among the weavers, having their own establishment of production and marketing of handloom clothes. They also had close link with the local political leaders and government officials.

The perceived needs of the promoters like Kulendra Debnath, Roychand Debnath and others to avail the benefits of government assistances for large scale production and distribution of handloom clothes impelled them to organise other producers and form the co-operative.

Government of course, facilitated the formation of the enterprise by sharing the capital and also by extending other support services.

Prior to the formation of the Assam Co-operative Artisans' and Weavers' Federation Ltd. (ARTFED), a state level federation of weavers and artisans in 1978, the structure of operation of the enterprise had been unitary in design and it operated as a self contained decision unit of the members. After 1978, the co-operative became an affiliated unit of the three tier structure of operation with the ARTFED at the top level and the Barak Valley Weavers and Artisans Co-operative (BWAC) at the district level. Since then it had been operating as a captive decision unit of the BWAC and the ARTFED.

The main business of the co-operative is arranging production of the handloom clothes through the weavers of the enterprise and marketing them through the BWAC (the district level co-operative of the handloom weavers) and also through the ARTFED (the state level federation of the handloom weavers).

The co-operative used to collect raw materials from the BWAC against specific orders and arrange weaving of clothes through the members. The BWAC and the ARTFED used to market the products through their own marketing channels. The weavers were paid remuneration at a rate fixed by the BWAC.

Government contributed the lion’s share of the capital of the enterprise by participating in the share capital and also by extending working capital finance. The final accounts of the enterprise as on 31.3.99 showed that 87.5 percent share capital of the enterprise was financed by the state government and the National Co-operative Development Corporation.

The enterprise has been operating on loss since 1995-96 after the period when the ARTFED and the BWAC stopped their three tier system of operation. However as on 31.3.99, the co-operative had an accumulated profit balance of profit of Rs. 87,584 (cf. Table 3.5).
3.5.2 Harinagar Rajbangsi S/T Tat Unnayan Silpa Samabay Samiti Ltd.

This co-operative society of the Scheduled Tribe community of Harinagar Gaon Panchayat under the Jaipur Block of Cachar district was registered in the year 1986. Initially there were 102 members in the co-operative.

Like other handloom weavers' co-operatives, this enterprise was promoted mainly with the following objectives:

(a) To arrange purchase and collection of raw materials (yarn and dye products) in bulk and supply them to the artisans for production of clothes against wages;
(b) To arrange marketing of the finished clothes;
(c) To provide the artisans with looms and accessories against easy terms and loan;
(d) To arrange for community work shed with facility of looms and accessories;
(e) To arrange training of weavers for design clothes and modern techniques of weaving and dyeing; and
(f) To ensure regular and remunerative wages to the artisans.

Weaving had been the traditional occupation of the members but not the prime occupation. Around ninety per cent members of the co-operative are Rajbangshi and the rest are from other communities.

The area of operation of the enterprise is spread over the entire Harinagar Gaon Panchayat and more than eighty per cent members are female.

Government's policy to promote handloom co-operatives among the Scheduled Cast and Scheduled Tribe community along with the liberal support services induced the promoter to take initiative for forming the enterprise.

Government contributed the lion's share of the capital of the enterprise and also extended support services in different forms.

The structure of operation of the enterprise is three-tier, with the state level federation (i.e. ARTFED) at the top and the district level union of weavers' (i.e. BWAC) at the middle level. It is a linkage dependent captive decision unit of the BWAC and the ARTFED. However, since the last few years it has been operating as an independent decision unit of the members in practice.

Initially for about seven years the main function of the enterprise had been collection of raw materials from the district level co-operative (BWAC) and arranging weaving of clothes on their behalf. Since mid-nineties the co-operative has been functioning practically as self contained decision unit, operating their business of weaving and marketing independently.
The final accounts of the enterprise showed that it had 260 members and an accumulated profit balance of Rs. 60,012 as on 31.3.99. Government contributed 72.1 per cent of the share capital and also 87.2 of the total capital invested in the enterprise as on that date (cf. Table 3.5).

3.5.3 Singla Valley S/C Samabay Bayan Samiti Ltd.

Singla Valley S/C Samabay Bayan Samiti, a co-operative society of the Scheduled Caste weavers' community of the village Fanairband under Chamtila Goan Panchayat of the Dullabcherra Block in the district of Karimganj was registered in the year 1992, with 100 members within its fold.

The area of operation of the co-operative is spread over the village Fetipath, Laicherra and Bethairbond under the same block of Karimganj district.

Around eighty per cent weavers of the enterprise belong to the Scheduled Caste community and the rest twenty per cent belong to the Nath and Debnath communities, which are recognised as Other Backward Communities (OBC) in the state of Assam.

About half of the members are traditional weavers and the rest are primarily marginal cultivators.

Survey of the enterprise revealed that the promotion of the co-operative was induced by the Officials of the District Handloom and Textiles Department who by dint of their closeness to some well off weavers of the locality, namely Niranta Malakar, Nishi Kanta Malakar, Subhash Namasudra and others initiated the formation of the co-operative. Initially, there were 100 members in the enterprise. The objectives of formation of the enterprise had been to arrange weaving of clothes under the direct supervision of the Karimganj District Handloom Weavers' and Artisans Co-operative (KHWAC) and to avail subsidies and grants from the government against production of Janata Clothes, under the special promotional package of the Government of India, Department of Handloom and Textiles.

Structurally the enterprise is vertically integrated under the three-tier structure of operation with the state level federation of weavers (i.e. ARTFED) at the apex level and the district level union of weavers (i.e. KHWAC) at the middle level. The enterprise is a shareholder member of the Karimganj District Handloom Weavers and Artisans Co-operative.

The primary business of the enterprise is procurement of raw materials (i.e. yam
...and dye products) in bulk and making the raw materials available to the members for weaving of clothes against remuneration and wages; arranging marketing of the clothes and providing support services to the members under the supervision of the Karimganj District Handloom Weavers and Artisans Co-operative.

The final accounts of the enterprise reflected that the enterprise had an accumulated loss of Rs. 4284 and 102 members in its roll of register as on that date, Government contributed ninety per cent of the capital of the enterprise in the form of participation in the share capital and also by extending loans (cf. Table 3.5).

3.5.4 Karchaghat Mahila Samabay Samiti Ltd.

Registered in the year 1985 with the Director of Handloom and Textile, Govt. of Assam, Karchaghat Mahila Samabay Samiti is a co-operative society of the women weavers of village Karchaghat, under Tinakhal Goan Panchayat of Lowairpoa Block under Karimganj district. The area of operation of the society includes four villages, namely, Chepargaon, Karchaghat, Burunga and Mairangaon under Tinakhal G.P. The villages are pre-dominantly inhabited by Manipuri community, who are traditional weavers of handloom clothes. Initially, the enterprise was registered with 51 women weavers of Karchaghat, among whom Smt. Niranjani Devi, Bharati Devi, Leima Devi and Ijemtambi Devi had been the leaders who took the lead for promotion of the enterprise.

Historically, Manipuri female folk are skilled artisan of handloom clothes, mainly of 'Phanek' and Manipuri Gamcha a traditional manipuri brand of cloth. Besides weaving of the above two variety of clothes, the weavers of the Karchaghat weavers co-operative also produce Saree, Dhuti, Laisempi, Karbi shawl (woollen), Bedsheet and Designed Saree etc.

The members of the society are primarily Manipuri housewives and unemployed girls, who were identified as potential weavers by the Department of Handloom and Textiles and were motivated by the government officials to form the co-operative and avail the government grants and subsidies under Janata Clothes Schemes.

The society operates its function under the supervision and guidance of the District Weavers' and Artisans Co-operatives of Karimganj District (i.e. KHWAC) and managed by a Managing Committee elected by the shareholders. The main function of the enterprise is producing and marketing of handloom clothes under the supervision of the Karimganj District Handloom Weavers and Artisans Co-operative.
The enterprise is a captive decision unit of the district level co-operative of the Handloom Weavers' and Artisans' (i.e. KHWAC) and follows the three-tier integrated structure of operation with the state level federation of Handloom Weavers' Co-operative i.e. ARTFED, at the top. It has been operating on loss since the last three years but had an accumulated profit of Rs. 29,969 as on 31.3.99. The final accounts of the enterprise showed that as on 31.3.99 it had a total member of 68 weavers. Government contributed 94.4 percent of its total capital invested as on 31.3.99 (cf. Table 3.5).

3.5.5 Sildubi S/C Weavers' Co-operative Ltd.

This co-operative society of the scheduled caste people of Sildubi Gaon Panchayat under the Barjalenga Development Block of Cachar district was formed and registered in the year 1994 with 102 members within its fold.

The co-operative with its office at Sildubi village was promoted by the artisans of Sildubi, who had handloom weaving as their traditional occupation.

The promoter chairman and other members of the society belong to the scheduled caste community, mostly Roy (Namasudra) and Das (Patni) community.

The promoter chairman and the secretary of the enterprise who had their close contact with the leader of other weavers co-operative and more particularly, the chairman and secretary of the Barak Valley Weavers' and Artisans Co-operative (BAWAC), came to understand the need and usefulness of co-operative during the early nineties. Having been inspired by the suggestions of the leaders of the BWAC and the Officials of the Department of Handloom and Textiles, Cachar, they formed the co-operatives society in the year 1994 with 102 member weavers.

The primary function of the co-operative, like other weavers' co-operatives is producing and marketing of clothes under the supervision of the BWAC and making the support services extended by the government available to the member weavers.

Like other primary handloom weavers' co-operative in the given region the structure of operation of the enterprise is federal in theory and unitary in practice. The other mode of operation of the enterprise are similar to that of other weavers' co-operatives of the district. The area of operation of the enterprise cover the entire Sildubi Gaon Panchayat.

As on 31.3.99, the society had 104 members within the fold of its operation and as on that date it had an accumulated profit of Rs. 19,524. Government also extended grant
of Rs. 2,00,000 to the enterprise under Housing Development Scheme of the handloom weavers and contributed Rs. 20,000 towards the capital of the co-operative. The final accounts of the co-operative showed that as on 31.3.99, government's share in the capital of the enterprise had been 74 per cent of the total capital invested in the enterprise (cf. Table 3.5).

3.5.6 Mirzapur Samabay Bayan Samiti Ltd.

It is the oldest weavers' co-operative society in the district of Karimganj and is situated in the village Mirzapur, under the Bhanga Gaon Panchayat of the Badarpur Block. The society was formed in the year 1946 with 32 members within its fold and was registered under the Government of undivided Assam before the enactment of the present Assam Co-operative Societies Act, 1949 (Act 1 of 1950).

The area of operation of the society includes the village Mirzapur, Masli and Rajpassa.

Late Pramotra Ranjan Das, Late Nalini Kr. Das and Sri Sasankha Sekhar Das along with others took the initiative to promote the co-operative, with the objective to protect themselves collectively from the competition of the private entrepreneurs and to facilitate marketing of the finished products, through the enterprise at a remunerative price.

Almost cent per cent members of the co-operative are Bengalee Hindus, belonging to Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes and General Castes. Initially around 80 per cent members were traditional weavers and the rest were seasonal artisans. There was no community bondage among the members but there was occupational bondage and also the felt need for large scale operation, which actually impelled the promoters and members to form the co-operative society in the year 1946.

Like other weaving co-operatives this enterprise is managed by a managing committee. The secretary of the co-operative is the whole time executive of the enterprise.

The product range of the society includes Saree, Dhuti, Gamcha, Bedheet, Laisampi, Pillow cover, Towel, Lungi, Mosquitonet and specially made designed Saree.

The enterprise operates under the supervision of the District level Weavers Co-operative as an integrated unit of the KHWAC. Like other weavers' co-operatives its main function centre around production of handloom clothes and marketing of the product in the
local market through the Karimganj District Handloom Weavers' and Artisans' Co-operative (i.e. KHWAC). Table 3.5 shows that as on 31.3.99, the enterprise had 157 members and an accumulated profit balance of Rs. 70,785. The Government's contribution towards the share capital of the enterprise had been 92 per cent of the total capital of the enterprise as on that date. Government also extended financial support to the enterprise in the form of subsidies and grants.

3.5.7 Maidanbeel Weavers' Co-operative Society Ltd.

This co-operative society of the handloom weavers' of Maidanbeel under the Arkatipur Gaon Panchayat of Cachar district was promoted in the year 1994 with 101 primary members.

About fifty percent members of the enterprise are Manipuri and the rest are from other communities. The area of operation of the enterprise is spread over the villages Laithaibasti, Padampur and Maidanbeel. Most of the members are traditional weavers, but weaving is not their primary occupation. There had been occupational bondage among most of the members.

It had been the government's policy of handloom development, through extension of support services and participation in the share capital of the co-operatives that impelled the members to form the co-operative. Thus, government had been the primary initiator of the enterprise.

The structure of operation of the enterprise like other weavers' co-operatives is federal and linkage dependent. The primary co-operative is a captive decision unit of the BWAC and the ARTFED and its main business centre around production and marketing of clothes under the directives and supervision of the BWAC. As on 31.3.99, the enterprise had an accumulated loss of Rs. 41,171 and a membership of 101 handloom weavers. Government contributed 54.6 per cent of the capital of the enterprise (cf. Table 3.5).

3.5.8 Chandrapur Handloom Weavers' Co-operative Society Ltd.

The Chandrapur Handloom Weavers' Co-operative society is located in the village Badri Chandrapur under the Banskandi Block of the district of Cachar. The area of operation of the society covers the villages of Manipur Part-I, Badrichandrapur, Nizbanskandi Part-I, Part-II and Chandrapur Part-I to part-IV.
The society was formed and registered in the year 1987, by the handloom weavers of the above villages. The most distinguishing aspect of the society is that the promoters of the society were mostly women. Smt. Singhavi Devi, Sadma Begum, Thaibi Devi, Anima Begum, Hema Rani Singha were the leader who initiated the formation of the society. Although the weavers of the society consist both men and women artisans of the area, but the women artisans dominates over the men artisans. The promoter chairperson of the enterprise was a women artisan, even the present chairperson of the co-operative Smt. Pakpi Singha is also an uprising women weaver. All weavers of the enterprise are from Manipuri community. The primary occupation of majority of the members is cultivation and weaving being their secondary occupation.

Thus, all members of the co-operative belong to the same community and same occupation, with traditional skill and aptitude. The society was formed with 167 members, when the 'Janata' cloth scheme of the government was in operation and was running successfully in the district. The primary objective of the society is availing the benefits of subsidies and grants extended by the government and ensuring marketing of the produce of the enterprise at remunerative prices.

The structure of operation of the enterprise was found to be federal with the primary village level handloom weavers’ co-operative at the bottom, the District level co-operative called the BWAC at the middle and the Apex co-operative called the ARTFED at the top of the federal structure. The enterprise manages its operation through an elected body of managing committee. As on 31.3.99, the co-operative maintained a membership of 324 artisans and had an accumulated loss of Rs. 12,375. Government contributed 86.7 per cent of its share capital and 88.7 percent of the total capital of the enterprise as on that date (cf. Table 3.5).

3.5.9 Sreema Samabay Bayan Samiti Ltd.

Promoted in the year 1988, as a registered co-operative society of the handloom weavers of Dudpatil Part IV and Massughat Gaon Panchayat of the Borkhola Block under Cachar District, Sreema Samabay Bayan Samiti, is one of the functioning co-operative enterprise of the primary weavers of that area. Initially 102 members of the area joined the co-operative for achieving their common interest of availing the government subsidies and assistances extended towards production of handloom clothes and joint marketing of the produce at remunerative prices through co-operative efforts.
The area of operation of the society includes the villages of Massughat Gaon Panchayat such as Sonacherra, Rupacherra and Dudpatil part IV. The artisans and weavers of the society are mostly Manipuri and Bengalee debnath (Jogi) community. Most of the members are poor and marginal farmers, of course, there are also a few progressive farmers with surplus production of crops, to whom weaving is a secondary and occasional occupation. About sixty per cent of the weavers are Manipuri and forty per cent are of Debnath community.

One Sri Haridhan Debnath of Dudpatil part IV, a progressive weaver along with six others floated the idea of formation of the co-operative society in the year 1988. Both Manipuri and Debnath members of the co-operative are traditionally skilled artisans of Saree, Gamcha, Mosquito net, Bedsheet etc. It had been the government incentives and policy decision to improve the economic condition of the weavers by providing them employment oriented schemes and subsidies, that prompted the weavers of the area to organise the co-operative society in the year 1988. The primary objective of the enterprise is to ensure regular employment to the weavers against remunerative wages under three-tier structure of operation. Other objectives of the enterprise included facilitating easy availability of credit for purchase of looms and other accessories and providing extension services like common workshop, training to the members. All these objectives along with government favourable policy encouraged the members to form the co-operative.

Government contributed the major share of the capital of the co-operative. The enterprise also received margin money assistance and other grants from government agencies for development of the co-operative.

The structure of operation of the enterprise like other weavers co-operatives of the region is federal and it operates as a captive decision unit of the BWAC and the ARTFED. The prime function of the enterprise is production and distribution of handloom clothes under the supervision and direction of the BWAC and extending support services to the members.

The financial results of the enterprise revealed that it had 253 members and an accumulated profit balance of Rs. 29,619 as on 31.3.99. The enterprise is operating its business on profit since the last consecutive years. Government contributed 90 per cent of the capital of the enterprise as on that date (cf. Table 3.5).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the enterprise</th>
<th>Year of registration</th>
<th>Number of members (as on 31.3.99)</th>
<th>Capital invested (as on 31.3.99)</th>
<th>Government participation %</th>
<th>Operating results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Arunoday Bayan Samabay Samiti Ltd.</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>1,36,448 8,64,706</td>
<td>10,01,204</td>
<td>87.5 96.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Harinagar Rajbangshi S/T Tat Unnayan Samabay Samiti Ltd.</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>41,610 49,434 91,044</td>
<td>72.1 87.2</td>
<td>60,012 (Profit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Singla Valley S/C Samabay Bayan Samiti Ltd.</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>10000 10,000</td>
<td>90.0 90.0</td>
<td>42,844 (Loss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Karchaghat Mahila Samabay Bayan Samiti Ltd.</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>6080 6100 12180</td>
<td>88.8 94.4</td>
<td>29,969 (Profit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Sildubi S/C Weavers Co-operative Society Ltd.</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>30400 9612 40,012</td>
<td>65.8 74.0</td>
<td>19,524 (Profit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Mirzapur Samabay Bayan Samiti Ltd.</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>39110 104270 1,43,380</td>
<td>92.0 97.8</td>
<td>70,785 (Profit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Maidanbeel Weavers Co-operative Society Ltd.</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>4430 4480</td>
<td>54.6 54.6</td>
<td>41,171 (Loss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Chandrapur Handloom Weavers Co-operative Society Ltd.</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>30,600 41,200 71,800</td>
<td>86.7 88.7</td>
<td>123,75 (Loss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Sreema Samabay Bayan Samiti Ltd.</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>11,530 13,833 25,363</td>
<td>78.1 90.0</td>
<td>29,619 (Profit)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest rupee.

Source: Final accounts of the enterprises.
3.5.10 Operational profile of the handloom weavers' co-operatives: Summary of observations.

To sum up, the operational profile of the nine sample handloom weavers' co-operatives revealed the following:

1. Seven out of the nine sample handloom weavers' co-operatives were promoted during the period between 1984 and 1994, following the promotion of the Assam Apex Weavers and Artisans Co-operative Federation Ltd. (i.e. ARTFED) in 1978.

2. Members of the co-operative in most of the enterprises are traditional weavers belonging to different castes, communities and are spread over a vast area of operation. Weaving had been their traditional occupation, but not the prime source of livelihood.

3. The government policy for restructuring the handloom weavers' co-operatives under a three-tier system of operation and extension of financial supports in the form of subsidies, grants and participation in the share capital of the enterprises imbibed the primary weavers to form the co-operatives, particularly after 1978.

4. Major part of the invested capital of the enterprises studied by us came from the government. In seven out of the nine cases studied government's contribution was more than 80 per cent of the total capital invested in the sample enterprises.

5. The enterprises followed a three-tier system of operation, with the ARTFED at the Apex level, the District level weavers' co-operatives at the Middle level and the Primary weavers co-operatives at the Bottom level.

6. The primary function of the co-operatives included purchasing and collecting of yarn and other materials from the District level weavers' co-operatives; making these available to the artisan members for weaving of clothes as per the specification of the District level weavers' co-operatives, supplying the finished clothes to the District level weavers co-operatives against payment of remuneration by the later at specified rates that used to cover both the direct cost of production and also the managerial overhead of the enterprise.

7. Six out of the nine sample enterprises had a balance of accumulated profit as on 31.3.99. However, our field survey revealed that the grant of subsidies and other support services by the District level weavers co-operatives and the State level federations of the weavers have been discontinued since the mid-nineties. This in turn adversely affected the operational health and the volume of business of the enterprises.