Chapter 5: Role of Governmental and Non-Governmental Organization on resettlement and rehabilitation of women victims

5.0: Introduction:

In the armed conflict situation, women and children are usually the worst hit. This type of situation has resulted in separation, displacement and dislocation of the families, homes and properties. To overcome this situation it is important for the Governments or NGOs to provide rehabilitation scheme for affected victims.

Rehabilitation is a multidimensional issue having complex linkage with gender, livelihood and even governance facets which involves relief, rehabilitation and resettlement. Relief means the immediate support offered to the affected persons during a disaster that disrupts the normal routine of life, causing loss of life and property. Rehabilitation means the restoration of someone to a useful place in society by re-establishing incomes, livelihood, living and social systems. Resettlement is used to define the process of starting of a new life in another part of country.

The Central Government and the State Government of Assam have taken certain measures to provide rehabilitation to victims in armed conflict situations.
5.1 Government Initiative for Rehabilitation:

5.1.1 AASHWAS Project: ‘Children are sons and daughters of life’s longing for itself. Let us take them into our fold for a better future’. (Khalil Gibran).

Keeping this line in mind and recognising the effect of armed insurgency in North East India, the Assam Police have initiated a project called AASHWAS in collaboration with UNICEF to help child victims of violence in Assam. It has implemented an educational rehabilitation scheme to provide direct assistance to children who have been the victims of the armed conflict. The National Foundation-sponsored programme is directed at building communal harmony. It tries to help child victims of violence and insurgency in Assam. It was inaugurated on 14th Nov, 2001. Initially, Project was collaborated with the international organisation called UNICEF and later with the National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH), New Delhi, an organization of Ministry of Home Affairs.

Objectives:

i) Create and develop a humane attitude towards children and also develop professional skills of the Police Personnel. Design and impart special training to achieve this.

ii) Sensitize the people in general and those living in the affected areas of conflict in particular issues relating to children. Develop a genuine concern for children.

iii) Creation of public opinion against all kinds of violence and terror that has direct bearing on the children.
iv) Collect and collate data relating to children’s families affected by violence perpetrated by any group irrespective of motives or status of victim families.

v) Identify, co-ordinate, employ and deploy experts to help victim families in their socio-psychological and educational rehabilitation.

National Foundation for Communal Harmony offers financial assistance to the children of the victim families for their educational rehabilitation. It extends financial assistance to the children whose i) Parents or the serving parent or the main bread earning member in the family was killed or permanently incapacitated during communal caste, ethnic or terrorist violence. ii) Family is below poverty line (BPL) and iii) If the child is below eighteen years of age. Families belonging to below poverty line, in whose households, violent death has taken place during last ten years, are contacted by the local police stations and applications in prescribed forms filled-up as per requirement of the Foundation. As per the scheme, all such children receive an amount of rupees one thousand to fifteen hundred per month till the child attains the age of twenty five. Child from class I to H.S Level receives 1000/-, up to Degree /Post Graduate Level 1,250/- and for technical education 1500/- as scholarship per month. The cheque issued by the National Foundation for Communal Harmony, New Delhi for the entire year for a beneficiary child distributed through the Deputy Commissioner’s offices and is deposited against the bank account of the family. Project Aashwas identifies the beneficiary children through the local Police Station, arranges the documentation and facilitates the receipt of the monthly stipend through banks. It also has a system of supervision of utilization
of the assistance by domestic visits through police officials. Till now 1,103 students have received scholarships of it. The Foundation has already sanctioned 967 applications so far. It conducts periodic get together of the beneficiaries to take stock of their progress in educational and psycho-social lives.

Policemen were given training on child psychology and interpersonal communication. A series of Orientation Training Programme with a scientific syllabus was conducted at the National institute for Child Development (NIPDICD), Guwahati.

It has claimed itself that more than 1000 children have received education help till now.

Their message was “Come one, come all, let us have a violence free society wherein our children can have a better future.” *(Source: Assam Police Website).*

When we have seen the list of beneficiaries from the project AASHWAS, we could find a very few child getting benefitted by it. Moreover, in most of the cases availing such schemes needs lot of paper work and time. Interestingly, children from militant families have not been benefitting from this project. Maloti Das, a relative of ULFA militant has told us “Though I wanted to apply AASHWAS for my daughter’s education help after my husband’s unnatural death, but being a relative of militant they rejected my application since I could not produce death certificate of my husband what AASHWAS wanted” *(Field Work Observation).* Only victim of civilian families or govt employees have got the benefits of the scheme. Ranjana Patowary, a woman relative of Government employee victim said, “My son’s education has become
possible because of AASHWAS help’ (Field Work observation). Niru Deka, wife of Police Inspector who was killed in the hands of ULFA stated that her two school going children’s education had become possible because of AASHWAS’s initiative. But surprisingly, this scheme has not been able to touch victims of remote villages of Assam. During our survey in remote villages of various blocks we have seen that most of victim families have not heard about AASHWAS. When we told about various provisions under AASHWAS they did not show any interest on it. Whatever may be the limitations, Aashwas continue to roll on. Their motto: ‘We do not want children to be social misfits tomorrow, we will tackle them today’ (The Assam Tribune, July 18, 2004).

5.1.2 Rajiv Gandhi Memorial Scheme for rehabilitation of victims of violence:

The Rajiv Gandhi Memorial Sangsthapan Yojana aims to provide terrorist, ethnic, communal, police firing, police action, encounter or any other form of violence through education, vocational training and income generating schemes in different fields on the basis of their preferences, individual skills and viability. However, the scheme will lay more emphasis on widows and as far as possible the children of victim of violence will be accommodated under the scheme ‘AASHWAS’ which is already in operation. Assistance under this scheme will also be provided to persons suffering from permanent disability caused by any of the above mentioned forms of violence. The basic of this project is to make them self-sufficient and self-reliant.
Eligibility Conditions:

A) The beneficiaries will be children and widows of victims of violence suffering from permanent disability caused by violence and also of victims of police firing/police action/encounter etc.

B) Age: Educational assistance will be admissible up to the age of 25 years. However, there will be no age bar for beneficiaries selected for vocational training and income generating schemes.

C) Families of eligible persons who were given employment or pension by the Govt. under circumstances coming under the purview of schemes will not be entitled to any benefits under this scheme.

D) Assistance under the scheme will be limited to one member per ‘family’. However; educational assistance may be extended to all the children of an affected family.

Schemes/Activities: Financial assistance will be provided for the following purposes:-

a) Education

b) Vocational training

c) Income generating schemes

d) Housing

Maximum limit of Assistance: Financial assistance sanctioned to a beneficiary for income generating schemes will be determined by the nature of scheme selected to a maximum limit of Rs.50,000/- (Rupees fifty thousand) per beneficiary. The performance of the students receiving educational assistance under the scheme would be reviewed by the Rajiv Gandhi Memorial Trust and
additional assistance will be given to meritorious students. In case of income generating ventures, assistance may be released in either cash or kind.

**Mode of Payment:** Funds will be disbursed to the beneficiaries either directly by the trust or through the concerned District Level Committee.

All funds disbursed to beneficiaries will be deposited in Bank accounts opened in their names by the Deputy Commissioners. For educational assistance, cheques will be issued in the name of the head of the institution where the beneficiary is enrolled to meet expense like tuition fees/books etc. The rest of the amount will be given to the guardians of the children to meet other incidental expenditure.

**Implementing Agency:** The District Level Committee will consist of –

A) The Deputy Commissioner-Chairman

B) The Additional Deputy Commissioner (Development)-Member

Secretary

C) The Superintendent of Police-Member

D) Project Director, DRDA-Member

E) Lead Bank Officer-Member

F) General Manager, DICC-Member

G) Two Representatives from families of violence victims-Member

H) District Elementary Education Officer-Member

I) District Social Welfare Officer-Member

J) District Officer, Labour & Employment Deptt-Member
The District Level Committee will be assigned the task of finalizing the scheme for each beneficiary and preparing the modalities of disbursement of the fund allotted.

**Schemes to be adopted:** The District Level Committee will finalize the selected schemes to be taken by the beneficiaries after carrying out actual field verification and awareness camp for the beneficiaries taking into account their preferences, individual skills, and assets along with economic and technical viability of the scheme.

**Monitoring:** The project will be constantly and regularly monitored by the District Level Committee which will meet at least once every quarter and monitor the progress through specially authorized agencies or concerned Govt. Departments.

The revised guidelines have implemented from 1st April, 2012. *(Source: Department of Home Affairs, Government of Assam).*

Since the procedure is very lengthy and complicated very few have got assistance from it *(Field Work Observation).* Few children of Forum for Terrorist Families have got assistance from it.

### 5.1.3 Scheme for Surrender-Cum-Rehabilitation of Militants:

In order to attract the ULFA cadres who intended to surrender, Hiteswar Saikia the then Chief Minister of Assam came with a rehabilitation plan for the surrendered. The scheme was later known as Scheme for Surrender-cum-rehabilitation of Militants in the North East: Government of Assam. The Scheme was called the ‘100 Per Cent Special Money Margin Scheme’ and was implemented between 1 June, 1992 and 31 March, 1997. Later on, the state
government of Assam declared another scheme in 1998 for the surrender and rehabilitation of the terrorists of various outfits. The objective of the scheme is to wean away the misguided youth and hard-core militants that have strayed into the folds of militancy and now find themselves trapped into that net. The scheme also seeks to ensure that the militants who have surrendered do not find it attractive to militants again (Government document on the rehabilitation scheme for the militants, 1998).

Out of 100 crore central assistance, two kinds of loan were provided. Individually, one surrendered cadre was given assistance of two lakh rupees and up to an amount of 20 lakh rupees for a cooperative group of surrendered militants. In addition, the cadres got preferable treatment in government contracts such as running of fish, coal, market syndicates and were liberally given licence for liquor permit. The cadres were given permission to carry their own guns and have governmental security personnel. Later on the government came up with another scheme in the year 1998.

**Benefits under the Scheme 1998**

1. Persons eligible under the scheme will be initially lodged in a rehabilitation camp where they will be imparted training in a trade/vocation of their liking or benefitting their aptitude.

2. They shall be paid a monthly stipend for a period of 12 months. The stipend in respect of a surrendered ULFA cadre shall not exceed Rs 2000/- per month. The scale of stipend for various categories of surrendered will be decided by the State Government in consultation with the Government of India.

3. Board and lodging at the rehabilitation camp will be free.
Note 1. The stay of a surrendered cadre in a rehabilitation camp shall not exceed one year. All attempts shall be made to settle the cadres during this period. In case of settlement of any cadre before the expiry of one year, the stipend shall be stopped with effect from the date of settlement.

Note 2: Minor crime case against successfully rehabilitated surrendered cadres will be withdrawn.

Note 3: The surrendered cadres who have committed terrible crimes like murder, rape, abduction, etc. will be subject to the process of law and surrender shall not imply amnesty from the crimes.

Note 4: A surrendered cadre who indulges in crime while under rehabilitation shall forfeit the benefits under the scheme.

Note 5: The agency for rehabilitation may be a suitable NGO and/or the state government. In case it is an NGO, it will run the rehabilitation camp with support from the security forces and the government where required (A suitable NGO, which has good credentials and willing to work in this sphere, will have to be identified and provided necessary support from the government). Necessary infrastructure for board, lodging and training of surrendered shall be provided to the NGO at government cost (Source: Government document on the rehabilitation scheme for the militants, 1998).

Incentives for weapons:

6. The following incentives have been built into the scheme for the surrendered weapons/ammunitions:
i) Rocket Launchers/UMG/GPMG/PIMCA/Sniper Rifle: Rs 25,000 per weapon

ii) AK 47/56/74 Rifle: Rs 15,000 per weapon

iii) 303 Rifles/Pistol/Revolver and other service weapon: Rs 3,000 per weapon

iv) Rocket: Rs. 1,000 per weapon

v) Grenade/Hand Grenade/Stick Grenade: Rs 500 per grenade

vi) Remote Control device: Rs 3000 each

vii) Ammunition of all types: Rs 3 per round

viii) Wireless sets:

   a) Short range: Rs1000 each

   b) Long Range: Rs5000 each set

ix) IED: Rs3000 each

x) Explosive Material: Rs1000 per kg

However, the incentive given for surrender of the aforesaid arms shall be deposited in the form of a Fixed Deposit in the joint names of Surrendered and the NGO/State Government nominee and shall be given to the surrendered at the time of his leaving the Rehabilitation Camp.

7. The State Governments of the North East shall implement the Scheme. The Government of India shall provide 100 percent reimbursement for expenditure incurred on the rehabilitation of surrendered. Details would be worked out by the ministry of Home Affairs in consultation with the Ministry of Finance.

8. The Government of India shall have the right to inspect any of the Camps set up for rehabilitation or transit and to verify any record in this regard.
**Procedure**

9. The following agencies will be involved in the process of surrender and rehabilitation:

   IG (Special branch), Army, Central Para Military Force, A nominated NGO.

   The scheme will be applicable to those militants who have surrendered after 1-4-1998. *(Source: Documents on North East India Compiled by Jaideep Saikia, 2010, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi.)*

10. Modification in the Scheme

   The Ministry of Home Affairs may carry out such modifications in the Scheme as may be considered necessary in public interest. The Ministry of finance will be consulted if any such modification involves financial implications.

   This scheme has covered only the surrendered ULFAs (SULFA). They have enjoyed all economic benefits and are leading affluent life in the society. It has not touched those who were caught by Indian Army, who deliberately left the Organization, who has not surrendered but still kept touch with the organization. They still live economic hardship.

**5.1.4 SWADHAR:**

   A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances (As amended on September 25, 2002)

   Recognising that limited State Intervention in old age homes, short stay homes, Nari Niketan etc, and they cover only a fringe of the problems the Department of Women and Child Development has introduced a scheme known
as ‘Swadhar’. The Swadhar Scheme aims to address the specific vulnerability of different groups of women in difficult circumstances through a home-based, holistic and integrated approach.

The following are the stated objectives of the scheme:

1. To provide primary need of shelter, food, clothing and care to the marginalised women/girls living in difficult circumstances who are without any social and economic support;
2. To provide emotional support and counselling to such women;
3. To rehabilitate them socially and economically through education, awareness, skill upgradation and personality development through behavioural training etc;
4. To arrange for specific clinical, legal and other support for women/girls in need of those intervention by linking and networking with other organisation in both governmental and non-governmental sector on a case to case basis;
5. To provide for helpline or other facilities to such women in distress; and
6. To provide such other services as will be required for the support and rehabilitation of such women in distress.

The following are identified as target group beneficiaries of the scheme:

1. Widows deserted by their families and relatives and left uncared (for) near religious places where they are victims of exploitation;
2. Women prisoners released from jail and without family support;
3. Women survivors of natural disaster, who have been rendered homeless and are without any social and economic support;
4. Trafficked women/girls rescued or runaway from brothels or other places or women/girl victims of sexual crimes who are disowned by their families or who do not want to go back to their respective families for various reasons;

5. Women victims of terrorist/extremist violence, who are without any support and without any economic means survival;

6. Mentally challenged women (except for the psychotic categories who require care in specialized environment in mental hospitals), who are without any support of family or relatives;

7. Women with HIV/AIDS deserted by their family or women who have lost their husband due to HIV/AIDS and are without social /economic support; or

8. Similarly placed women in difficult circumstances.

The scheme is implemented through agencies like Social Welfare/Women and Child Welfare Department of State Government, Women Development Corporations, Urban Local Bodies, reputed Public/Private Trust or Voluntary Organisations who are willing to take up the responsibility of rehabilitation of these women. Since the government has set various terms and conditions for the organisations involved in the implementation of those schemes, women under conflicting situation have not got benefits of this scheme (Field work observation).

(Source: Women in Armed Conflict Situations (A study by North East Network) by Roshmi Goswami, MG Sreekala & Meghna Goswami, May 2005).
5.1.5 Compensation through K N Saikia’s report on Secret Killings:

A kind of peculiar executions popularly known as ‘Secret Killing’ was carried out in the State of Assam between 1998 and 2001 during the rule of Asom Gana Parishad, where mostly close relatives and friends of ULFA activists were targeted who failed to bring the ULFA cadres to the negotiation table or to surrender before the government.

A Convention of the families of the victims of Secret killings was held at Guwahati. This was organized by Manab Adhikar Sangram Samiti (MASS). The record of MASS states about 150 families had become the victims of Secret Killings. The main objective of the convention was to put pressure on the Government to take action on the compensation for the victims and prosecution of the perpetrators.

Most of the victims of secret killings are dead. It is said that approximately 11 hundred people became victim of this killings. Three Inquiry commissions were established to investigate the cases of secret killings under Commission of Inquiry Act 1952. Meera Sharmah Commission was constituted on 1st July, 2003. She resigned on the 18th October, 2003 citing non-cooperation from Police. J.N Sarmah Commission constituted on 4th November, 2003 to look into 11 cases of Secret Killings as well as any other matter related to or relevant to the purpose of this inquiry. He submitted his report to the government but not accepted as the commission could not detect the perpetrators and motive behind the killings of ULFA families. K.N Saikia Commission was constituted on 3rd November, 2005 and submitted the report in four parts to the govt and the
reports were presented before the Assembly on November 15, 2007. The report reflected close nexus between Government and SULFA. K.N Saikia report investigated 35 cases of secret killings involving 50 deaths (Hindustan Times, 2009). The Commission recommended compensation of Rs. 5 lakh per person killed by the secret killers—First instalment three lakh and then two lakh (Source: Two Circle Net Delivering News, Not Profit ‘‘Victims of Secret killing’ and their families demand justice’’ By Anjumara Begam.)

Some family informed that they have received Rs. 3 lakh as compensation; they are still to get remaining two lakh, the second instalment. Moreover many families are still to get the benefit. Seuti Das, mother of secret killing victim Ganesh Das of Hajo block have stated that mere compensation does not solve one’s own problem. It can’t return one’s own life (Field work observation).

Gender inequality exists everywhere in India and it is felt in the most unusual circumstances. In areas of militancy women cadres are often found subjected of gender discrimination. Only male SULFA victims have enjoyed numerous ‘benefits’ under various governmental schemes. The female ex-comrades are now left to the oblivion leading a life of neglect, social exclusion and economic hardships. They are nowhere getting any benefit from the government schemes meant for rehabilitation of ex-militants after returning to the mainstream. They are now living a life of poverty, neglect and social exclusion and are still battling for a normal life due to the prevailing social stigma which is gender biased (Field work observation). It is seen that broad
canvas of various violations of human rights over decades and there is little evidence of relief and remedies.¹

Baby Chetry alias Manisha Sarmah, Ex Woman Militant, is leading a life of poverty and deprivation in Rampur village of Nalbari District. She was an active member of Enigma B. She was caught by Indian Army during Bhutan Operation. She is married to a landless peasant who earns living as a daily wage labour. She has not been benefited by any governmental rehabilitation scheme (Field work observation).

It is seen that only wives or relatives of Government officers have got the employment in the Police or other departments of Governments (Field work Observation).

On the other hand, women militants, relatives of militants, family members of shelter providers etc are still crying for Governmental benefits. They are still under miserable condition.

It is alleged that in terms of resettlement and rehabilitation programmes for victimised women, there is huge gap of the understanding of the specific needs and concerns of women. Official programmes do not ‘naturally’ take women into account as independent beings capable of making decisions regarding their own lives and futures. It is the family members of this structure in Assam have to run from pillar to post, to get justice. The Government on its part contributed nothing in bringing their shattered life on track. Moreover, many widows are not aware of the schemes run for their benefit by the social welfare department of the government (Field work observation).

The rehabilitation schemes initiated by government are not sufficient. It has not been able to touch all victims of conflict situation.

5.2 Non Governmental Organization’s effort to rehabilitation:

NGOs can impart the vulnerable women adequate training for economically viable income generating activities like incense, candle and soap making, mushroom cultivation, food processing and cattle farming. Finally they can facilitate the nascent Self-Help Group (SHG) to become economically sustainable by helping it to get affordable micro-credit.

Though there are a number of nongovernmental organizations, the steps taken for rehabilitation through these NGOs are not satisfactory. Few organizations have come to provide help to the victims. Though there is some self-help groups in Nalbari and Kamrup District, Assam are active yet they have not been able to help women who are the victims of insurgency including women militants, relatives of militants and shelter providers. Kabita Chakravarty, wife of missing ULFA militant have stated that banks often hesitate to provide them loan with the presumption that they will not be able to refund the sanctioned loan in time. Some of the common women victims have got chance to associate themselves with some self-help groups. One woman Ex Militant have stated that only women of SULFA families have formed various self-help groups like Milijuli Atma Sahayak Gut, Bandhan, Rangjuli etc with the assistance from local banks related to weaving, bamboo work, candle making etc in Nalbari District.

5.2.1. Asha Darshan:

It is a Nalbari based Non Governmental Organization, established in 2002. It provides children Education Development Programme, Health Awareness Programme and facilitates the women victims of conflict situation in organizing themselves in small
and cohesive self-help groups. It helps self-help groups to get income from different sources. The organization also imparts training for income generation activities like candle, soap making, mushroom cultivation, food processing and cattle farming. It provides vocational training to women.

This organization has made women victims empowered and economically self-sufficient. It has claimed itself that many surrendered women militant, women family members of militants killed during encounters, widow women rescued from traffickers etc. have been duly rehabilitated through various self help groups.²

Contrary to their claim we have not met a single woman who has got assistance from Asha Darshan during our field survey.

It is seen that though there are many self-help groups present in society yet their existence is only in paper. It is alleged that these organisations are not service oriented as well as efficient. It is seen that most of NGOs who run SHGs are self-centred and profit motive. They are busy for fulfilling their vested interest only. They are not serious enough about their duties (Field Work Observation).

State administration should lay down a mechanism to provide for the security and rehabilitation of women survivors of violence in Assam at different levels. NGOs should monitor the welfare schemes available for women victims and help them in getting their rightful benefits.


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