

Occupational Preference and Difficulties Faced By Displaced Tribal Farm Women in Hill Districts of Assam

K. K. Saharia¹, M. Johari² and J. Talukdar³

1. Professor, 2&3. Ph.D. Scholars, Department of Extension Education, College of Veterinary Science,
Assam Agricultural University, Khanapara, Guwahati, Assam

Corresponding author e-mail: saharia.kk@gmail.com

Paper Received on October 20, 2017, Accepted on November 29, 2017 and Published Online on December 22, 2017

ABSTRACT

*A study on occupational preference and realization of difficulties by the displaced tribal farm women in hill districts of Assam in rearing livestock was carried out with stratified randomly selected one hundred each respondents from two districts namely Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong making the total sample size 200. A pre-tested, reliable and valid interview schedule encompassing preference for occupation and a check list containing seventeen items were used for data collection. Among the displaced tribal farm women, preference of occupation from higher to lower as primary source of livelihood was agriculture, followed by animal husbandry, business, weaving and craft making where service did not feature. The realization of difficulties by the respondents was in low level and there was no significant mean difference between the two districts. No time for weaving and craft making, needing to put more labour, lack of open grazing field for livestock, education of children suffering and no recreation against tedious labour were the major problems the displaced tribal farm women faced due to rearing of livestock. The realization of difficulties was positively and high significantly ($P < 0.01$) correlated with occupation (0.41^{**}) when the displaced tribal farm women had livestock.*

Key words : Displaced; Tribal; Farm women; Occupation; Difficulties; Livestock;

Occupation of farmers including farm women in difficult areas is one of the pivotal areas of consideration for navigating progress and prosperity among them at individual as well as in community levels (Misra *et al.*, 2016). Hidalgo *et al.* (2010) opined in their study in different parts of the world including the farm sector in Brazil that with higher duration in occupation, there was a distinct economic orientation and individuals used to choose only such activities which were safe and remunerative from economic point of view. So, most often than not, with migration of farmers the variations in occupation might have been caused because of the nature of changes taking place and the design of samples collected (Glaeser and Maré, 2001; Yankow, 2006 and Combes *et al.*, 2008) including its focus on public markets (Dziadek, 2011). In developing countries, even handicrafts are sold to locals and the tourists as souvenirs become a part of occupation in difficult areas (Kumar, 2011; Saharia, 2016). So, the occupation of displaced

tribal farm women especially when they are displaced, distantly located and discriminated; might have had some cursing situations with their efforts to mitigate the two square meals. It was under such transitory situations, an attempt was made to find out the occupation-mitigating hazards and the common difficulties in relation to livestock rearing of such farm women in two hill districts of Assam.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in both the two hill districts of Assam namely, the Karbi Anglong and the Dima Hasao where efforts for migration of occupation by the farm families especially the displaced tribal farm women is a common phenomenon because of dominating slash and burn method of agriculture forcing them also to migrate from one place to another. In addition many other factors also contribute for their displacement. The study revolved around the women engaged in livestock

farming, especially in the generally categorized remote, difficult and disturbed areas, where even otherwise concentration of displaced tribal women farmers in action is traditionally more. This was again an outcome of a phenomenon where the migrated farmers used to go back to interior places in search of more amount of fertile land. Data were collected by personally interviewing the stratified randomly selected women respondents with a specially designed check list in the form of a summated rating scale during the period from January 2016 to July 2016 after obtaining prior permission from them and their peers. The strata of the study were two districts, followed by two blocks from each district and then 50 each randomly selected displaced tribal farm women from each of the blocks making the total sample size 200.

The occupational preference of the displaced tribal farm women was received by asking them to place their agreement in three degrees namely primary, secondary and tertiary with their corresponding values as 3, 2 and 1 respectively. For obtaining preference they were asked simply to put their agreement under any of the above mentioned three degrees. For obtaining response the tribal farm women were offered a check list of seventeen statements and they were asked to respond in either of the three degrees ranging from “mostly”, “frequently” and “occasionally” with their corresponding values of 3, 2 and 1 respectively. As such the minimum and maximum obtainable scores for a respondent were 17 and 51 respectively. The incorporated items in the check list were selected at 20 per cent confidence level. These seventeen statements were collected from most commonly featuring literatures, maximum mode obtained from the academic experts, administrators of the autonomous councils of both the districts, experienced women social workers and the community leaders. Initially there were thirty two such statements. Pre-testing of the interview schedule was done in the nearby simulating pockets of Cachar district to see the reliability of the check list. Nine statements were removed after the pre-testing due to their coverage in other items included in the list or non-relevance of them in such areas. The reliability worked out was 0.91. Content validity was ensured in consultation with the academic experts, administrators of the autonomous councils and the community leaders where each one of the items were individually checked for their relevance and then

they were placed sensitively to maintain the flow of the items in the check list. Data such collected from 200 tribal livestock farm women from proportionate different major ethnic (tribal) groups in a random manner were authenticated with the help of the peer groups and statutory village administrators, analyzed to find out the results, based on which conclusions were drawn and recommendations were put forwarded.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 revealed that in Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong and pooled sample the occupation of the respondents was agriculture as primary for 99.00 per cent, 93.00 per cent, 96.00 per cent respectively and as secondary for 1.00 per cent, 7.00 per cent, 4.00 per cent respectively. Animal Husbandry as primary- was 1.00 per cent, 5.00 per cent, 3.00 per cent respectively and as secondary for 99.00 per cent, 87.00 per cent, 93.00 per cent respectively, business as primary-for 0.00 per cent, 2.00 per cent, 1.00 per cent respectively, and as for secondary 0.00 per cent, 49.00 per cent, 24.50 per cent respectively, craft as tertiary-for 12.00 per cent, 0.00 per cent, 6.00 per cent respectively, weaving as tertiary- for 97.00 per cent, 78.00 per cent, 87.50 per cent respectively. From this it could be concluded that, in the study area the order of concentration of occupation was agriculture, followed by animal husbandry, business, weaving and craft making. This

Table 1. Frequency distribution of respondents on the basis of their primary, secondary and tertiary mode of occupation

Occupation	District	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Agriculture	DH	99(99.00)	1(1.00)	0(0.00)
	K A	93(93.00)	7(7.00)	0(0.00)
	Pooled	192(96.00)	8(4.00)	0(0.00)
Animal husbandry	DH	1(1.00)	99(99.00)	0(0.00)
	KA	5(5.00)	87(87.00)	8(8.00)
	Pooled	6(3.00)	186(93.00)	8(4.00)
Business	DH	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	4(4.00)
	KA	2(2.00)	49(49.00)	27(27.00)
	Pooled	2(1.00)	49(24.50)	31(15.50)
Craft	DH	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	12(12.00)
	KA	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
	Pooled	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	12(6.00)
Weaving	DH	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	97(97.00)
	KA	0(0.00)	4(4.00)	78(78.00)
	Pooled	0(0.00)	4(2.00)	175(87.50)

Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage.
DH=Dima Hasao, KA= Karbi Anglong

Table 2. Profile of the displaced tribal farm women on the basis of their occupational difficulties in different districts

Variables	District	Mean	SD	Range	Low	Medium	High	't' value
Occupational difficulties	DH	18.03	4.77	13-33	8(8.00)	71(71.00)	21(21.00)	0.87 ^{NS}
	KA	18.17	5.28	9-25	24(24.00)	59(59.00)	17(17.00)	
	Pooled	18.10	5.02	9-33	32(16.00)	130(65.00)	38(19.00)	

might be due to limited scope of employment in the non-agricultural sector for the displaced tribal farm women of both the hill districts on one side and the traditional values with lower educational level putting them to such atmosphere on the other hand. The findings received support from the study by *Hidalgo et. al., 2010; Das, 2011*.

A perusal of the data presented in Table 2 indicated that the average perceived degree of occupational difficulties faced by the displaced tribal farm women due to displacement were 18.03, 18.17 and 18.10 in Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong and pooled sample with their respective standard deviation as 4.77, 5.28 and 5.02 and ranges as 13-33, 9-25 and 9-33 respectively out of the total maximum obtainable score of 51. That indicated that the difficulties realized by the displaced tribal farm women were just around one third of the total possible degrees of difficulties. Based on mean and standard deviation, the respondents were categorized into low, medium and high groups. Their distribution were 8.00 per cent, 71.00 per cent and 21.00 per cent in Dima Hasao, 24.00 per cent, 59.00 per cent and 17.00 per cent in Karbi Anglong and 16.00 per cent, 65.00 per cent and 19.00 per cent in pooled sample respectively. The mean scores showed no significant difference ($t=0.87$, NS). Difficulties not being realized by the illiterate or lowly literate farm women in difficult areas were common features (*Talukdar, 2012*) and that must have happened to the displaced tribal farm women in absence of exposure and training (*Johari, 2013*)

An item wise further analysis was carried out and the results were presented in Table 3 which revealed that out of the total seventeen statements presented before the respondents, they agreed in "somewhat" degree to the extent of 93.00 per cent followed by 74.00 per cent, 69.00 per cent, 66.00 per cent and 57.00 per cent to the areas like "women get no time for weaving and craft making – all their time is spent for livestock", "the ladies have to put more labour now for rearing livestock", "no spare land for the livestock grazing, open grazing fields are not available", "education of children has suffered because of their engagement in livestock

care and management" and "life of women has become more tedious with no scope for recreation or get together when they have livestock" respectively in Dima Hasao district. Whereas in Karbi Anglong the correspondent figures were 87.00 per cent, 39.00 per cent, 29.00 per cent, 24.00 per cent and 57.00 per cent and in the pooled sample were 90.00 per cent, 56.50 per cent, 49.00 per cent, 45.00 per cent and 57.00 per cent respectively. The realizations of the tribal women farmers were revolved around economic motivation against the backdrops of non-availability of time, resources and positive social attributes. Their problems were further complicated by the facts that all of them came down and settled there afresh and therefore, they had yet to develop mutual trust and dependency among themselves. Their situation was further complicated by the fact that they did not get the blessings from the civil authorities simply because of the fact that they settled down in places (might be reclaiming forest land) which might not have been considered as the revenue villages. As such they were deprived from all possible Government welfare schemes of selective nature, although they might have received the benefits of the universal programs and projects. Similar kinds of realizations were also mentioned by *Leus et. al., 2001; Kanbur and Zhang, 2005; and Otsuka, 2009*. They stated that in many rural societies, a lack of access to education and limited opportunities to increase and improve one's skill set inhibit social mobility.

As shown in Table 4, the realization of difficulties was positively and high significantly ($P<0.01$) correlated with occupation (0.41^{**}). Women socializing in a new place was always a troublesome affair where all the occupation in their engagement patterns right from household articulation of things to animal management

Table 4. Coefficient of correlation of respondents on the realization of difficulties and occupation due to the displacement

Variables	'r' value
Realization of difficulties Occupation	0.41 ^{**}

^{**} Significant at 0.01 level of significance

Table 3. Frequency distribution of respondents on the basis of their difficulties arising in livestock rearing due to the displacement

Areas of difficulties due to displacement	District	Degrees of realization of difficulties in occupation		
		Very much	Much	Somewhat
The total agricultural land has become lesser causing food crisis for livestock	DH	60(60.00)	20(20.00)	20(20.00)
	KA	72(72.00)	3(3.00)	25(25.00)
	Pooled	132(66.00)	23(11.50)	45(22.50)
Production and productivity of the available land are lesser affecting food availability for livestock	DH	33(33.00)	47(47.00)	20(20.00)
	KA	72(72.00)	1(1.00)	27(27.00)
	Pooled	105(52.50)	48(24.00)	47(23.50)
The ladies have to put more labour now for rearing livestock due to displacement	DH	8(8.00)	18(18.00)	74(74.00)
	KA	41(41.00)	20(20.00)	39(39.00)
	Pooled	49(24.50)	38(19.00)	113(56.50)
Health of the displaced farm women deteriorated due to over burden and hard labour	DH	0(0.00)	15(15.00)	12(12.00)
	KA	0(0.00)	11(11.00)	46(46.00)
	Pooled	0(0.00)	26(13.00)	58(29.00)
Open grazing fields are not available for livestock grazing	DH	1(1.00)	29(29.00)	69(69.00)
	KA	50(50.00)	13(13.00)	29(29.00)
	Pooled	51(25.50)	42(21.00)	98(49.00)
There is always a danger of predators, their number is more now	DH	62(62.00)	12(12.00)	26(26.00)
	KA	69(69.00)	1(1.00)	17(17.00)
	Pooled	131(65.50)	13(6.50)	43(21.50)
Society is no more united and no livestock is considered as a community wealth	DH	3(3.00)	0(0.00)	31(31.00)
	KA	11(11.00)	0(0.00)	33(33.00)
	Pooled	14(7.00)	0(0.00)	64(32.00)
Because of lack of uniformity of origin of the neighbours, there is no social bondage and no sympathy for the livestock	DH	3(3.00)	0(0.00)	31(31.00)
	KA	10(10.00)	28(28.00)	44(44.00)
	Pooled	13(6.50)	28(14.00)	75(37.50)
Life of women has become more tedious with no scope for recreation or get together when they have livestock	DH	0(0.00)	3(3.00)	57(57.00)
	KA	0(0.00)	19(19.00)	57(57.00)
	Pooled	0(0.00)	22(11.00)	114(57.00)
Women cannot afford to have self-esteem as livestock rearing is looked down	DH	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	25(25.00)
	KA	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	30(30.00)
	Pooled	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	55(27.50)
There are many broken houses and for widows livestock is the only asset	DH	3(3.00)	35(35.00)	3(3.00)
	KA	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
	Pooled	3(1.50)	35(17.50)	3(1.50)
Incidences of single mother increased and future of children depends upon livestock only	DH	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	3(3.00)
	KA	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
	Pooled	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	3(1.50)
Authorities have not come forward for any help for improving the conditions of livestock owners	DH	57(57.00)	20(20.00)	2(2.00)
	KA	8(8.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
	Pooled	65(32.50)	20(10.00)	2(1.00)
Education of children has suffered because of their engagement in livestock care and management	DH	1(1.00)	0(0.00)	66(66.00)
	KA	3(3.00)	13(13.00)	24(24.00)
	Pooled	4(2.00)	13(6.50)	90(45.00)
Women get no time for weaving and craft making – all their time is spent for livestock	DH	4(4.00)	3(3.00)	93(93.00)
	KA	0(0.00)	1(1.00)	87(87.00)
	Pooled	4(2.00)	4(2.00)	180(90.00)
Due to increased expenditure, people have become poorer and livestock cannot compensate anymore	DH	0(0.00)	54(54.00)	34(34.00)
	KA	0(0.00)	36(36.00)	39(39.00)
	Pooled	0(0.00)	90(45.00)	73(36.50)
For the same job to get done, women have to spend more time, money and labour outside home if they have livestock	DH	0(0.00)	9(9.00)	2(2.00)
	KA	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	20(20.00)
	Pooled	0(0.00)	9(4.50)	22(11.00)

Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage. DH=Dima Hasao, KA=Karbi Anglong

and men management, especially in a close and remote places (displaced) were understandably difficult tasks. These were well expressed in the study of *Njuki and Sanginga, 2013*.

CONCLUSION

Occupation of displaced tribal farm women livestock farmers in difficult areas has a major role to play in navigating progress and prosperity to their community. The study on occupational preference and realization of difficulties by the displaced tribal farmwomen in hill districts of Assam in rearing livestock revealed that among the tribal farm women, preference of occupation from higher to lower as primary source of livelihood was agriculture, followed by animal husbandry, business, weaving and craft making where

service did not feature. The realization of difficulties by the respondents was in low level nearing to one third of the total score of difficulties and there was no significant mean difference between the two districts. No time for weaving and craft making, needing to put more labour, lack of open grazing field for grazing of livestock, education of children suffering and no recreation against tedious labour were the major difficulties the displaced tribal farm women faced due to rearing of livestock. The realization of difficulties was positively and high significantly ($P < 0.01$) correlated with occupation (0.41^{**}) when the displaced tribal farm women had to rear livestock. There was a need for exposure and training of the tribal farm women to a model of inclusive agriculture with livestock rearing to minimize their drudgery and draw them to development.

REFERENCES

- Combes, P.P.; Duranton, G. and Gobillon, L. (2008). Spatial wage disparities: Sorting matters. *J. of Urban Eco.*, **63** (2): 723-742.
- Das, S.K. (2011). Women empowerment and self-help group: An analytical study of constraints in Karbi Anglong district of Assam. *J. of North East India Studies*, **1**(1):1.
- Dziadek, F. (2011). Sant' Ambrogio's street festival. *The Guardian*, December 8. Retrieved 22 May 2014.
- Glaeser, E.L. and Mare, D.C. (2001). Cities and skills. *J of Labor Eco.*, **19**(2): 316-342.
- Hidalgo, F.; Daniel, S.N.; Nichter, S. and Richardson, N. (2010). Economic determinants of land invasions. *The Review of Eco. and Stat.*, **92** (3): 505-523.
- Johari, M. (2013). System of rearing and marketing of pig in DimaHasao district of Assam. M.V.Sc. Thesis submitted to the Assam Agricultural University, Khanapara, Guwahati-22, Assam, India.
- Kanbur, R. and Zhang, X. (2005). Fifty years of regional inequality in China: a journey through central planning, reform, and openness. *Review of Development Economics*, Wiley, **9** (1): 87-106.
- Kumar, A. (2011). Handicraft business: weaving a career out of handicrafts and empowering the Indian artisans. *Eco. Times of India*, November, pp. 12.
- Leus, X.; Wallace, J. and Lorretti, A. (2001). Internally displaced persons. *Prehospital Disaster Medicine*, **16**: 75-83
- Misra, A. K.; Kalas, P.; Sahoo, P. K.; Singh, A. and Srivastava, S. K. (2016) Gender and livestock production in India : Issues and strategies for enhancing livelihood of farm women, indigenous. Compiled invited papers in the international livestock conference, ISAPM from 29-31 January, 2016 at Hyderabad, India, 160-177.
- Njuki, J. and Sanginga, P. (2013). Gender and livestock: issues, challenges and opportunities, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Nairobi, Kenya.
- Otsuka, K. (2009). Rural poverty and income dynamics in Asia and Africa. New York: Routledge.
- Saharia, K. K. (2016) Small farmers, merchandizing and survivability, indigenous; Compiled invited papers in the international livestock conference, ISAPM from 29-31 January, 2016 at Hyderabad, India, 421-428
- Talukdar, J. (2012). Status of health, empowerment and animal husbandry related to rural women. M.V.Sc. Thesis, Assam Agricultural University, College of Veterinary Science, Khanapara, Guwahati-22, India
- Yankow, J. (2006). Why do cities pay more? An empirical examination of some competing theories of the urban wage premium. *J. of Urban Eco.*, **60**(2): 139-161.