

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

7.1 SUMMARY FROM THEORETICAL BACKDROP

The status of women in a society is measured in terms of the level of income, employment, education, health as well as the role played by them in family, community and society. In fact, women represent a crucial development force in the world economy and society. As per UNDP (1999) India was ranked in the last quartile of the countries (112 out of 143 countries) in gender related development index (GDI). In rural India, women labourers are involved in a variety of occupations like agriculture and allied activities, construction, plantation and other works. It is observed that agriculture, the single largest production endeavour in India, contributing 25 percent of GDP is increasingly becoming a female activity. Agriculture sector employs 80 percent of all economically active women in the country as compared to 63 percent of men. There are 75 million women in dairying as against 15 million of men and 20 million in other livestock activities as compared to 1.5 million men. At the home front, nearly 84 percent of all economically active women in India are engaged in agriculture and allied activities (Anonymous, 2002b; 2002a).

Due to lower socio-economic status, the women in India are subjected to various forms of socio-economic and sexual violence. Moreover, in rural India, besides work participation women's marginalisation has manifested in many other social areas in terms of sex ratio, literacy rates, age at marriage, decision-making processes, access to property, etc. The problem is more acute among the rural landless women labourers.³ The economic vulnerability of the family compels to go to work under adverse working environments, supplementing the income of their respective families. Such manifestations have their close relations

with the specific socio-cultural and economic formations of the society. It is observed that generally in rural India, women are out of reach of laws and governmental schemes that seek to protect their social security and improve their working conditions.

The status of women in society is directly linked with social and cultural tradition, stages of economic developments achieved, educational levels and political attainments of women in a society. Such factors affect the national as also regional characteristics of status of women and the pattern of their work participation. Though the nature and type of economic and non-economic role of women have undergone continued transformation in accordance with the changes in technological development but in the agricultural sector women are still found to perform more or less traditional roles. It is observed that though new technology has increased women's employment opportunity but it has not helped in improving their status. Technology has increased the household income of a small section of households who have access to and control over technology. It has also marginalised a large section of rural population, making them subject to the dictates of the technological power of the former. In both the processes women have been marginalised and subjugated to male dominance in the family and community (Krishnaraj, 1988; Singha Roy, 1995). New technologies in certain sphere, while throwing women of some classes out of employment have also increased household income of some others.

Various empirical studies (Boserup, 1970; Gulati, 1984; Girappa, 1988; Bagwe, 1995; Mahaptra, 2002; Wasnik, 2006) have viewed that female agricultural labour form the single largest category of workers among Indian working women particularly in rural India. A lot of empirical studies in the context of Assam (Saikia, Gogoi and Lekharu, 1986; Saikia, 1992; Choudhury, 1994; Kar, 2002; Choudhury and Shingh, 2003) highlighted the high participatory rates of women in agricultural

activities as unpaid family labours who work in their own farm and low wage paid agricultural labourer. Several studies related to changing contours of women's work in agriculture documented the fact that women are being treated merely as subsidiary workers, helpers and secondary wage earners, who also shoulder the major responsibility. Most of the studies viewed that in rural India women are still predominantly self employed/family helpers and the proportion of casual workers form a much larger proportion of the female workforce as compared to their male counterparts (Krishnaraj, 1990; Duvvuary, 1998; Shah, 2005). However, in the context with the changing scenario of women's participation in agriculture it should be vital to mention that women are still primarily dependent on agriculture for sustenance. All the existing literature on the Green Revolution has shown that new technologies have affected the nature and extent of women's work participation and household responsibilities in diverge ways across the villages (Sinha Roy, 1995). Women cultivators tended to increasingly exploit unpaid family labour to maintain their competitive edge in a commercial agrarian setting.

7.2 FINDINGS FROM THE SECONDARY DATA

- 1. Land and Nature of the Economy:** As per statistics of 1999-2000, the net sown area of the Barak Valley region was 233.88 thousand hectares, which constituted 33.84 percent of the total reporting area of the region. The economy of the region is predominantly agricultural with 70.73 percent of workforce is being engaged in primary sector, 7.0 percent in secondary sector and 23.0 percent in tertiary sector. In terms of growth and output and attainment of yield in agricultural sector, the region lags far behind the all India standard, though the sectoral composition of the economy shows strong agricultural bias. Agriculture contributed 38.1 percent Gross District Domestic Product (GDDP)

and the primary sector contributed 38.8 percent of the same. Due to relative geographical isolation, the valley is lagging behind large scale industrialisation.

2. **Demographic Feature:** As per 2001 census, the Barak Valley constituted 8.9 percent of the geographical area of the state but it contains 11.71 percent of the population. According to 2001 statistics, 89.2 percent of the total population has been living in rural area and only 10.2 percent in urban area. In rural area, 48.4 percent are workers and the respective figures for urban area stood at 48 percent. While about same proportion (7 percent) are female workers both in rural and urban area. It is revealed that the Barak Valley has been generally having a higher rate of growth of population than the Brahmaputra Valley region of Assam. However, it is for the first time in 2001 census the region has been witnessed a relatively lower decadal growth rate (1991-2001) within the state all along.
3. **Female Workforce Participation:** As compared to Assam as well as India, the Female Workforce Participation Rate (FWPR) in Barak Valley region is lagging much behind. As per Assam Human Development Report, 2003, the FWPR in the region was 140 (per 1000 persons) as against 208 for Assam and 257 for all India. In rural area of the region, the FWPR was estimated 145 (per 1000 persons) as against 223 for Assam and 310 for all India. In case of urban area of the region, the FWPR was 101 as against 103 for Assam and 115 for all India. An analysis of the main and marginal workers based on 2001 census shows that much fewer women were employed formally in the agricultural sector than men in the region. This has implication for lower economic status of women in the Barak Valley region.

- 4. Human Development Index:** As per Assam Human Development Report, 2003, the HDI and GDI value for Barak Valley region stood at 0.355 and 0.343 respectively. The respective HDI and GDI value for the state as a whole was 0.407 and 0.537 respectively. All the three districts of the valley and the valley as a whole have HDI values lower than the state average. A negative difference between HDI and GDI rank of the region indicates the existence of gender disparity prevailing in the region. It implies that women do not have the same level of development (income, education and health) as men. The GDI value for the state shows wide variations across districts and the GDI value for the Karimganj district is 0.012 which was ranked lowest among the districts in Assam. The particular characteristics of a district in respect of its geographical features and development, infrastructure, population, health facilities available are crucial for such wide disparity in the GDI across districts in the region.
- 5. Cropping Pattern:** An important feature of the cropping pattern of the Barak Valley regions is the predominance of rice which accounts for more than 90 percent of the defined total cropped area. Agriculturally, the region is virtually a rice mono-cropped region. The share of rice in total cropped area fluctuated between 91.64 percent to 95.12 percent during the period 1971-72 to 2004-05 without showing any distinct trend. Other notable crops cultivated in the region are pulses, rape and mustard, potato and sugarcane. On the basis of the harvesting seasons, three different types of paddy crops namely autumn paddy, winter paddy and summer paddy are grown in the region. Although traditionally, the region had a much higher share of summer paddy than for the state as a whole, there has been no further improvement in the share in

the region like in other parts of the state. This is mainly due to lack of progress in irrigation facilities in the Barak Valley region.

6. **Comparative Analysis of Productivity of Rice:** The comparative picture of yield of rice in the Barak Valley region, the state of Assam as a whole and at the all India level revealed that the yield of rice in the region has been above the state yield for most of the years during 1977-78 to 2000-01, though in general the former remain below the all India standard. However, the yield of rice in the region has shown wide fluctuation during the period, compared to the overall yields for Assam and for all India. The greater instability in the yield of rice may be due to its dependence on monsoon.
7. **Area under HYVs:** In terms of growth of output and attainment of yield in agricultural sector, the Barak Valley region lags far behind the all India standard in terms of using HYV seeds, fertilisers, soil nutrients, technology, etc. as per statistics of the Directorate of Agriculture, Government of Assam. During 2002-03, the percentage of HYV area to total rice in Barak Valley region, Assam and all India was 53.41 percent, 55.96 percent and 82.91 percent respectively. In terms of proportion of rice area under HYVs, the Barak Valley stands ahead of the state as a whole but it lags behind the country as a whole.
8. **Irrigation Infrastructure:** It is notable that the irrigation infrastructure in the region is much more underdeveloped than all India standards. The irrigation coverage is being limited to only 4.09 percent of the gross cropped area as per 2000-01 statistics. A large part of the agricultural land remained unutilised in most of the years. Due to non-existence of irrigation facilities, the farmers are not in a position to adopt HYV fertiliser package for increasing productivity and as a result the farmers have to depend on rain-fed

condition under which it becomes very risky to use fertilisers. This creates a strong hurdle in increasing the productivity of rice in the region. Moreover, as compared to the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam, there has been practically no growth of privately owned tube-well based minor irrigation available in the Barak Valley region.

7.3 FINDINGS FROM THE PRIMARY DATA

- 1. Agrarian Characteristics of the Sample Farms:** Agriculture has been playing the dominant economic activity among the selected sample villages of the six ADO circles of our study. Of all these selected circles, Udharbond, Narshingpur and Sadarashi have been found better economic base having higher productivity of rice per hectare. Other than agriculture, people are today found to prefer permanent jobs outside the villages giving their land leased out to others in the concerned sample villages. All though paddy, pulse, rape and mustard, vegetables (both kharif and rabi) etc. are grown in the sample farms, yet the dominant practice of agriculture in the sample villages is the paddy cultivation by both male and female headed households. The sample farmers generally cultivates the three important varieties of paddy such as 'Ahu', 'Sali' and 'Boro' which is grown almost throughout the year in three seasons. 'Ahu' is harvested in autumn season (August/September), 'Sali' in winter (December/January) while 'Boro' is harvested in summer season (April/May). Another important observation is that in most of the ADO circles single cropping is practised even though the low incidents of double cropping is observed in R.K. Nagar circle in the traditional manner. However, agriculture in the region is totally dependent on monsoon due to practically non-existence of adequate scientific irrigation facilities throughout the region.

- 2. Status of Female Labour:** It has been found that though agriculture in the region is performed by both male and female workers of the households but the female workers in the region are mainly working as either unpaid domestic labour who work on their own farm or as marginal workers. The traditional values prevalent in the region surveyed do not favour female participation in agricultural activities. But the economic compulsion victimise them to push into the labour market. In spite of their significant contribution in agriculture, the women workers in the sample farms are found to be relatively poor, illiterate and economically less organised. Agriculture in the region is found to be a male dominated activity. In the selected villages the proportion of female headed households was found to be very negligible (about 5 percent). Most of the female workers in the selected ADO circles are deprived of socio-economic activities and have lack of awareness regarding employment conditions, marketing information, etc. Moreover, unemployment is found to be much more pronounced for women labourer than that for male labourer in the sample farms. This is mainly due to traditional role performed by the women in agriculture in the region. It is observed that the agricultural equipments are not suitable for women in farming operations especially due to lack of technical backup, illiteracy and lack of financial support available to the women farmers. Notably, the women farmers in the sample villages are suffering from inadequate training facilities and supportive development programmes by the Government as well as the Non Governmental Organisations.
- 3. Gender Disparity:** A wide gender disparity has been found to persist in the agricultural operations in most of the selected villages. It is observed that women in the sample villages have no

control over productive resources. Though most of the women households perform dual activities (both domestic as well as farming) but majority of the sample farm households are found to be male dominated. There is no doubt that women spent a much greater time involved in off-farm activities like care of animals, poultry and vegetable nursery but despite the considerable time spent on these activities, such work is frequently fallen to the household domain. Moreover, seasonality in employment is found to be more pronounced for female labour than that of male labour. In most of the sample villages sowing, weeding and harvesting is performed by the female labour which are found to be comparatively less remunerative than other works performed by the male labour in the agricultural operations. Apart from farming, a considerable role has been performed by the women in the selected circles on economically productive occupations, most of which remain unaccounted as 'economic activities' and considered to be 'household activities'. Further, an unequal gender relation has been found to prevail within the family as well as in the society which lead to an unequal distribution of household resources.

4. **Employment Pattern:** It is observed from the study that women has been playing considerable role in various agricultural activities such as pre-sowing and sowing operations, harvesting, transplanting, preparation of compost and raising vegetable nursery. A gender specific employment pattern is found to exist in the sample villages. The extent of seasonal fluctuation is found to be higher in case of female labour than that of male labour because female labourers were engaged in some specific operations during certain periods in the crop season. Moreover, it is observed that considerable time of female labour is spent on economically productive off-farm activities most of which have remained

unacknowledged. In fact, women spent as much time in care of livestock as in crop production activities. Moreover, food processing, particularly preparing varieties of rice products both for domestic consumption as well as sale is performed by the women in rural households. It is observed that in the three ADO circles, Lala HQ, Banskandi and Udharbond, a higher percentage of women labour is involved in sowing operations both as hired as well as family labour. Further, women from a specific community, known as Manipuri, in these circles are found to perform both indoor as well as outdoor activities such as producing and selling rice products and preparation of cloths etc. All these six circles have heterogeneous characteristics of population consisting of Hindu, Muslim, Manipuri, Naga communities. Mostly women are found to be hired only as temporary or casual workers in farming in the region.

5. **Wage Differentials:** A high degree of wage disparity has been found to exist between male and female labour in the selected villages. Women in farm households is found to contribute significantly to family income for both unremunerated domestic labour and other income generating activities. But in most of the sample farms female wage rate is found to be lower than those of male for similar type of work in agricultural activities in the region. Casual wage rates found to vary from Rs. 80/- to Rs. 100/- per day for male labour and Rs. 60/- to Rs. 80/- for female labour throughout the region. In some villages sowing work is found to be performed by women labourer on contract basis but in each case women are paid less than men. Persisting gender disparity regarding employment and wages as observed in the agricultural sector of the region is inhibiting women empowerment in the study area. Moreover, it is observed that most of the women workers in

the region were working as 'domestic labour' or 'marginal worker' in farming. Most of them explained that due to absence of non-farm activities in the rural area, they are forced to take up agriculture as their main source of livelihood. From our study it is clear that a glaring gender disparity has been found to exist in the selected circles regarding wages between male and female labourers.

6. Decision-Making Role of Women: Women's participation regarding decision-making related to farming and household services have been found to be very limited in our study. The majority of the farm women have little say regarding the management of farm households. As most of our sample households are male headed, the decision-making process regarding crop pattern, seeds used, fertilisers' application, timing of sowing and such other matters regarding control and regulation of resources are generally undertaken by the male households. Similarly, in financial matters also, the role of farm women is found to be largely negligible. Most of the women labourers engaged in agricultural sector in our study area were found to be illiterate and have little say in managing their own affairs (67.6 percent). For farm management the extent of participation was found to be 4.6 percent in crop planning, 2.0 percent in resource use and 42.8 percent in other activities. The study found that irrespective of their family status, most of the sample farm women have practically no decision-making power to allocate resources. This is mainly due to the fact that the sample farm women had no technical knowledge about agriculture which acts as a hurdle in case of farm decision-making.

From the study it is observed that most of the female workers in the selected ADO circles are deprived of socio-

economic activities and the at the same they have lack of awareness regarding family as well as farm decision-making processes which ultimately determines their lower status in the society.

- 7. Marginal Productivity of Female Labourer:** The Female Work Participation Rate (FWPR) in the sample villages is found to be lower than the male participation rate. The estimated result obtained from Cob-Douglas Production Function indicates that the marginal productivity of female labour is positive. This implies that female labour has a positive contribution on the productivity of rice in the sample farms. Thus, women's contribution in agricultural productivity in the region is found to be very much significant in the analysis.
- 8. Prevalence of Disguised Employment:** A very important fact revealed from the study is that the coefficient of male labour in mandays per hectare has been found negative which means that the marginal productivity of male labour is zero. This, in turn, indicates the presence of disguised employment of male labour in rice production in study area. Hence, it becomes essential to transfer the male labour to other occupation. However, the coefficient has been found to be insignificant in the analysis.
- 9. Production-Area Dependency:** The result of the analysis shows that the coefficient of area under rice (in hectare) is significantly negative. It means that effect of an increasing area under rice production, other things remaining constant on production of rice per hectare is negative. Theoretically, it becomes possible if area under rice production reaches the optimum and then any further increase in the area under rice production will not increase productivity. It is evident from the secondary data that the cropping pattern of the Barak Valley region is predominated by

paddy which accounts for about 93 percent of the defined total cropped area. This is a very important factor behind the low productivity of rice in the region.

10. Impact of Technology on Female Workforce: It is revealed that women workers are in disadvantageous position due to introduction of modern agricultural technology. The study found that female labour productivity of technologically advanced farms is lower than that of backward farms. These findings though seems surprising but the fact that advancement of technology that took place in the study area is leaning towards male labourers, for example running tractors, etc. The female labourers find it hard to adopt those specific modern technologies in the absence of proper training. They are performing the traditional roles in agricultural production. As a result, productivity of female labourers got a setback.

11. Decreasing Returns to Scale: From the study it is observed that over all the sample farms are operating under decreasing returns to scale since sum of elasticities of factor inputs is found to be less than one ($-0.85-0.05+0.07$).

7.4 CONCLUSION

The impact of developmental activities on rural women during the post-independence period is considerable. The role and status of women in the rural societies of the North Eastern region have undergone certain changes though the pace of change may vary from region to region and from community to community. There is no doubt that the participation of women in economic activities, has not declined, rather it has increased in many cases. Rural women work long hours in domestic and agricultural production because they frequently have primary responsibilities for both household subsistence and child welfare.

The present study was designed with objectives to study the pattern of women's participation in the Barak Valley region of Assam and to examine the specific characteristic of work in agricultural sector and their distributional pattern among the women. The study has been executed to assess the extents to which the status of women have improved over the years in relation to workforce participation rate of women in the Barak Valley region of Assam and to analyse their pattern of access over resources. Rural women in the Barak Valley, irrespective of caste or religion, continue to have a subordinate status both within the home and outside. Extent of awareness and access to education are prime determinants of their status and role in the process of development. Lacks of education and skill formation have been found to be the main constraints to rural women for upliftment of their employment as well as family status. Majority of rural women work in the unorganised sector and their employment status is far lower than that of men.

In agricultural sector, women work as marginal worker and they have limited access to credit and development programmes. Easy accessibility of cheap finance for self employment is very much essential for improving their family income and standard of living. In spite of various constitutional safeguards, legislative measures and various packages of programmes undertaken by the Government, no significant development has taken place to improve the socio-economic condition of the farm women in the state of Assam and also in the Barak Valley region. All the schemes launched by the Government could not improve the living conditions and solve the problems of rural women's employment to the desired extent. The study found that most of the rural women in the region were engaged in three types of agricultural operations namely sowing, weeding and harvesting which had consumed nearly three fourth of female labour on the sample farms. Moreover, women in the selected ADO circles remain engaged in sorting of seeds,

sowing, harvesting, livestock and poultry farms. Though seasonal, women spend more time in transplanting and harvesting. This emphasised the importance of these operations in paddy production from the female point of view to consume labour availability in the peak period.

However, the study observed that women are usually overburdened with monotonous household and other economic activities. Most of them are engaged in the family farms and some in outside wage earning jobs. The scope for salaried jobs in the villages and outside the villages is extremely limited. Prevailing illiteracy, poverty, lack of technical backup etc. are the main constraints behind the marginalisation of the participation of rural women in gainful employment opportunities throughout the region. In our study area women are found to maintain the houses, perform the routine work meant for them and also help the male members in economic activities. Moreover, they take care of health and education of the childrens. Most of the women spend about 14 to 15 hours a day in such works in the peak agricultural season. They also spend considerable time of a day in cleaning and washing, cooking etc. However, they have little say regarding the management of farm household. In financial matters the role of farm women is found to be largely minor. In fact, the women have no decision-making power to allocate resources which is acting as a hurdle towards their empowerment.

Further, the findings of the study provides evidence in support of the existence of poor quality and quantity o agricultural infrastructural facilities; especially irrigation, extension service and institutional credit system. These have been playing a major constraint on agricultural prosperity of the region. The irrigation coverage available is less than 3 percent throughout region. Though it has not been come to be significant factor in influencing the use of HYVs and raising the cropping intensity of the sample farms, but the poor state of irrigation infrastructure, is no doubt, is working as a constraint on agricultural development throughout

the region. The macro level analysis on the trends in cropping pattern in Barak Valley region revealed that absence of irrigation has not allowed for the diversification of rice crop from the predominance of winter rice to less flood affected and drier season summer and autumn rice. The fact that non-availability of irrigation is one of the most frequently cited reasons by the sample farmers for not using seed-fertilizer technology more extensively. Moreover, the role being played by financial institutions are also not said to be satisfactory. Though the Female Work Participation Rate (FWPR) in the sample villages has been found to be less than the male participation rate but the study found a positive contribution of women worker on the productivity of rice in the sample farms. Hence the study identified the existence poor state of agriculture infrastructure especially of irrigation, extension service network and institutional credit system on the one hand and the prevailing gender disparity on the other hand as the main constraints on agricultural development of the region.

7.5 SUGGESTIONS

For improving the status of the rural farm women in the Barak Valley region, their involvement should be increased in various activities that are taking place in the rural areas. The voluntary organisations should play an important role in this regard. It is very vital to increase awareness level among the rural women in the region regarding available opportunities, their rights and responsibilities through proper education, easy accessibility of loans for self-employment, adequate training facilities, etc from the grass root level so as to increase their accessibility in different spheres.

However, in order to remove the prevailing constraints to women empowerment and to pave for a healthy and gender neutral development

of agriculture in the Barak Valley region of Assam, the following policy measures have been suggested:

1. Steps for development of irrigation infrastructure in the region should be given to most priority for its agricultural development. As the region is not adequately emboweled with quality ground water, for the development of its irrigation infrastructure the region will have to depend on its river sources. More emphasis should be given on minor irrigation system based on deep and shallow tube wells as it is quite effective for exploiting ground water reserve for irrigation. As the valley is well endowed with river water resources, minor River Pumping System (RPS) should be given priority. To make a positive impact on the agriculture of Barak Valley a majority project such as Barak Dam River Valley Project report have already been prepared by the Brahmaputra Board, a Government of India organisation. But one of the major obstacles of its implementation has been the opposition from the neighbouring state of Manipur and also neighbouring country of Bangladesh. If successfully implemented, the Barak Dam is expected to overcome the recurring problem of floods in the region. Notwithstanding the usefulness of such initiatives a lot of more efforts would be necessary for the diversified agricultural development of the region.
2. The study identified the poor status of the women worker who work at par with their husbands outside the house and supplement the family income but their position and status did not improved in the family set up. Hence, proper infrastructural facilities congenial for both men and women workers are essentially needed to increase gainful employment opportunities in agriculture and allied activities of the region. Though some initiatives in employment generation and poverty alleviation scheme have been adopted by the Government, substantial efforts

need to be given to achieve gender equity in the region. The focus needs to be shifted to rural women especially.

3. In spite of re-orientation during the last decade, there are still many gaps in the coverage of extension agencies throughout the region. As such the obstacle of adequate coverage and intensity of the extension service needs to be properly addressed for innovative agricultural transmission to the farmers in the region. Further, considering the important role of women in agriculture in the region emphasis may be given by the government for employment of women Agricultural Development Officers (WADOs) and Women Village Level Extension Workers (WVLEWs) for meaningful awareness. Due to practice of their traditional values and customs, it is observed that the rural women workers do not come in direct contact with male government officials at par with the male workers for improving their knowledge and awareness regarding various schemes meant especially for the women. Employment of women government officials would be more effective for meaningful awareness of the women farmers.
4. The study suggested co-ordinated research for the task of improving existing technology package throughout the region. Keeping in view the limitation of the application of the existing HYVs to the flood prone low lying and water logged areas of the region, more research efforts need to be focussed on development of new varieties of crops which can be applicable particularly to specific environmental condition of the region. Further, for capacity building and to acquaint women workers in technology driven agricultural workers, special training programmes for skill development need to be organised. Sincere efforts by the government and non-government agencies need to be made for instituting special training camps for women farmers and labourers.

5. Since women workers in the region have been found to be more productive than their male worker in the sample villages, it is necessary to give more emphasis on productive employment of women farmers in the agricultural sector of the region. Moreover, in order to increase the potential of women employment in the rural areas of the region, the secondary and tertiary sectors of employment opportunities need to be expanded as the occupational structure of the region seems receptive to a larger absorption of women labour in these sectors. Besides, the women labourer needs to be encouraged to join the labour market by developing a positive attitude towards the dignity of labour to become an economic earner. The non-governmental organisations may take active part for creating awareness of the rural women towards their economic participation.
6. Since the literacy rate of women worker is less than their male counterparts, it is suggested for organising frequent literacy camps by both government and non-government agencies in the region. It also necessary to create awareness among women worker about various employment generating programmes meant for landless labourers. Further, to reduce the existing illiteracy level of the rural women in the region, adult education programmes should be effectively implemented for all rural women labourers.
7. The study observed that most of the Manipuri women and other scheduled tribe women in the sample villages took active participation in weaving, property and selling various rice products and many other productive off farm activities most of which remained considered as 'domestic activities'. The study, therefore, suggested for taking necessary steps by both the governmental and non-governmental organisations so that various entrepreneurial and skill development programmes for women in the region for enhancing their earning

capacity may be organised. The increasing awareness in this regard would make them confident towards their economic earning capacity.

8. It is observed that in the sample villages of the region there is inadequacy of institutional framework for obtaining easy credit facilities for the poor farmer. This creates a hurdle for poor farmers in respect of performance and adoption of modern agricultural operations smoothly. Infact they had to depend on informal sources for the availability of credit with high interest rates. The study, thus, suggested for taking necessary steps by the government for ensuring the access to institutional finance especially to the poor women farmers with easy credit facilities. At the same time, creation of more SHGs particularly for rural women and its proper functioning is the urgently needed which would promote the propensity to employment among the rural women labourers and would strengthen their economic independence.
9. Maintaning wage parity and balacing the working hours between male and female workers should be ensured by the existing institutional framework. The Panchayatj Raj institutions will have to be proactive in this respect. It should also need to be ensured that the equity in the fixation of wage rates should not be made at the cost of withdrawal of female labour from the market. Most of the women in study area being the sufferers of wage disparity, the enforcement of the “Maximum Wages Act” and equal remuneration to equal work in the rural areas of the entire region should be taken up by the government as top most priority.
10. The unequal gender relation prevailing within the family as well as at the society led to the continuance of gender discrimination which re-inforces indifference of female literacy and constrains the growth and development of women in society. Thus the study suggested that the women labourers should be given equal chance in the family right and

responsibilities as well as in the farming decision making processes. This can be rectified by creating awareness towards their rights and responsibilities. The NGOs can play an active role in this regard.

11. As per findings of the study, as more than 90 percent of the cropped area of Barak Valley region is utilised for rice production, there is the urgent need for diversification of agriculture throughout the region for increasing productivity of agriculture. The study focused specially on the diversification rice crop as the most effective measure for agricultural development of the region.

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