Livelihood Pattern of Riverine Areas of Dibrugarh District and its Prospects of Livelihood Diversification

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Research Article

ABSTRACT

Diversification is a continuous adaptive process whereby household add new activities maintain existing one or drop others, thereby maintaining diverse and changinmake greater contribution to general livelihood portfolios. Livelihood in rural areas is very erratic and risk hidden. The land based livelihood of small and marginal farmers are becoming unsustainable in recent times due to surplus man power and decrease in availability of arable land. Diversification activities make greater contribution take strategy by which people try to improve the generate cash incomes for poor households and it is a key strategy by which people try to improve their wellbeing. The Barbaruah development block of Dibrugarh district is a chronically flood affected block. Six livelihood diversification strategies are identified i) farm only, ii) Off farm only, iii) non-farm only, iv) on farm plus off farm, v)off farm plus non-farm, vi) on farm plus off farm plus non-farm. As the entire survey area is inundated by flood water in every year, a part from farm activities various income generating activities carried out under livelihood diversification. Some households end upon multiple activities. A common pattern is for every poor and the comprehensive well-off households to have most diverse livelihood. Farm income accounts for 54.0 per cent of the total household income coming from off farm activities. It is also revealed that 44 per cent households prefer livelihood diversification due to limited agricultural income. About 22 per cent reported that the availability of non-farm activities encouraged them to adopt nonfarm activities. Managing livelihood has always been a critical factor or challenge among the poor in everywhere. Livelihood in the present scenario has become the keyword for the better living and prosperity.

INTRODUCTION

Diversification is a continuous adaptive process whereby household add new activities, maintain existing one or drop others, thereby maintaining diverse and changing livelihood portfolios. Livelihood in rural areas is very erratic and risk hidden. Agriculture and allied activities support livelihood of nearly 70 percent of India's rural population. However, land based livelihood activities of small and marginal farmers are becoming unsuitable in recent times due to surplus man power and decrease in availability of arable land. Due to inadequate income from non–farm activities to support family's need, rural population is forced to look an alternative means of supplementing their livelihood. Diversification activities make greater contribution to generate cash incomes for poor households and it is a key strategy by which people try to improve their wellbeing. The study attempt to analyses the existing livelihood pattern of riverine areas of Dibrugarh district and problems and scope of diversification of livelihood activities of the rural farmers/people. Variables determining the livelihood diversification activities of the communities to be identified during the study [1].

Objectives
The main objectives of this paper are
- To identify the pattern of rural livelihood in riverine areas and scope of livelihood diversification.
- To examine critically the prospect of livelihood diversification strategy in the identified areas along with the problems of diversification [2].

Research questions
The study intend to answer the following research questions
Does livelihood diversification improve the livelihood status of the rural community?
What are the inherent and emerging constraints in relation to livelihood diversification?

METHODOLOGY

The Barbaruah Development Block of West Dibrugarh Revenue Circle is purposively selected as most of the villages under this block are flood prone during the period from May to October in a year. These villages are submerged by the river Brahmaputra, Dihing and Sessa during rainy seasons. The flood water damage the winter paddy, summer vegetables and bao paddy along with wash way the livestock of the farmers. Based on the primary and secondary data, Barbarua Development Block is finally selected for the study. In the block itself three nos Missing community dominated villages and three nos scheduled caste dominated villages are selected for the study. Through random sampling, 10 households of each diverse socio economic background are selected from each village. Semi structured schedules are prepared for interviewing the villagers, local village head (Gaon Burah), school teacher, unemployed youth, agricultural labour, landless people and women. The villagers are interviewed to understand their perception towards the present source of livelihood. The household schedule include demographic profile, educational status, occupation, income aspects, land holding pattern, cropping pattern, source of livelihood, migration pattern, factors affecting the income generation, diversity of livelihood portfolio, skill development, market accessibility etc [3].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the study six livelihood diversification strategies are identified. These include farm only off farm only non-farm only on farm plus off farm off farm plus non-farm and on farm plus off farm plus nonfarm. The age, gender, qualification, land size of the household, income invariability affect the diversification of livelihood strategies [4].

Demographic pattern of the household
It is found that 37 percent of the households head lies in the age group 40-50 years. This shows that majority of households are active and economically viable. This age group of people is interested to venture in non-agricultural activities and involved in livelihood diversification along with the age group of 30-40 years. Gender is the integral determinant of the rural livelihood. It seems that 80% of the household head in the study area are male. They provide decision regarding the participation in livelihood diversification. The average size of the households is found at 6 (six). It helps in joint decision regarding participation in livelihood diversification. More the size of the households required income is more. Large household having more income generation activities than a smaller household. Large households due to their limited land holding, they have to diversify their livelihood activities. The demographic pattern of the households head is presented in (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic pattern of the households head.

Sl No	Characteristics	Total	Missing	Scheduled Caste
1	Total no of households	60	30	30
2	Age of household head (Yrs)			
	Below 30	4	1	3
	30-40	12	9	3
	40-50	22	8	14
	50-60	12	8	4
	60 and above	10	4	6
3	Gender of the households			
	Male (%)	80	82	78
	Female (%)	20	18	22

Socio-economic status

Educational status of households head are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Educational status of household head.

Sl No	Characteristics	Total	Missing	Scheduled caste
1	Total no of households	60	30	30
2	Educational level of household head			
i	Never attended school	8	4	4
ii	Primary Education	12	7	5
iii	Up to High school	22	14	8
iv	Up to higher secondary	8	5	3
v	Under graduate and above	10	-	10

Most of the household heads studied up to high school level (70%). However 30% respondents are under graduate and above. II. The household livelihood strategies are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Household livelihood strategies.

Sl No	Characteristics	Total	Missing	Scheduled caste
1	Total no of households	60	30	30
2	On farm	18	12	6
3	Off-farm	6	1	5
4	Non-farm	16	8	8
5	On farm+off farm	6	4	2
6	Off farm+nonfarm	8	4	4
7	On farm+off farm+nonfarm	6	1	5

Occupationally, 30% households have farming as their main occupation. Only 10% households have both on farm and off farm activities. It is observed that mostly scheduled caste households are involved in off farm and non-farm activities such as fishing, fish net marketing, wood cutting in nearby forest etc. Educational qualification positively effects the diversification decision as educated family members prefer off farm as well as non-farm activities.

III.The classification of household land holding is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Classification of household land holding.

Sl No	Characteristics	Total	Missing	Scheduled caste
1	Total no of households	60	30	30
2	Landless farmer	18	6	12
3	Small farmer	22	8	14
4	Marginal farmer	20	16	4
5	Big farmer	-	-	-

The operational land holding is more among the missing community. Most of the Missing households are small and marginal farmers. The number of land less farmers are more among the scheduled caste community. Their cultivated fields are affected by flood in every year. Therefore, they cannot solely depend upon agricultural production.

Livestock status

Rearing animals and fowl is also another activity of the missing and scheduled caste community. Almost every household rare pigs, fowls, cattle for their livelihood. These livestock have good market in and around nearby villages as well as in Dibrugarh town. Women SHGs are also rearing and selling livestocks.

Livelihood diversification

As the entire survey area is inundated by flood water in every year, apart from farm activities, various other income generation activities to be carried out under livelihood diversification. Some households depend upon multiple activities. Every household whether poor or well to do family have diverted livelihood activities. The Table 5 indicates the source income of households from different sources. Farm income accounts for 54.0 percent of the total household income. It includes both on farm and non-farm income generating activities. Only 10 percent of the total household's income coming from off farm activities. This shows that majority of the farm households in the studying area were engaged in farming activities and nonfarm activities. Apart from these, six households are dependent on off farming activities, four salaried job, eight in fishing, 3 artisans and seven traders.

Table 5. Source of income of households.

Sl No	Characteristics	Total	Male	Female
1	Farming	32	30	2
2	Off farming	6	5	1
3	Salaried job	4	4	0
4	Fishing	8	8	0
5	Artisans	3	3	0
6	Petty traders	7	7	0
Total		60	57	3

Reasons for livelihood diversification

The Table 6 revealed that 44 percent reported limited agricultural income as the first priority for engaging in livelihood diversification. Another 22 percent respondents reported that the availability of non farm activities as their second most important reason for diversification of activities. Only 14 per cent reported that they want to stay in good condition.

Table 6. Reasons for livelihood diversification in percentage.

Sl No	Characteristics	Male	Female	Total

1	Limited agricultural income	44.6	42.4	44
2	Large family	23	17	20
3	Available non-farm activities	23	21.6	22
4	To stay in good condition	17	12	14

It is observed that during the study, Missing community people are mostly dependent on forest and agricultural activity. Whereas the scheduled caste population are mostly .stay in backward areas. They are dependent on fishery related activities.

Problems of livelihood diversification

Agriculture is the main occupation of the missing and scheduled caste community. But they do not have sufficient land foe agricultural activity. In flood season, the farm sector as well as non-farm sector become jeopardise. Repeated crop failure due to successive floods compelled them to migrate for better livelihood. As most of the farmers are small and marginal farmers, they do not have sufficient money to shift high value crop during rabi season [5].

Prospect of livelihood diversification

- Mechanization of agricultural sector for growing more than one crop during rabi season.
- Flow of credit is one of the components which help in diversification of activities such as horticulture, food processing, sericulture, handloom, textile etc. These activities can promote income earning of the farmers [6].
- Skill development and training.

CONCLUSION

An individual occupation choice is found to be influenced by several factors such as level of education, assets of the household, land ownership, and closeness to the town, household size, and agricultural wage. Infrastructure facility as well as demand for non-agricultural products. It is observed that people are engaged in rice cultivation for subsistence only and their income from other crops and non-farm sources. Most of them desire to diversify livelihood for their existence and better living condition. Managing livelihood need has always been a critical factor or challenge among the poor and marginal farmers in everywhere. Diversification of livelihood in the present scenario has become the key word for better living and prosperity.

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