



Hardship Faced by the Displaced Tribal Farm women of Hill District of Assam

M. Johari* • K. K. Saharia • A. Borgohain • M.N. Ray • L. S. Khuman

Department of Extension Education L.C.V.Sc., College of Veterinary Science, Khanapara-781022, Guwahati

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 5 August 2017

Revision Received 15 January 2018

Accepted 25 January 2018

Key words:

Hardship, Displaced, Tribal, Farm women, Hill

ABSTRACT

A study on the hardship faced by the displaced tribal farmwomen in hill district of Assam in rearing livestock was carried out by contacting one hundred women farmers each from two districts namely Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong in Assam. A reliable and valid interview schedule encompassing a check list containing seventeen items was used for data collection. It was found that the average degree of difficulties faced due to displacement was 18.10 out of the total obtainable score of 51. When they were tested for mean differences, the test revealed no significant level of difference in the districts. Further majority of the respondents revealed that “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”, “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”, “life of women has become more tedious with no scope for recreation or get together when they have livestock”.

1. Introduction

In tribal communities, the role of women is substantial and crucial; although not given their due share of social command they deserve (Burman 2012). They constitute about half the total population but in tribal society women are more important than in other social groups, because they work harder and the family economy and management depend on them (Misra et al. 2016). Even after industrialization and the resultant commercialization swamped the tribal economy, women continued to play a significant role (Saharia 2014). Collection of minor forest produce is done mostly by women and children. Many also work as laborers in industries, households and construction, contributing to their family income (Chauhan 2011). Despite exploitation by contractors and managers, tribal people are hardworking, loyal and simple in general.

However, tribal women face problems and challenges in getting a sustainable livelihood and a decent living due to environmental degradation and the interference of outsiders with vested interests. The strategy for tribal development, and specially women, needs improvement, betterment, development and upliftment to affect their empowerment. Tribal women have adjusted themselves to live a traditional life style in the local environment and follow occupations based on natural resources (Chauhan 2011; Saharia, 2014). But the things are gradually changing even for them and they are into more settled life with animal husbandry as one of their main occupations. However, frequent migration brings to them and their society the multifaceted problems in life and livelihood (Leus et al. 2001; Porter and Haslam 2001; Kerimova et al. 2003). Keeping this point in view a study to understand the hardship faced by the displaced tribal farmwomen of hill district of Assam was taken up.

*Corresponding author: drmonosri@gmail.com

2. Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in both the two hill districts of Assam namely, the Karbi Anglong and the Dima Hasao district where the migration of farm families is a common phenomenon and relatively more in number than in all other districts of the state. So, the study revolved around the women engaged in livestock farming, especially in the generally categorized remote, difficult and disturbed areas. Data were collected by personally interviewing the selected 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. For obtaining response the respondents were offered a check list of seventeen statements and they were asked to respond in either of the three degrees ranging from “very much”, “much” and “somewhat” 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. These seventeen statements were collected from literature, academic experts, administrators of the autonomous councils and the community leaders. Initially there were twenty six such statements. Pre-testing of the interview schedule was done in the nearby simulating Cachar district to see the reliability of the check list. Some 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 treated as 0.89. As far as the validity was concerned, content validity was ensured in consultation with the help of 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 about 200 animal husbandry farm women from proportionate different ethnic (tribal) groups 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.

3. Results and Discussion

Displacement of farm families, especially among the tribal communities is a common feature although clubbed with many folded difficulties of social, economic, cultural and other ramifications. A perusal of the data presented in Table 1 indicated that the average degree of difficulties faced due to displacement by the farm women 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 existed, but the same were not perceived at the highest degree endangering their social being. Based on mean and standard deviation, the respondents were categorized into low, medium and high groups. Their distribution were 8.0%, 71.0% and 21.0% in Dima Hasao, 24.0% 59.0% and 17.0% in Karbi Anglong and 16.0%, 65.0% and 19.0% in pooled sample, respectively. The mean scores showed no significant difference ($t=0.87$, NS). The finding was again assertive that the farm women were in difficulty, but at the same time tried to make a living not paying much attention to the problems they were in. That was the reason that their realization was at lower scores and there was no significant difference in mean values. Similar findings were also hinted by Misra et al. (2016) and Sastry (2016). The further analysis to know the exact areas of mostly felt difficulties was attempted and the results were presented in Table 2. It revealed that out of the total seventeen statements presented before the respondents showed their agreement ranging from very much, much and somewhat; the respondents were prompted in showing their agreement in “very much” degree to the extent of 62% followed by 60%, 57%, 33%, 8%, 4%, 3%, 3%, 3%, 1%, 1%, 0.00 %, 0.00 %, 0.00 %, 0.00 %, 0.00 % and 0.00% the areas like “There is always a danger of predators, their number is more now”, “The total agricultural land has become lesser causing food crisis for livestock”, “Local authorities have not come forward for any help like earlier for improving the conditions of livestock owners”, “Production and productivity of the available land are lesser affecting food availability for livestock”, “The ladies have to put more labour now for rearing livestock”, “Women get no time for weaving and craft making – all their time is spent for livestock”, “Society is no more united here, no livestock is considered as a community wealth”, “Because of lack of uniformity of origin of the Neighbourers, there is no social bondage and as such no sympathy for the livestock”, “There is more number of broken homes and widows for whom livestock is the only asset”, “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”, “The health of the farm women deteriorated due to over burden and harder labour”, “Life of women has become more tedious with no scope for recreation or get together when they have livestock”, “Women cannot afford to have self-esteem as livestock rearing is looked down”, “Incidences of single mother has

increased and future of children depends upon livestock only”, “Due to increased expenditure, people have become poorer and livestock cannot compensate anymore” and “For the same job to get done, women have to spend more time, money and labour outside home if they have livestock”, respectively, in Dima Hasao whereas in Karbi Anglong the correspondent figures were 69.0%, 72.0%, 8.0%, 72.0%, 41.0%, 0.0%, 11.0% 10.0%, 0.0%, 50.0%, 3.0%, 0.0%, 0.0%, 0.0%, 0.0% and 0.0%. And in the pooled sample 65.5%, 66.0%, 32.50%, 52.5% 24.50%, 2.0%, 7.0%, 6.50%, 1.5%, 25.5%, 2.0%, 0.0%, 0.0%, 0.0%, 0.0% and 0.0%, respectively. The realizations of the women 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), te Velde et al. (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. Low levels

of education and few skills result in much of the rural poor working as subsistence farmers or in insecure, informal employment, perpetuating the state of rural poverty. Inadequate education regarding health and nutritional needs often results in under-nutrition or malnutrition among the rural poor. Social isolation due to inadequate roads and poor access to information makes acquiring health care (and affording it) particularly difficult for the rural poor, resulting in worse health and higher rates of infant mortality. There have been noted disparities in both Asia and Africa between rural and urban areas in terms of the allocation of public education and health services. The problems faced by the women in their work places are simply unbelievable and they are spiral in nature one problem adding up to the other making the life more difficult and challenging. It is also said that displaced people a vulnerable group, exposed to new hazards and open to greater risks for the development of illness and death, mental disorders and further persecution and violence (Leus et al. 2001; Porter and Haslam 2001; Kerimova et al. 2003). The movement of displaced people contributes to strains on the local health care systems, and often host populations end up sharing the suffering of the displaced (Haug 2002; Grein et al. 2003).

Conclusion

The findings revealed that the average degree of difficulties faced due to displacement was 18.10. Further majority of the respondents revealed that “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”, “Life of women has become more tedious with no scope for recreation or get together when they have livestock”.

Table 1. Profile of the respondents on the basis of their hardship in different districts

Variables	District	Mean	SD	Range	Low	Medium	High	‘t’ value
Difficulties faced due to displacement	DH	18.03	4.77	13-33	8 (8.0)	71 (71.0)	21 (21.00)	0.87 NS
	KA	18.17	5.28	9-25	24 (24.0)	59 (59.0)	17 (17.0)	
	Pooled	18.10	5.02	9-33	32 (16.00)	130 (65.00)	38 (19.00)	

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

Table 2. Frequency distribution of respondents on the basis of their difficulties due to the displacement

Sl. No	Difficulties due to displacement	District	Degrees of information		
			Very much	Much	Somewhat
1.	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)
2.	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)
3.	The ladies have to put more labour now for rearing livestock	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)
4.	The health of the farm women deteriorated due to over burden and harder 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)
5.	No spare land for the livestock grazing, open grazing fields are not available	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)
6.	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)
7.	Society is no more united here, 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)
8.	Because of lack of uniformity of origin of the neighbours, there is no social bondage and as such 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)
9.	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)
10.	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)
11.	There is more number of broken houses and widows for whom 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)
12.	Incidences of single mother has 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)
13.	Local authorities have not come forward for any help like earlier 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)
14.	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)
15.	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)
16.	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)
17.	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

References

- Burman JJR (2012). Status of tribal women in India, Mainstream Weekly, Tuesday, the 13th March, 2012, pp 10.
- Chauhan NM (2011). Role performance of tribal farm women in agriculture and animal husbandry in Gujarat Kar J Agril Sciences 24(5): 672-674
- Grein T, Checci F, Escriba JM, Tamrat A, Karunakara U, Stokes C, Brown V, Legros D (2003). Mortality among displaced former UNITA members and their families in Angola: A retrospective cluster study. British Medical Journal 327: 650-651
- Haug R (2002). Forced migration, processes of return and livelihood construction among pastoralists in Northern Sudan. Disasters 26:70-84.
- Kanbur R, Zhang X (2005). Fifty years of regional inequality in China: a journey through central planning, reform, and openness". Review of Development Economics, 9(1): 87-106.
- Kerimova J, Posner SF, Brown YT, Hillis S, Meikle S, Duerr A (2003). High prevalence of reported sexual intercourse among internally displaced women in Azerbaijan. Amer J Public Health, 93: 1076-1070
- Leus X, Wallace J, Lorretti A (2001). Internally displaced persons Prehospital Disaster Medicine, 16 pp 75-83.
- Misra AK, Kalash P, Sahoo PK, Singh A, Srivastava SK (2016). Gender and livestock production in India : Issues and strategies for enhancing livelihood of farm women, in indigenous – a compilation of Invited Papers in International Livestock Conference, ISAPM, Hyderabad pp 160-177
- Otsuka K (2009). Rural poverty and income dynamics in Asia and Africa. New York: Routledge.
- Porter M, Haslam N (2001). Forced displacement in Yugoslavia: A meta-analysis of psychological consequences and their moderators. J Trauma Stress 14: 817-834
- Saharia KK (2014). Women profile in livestock management under changing climate. Souvenir cum Lead Paper, National Seminar on New dimensional approaches for livestock productivity and profitability enhancement under era of climate change", XXI Annual Convention of Indian Society of Animal Production and Management, College of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry, AAU, Anand, Gujarat, pp 276-284
- Sastry NSR (2016). Diverse constraints to livestock production in India, in indigenous – A compilation of invited papers in International Livestock Conference, ISAPM, Hyderabad, pp 42-49
- te Velde, Dirk W, Morrissey O (2005). Spatial inequality for manufacturing wages in five African countries. In: Kanbur R, Venables AJ (eds.) Spatial inequality and development, Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, pp 292-310