

SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS AND LIVELIHOOD OF THE VILLAGES ON THE SIDE OF THE BARAK RIVER JIRIBAM SUB-DIVISION, MANIPUR

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Abstract: Jiribam sub-division is situated in the Imphal east district of Manipur. The two villages which are selected for the current research programme are Borobekra Jatrapur and Bhowmipara that are inhibited on the river side of the Barak – one of the major river system in Manipur. Most of their economy depends on this river. Some people transports bamboo and its products at high water level. 20% households in Jatrapur and 13% in Bhowmipara totally depend only on capture fishery in this river. Fish catching and work for daily wages are the main activities done by this fishing community. Other fishery activities like fish processing, fish fermentation, fish by-products are not common. Some of the fish species which have high economic importance are S. aor, H. elisha, B. bagarius, etc. Their economic status is below average. Their education is mostly elementary level having only one high school. The houses are of thatched or kutcha and sanitary facility is not well developed. There is one primary health centre for emergency treatment and ASHA helps for women. **Keywords:** Fishing, Economic status, Jatrapur, Bhowmipara, Jiribam

1) INTRODUCTION

Jiribam sub-division is situated in the Imphal east district of Manipur at a distance of 217 km from Imphal. Two villages are randomly selected for the present research programme viz., Borobekra Jatrapur, 27 km and Bhowmipara, 35 km from Jiribam on the bank of the Barak river. Manipur has two river systems – the Barak River System and Irrawady River System. Barak river is considered as one of the most important river ecosystem due to its high productivity and its importance for fishery. Ii is said that 12 million people are directly engaged in fishing [9] and fisheries – related activities provide important sources for livelihoods for nearly 7 million people in India [4]. Livelihood can be defined as the capabilities of the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities and accesses to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual household [3]. Many commercially important fishes were caught on the entire stretch of the river. Besides its large potential for fishery



resources, agriculture and forest products such as fuel and fodder are also the main source of income for the villagers. Fishing is mostly through capture fishery but culture fishery is very less. Their fishing techniques, crafts and gears are with small boat fishing nets and mostly of indigenous type. Mechanised fishing and electric fishing is rarely operated in the Barak by these people. Their economic conditions are moderate but some are below poverty line. Despite its high potential for fishery, agriculture, forest sector, the socio economic status of the people is not good as expected due to poor infrastructure, dilapidated road for transport etc. Studies on the socio economic status of the villagers on the bank of the Barak river of the Jiribam sub-division is very limited. Analyzing the socioeconomic status of the community of the two villages who interact closely; is very important for the community upliftment and preserving the ecosystem of the Barak river. The main objectives of the present study were to understand the demographic, social and economic condition of the people of the study sites. The present study will help to formulate the policy programmes of the government for the development of the people in general and the fishing community in particular.

2) METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted from June 2014 to March 2016 in the two villages where the fishing activities were done regularly. The survey is seasonally conducted through regular field visit at the respective areas house to house which includes group discussion with the farmers, questionnaires, personal interviews, etc. [17] to access fishing manpower, crafts and gears along the banks of the Barak river. The study site is selected randomly through information. According to the convenience, it is divided into five seasons in a year viz: i) Summer season (April-May), ii) Monsoon season (June-July), iii) Post Monsoon season (August – October), iv) Winter Season (December-January) and v) Spring Season (February-March). The work includes group discussion with the villagers and questionnaires for each family. The fishing techniques are personally observed while operating and necessary photographs were taken. The survey was done under three main areas/criteria namely: Demographic, Economic and Social. Under demography, family and age were considered, source of income, monthly income, crafts and gears, fishing for Economic data and for Social data like sanitary facilities, garbage dumping, drinking water, electricity, housing condition, religion and education were considered [6] & [17].



3) **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Jatrapur is a small village on the bank of the river Barak which is 23 km from Jiribam town. It has around 127 families, out of which 25 families exclusively depend on fishing for their livelihood. The fisherman works day and night for catching fish at Barak river by using (through) boat. Mostly capture fishery is done in this area. Women do not take part in fishing but take part in other activities like fish sorting, net repairing etc. Bhowmipara is another village around 35 km from Jiribam which has around 150 families out of which 16-20 are fisherman family. Other depends on agriculture and other works like artisans, construction works, etc.

3.1) Fishing status

People from both the villages perform both fish catching as well as fish marketing. Most of

the fishing activities were done by male fishers. Only sorting of fish, preparation of net, etc. are done by women. About 20% of the total population depend on fishing for their livelihood. 50% of the fishing community are full-time fishers i.e. fishing is done throughout the year. Anonymous [2] classified fishermen as full time, part time and occasional depending upon the no. of fishing days in a year.



Fig. 1: Traditional boat

Fish catching is mainly done by nets with the help of indigenous and modern crafts and gears. Among them, 70% use traditional boats and 20% performed fishing with no crafts. The remaining 10% used motorised boats. Fishing methods are totally based on nets. Different types of nets are used such as cast net (30%), gill nets (50)%. 20% of fishing techniques were based on hook and lines. Traps and electric fishing is seldom used in the Barak river though it is reported in other parts of the state [16]. Different types of nets used by these fishing communities are sairen jal, holar jal, moreh jal (imported from Burma), goorjal, baspata jaal etc. Sairen is a type of net operated during April mainly for catching *H. elisha*. Golpa jaal is operated during Jan-Feb for catching *Bagarius sps., L. rohita, S. aor*, etc. Holar jaal is used to catch some species locally known as laria, *L. Pangusia* (lacho) and sometimes caught *H. elisha*. Moreh jaal is used in catching larla (local name), *E. Bucha* (bacha), etc. Goorjaal is a small sieve size net for catching small fishes like laria (local name),





Fig. 2: Different types of nets

lacho, etc. Borang is a large sieve size net about 80-100 mm operated during winter season i.e. Nov-Jan to catch large fishes like *S. aor* (ngachou). Baspata jaal about 20 mm size is



Fig.3: Barak River during winter season (2016)



operated during Nov-March, when water level is lower. Generally, the amount of catch is highest during winter season. But, the period from Nov-Jan, 2016 got the minimum catch. It may be due to low water level in Barak River. The types of fish available are different according to the seasons. Summer season catch includes *Bagarius, Mastacembalus,* Laria, kharish, *Elisha*, etc. winter catch includes Baspata (wanamanbi), laso (season), shrimps, *Wallago* (rarely), *L. calbasu,* etc. The fisherman used mahajal across the river to catch these fishes. Cast net is mainly used when water level becomes lower. They used a locally made basket known as Dingra to put the caught fishes. Most of the net used by them are bought from Jiribam and Silchar (Assam) market.

Those species are caught simply by operating those types of nets with indigenous techniques. But a special technique is necessary for catching *Bagarius sps*. which has a large body size. It is caught by using two different types of hooks. A large hook with nylon thread is dropped into the river with the help of a haul assuming the location where there is a possibility of catching *Bagarius sps*. Around 250gm weight of small fishes like *M. armatus, L. rohita, C. mrigala*, etc. are used as fish bait. When the fish is trapped into the hook, the thread is pulled up till the mouth of the fish is seen. Another large size hook with a long hard thread is used to support the large fish. Once the fish is hooked and still in the deep water, it cannot escape due to hard thread. This fish catching is done through boat. Sometimes the boat may be upside down due to hard pulling by the fish, but the fishermen could easily come out by swimming. *Bagarius sps*. is mainly caught during rainy season. It is not available in clear water. The maximum size of *Bagarius* caught in rainy season (2015) was 118 kg

weight. During April they sell it at Rs.200/kg. No chemical/electric fishing is done here. But tribal fisherman used electric fishing and dynamite blasting to catch fish easily in the Churchandpur side of the Barak river. Blasting is more harmful as it is kills small fishes, fry, fingerlings and other



Fig. 5. Different types of hooks, lines, net, thread, etc. sold at Borobekra Market



fish food organisms for catching few big fishes. This may be one reason for decreasing fish catch in the Barak river. During rainy season, water level of the river becomes higher with high current and sometimes flood affects the fishing community. Generally, fish catching is maximum from October to March when both the current and level of water becomes lower. Fish processing is done in small amount for household uses. Smoked fish or fermented fish is not common here. Only fresh fishes are marketed which is mainly done by male fishers. They sell the fishes at Silchar, Fulertal (Assam), Borobekra Bazar. Borobekra is open only on Saturday in a week. Therefore, they sold the fishes at Silchar mainly. Transportation is carried out through motorboat and costs Rs 100 with three hours duration. They sell their prize catches at Gulathol market (open only on Wednesday) at around Rs. 500/kg. Other small fishes are sold at Rs. 150-200/kg. These small fishes are caught by a special locally made dragnet in the Jiri river everyday.

They also catch shrimps and large size shrimps during December to January season. They catch the whole night and sell it at Silchar at the rate of Rs. 1200-1500/ kg. They use Nupa el (a type of cast net) for catching shrimps (khajing) using feed like waikup (a by-product from





Fig. 6: Vegetable Plantation for extra source of income



paddy), salt, small fishes. They also sell the fishes at Jakurador Bazar but they prefer to sell it to Fulertal and Silchar market since it can earn more profit. For instance, Shrimp (khajing achouba) is only Rs. 300/kg but at Silchar they sell it around Rs. 1200-1500/kg. They transported the fishes there through motorboat at Barak River costing Rs. 100 fare. They sell the fishes in the market as fresh. There is no smoking and processing done. Smoking and processing of fish is sometimes done by tribal fisherman on the Churchandpur side of the Barak river. Churchandpur district is only 10 km from this place by Barak river. The source of income for these people mainly comes from agriculture which is the highest (40%) and lowest in government sector (5%). 10% of the total population earns Rs. 10000 and above per month which is categorised as high class family. Low family can earn around Rs.1000-5000 per month which contributes 30%. Medium class occupies 60% that can earn above Rs.5000 and below Rs.10000. Some other sources of income are derived from plantation of vegetables and fruits like orange, Betel nut, banana, Citrus micropthera (heiribob), coconut, lime, litchi, beans, bamboo, etc. Since the area is situated in a warmer climatic reason, betel nuts are largely suited here. One family can earn Rs. 60,000/yr from Betel nut selling only. Betel nut chewing is found to be a regular habit among the fishermen as in [12].

SI.	Feature	Category	%	SI.	Feature	Category	%
No.				No.			
1	Fishing	Full-time	70	6	Age	Young (10-20 yrs)	20
		Part-time	30			Middle (21-40yrs)	55
		Licence	Nil			Old (41-60yrs)	20
						Very Old (above 60)	05
2	Crafts and gear	Traditional	70	7	Source of income	Private	20
		Motorised	10			Fishing	20
		No craft	20			Government	05
						Agriculture	40
						other	15
3	Nets, hooks and lines	Cast net	20	8	Monthly income	Low	30
		Gill net	55			(Rs.1,000-5,000)	
		Hook and lines	10			Medium	60
		Scoop net	05			(Rs.5001-10,000)	
		Traps	10			High (above 10,000)	10
4	Family size	Small	05	9	Education	Elementary level	25
		(2-3 members)				Higher secondary	10
		Medium	40			Graduate	05
		(4-6 members)				Illiterate	50

Table: Demographic, Social and Economic Status



		Large (7-10 members)	55				
5	Housing status	Kutcha	95	10	Sanitation	kutcha	95
		Semi-pucca	05			Semi-pucca	05
		Рисса	Nil			Рисса	Nil

3.2) Socio-economic status

Socio-economic conditions of the fishers are moderate and some of them are poor. Women only involved in household work. It is reported that 40% of Thai women have been involved in the contribution of their income in the households, communities and country [11]. They do not participate in fishing, even selling. Earning from the fish catching are utilised for family maintenance. Age, family size, religion, housing conditions, education, sanitation, health, transport, communication etc. are the indicators for socio-economic status and human development in the society.

The study showed that the age of the fishermen varied from 10-60 years and above. 20% of the fishermen were in the young (10-20 yrs), 55% in the medium (21-40 years), 20% in the old (41-60 years) and 5% in the very old age group (above 60). The fishermen in the middle age group is the highest in fishing activity and lowest in the very old age group which is supported by [13] & [17]. According to the convenience of the study, family size is divided into three categories viz., 2-3 (small), 4-6 (medium) and 7-10 (large) family members. Most of the fishermen family are composed of 7-10 members (65%) which is marked as large family. 90% are of thatched house and 10% are semi-pucca. Muslim community dominates the population.

Education forms an important input in the overall development of individuals into the society enabling them to comprehend a better social, cultural and political environment. Sen, [1] also described the capability and endowment of education utilizing social, political and economic opportunities. Unfortunately, these villages have only one high school at Borobekra about 2km far. All the children for these villages walk on foot for study. Like Jatrapur, Bhowmipura also showed shortcoming in the education sector, since most of the parents cannot afford their children sending to private schools. Only one Govt. School available here is not sufficient enough for schooling of the children. Only two matriculates in the village so far. There is the poor education in the region. Illiteracy is also one of the most important constraints of fishery as described by [7]. So, it is necessary to establish a non-



formal education centre to educate the fishermen so that they can develop their own knowledge to improve their status. Women are least involved in the fishing practices except the household works. Sanitation is another important aspect to indicate the economic status of an area. These two villages have many drawbacks regarding sanitary programmes, health and hygiene. WHO refers sanitation as the provisions of facilities and services for the safe disposal of human urine and faeces and the name itself refers to the maintenance of hygienic conditions through services such as garbage collection, wastewater disposal, etc. Most of the family cannot afford sanitary latrines, safe drinking water instead they used directly from Barak River. In winter, water is clear resulting in a better water quality. But turbidity is high and many unwanted things are draining contaminating water during rainy season due to high water current. This will cause many water borne diseases like diarrhoea, amoebic dysentery, cholera, etc. which may cause even death.



Fig.7: Socio-economic conditions



It is estimated that around five million people die on account of preventable diseases due to lack of sanitation and hygiene [5]. Almost the fisher community cannot provide pucca latrines, bathroom, toilet, disposal facilities, etc. George [10] refers sanitation as a necessity for healthy life. As a result, assessment of healthy status constitutes an important aspect of the current study and also an indicator of the standard of living. Health is the level of functional and metabolic efficiency of living organisms and the ability of the individuals or communities to adapt and self manage when facing mental and social challenges. Therefore, WHO [8] describes health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. These fishing communities seldom take part in the social issues.

Only one primary health centre is available in this area and ASHA supported women. There is no emergency service. They have to travel at Jiribam for emergency treatment. They are somewhat lacking behind with this increasing trend towards development. One of the main reasons may be due to low income. In order to maintain their livelihood, they have not enough time for such programmes. Besides, there is no implementation of programmes regarding fishery activities like fish mela, self-help groups, loans, etc. for the villagers by the Government or any NGO's. In Bankok, women established a group named "Woman Development Volunteer Group" in collaboration with the Government, Phetchaburi Province [15].

Another important aspect for determining the social conditions is transport and communication system. It helps in connecting people and facilitates the social-economic status of a region. Besides, it helps in the development of primary sector and to solve the problem of unemployment in rural areas. If roads and transport systems are well developed, production will be increased with low cost. These two villages are not too far from Jiribam the prices of the products are highly different viz., *H. elisha* costs Rs. 400/kg weight but Rs. 800/kg at Jiribam Bazar. There is almost twice in each price. This is all because of underdeveloped roads. If a fisherman family want to earn more money, they have to sell the fishes at the markets where they can get more profit like Silchar or Fulertal in Assam. The roads are in bad shape specially during rainy season. The availability of Magic tata service is a great advantage for transport. It is reported that even road repairing is done by the association of vehicle owners that operated in this area. All passenger motors are registered



under Assam Transport. One of the main reasons for this may be the advantage for repairing facilities at Silchar. Silchar is very near in comparison with Imphal.

4) CONCLUSION

Most fishermen are poor and lack of many comforts of life [14]. From the current research work, it can be concluded that these two villages are generally less developed due to the



Fig.8: Questionnaires, Group Discussions and Group Photographs with the villagers of Jatrapur and Bhowmipara

lack of basic infrastructure and facilities like transport and communication, skilled labour, modern techniques. Most of the fishing techniques and crafts used are of indigenous type. If these facilities are developed, then the productivity will be increased. It is also suggested that the State Government should focus on the development of the infrastructures, basic education, sanitary, communication and transport for overall improvement of the socioeconomic conditions of the people and conserve the fragile river ecosystem of the area.

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