

## CHAPTER- II

### Framework of Study

The chapter deals with background and origin of research problem, statement of problem, scope and significance of study, universe of study, research question, objectives, hypotheses and methods of data collection. As many as fifty relevant literatures in the field have been reviewed.

#### Background of Research Problem

Quite for some time now a significant shift is apparent in government and NGO approach towards women's development in India. Starting with 'welfare' in fifties to 'development' in seventies and 'empowerment' in nineties, women in development (WID) approach became popular in 1970s and aimed to 'integrate women in development'. Approach missed out fact about women's involvement in development processes. This leads to project being classified as 'women's project' thereby alienating men. In many a cases women are left off worse than earlier.

Efforts to promote gender equality have in recent years shifted in focus from 'women in development' to 'gender and development'. The 'women in development' approach began with an uncritical acceptance of existing social structures and focused on how women could be better integrated into existing development initiatives. Targeting women's productive work to exclusion of their reproductive work, this approach was characterised by income-generating projects for women that failed to address the systemic causes of gender inequality. It also tended to view women as passive recipients of development assistance, rather than as active agents in transforming their own economic, social, political and cultural realities.

A key outcome was that woman's concerns were viewed in isolation, as separate issues, leading to their marginalisation in state system and other structures. Gender and development approach, which forms basis of Plan of Action, focuses more on fact that women and men have different life course and that development policy affect them differently. It seeks to address these differences by mainstreaming gender into development planning at all levels and in all sectors, focusing less on providing equal treatment for men and women (since equal treatment does not necessarily result in equal outcomes) and more on taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure equal outcomes. It recognises that improving status of women can not be understood as a separate, isolated issue and can only be achieved by taking into account status of both women and men.

Gender and development approach is built on awareness not only of difference between men and women but also of inequality that emanate from these differences. It seeks to address not only women's practical gender needs (immediate material needs of women in their existing roles as, for example, house-wives and mothers) but also their strategic gender interests (necessity of changing position of women in society – addressing inequalities in employment, political participation and cultural and legal status).

### **Statement of Problem**

Very recently government attempts to address gender issues in development planning. While contexts within which these policy approaches have been attempted vary, broadly speaking, welfare, anti-poverty and efficiency approaches can be linked to a WID framework, while equity and empowerment/transformation are more consistent with the GAD framework. Gender and Development (GAD) is more thorough and

examine role and need of women and men and how these related to each other? It also raises question about women's access to resource and decision in relation to men. It also questions gender base inequalities in all areas. GAD therefore soon emerges as a more reliable framework of planning in gender.

Human Resource Development is one of the major thrust areas in eighth five year plan in India and a special focus was placed on women and children. With children attention was focused on their 'survival, protection and development' especially for the girl child, whereas for women focus was on economic independence and self-reliance.

Empowerment of women is a major objective of ninth five year plan. This was first plan which involved women's groups from around India in a consultative process. Plan aimed to create enabling environment with requisite policy and programme, legislative support, exclusive institutional mechanism at s various levels and adequate financial and human resource to achieve the objective.

An integrated approach needs formulated to achieve same target. Efforts made at various fronts like social, economic, legal and political need harmonised too. Further a strategy to earmark fund as 'women's component' has to be adopted to ensure flow of resources adequate. The plan also calls for expeditious adoption of 'National Policy for Empowering Women along with a well-defined Gender Development Index to monitor progress towards improving women's status in society.

### **Scope of the Study**

As human development moves to centre stage of global development debate, gender issues cannot be excluded from debate on development and issues relating to women

should be addressed in relation to men. Since women are in a state of economic, social, political and knowledge disempowerment, it is imperative to reverse process. If women to be empowered, it is necessary to provide an expanding network of support service to free them from gender shackles. They are to be provided with alternative form of informal credit, training, employment, management skill and social security along with access to knowledge and resources for economic and political empowerment.

### **Universe of Study**

On basis of above conceptual framework the present study is confined to study of gender and human development in Hailakandi district of Assam. Choice of the district as universe of research is due to backwardness of the district and miserable condition of women living in the district.

### **Research Question**

This micro study on Gender and Human Development is based on research question **traditional socio-economic and political institutions become barriers to usher in development in Hailakandi district of Assam by resolving gender issue.**

### **Significance of Study**

The present interdisciplinary study of gender and human development will not only contribute to the field of knowledge but also reduce gap between male and female to achieve goal of development in a systematic manner. The findings of the study can also be linked at state, national and international level.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

1. To explore and study relationship and intricacy between gender inequality and human development in Hailakandi district.
2. To study extent of incompatibility between gender and human development in Hailakandi district.
3. To find out study process of gender inequality discriminating women than men in Hailakandi district.
4. To study rationale behind gender discrimination and uneven path of human development in Hailakandi district.

### **Hypotheses of the Study:**

Considering key objectives, the study attempts to test the following hypotheses:

1. Gender inequality promotes underdevelopment in Hailakandi district.
2. Gender discrimination is both attitudinal and actual.
3. Gender disequilibrium happens due to less education vis-a-vis employment of women.
4. Change of governing values and institutions may bring gender equality and human development to certain extent.

### **Methodology of Data Collection**

Important guiding factor in choosing appropriate method to collect data and to analyse them depends upon problem at hand. Nature of work necessitates both primary and secondary source of data addressing different issues relating to gender and human

development in Hailakandi district. Hence publication and government record relating to different issues constitute secondary source of data. For assessment of women empowerment, participatory and rapid rural appraisal at community level, focused and informal group discussion, interviews with cross section participating in programmes as well as group survey have been undertaken for the study.

### Sample Study

For study of gender and human development in district of Hailakandi of Assam stratified sampling has been used. Size of total sample is 600. As total universe of study i.e. N is 659296 according to 2011 census, five (5) blocks of total universe has been taken as unit of sample as per proportional allocation i.e.

$$n_1 = n/N \times N_1$$

$$n_2 = n/N \times N_2$$

$$n_3 = n/N \times N_3$$

$$n_4 = n/N \times N_4$$

$$n_5 = n/N \times N_5$$

N= Total population of 5 (five) blocks in district and since n i.e. sample has been taken 600 calculation for distribution of sample will be as per formula mentioned below.

N <sub>1</sub> (Algapur Block)	=	121392
N <sub>2</sub> (Hailakandi Block)	=	166498
N <sub>3</sub> (Lala Block)	=	203139
N <sub>4</sub> (Katlicherra)	=	73410
N <sub>5</sub> (South Hailakandi)	=	94857
<b>Total=</b>		<b>659296</b>

Total sample study has been undertaken for purpose varies from block to block of the district to make the study more scientific and hence according to formula of stratified sampling:

$$n_1 = \frac{600}{659296} \times 121392 = 110 \text{ (Algapur Block)}$$

$$n_2 = \frac{600}{659296} \times 166498 = 152 \text{ (Hailakandi Block)}$$

$$n_3 = \frac{600}{659296} \times 203139 = 185 \text{ (Lala Block)}$$

$$n_4 = \frac{600}{659296} \times 73410 = 67 \text{ (Katlicherra Block)}$$

$$n_5 = \frac{600}{659296} \times 94857 = 86 \text{ (South Hailakandi Block)}$$

Thereafter judgemental sampling or purposive sampling method has been followed to distribute questionnaires as purpose of the study is on small group of persons and on a specific field. However, care has been taken so that among all groups of the district the sample number as selected block wise be distributed.

After collection of data from field and through survey method on different indicators, data have been shown in percentage in table. Interpretation of data has been made by comparing HDI of different districts of Assam and of the state as a whole. Linkage has also been established with national level of HDI and gender disparity and gender inequality has been found through construction of gender index by subtracting GDI from HDI rank and figure and inference has been made accordingly.

## **Literature Review**

In the present chapter a good number of relevant works have been reviewed with an attempt to familiarise with type of work that has been undertaken and to identify research gap, which this modest study will attempt to fill up. Problems are useful for indicating type of difficulty that may be encountered in present study as also possible analytical shortcoming.

This chapter has been divided into three components. First section deals with literature concerning human development relationship with gender. Second section concerns studies related to women empowerment and gender. Third section deals with studies related to different indicators of gender equality .Fourth part deals with studies of society's discriminatory attitude towards women for which gender inequality exists and human development in any society is not complete and last section deals with gender equality, economic activity, health, education and decision making are the spheres in which women are marginalised.

## **GENDER AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

Like race and ethnicity, gender is a social construct. It defines and differentiates role, right, responsibility and obligation of women and men. Innate biological difference between female and male are interpreted by society to create a set of social expectations that define behaviour that are appropriate for women and men and that determine women's and men's differential access to right, resource and power in society. Although specific nature and degree of these differences vary from one society to the next, they typically favour men, creating an imbalance in power and a gender inequality that exists in most societies worldwide.



Development should be an integrated, holistic process that meets people's economic, social, political, cultural and environmental needs and improves quality of life for all. This understanding of development includes concept of human development, which is measured not only according to economic indicators such as gross national product (GNP) but also according to health (life expectancy) and education (literacy and enrolment). This is basis of UNDP's Human Development Index, which ranks countries worldwide according to these three indicators. Human development has two key elements, development of human capability and development of opportunity for people to use these capabilities. It brings together production and distribution of commodities and resources and expansion and use of human capability (UNDP, 1995: 11-12). Importance of human development for women is recognition that "if it is not engendered it is endangered" (UNDP, 1995). Human development can not be equitable, sustainable or holistic unless it addresses gender inequality and needs of both women and men.<sup>1</sup>

An important contribution to advancement of gender equality within human development paradigm has been design of two new indices, gender-related development index (GDI) and gender empowerment measure (GEM). These indices are used to compare gender inequality in human capability (GDI) and inequalities in key areas of political and economic decision-making structures (GEM) (UNDP, 1995).

In its approach to gender analysis, GMS includes human development indicators and also looks to such areas as participation in political decision-making and appropriateness of legislative and administrative systems.

Nayak (2005) emphasises on status and progress of human development in a backward region like Northeast India comprising eight states which are predominantly inhabited by tribal people. The study reveals that the region in respect of human development is highly lagging behind the country and as compared to many other countries in world. Progress of human development not only has been very low in last two and half decades but also witnessing wide spread rural-urban and gender disparity. It has also been witnessing uneven progress across different states in the region which calls for an immediate intervention on part of government.<sup>2</sup>

“Women’s issues, as they have been conceptualised in the region, continue to take a back seat to other stated government priorities, such as economic and political crises, conflict and violence. There is little recognition that all these issues are intrinsically related to a lack of overall human, including women’s development.” (South Asia 2000)

Mahajan (2009) makes an effort towards understanding attainment of human development and shortfall as well among states of Northeast India (NEI) by widening scope of HDI. The following indicators have been selected for purpose of highlighting each state’s standing on human development: Per capita state income, households in pucca and semi-pucca houses, and access to electricity and population above poverty, literacy rate, infant mortality rate and access to safe-drinking water. The study reveals that low level of human development in north-eastern states of India reflects high human deprivation among its populace. There is trace of high incidence of poverty which speaks about high volume of shortfalls in human development in Northeast India.<sup>3</sup>

High levels of infant mortality combined with strong son preference motivate women to bear high numbers of children in an attempt to have a son or two survive to adulthood. Research has shown that numerous pregnancies and closely spaced births erode a mother's nutritional status, which can negatively affect pregnancy outcome (e.g., premature birth, low birth-weight baby) and also increase health risk for mother (Jejeebhoy and Rao, 1995).

Tripathy and Mishra (2010) made an attempt to classify districts in Odisha on basis of a composite index computed on basis of Sudarshan-Iyengar method. The study finds that HDI for the state is 0.579 with variation across districts from 0.370 in case of Malkangiri to 0.736 in case of Khurda. Further the study concludes that alternative variables reflecting health, education and standard of living attainment may be which can capture variations across districts in state as well as across states.<sup>4</sup>

Nayak (2009) reports about findings of various human development reports published either by UNDP or Government of India or by individual state governments on states of northeast India. The findings reveal that achievement of north-eastern region is quite reasonable in comparison to all India average situations in respect of human development indicators for both sexes but it has miserably failed in bringing commensurate economic growth. There exists wide spread disparity of socio-economic achievements across different states and from urban to rural areas. If problems of poor economic growth, overall development and gender disparity are not properly addressed the region may fall into trap of vicious quadrant instead of moving to a virtuous one.<sup>5</sup>

Singh (2010) put focus on human post-economic development in Manipur during reform period. The study reveals that though per capita income in Manipur remained

low, trend of other indicators like IMR, literacy rate, and sex ratio are encouraging, reflecting an inner vibrancy in social core. However, high level of poverty co-existed with low unemployment rate in rural Manipur, implying employment in low paid jobs.<sup>6</sup>

Agarwal (2010) finds that Mizoram is attaining poorly in human development indicators. The state attained a high level of literacy and has performed better on health front too. But worry for the state is high dropout rate. Another weakening force in education system is non-availability of qualified manpower and other supportive infrastructural facilities. Major concern is high growth rate of population due to high fertility rate. So focus should be more on appropriate delivery mechanism for a balanced development of human resources.<sup>7</sup>

Roy and Adhikari (2010) examine progress and status of human development in Assam following UNDP methodology. They find that there has been high degree of disparity across districts in levels of attainment in various dimensions of human development in the state. Further, inter-district disparities are also noticed in HPI and moderate degree of negative correlation between HDI and HPI exists in the state. Poverty is not only an outcome of lower income but also due to deprivation in health, education, shelter, water supply, and sanitation for the people. There is an urgent need to set priorities and target for relatively backward regions of the state and groups of disadvantaged people.<sup>8</sup>

In a study Chatterjee (1999) has made an attempt to study present state of affairs prevailing in social sectors of North-eastern states. The study finds that development of social sector is essential for development of the region. It emphasises mainly on provision of poverty alleviation schemes, education and health care facilities,

panchayati raj system to create social awareness and development of agriculture and establishment of agro-based industries which would help to generate income and employment.<sup>9</sup>

Oluwoye (1998) attempts to determine components of a good quality of rural life in Nigeria based on sample survey of 308 rural women in eleven villages in Oyo state. The study found that ability to have plenty of children, good health, wealth and good personality were highly perceived as measures of essential components of quality of life in rural areas.<sup>10</sup>

Molina and Purser (2010) use a unique data set of Human Development Index to describe long-run human development trends for 111 countries, from 1970 to 2005. The study finds that 110 of the 111 countries show progress in their HDI levels over a 35 -year period. HDI growth is fastest for low-HDI and middle-HDI countries in the pre-1990 period. Life-expectancy and education sub-components grow faster than income. It is found that income and non-income components of HDI change have a near-zero correlation. Income is not a significant determinant of HDI change once urbanisation, fertility and female schooling are included. Finally, the study tests effects of institutions, geography and gender on HDI growth and finds that the most robust predictors of HDI growth are fertility and female schooling.<sup>11</sup>

The study of Nayak and Ray (2010) attempted to identify nature as well as level of disparity amongst districts in Meghalaya. It also tries to trace causes of relatively poor performance of some districts in the state. Based on primary data, the study adopted guideline provided by Planning Commission to compute level of human development in Meghalaya. It is found that there exists a significant level of disparity both in income and non-income attainments over districts. In addition, economic inequality is

much higher than overall HDI inequality. It is suggested that there is a need to redesign public policies that directly affect welfare of people.<sup>12</sup>

In World Bank report *Gender and Poverty in India* of 1991, principal author Lynn Bennett announces: now researcher, women activist, and government department are reaching a new consensus... women be seen as economic actor with a particularly important role to play to reduce poverty. [World Bank 1991: iii]<sup>13</sup>

Import of instrumental freedom and agency for gender is well brought out by Amartya Sen in discussion on 'women's agency and social change' (Sen 2006, pp.189-203). Personhood of women acquires full status only when they become agents of change in their own lives rather than being mere enjoyers of well-being as recipients of welfare measures. Greater agency for women helps at outset in removing inequities which prevent well-being, viz, independence of livelihoods, literacy and education (Sen 2006, p. 191). Further he says same applies to many other areas of economic, political and social action, varying from rural credit and economic activities, on one hand to political agitation and social debates on other. Extensive reach of women's agency is one of more neglected areas of development studies, and most urgently in need of correction. Nothing, arguably, is as important today in political economy of development as an adequate recognition of political, economic and social participation and leadership of women. This is indeed a crucial aspect of development of freedom (Sen 2006, p.203).<sup>14</sup>

Women are engaged primarily as unskilled labour in production process. Skilled women represent a very small percentage (7.4 percent) of employment. In both public and private sectors, women do secretarial work, with little participation in management (Gerde, 2001).<sup>15</sup>

Autonomous women's organisations doubt about 33% reservation have different reason. They fear by participating in corrupt electoral process women's right activist may not able to further broader interest of women (Vibhuti Patel, 1993).<sup>16</sup>

Increase in women's' direct control over resources including cash income is necessary to enhance immediate welfare of family as well as health and nutrition status of their children. There is evidence which suggest same improvement in welfare may not take place with increase in males' income as considerable part of males' income is usually spent on personal habits, domestic goods and leisure (Roy and Tisdell 1993a, b; Roy and Tisdell 1996; Hanger and Morris 1973; Palmer 1977; Young 1978).<sup>17</sup>

Kandiyoti (1992) points out any type of policy measures undertaken to improve women's' economic condition should include (i) to protect womens' existing source of livelihood; (ii) to eliminate discriminatory legislation in ownership and control of productive assets; (iii) to ensure equitable access to agricultural inputs, credit, extension services and education; (iv) to prove support of extra household forms of organisation of womens' labour ; and (v) to provide encouragement for enhancing capacity for political empowerment and organisation.<sup>18</sup>

Rounaq Jahan (1987) points out autonomous womens' organisation feel women activist may make compromises in their principles, programmes and practices. Moreover, talented women will be co-opted by the system. 33% reservation has other dangers. It prepares ground for opponents of womens' right movement (mothers-in-law) to get elected in most places. These women will be from elite section, mainly kith and kin of male politician. Women politician in south Asia are not different from their male counterparts.<sup>19</sup>

Gender gap is prevalent in area of basic education. Household responsibilities, early marriage, and economic and cultural factors hamper girls' access to education. At primary school level, girls have lower enrolment rate and higher grade repetition rate than boys, and 13 percent of eligible girls attend secondary school. Low education level among girls and women inevitably has a negative influence on their income-earning capabilities and on their access to economic opportunities (Rena, 2005).<sup>20</sup>

Ansari (1992) conducts an experimental study to find out gender effect on communication with rural women. His study proved female communicators even with less communication skills are more effective than male communicators having low or high communication skills for communicating to rural women.<sup>21</sup>

### **Women Empowerment**

The concept of empowerment is related to gender equality but distinct from it. Based on a review of literature on definition and measurement of women's empowerment, Malhotra, Schuler and Boender (2002) conclude that empowerment is a process that marks change over a period of time and requires that individual being empowered is involved as a significant agent in that change process.

Several experts agree that an empowered woman is one who has agency to formulate strategic choices and to control resources and decisions that affect important life outcomes (Kabeer 1999). Core of the concept of empowerment lies in ability of woman to control her own destiny. This implies that to be empowered women must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), they must also have agency to use those right, capability, resource, and opportunity to make strategic choices and



decisions (such as is provided through leadership opportunity and participation in political institution).<sup>22</sup>

Statistics on women's participation in electoral process are not very encouraging. It is important not only to pressurise political parties but also to make leaders understand significance of organising systematic training of women possessing leadership quality, of carefully selecting women candidates and ensuring financial, technical and human resources for affirmative action (Patel, Vibhuti, 1992).<sup>23</sup>

Analysis made by Kumari and Kidwai (1996) stated that political parties have dominated conservative 'cultural' perspective and no conscious attempt has been made to increase active participation of women. Women in India today are agitating at doors of parliament, demanding reservation for 33 per cent of seats. Issue at stake here is more complex than it may seem. It is not only a question of a few more or a few less women in corridors of Parliament and legislatures but also a response to fact that a large section of society has historically been denied its legitimate share in exercise of political power, power that ultimately determines its destiny. In this demand for reservation, women are also raising their voice against a system, which has consistently denied them space by harnessing forces of tradition in order to marginalise and trivialise their role. Reservation of seats for women in Panchayats/Municipal bodies have shown that it has tremendous implications, not merely in terms of number of women entering public arena and holding public office, but also in terms of social, economic and political impact that these reservations have had for total system.<sup>24</sup>

If we examine reasons for low participation, as stated by Nath, Kamle (1997), 'down ages women have always been treated as subordinate to men in every aspect of life.

Their place of work was confined to the domain of household with household chores and rearing of children. Her identity was attached to that of her father, husband or son, i.e. she was given a status in accordance with that of her male partner. It is not that women in past have not contributed substantially in politics, but because of their secondary status and low esteem, most of them were denied entry in political decision-making. 74th Amendment of Indian Constitution in 1992 ushered in a new era in democratic process of country as it not only provided constitutional status to municipal bodies but also provided an enabling environment for women to a direct part in local self government and brought women to forefront and centre of local development. Sharing power and responsibilities with immense control over resources for development and social change will be an empowering instrument for women.<sup>25</sup>

Nath (1998) analysed that women's movement and groups have to recognise importance of women as a constituency and ensure their participation and representation in policy formulation. This can be achieved through reorienting existing structures for entry into decision-making including political party system and introduce quotas or reservation as a temporary means of women's representation.

Several experts agree that an empowered woman is one who has agency to formulate strategic choices and to control resources and decisions that affect important life outcomes (Kabeer 1999). Core concept of empowerment lies in ability of woman to control her own destiny. This implies that to be empowered women must not only have equal capability (such as education and health) and access to resources and opportunity (such as land and employment), they must also have agency to use those right, capability, resource, and opportunity to make strategic choice and decision (such as is provided through leadership opportunity and participation in political institution).<sup>26</sup>

Santanu Ray and Purusottam Nayak (2010) in their study entitled that Human Development in Northeast India. The paper is an attempt to make a critical assessment of process of expansion of human capability in north-eastern states of India by examining reports published by Planning Commission and Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. of India in 2002 and 2009 respectively. Northeast states are compared not only among themselves but also with corresponding performance at national level using various indices such as HDI, HPI, GPI, GDI and GEM. The paper concludes that a parallel expansion of economic opportunities for both the sexes and different sections of society is necessary to achieve sustainable expansion of human capability .<sup>27</sup>

### **Gender Equality**

According to UN (2002), “equality is cornerstone of every democratic society that aspires to social justice and human rights.” The term gender equality has been defined in multiple ways in development literature and has been subject of great debate in U.N. It often means women having same opportunities in life as men, for instance equality of access to education and employment, which does not necessarily lead to equality of outcomes.<sup>28</sup>

Female share of non-agricultural wage employment does not provide information on another gender gap, namely that women and men work in different occupations. Worldwide, women are concentrated in clerical, sales, and service jobs traditionally regarded as “female” and are underrepresented in production, transport, administrative, and managerial jobs in which men predominate (Mehra and Gammage 1999).<sup>29</sup>

On other hand, a recent study conducted by Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2001) comparing effects of quotas for women in two Indian states, West Bengal and Rajasthan found that women elected as leaders under mandated reservation invest more in public goods most closely linked to women's concerns. These include drinking water, fuel, and employment generating activities such as road construction. When women are heads of panchayats, there is a greater likelihood that policies that are sensitive to women's needs will be implemented.<sup>30</sup>

Several experts have proposed conceptual frameworks for understanding gender equality. United Nations Human Development Report (1995) refers to gender equality in terms of capabilities (education, health, and nutrition) and opportunity (economic and decision-making). Similarly, World Bank defines gender equality in terms of equality under law, equality of opportunity (including equality of rewards for work and equality in access to human capital and other productive resources that enable opportunity), and equality of voice (ability to influence and contribute to development process).

Violence against women continues to be a serious violation of women's rights. According to Heise and Ellsberg (1999), around world at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. And despite gains mentioned earlier, maternal childbirth-related causes (WHO 2002), 99 percent of which occur in developing world.<sup>31</sup>

Equality refers to equal opportunities in terms of access to sources of livelihood, health, and education, as well as to social, economic and political participation without discrimination. Patriarchal structures aid prevalence and perpetuation of

gender inequality despite constitutional provision of equality (Agrawal and Rao 2004; Government of India 1974).

### **Gender and Society**

Mortality remains staggeringly high over half a million women die each year from pregnancy and Gender inequalities exist because of discrimination in the family and societal institutions, and social, cultural, and religious norms that perpetuate stereotypes, practices and beliefs that are detrimental to women. Human rights conventions provide redress for discrimination. Among these, Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted by U.N. General Assembly in 1979, is the most universally accepted instrument for realising gender equality and influencing cultural and traditional definition of gender roles and family relations. Treaty has been ratified by 170 countries, including every nation in Western Hemisphere except United States, but its impact is dependent on political will and resolution.

Economic institutions and policy can exacerbate existing gender inequality instead of mitigating them. There is a strong tendency to see market as a liberating force for women. While modern markets can and do undermine some of pre-existing forms of culturally-determined gender inequality, they also incorporate and transform pre-existing inequalities into new ones (Elson and Pearson 1997).

Modern economic relations have gender inequality inscribed within them and often do not take account of externalities produced by unpaid care in households (Folbre 1994). Similarly, laws and policies play a significant role in determining extent of gender inequality that exists in a society. They can serve to protect women's rights or to reduce them. For example, in many countries, women still lack legal right to inherit

or own property and, in many others, violence against women is not considered a criminal offense. Without transformations in economic relations or implementation and enforcement of legal rights and protection, gender equality and empowerment of women can remain an elusive goal.

Hosseini (2004) emphasises that justice of Islam is no longer reflected in law that some Islamists desire on forcing in name of Shariat. Some salient statements of Islam are that women to be inferior to men and men to be guardians of women. All factors or issues about women in Muslim community need to be addressed.<sup>33</sup>

The women's rights had been defined on origin of a 'deserts based' concept of justice, according to status, potential and ability of women, individuals are permitted in traditional thought of Islam. This concept of justice leads to proportional equality that recognises individual rights in proportion to women's right 'deserts'. Nowadays, this concept of justice has met into huge problems (Hosseini, 2004 and Osman, 2014).

Bansal is of opinion that economic development is generally seen as a historical procedure which takes place in more or less all societies marked by economic development and improved production and utilisation of things and services. Development, often, is used in a regular sense as a multiple-valued public goal wrapping such varied spheres as enhanced living standard, material well-being, education, health care, extensive opportunities for job and free time, and in essence entire range of attractive social and material wellbeing. But, as far as today's globalisation is concerned, theory of development is interpreted in a different way and idea, right to development has not been taken sincerely (Shameemed, 2012 and Bansal, 2008).<sup>34</sup>

People look for public good which comes from justice and tolerate corruption arising from legal discrimination and injustice. People understand that this is public matter and not a personal matter; indeed it is considered as a universal matter of attention to whole species of human. This attention is needed for safeguarding of human society orders and for human species survival. Women should have equal rights similar to men. Quran speaks of equality in punishments and rewards in this world or other. According to Quran, worldly punishments are to be identical for male and female wrongdoers and thieves (Pensky, 2008 and Todd, 2006).<sup>35</sup>

An overview of Muslim culture and history carry many areas of women continued to bring to diverse forms of oppression and injustice, almost in label of Islam. In general, Muslim communities are concerned with trying to control women than their human rights. Many Muslims, when they speak about human rights, do not bother right of women at all. Women are main choice of the most serious violations of human right which occur in Muslim societies. In Muslim societies "Honour Killings" are still taking place and also female children are discriminated. Therefore, son birth is a celebration while daughter birth calls for consolation<sup>36</sup>. Many girls are married when they are still newborn or child. Women, down the ages, have been treated cruelly, due to traditional Muslim culture; there is time to come to change all conceited customs (Vincent, 2005 and Baderin, 2004).<sup>37</sup>

### **Gender Equality, Economic Activity, Health, Education and Decision Making**

Women work both for labour market and for household. Some of this work is recognised and remunerated, while most of it is not enumerated and remains unpaid. Women's contribution to household, economy and society goes unrecognised since most activities females are involved in do not enter sphere of market and remain non-

monetised. Most work undertaken by women is often interspersed with other household chores, making it difficult to separate various tasks performed. Perpetuation of gender stereotypes and social division of labour that typecasts women mainly as workers in domestic sphere has been chief barrier to recognition of women's economic work participation (Bardhan 1985;<sup>38</sup> Tinker 1990).<sup>39</sup>

Non-recognition of women's participation in economic activities is not only an outcome of (a) their work being intertwined with household activities; and (b) being unpaid, making it difficult for enumerators to identify women as workers, but also stems from flawed definitions and limited scope of economic activity 8 (Agarwal 1985;<sup>40</sup> Duvvury 1998;<sup>41</sup> Government of India 1988).<sup>42</sup>

Role played by women in care sector, predominantly their reproductive work (bearing, rearing, nurturing children and household maintenance), falls outside national accounting system. Many tasks are non-working. Women's are involved in would be considered work if performed by a person hired for purpose or unrelated to household (Visaria 1999).<sup>43</sup>

Role fulfilled by women in household maintenance and care activities cannot be trivialised. Assigning monetary value to all tasks undertaken by them, however, is not very easy. Some efforts have been made to study manner in which time is spent by women in course of day through time use surveys (Government of India 2000). This reveals significance of time spent by women in unpaid care activities (Bhatia 2002;<sup>44</sup> Hirway 2002<sup>45</sup> among others).

Organised sector employment constitutes a small share of total employment in India. Reliable estimates for this sector are available from Ministry of Labour, Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGE&T). Women's share in organised sector



employment is only 17 per cent. Even within organised sector most women are located in lower rungs of hierarchy. Very few are managers, bosses or decision-makers (Agrawal and Rao 2004;<sup>46</sup> Menon-Sen and Kumar 2001<sup>47</sup>).

On the whole, FWPR is low, partly as a result of the poor coverage given to women's work, especially in unorganised sector and partly due to heavy domestic responsibilities that inhibit women's economic activities. Nearly 50 per cent of women who are principally involved in home-making reported that there was no other household member to undertake these responsibilities. It is noteworthy that even in this segment, 31 per cent urban and 26 per cent rural women expressed their willingness to undertake work within their homes (Government of India 2001).<sup>48</sup> argued in favour of income earning opportunity for housewives as a means of empowering and improving their economic status.

Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal are some of the states where enrolment is low and dropout rate high, implying a very low retention rate of girls at primary school level. Use of girls in sibling care, as additional hands for helping mothers in household, farm and off-farm work and so on operate to reduce availability of formal education for them (Rustagi 2002).<sup>49</sup>

In state's approach to the issue of women's health there is an excessive focus on reproductive health (Datta 2003).<sup>50</sup> Women are viewed mainly as means of reproduction, often at cost of their own personal, individual identity. Even now, despite some efforts to widen women's health concerns to include issues of nutrition, sexuality and control over their bodies, state policies and programmes still emphasise and concentrate on family welfare and reproductive health.

Frequent childbearing, often an offshoot of predominant preference for a son in our society, takes a heavy toll on women. Among resource poor households, it is distressing to note that women breastfeed more than one child simultaneously due to lack of money to feed older child with an alternative or supplementary diet. During childbirth, several serious complications are commonly reported, such as haemorrhage, excessive bleeding, anaemia, toxicity, premature babies and associated problem (IIPS 2000).<sup>51</sup> Among these, anaemia is a prominent cause leading to maternal deaths, apart from resulting in physically weak children.

Originally, prejudice against girl children arose because girls by nature are vulnerable to sexual assault and kidnapping, thereby compromising family honour. Second, marriages were costly affairs, turning girls into financial liabilities. Son preference has been a steady reason for the discrimination against girl children. Even today expanding custom of dowry, adding to cost of securing future of a girl, and decreasing family size with a preference for sons, not daughters, are factors accounting for rejection of girl children (Centre for Women's Development Studies 2002;<sup>52</sup>).

Among rural females, tuberculosis and anaemia are prominent causes of death. This is a reflection of low immunity levels due to lack of balanced food intake, proper nutrition and healthcare for women. Even deaths during childbirth are often an outcome of these factors together with unhygienic conditions in which both institutional and non-institutional deliveries occur, which increases chances of severe infections that adversely affect survival of women. Deliveries that occur without formal help or with assistance of untrained dais (midwives) increase risk of non-survival of infants, especially in cases of complicated pregnancies. Women living in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Assam have a higher propensity to die in childbirth (IIPS 2000b).<sup>53</sup>

It needs to be highlighted here, however, that contrary to popular belief, high rates of maternal mortality are not due to reproduction, but are a result of poor health conditions that are an outcome of gender discrimination meted out over years from childhood (Krishnaji and James 2002).<sup>54</sup> Deprivations in healthcare and nutrition on one hand and compulsions of marriage and reproduction on other, adversely affect female bodies, and lead to fatality. Women who survive beyond their reproductive years tend to outlive men as is seen in life expectancy figures.

Opportunities for women to participate in local politics have opened up to allow them to advance interests of local people, especially women and children. Despite cases of misuse and incidence of proxy members and *sarpanch*, there have been encouraging results, more gender-just developments and hope for empowerment of women (Institute of Social Science 1995-2001).<sup>55</sup>

Extent of violence in a society and crimes against women reflect how secure women feel and how safe they actually are. To live life with dignity is a basic necessity for all people, including women. Placed on wrong side of power and hierarchies, women often face brunt of violence. Since they are viewed as property of men in their lives, whose responsibility it is to protect them, conflict between men and women's over any issue provokes violence against women. Fear of violence permeates all spheres and persons of all ages, proving to be a severe hindrance to women's capacity building and attainment of their potential. How safe and secure a place is considered by women and society at large affects girl's education, their mobility, employment, skill enhancement, income earning capacity and political participation. Discrimination and neglect in different spheres of their lives can also be considered forms of violence. Violence assumes various forms, not all of which are quantifiable. (Centre for Women's Development Studies 2002b).<sup>56</sup>

From the above review it is clear that studies of (Vibhuti Patel, 1993) and Rounaq Jahan (1987) are critical to 33% reservation of women in PRIs and even state and national legislatures. However, they are partially correct in their view about every possibility corrupt when they compromise with prevailing situation of large scale corruption and rule of in-laws.

## **Conclusion**

A look at variety of studies also suggests despite increase in female education and labour force participation, substantial gender gap in earning and employment still remain. Women have an unfair disadvantage in labour market. Discrimination in any form reduces efficiency and thus slow down pace of development and economic growth. Again, it is imperative to see institutional and organisational basis for development be found in local community organisations and NGOs, as communitarians believe social development can best be achieved at local level by people in situation, civil society and its contribution as partners in development process. Above review on gender and development suggest in order to understand status of women, one must analyse women's access to and control over public and private resources, labour and income, education, health, knowledge, skill, communication, physical security, legal structure and redressal of grievance etc. in relation to men, and target of development cannot be fruitful without addressing issues relating to women. Though works have been done on gender and development, there has rarely been any attempt to understand phenomena of gender and human development in Assam. The present study is an attempt to examine empirically the phenomena in Hailakandi district of Assam.

The study has borrowed from both UNDP Human Development Report (1995) and Gender Equality (2002) frameworks to propose three primary domains or components of equality between women and men: capabilities, access to resources and opportunities, and agency or ability to influence and contribute to outcomes. Capabilities domain refers to basic human abilities as measured through education, health, and decision making. It is the most fundamental of all three domains and is necessary for achieving equality in other two domains. Access to resources and opportunities, second domain, refers primarily to equality in opportunity to use or apply basic capabilities through access to economic assets (such as land and property) and resources (such as income and employment). Third domain, agency, is defining element of concept of empowerment and refers to ability to make choices and decisions that can alter outcomes. Gender equality in this domain can only result from an equalising in balance of power between women and men in household and societal institutions.

These three domains of equality are inter-related. Progress in any one domain to exclusion of others is insufficient to meet goal of gender equality. While they are inter-related, three domains are not necessarily dependent on each other. So, for instance, illiterate women may organise, thereby building their agency to influence outcomes for themselves and their households. Not surprisingly, women then use that agency to demand capability (better health or education) and opportunity (access to decent work). Similarly, women with capability (as measured by education) may have no economic opportunity, as is evidenced in many Middle Eastern countries. Hence findings of different studies have been taken in to account for advancement of the study in a systematic manner.