

CHAPTER 5

Chapter - 5

THE WOMEN LABOURERS IN BRICK KILN INDUSTRY: A SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

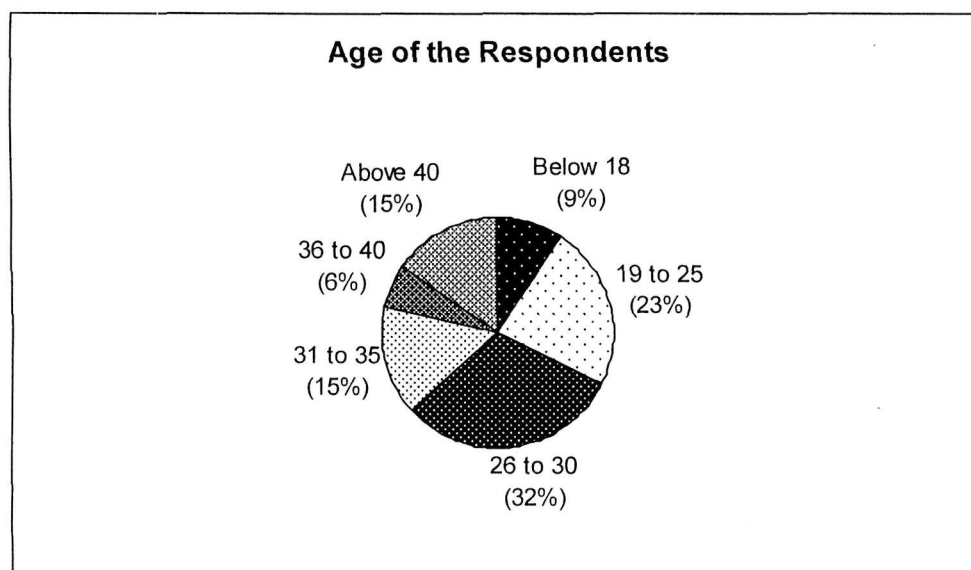
Workers in the Brick kiln industry comprise one of the poorest and weakest segment of the society. Both local and migrant workers are engaged in brick kilns. The migrant workers are essentially agricultural labourers who migrate from one state to another in search of employment in Brick kilns during the lean agricultural period from November to May. The availability of work depends upon the absence of rain. This lean period is applicable to single paddy cropped areas and that is the reason for the presence of a large number of workers from the rice growing pockets of Uttar Pradesh and Assam as well. Besides workers from U.P, a large number of workers also come from Bihar and Jharkhand are called as '*Deshwali*'. They leave their family members at their native place to look after the farm activities and prefer to migrate alone to work in brick industry. However, they bring their minor sons to get assistance from them in their work. It also shows that they have some minimal land which is taken care by the other family members in the absence of these workers. They all come in bulk to the work site.

The study is mainly focused on women engaged in brick kilns. The women respondents comprise of both the local and migrant women. Internal migration is prevalent in which the workers migrate along with their family from Dubri and Kokrajhar districts of Assam. These migrants are mostly the landless wage earners. Lack of other livelihood resources at their villages makes them to migrate along with all the family members. These women from Dubri and Kokrajhar also know the molding of bricks. There are women who are the bread winners of their family. They are mostly from economically weaker section of the society. The second category of workers are hailing from the local villages they are mostly the tea garden workers. The tea garden labourers have long back migrated from UP, Bihar to work in tea gardens during British period. The labourers from local areas engage predominantly in loading and unloading of bricks.

Demographic Profile of Women in Brick Kiln Industry

The following text presents a detailed socio-economic and demographic features of brick kiln labourers.

Chart 5.1 : Age of the Respondents



Source: Primary Data

The age distribution of the respondents shows that an overwhelming majority fall in the age group 26-30 years and 23 per cent in the age group 19-25 years. Another 15.3 per cent respondents belongs to the age group 31-35 years, followed by 9.3 per cent respondents whose age is below 18 years. Though there is absence of child labour in this industry, adolescents are engaged in the work of brick kilns. Only 6 per cent of the respondents fall in the age group 36-40 years. Similar trend is seen in the study conducted by Labour Bureau in various states and Union Territories i.e. Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh.

Marital Status

The following table clarifies the position of women regarding their marital status. A considerable portion of respondents are married (76.0 per cent), while 14 per cent are unmarried. The proportion of widow, Separated and Divorcee are 7.3 per cent, 1.7 per cent and 1.0 per cent respectively.

**Table. 5.1: Distribution of respondents by Marital Status
(Percentage in Parentheses)**

Sl.No	Marital Status	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar N =100	Hilakandi n = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	Married	72 (72.00)	59 (59.00)	97 (97.00)	228 (76.00)
2	Unmarried	18 (18.00)	23 (23.00)	1 (1.00)	42 (14.00)
3	Widow	7 (7.00)	15 (15.00)	0 (0.00)	22 (7.33)
4	Divorced/Separated	3 (3.00)	3 (3.00)	2 (2.00)	8 (2.67)

Source: Primary Data

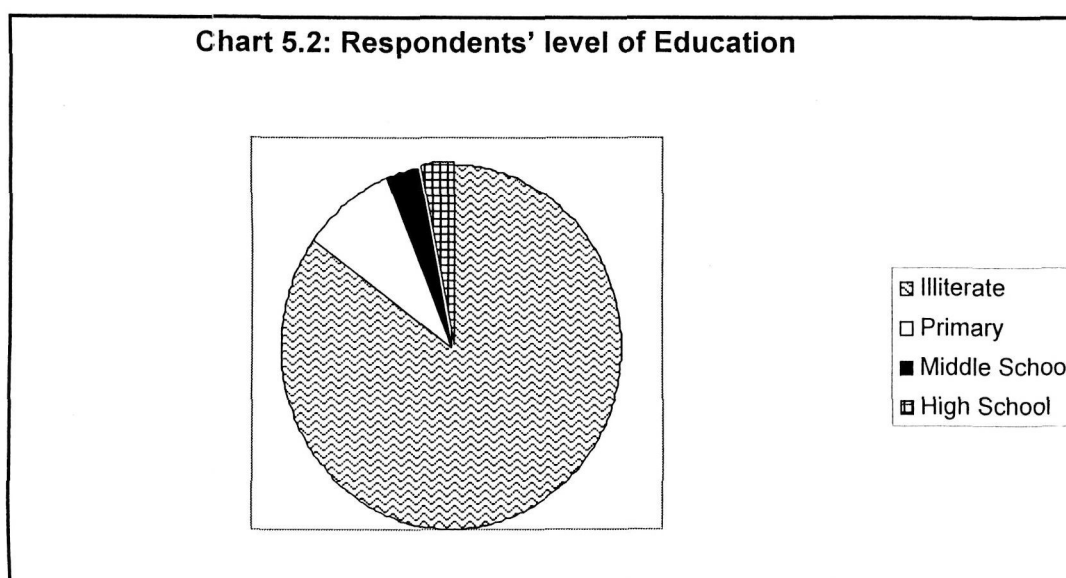
Education

For the marginalised and poor, education is a tool of empowerment where education and knowledge has always been considered as a domain of power structure. Attaining education for economic and socially deprived class is always being a major challenge to the conservative upper-caste who has hegemony over knowledge, but believing that knowledge is not important or appropriate for members of the lower castes.

Basic education among the disadvantaged groups can enhance their ability to resist oppression, to organise politically, and to get a fair deal. The re-distributive effects can be important not only between different social groups but within the family. Therefore, education can play an important role to empower the unorganised force of labour. In present context, the level of awareness, through qualitative education can facilitate organise the labour force and improve their bargaining capacity. Education certainly helps them to access the market, demand of labour and proper implementation

of laws and schemes in favour of them. In other words education can be vanguard for better quality of life.

We shall see whether the women had better access to education than the men because studies indicate that the level of education, of the women in particular, influence the number of children (Rao 1993), so does the prevalence of child labour. To the parents of child labourers the child is not a mouth to feed but two hands to work with and to bring some income to the family from an early age (Weiner 1992:63-64). So, they tend to have more children than what the middle class considers reasonable.



Source: Primary Data

Regarding educational status of the respondents, it was found that a large majority of the respondents have never gone to school (84.7 per cent), followed by 10.7 per cent of respondents studied up to primary school, 2.3 per cent respondents have completed only their middle school education and 2.3 per cent respondents have studied up to high school.

The data shows that in spite of the government policy 'free education for women' there are 84.7 per cent illiterate women. Very few could reach up to high school. The reason to this may be attributed to the fact that these small portion of the respondents who have studied are the first generation literates. Poverty, coupled with illiteracy makes them vulnerable and puts them in the receiving end of exploitation.

Schooling of Children

Out of the 185 respondents having children of school going age, only 81 respondents have currently sending their children to school. The reason is pretty clear that the respondent fall in to such age group either their children are too small to send them to school or their children have dropped out from the school. Many of the respondents don't bear the cost of schooling of their children because of their migrant nature or because of poverty.

For the reason of dropout from the school, the findings of the study revealed that children of 62% labourers quit school due to economic hardship. Scanty income hardly fulfills the basic necessity of the family, and education does not deserve the basic necessity in the marginalized family. A total of 29 % respondents feel that their children have not continued with education because of their responsibility to contribute into the family income by earning some money. No school education provides them formal practical skill oriented training for optimal utilization of their labour. Therefore, the prevalent rate of child labour can't be eliminated without addressing the cause of deprivation of poor children from the basic education.

Migration is said to be another important cause for dropout from school, 9% respondent stated that migration is the cause why their children either can't go to school or leave the school after some time. Due to in-migration, they couldn't find any suitable school in new town or city. There is lot of official complexities regarding their re-admission in new school, which a poor migrant labour cannot afford. Beside this, acquainted themselves in entirely different linguistic and culture setting secluded them to enter into the school. One of the major reasons to lay off from the school in tandem with the above cause is no assimilation with the curriculum being recognized in schools. The respondents agreed that children relinquished the subject matter being taught in school and leave the school due to poor performance. In most of the houses, both male and female work as a labourer. In this situation, their elder children especially girl child is left behind to look after their younger siblings. This condition obliged their daughters to discontinue their education.

Type of Family

Table 5.2: Distribution of respondents by type of family
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Sl.No	Type of Family	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar n =100	Hilakandi N = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	Nuclear	89 (89.00)	91 (91.00)	84 (84.00)	264 (88.00)
2	Joint	11 (11.00)	9 (9.00)	16 (16.00)	36 (12.00)

Source: Primary Data

With regards to the family type of the respondents, it was found that there is slightly higher proportion of the changing pattern of family structure in the country, i.e. nuclear families (88 per cent) and joint families (12 per cent). From ancient times our country is known for its large joint families. With the advent of change in employment pattern, change in the livelihood patterns nuclear families are emerging. A nuclear family is indicative of the conflicting nature of the joint family organisation in India.

Size of Family

Table 5.3: Distribution of respondents by size of family
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Sl.No	Size of Family	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar n =100	Hilakandi N = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	Up to 2	7 (7.00)	7 (7.00)	9 (9.00)	23 (7.67)
2	3-4	31 (31.00)	38 (38.00)	49 (49.00)	118 (39.33)
3	5-6	52 (52.00)	49 (49.00)	33 (33.00)	134 (44.67)
4	7 & Above	10 (10.00)	6 (6.00)	9 (9.00)	25 (8.33)

Source: Primary Data

Family size is an important socio-economic determinant. The data in the table about the distribution of respondents by family size shows that less than half percentage of the respondents (44.7 per cent) has a family with 5 to 6 members, followed by 39.3 per cent respondents with 3 to 4 members. Another 8.3 per cent respondents have family members above 7 and remaining only 7.7 per cent respondents have a family size comprising of two members.

Household Head

A majority of the households are male headed households and it was evident from the study that there are few female headed households (i.e. 5.3 per cent) who are the principle bread earner of the family. They have entered into brick kiln work under compelling conditions like due to the illness or death of male bread earner in the family. Out of compulsion these women have entered to work as a survival strategy.

**Table 5.4: Distribution of respondents by household head
(Percentage in Parentheses)**

Sl.No	Household head	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar n =100	Hilakandi N = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	Female	5 (5.00)	6 (6.00)	5 (5.00)	16 (5.33)
2	Male	95 (95.00)	94 (94.00)	95 (95.00)	284 (94.67)

Source: Primary Data

Religion of Respondents

A majority of women workers in Cachar and Hailakandi districts are Hindus. (Cachar: 96 per cent. Hailakandi : 77). This is group is followed by Muslims. (Cachar: 4). In case of women workers from Karimganj district, it was found that Muslims are dominating (Karimganj : 62 per cent) followed by Hindus (38 per cent) the proportion of workers are relatively congruent with the population of India and the population of the district concerned. A slight variation occurs in the imbalance between Muslim

women. Unlike in other places, Muslims from these districts does not insist on *Purdah* which confines its women to the four walls of the home.

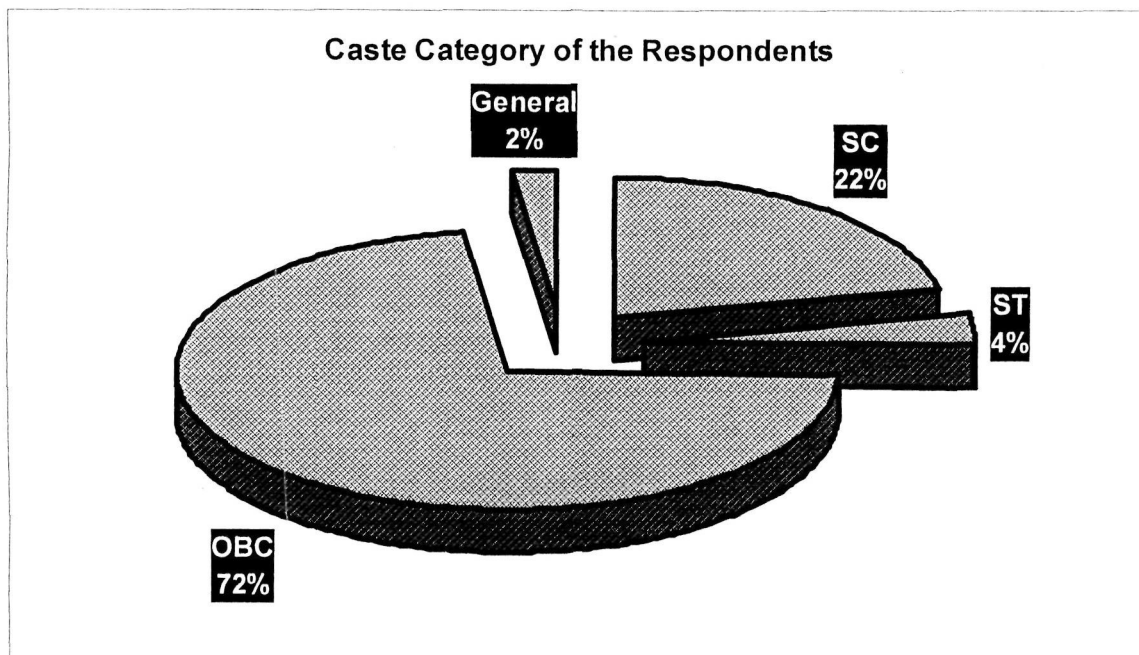
Table 5.5: Distribution of respondents by Religion
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Sl.No	Religion	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar n = 100	Hilakandi n = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	Hindu	96 (96.00)	77 (77.00)	38 (38.00)	211 (70.33)
2	Muslim	4 (4.00)	23 (23.00)	62 (62.00)	89 (29.67)

Source: Primary Data

Having established the religion of the workers it would be interesting to note of their caste. Caste is a part and parcel of Indian life and its importance cannot be ignored in any study. The following tables reveal the caste category of the respondents.

Chart 5.3: Caste Category of the Respondents



Source: Primary Data

The above data reveals that there is little differential in terms of distribution of respondents by caste. However, a substantial proportion (72.0 per cent) belongs to Other Backward Castes. Another 22 per cent of the respondents belongs to Schedule Caste followed by 3.7 per cent belongs to Scheduled Tribe. It was found from the study that a negligible 2.3 per cent respondents belongs to others (mostly the upper caste). The findings of the study are in line with other similar studies conducted by Gupta 2003.

Ownership of House

Having access to adequate, safe and secure housing substantially strengthens the likelihood of people being able to enjoy certain additional rights. Housing is a foundation from which other legal entitlements can be achieved. Lack of access to and control over land, housing constitutes a violation of human rights and contributes significantly to women's increasing poverty. Most of the respondents are residing in their own houses with a small house. 'Given by other' is referred as the house given by their nearby relatives. In case of own house also it is predominantly by the respondents who are residing in the tea garden area.

**Table 5.6 Ownership of House
(Percentage in Parentheses)**

Sl.No	Ownership of House	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar n =100	Hilakandi n = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	Rental	4 (4.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.00)	5 (1.67)
2	Own	94 (94.00)	51 (51.00)	81 (81.00)	226 (75.33)
3	Given by other	1 (1.00)	1 (1.00)	8 (8.00)	10 (3.33)
4	Any other	1 (1.00)	48 (48.00)	10 (10.00)	59 (19.67)

Source: Primary Data

**Table 5.7: Distribution of respondents according to the type of house they live in
(Percentage in Parentheses)**

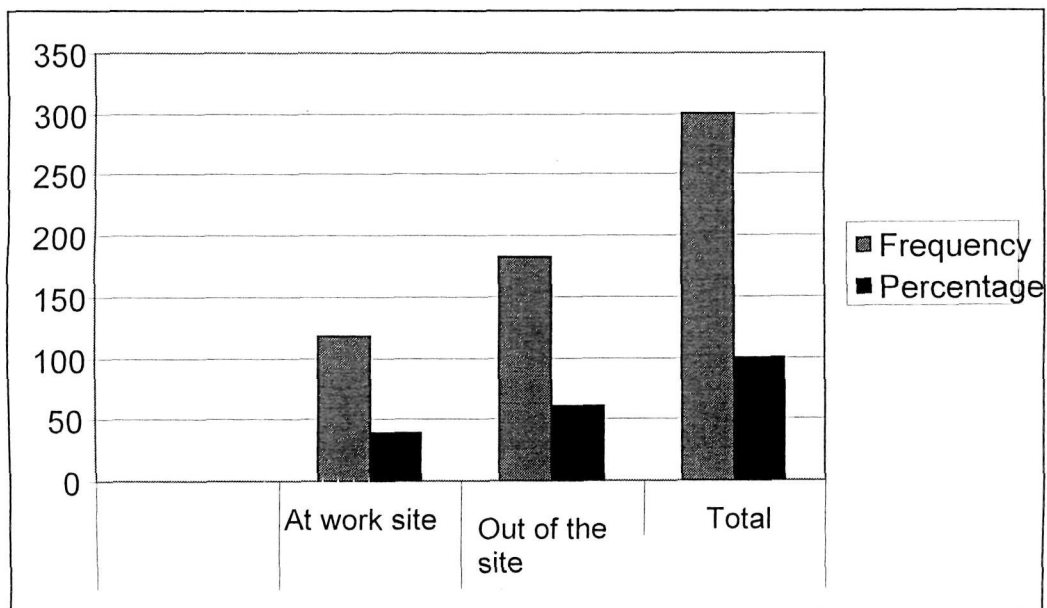
Sl.No	Type of House	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar n =100	Hilakandi N = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	Made of bamboo	96 (96.00)	100 (100.00)	86 (86.00)	282 (94.00)
2	Assam type room	4 (4.00)	0 (0.00)	6 (6.00)	10 (3.33)
3	Mud house	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	8 (8.00)	8 (2.67)

Source: Primary Data

It was found from the study that 94 per cent of the respondents are staying in the houses made-up of bamboo. Only 3.33 per cent of the respondents are residing in Assam type rooms i.e. with a tin shed. A negligible less than three per cent of the respondents (2.67 per cent) are staying in house made-up of mud.

Place of Stay

Chart 5.4: Place of stay of the respondents

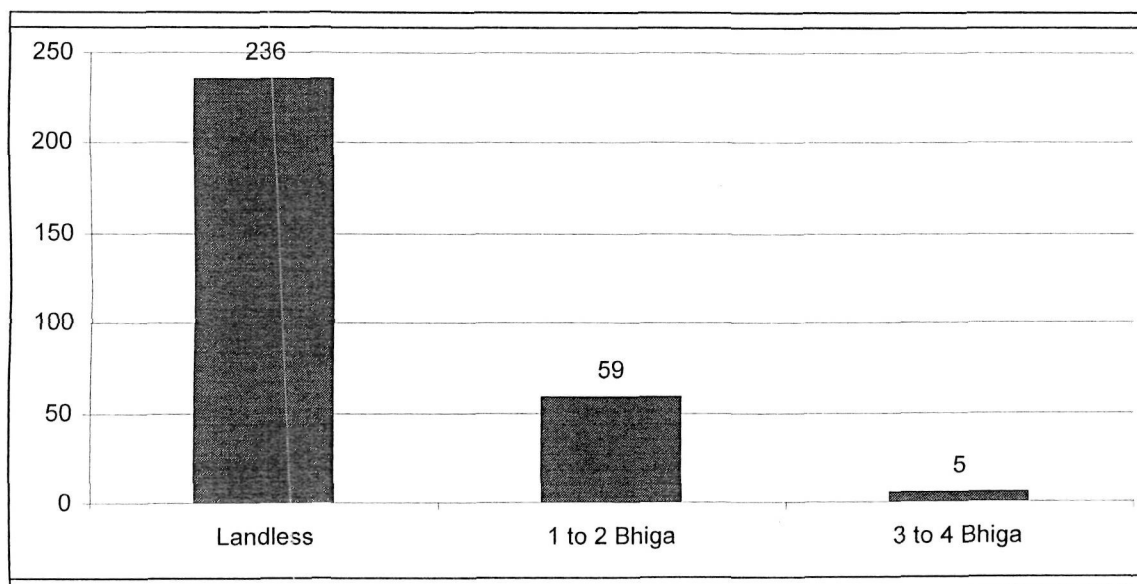


Source: Primary Data

With regards to place of stay of the respondents, 40 percent of the respondents stay at the work site. It has been seen that those respondents residing at the work site mostly are staying at squatter settlements given by the owner. These houses are made up of bamboo and tin sheds. The others who are staying away from the work site within walking distance are from the nearby villages. Within walking distance has been defined as a distance which can be covered within 5 to 10 minutes. Distances that take more than 20 minutes of walking have been classified as places, which are not within walking distance. With that lack of transportation facility from the brick kiln owners, it was found that respondents from nearby villages come by walking by spending more than half an hour. In very few cases it was found that the kiln owners send their vehicles to bring the workers from their respective villages to the kilns. It is found in Hailakandi where there is shortage of labourers to work in brick kilns.

Chart 5.5: Land holding pattern of the Respondents

Distribution of respondent by size of landholding



Source: Primary Data

The above table gives the details about the land holding pattern of the respondents. The study clearly reveals that brick kiln industry is predominantly comprising of labour from the landless category (i.e. 78.7 per cent). Although they depended on the agricultural sector for 6 months a year and 21.3 per cent did own land

but would fall in the category of small farmers. The details of these small farmers also revealed that only 19.7 per cent of them have land ranging from 1 to 2 *Bhiga*³ and a negligible number of respondents i.e. 1.7 per cent have land possession ranging from 3 to 4 *Bhigas*. From the above data it is apparent that landlessness is an imperative factor making the women to enter into brick kiln work. A predominant number of brick kiln labourers are working in the tea gardens. These tea garden labourers have a meager land given by the tea garden. It is the only land available for their livelihood. It was also found that though the land is given to them, but the real possession is with the others from whom the respondents took some money to meet with major expenses.

Facilities and Amenities

Facilities and amenities are referred here with reference to their residences. In the case of almost all the respondents, there is no electricity facility available to them in their villages. Water sources and sanitation facilities have an important influence on the health of household members, especially women and children.

**Table 5.8: Facilities and amenities available to the respondents
(Percentage in Parentheses)**

Sl.No	Facilities and Amenities	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar n =100	Hilakandi n = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	Electricity	4 (4.00)	0 (0.00)	3 (3.00)	7 (2.33)
2	Drinking Water	0 (0.00)	4 (4.00)	3 (3.00)	7 (2.33)
3	Personal <i>Kachha</i> Toilet	55 (55.00)	37 (37.00)	87 (87.00)	179 (59.67)
4	Ration Card	19 (19.00)	24 (24.00)	41 (41.00)	84 (28.00)

Source: Primary Data

³ A land measure equivalent to one-third of an acre.

It was found that 64.3 percent of the respondents fetch water from well, followed by 27.3 per cent from hand pump, 6 percent from pond, another 2.3 per cent respondents fetch water from pond. It is because that most of the respondents are residing on the hillocks to keep them away from floods. They get water from the ponds, bore-wells available at the foothills. It is noteworthy that with the lack of potable water, the burden of fetching water becomes the additional strain of work for women which affect their health. The water scarcity increases during summer when the groundwater level goes down.

Occupational pattern of the head of the family

Occupation of the respondents is pertinent in deciding the family income. Like women, the men of their families are largely seen to be employed in the informal sector both migrants and non-migrants.

**Table 5.9 Distribution of respondents according to the occupation of head of the family
(Percentage in Parentheses)**

Sl. No	Occupation of head of the family	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar n =100	Hilakandi n = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	Brick Kiln Industry	56 (56.00)	44 (44.00)	89 (89.00)	189 (63.00)
2	Tea Garden	12 (12.00)	20 (20.00)	06 (06.00)	38 (12.67)
3	Wage Labour	15 (15.00)	26 (26.00)	03 (03.00)	44 (14.67)
4	No Work	08 (08.00)	10 (10.00)	03 (03.00)	21 (7.00)
5	Not applicable	3 (3.00)	3 (3.00)	2 (2.00)	8 (2.67)

Source: Primary Data

Occupational pattern of the head of the family of the respondents indicate that the incidence of men in the family in brick kilns is predominant (63 per cent). This is also an important factor for women to prefer to work in brick kilns along with their men in the same kiln. Around 12.67 per cent of the respondents' male family members are employed in tea gardens. A significant number of head of the families (14.67 per cent) engaged as wage labour to support the family earnings. They are largely employed as casual labourers in the activities of drainage works, loading and unloading, watchmen, construction works, road building, etc. Seven per cent of the respondents stated that their husbands do not work and are dependent on the earnings from other family members due to illness or disability. Rest of the negligible 2.67 per cent of the respondents are the only bread earners in the family (female headed households).

Past Work Profile of the Respondents:

This section gives the details about the past profile of the workers in terms of their first experience of working for payment, nature of work they took up, duration etc.

Age at Work Initiation

Work initiated is used here to refer to a paid work done outside the house and prior to joining the present work. The following table gives the details about the respondents' age at the time of taking up their first job.

The majority of the respondents (62.33 per cent) have stated that they have entered in to work for payment at the age between 15 to 18 years. More than 16 per cent of the respondents have taken up the work when they were between 10 to 15 years of age. 8.67 per cent of the respondents entered in to work at the age of 19 to 22 years. Eight per cent of the respondents took up work when they were at the age between 23 to 25 years. Only 4.33 per cent of the respondents have entered into work when they were above 25 year of age. These respondents are mostly the married one. From the above it is clear that parents often take the help of children to supplement their own earnings, and this is a major reason for the widespread prevalence of child labour in the unorganised sector.

**Table 5.10: Distribution of respondents by their age at work initiation
(Percentage in Parentheses)**

Sl.No	Age at work initiation	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar n =100	Hilakandi n = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	12-14	19 (19.00)	14 (14.00)	17 (17.00)	50 (16.67)
2	15-18	75 (75.00)	73 (73.00)	39 (39.00)	187 (62.33)
3	19-22	5 (5.00)	8 (8.00)	13 (13.00)	26 (8.67)
4	23-26	1 (1.00)	3 (3.00)	20 (20.00)	24 (8.00)
5	After 26	0 (0.00)	2 (2.00)	11 (11.00)	13 (4.33)

Source: Primary Data

Work Initiated

It was found from the study that the respondents have had an experience of working mainly in the unorganised sector. In case of organized sector like Tea Garden labour, it was found that they were engaged mostly as the casual labourers. The following table gives the details about the type of work taken up by the respondents for the first time on payment basis.

**Table 5.11 Distribution of respondents by the type of work initiated
(Percentage in Parentheses)**

Sl.No	Type of work	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar n =100	Hilakandi n = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	Construction Work	0 (0.00)	3 (3.00)	15 (15.00)	18 (6.00)
2	Brick Kiln Industry	83 (83.00)	11 (11.00)	26 (26.00)	120 (40.00)
3	Agriculture	16 (16.00)	11 (11.00)	22 (22.00)	49 (16.33)
4	Maid	1 (1.00)	0 (0.00)	18 (18.00)	19 (6.33)
5	Tea Garden	0 (0.00)	75 (75.00)	19 (19.00)	94 (31.33)

Source: Primary Data

The work experience of the respondents for the first time revealed that a predominant number of respondents (40 per cent) had entered in to work in brick kiln industry. A significant section (31.33 per cent) of the respondents had an experience of working in Tea Gardens. Another 16.33 respondents worked in the traditional agriculture sector, followed by 6.33 per cent respondents started working as domestic servants. Remaining 6 per cent of the respondents had first time experience of working in the modern sector i.e. construction work. Discussion with the respondents revealed that under furious conditions only they have started working to supplement their family. It is important to not here that the respondent's first experience of working for payment was mostly as casual labour.

Reasons of Working

Discussions with the respondents brought out the following reasons for started working on payment.

Table 5.12: Distribution of respondents according to reasons of work initiation (Percentage in Parentheses)

Sl.No	Reason	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar n = 100	Hilakandi n = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	Poverty	96 (96.00)	86 (86.00)	82 (82.00)	264 (88.00)
2	Family Compulsion	1 (1.00)	5 (5.00)	11 (11.00)	17 (5.67)
3	To pay off Debts	0 (0.00)	3 (3.00)	2 (2.00)	5 (1.67)
4	Husband's Illness	1 (1.00)	0 (0.00)	3 (3.00)	4 (1.33)
5	Father's Death	0 (0.00)	3 (3.00)	0 (0.00)	3 (1.00)
6	Meeting expenses on Marriage	0 (0.00)	2 (2.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.67)
7	Husband's Death	1 (1.00)	1 (1.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.67)
8	Separation /Divorce	1 (1.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (2.00)	3 (1.00)

Source: Primary Data

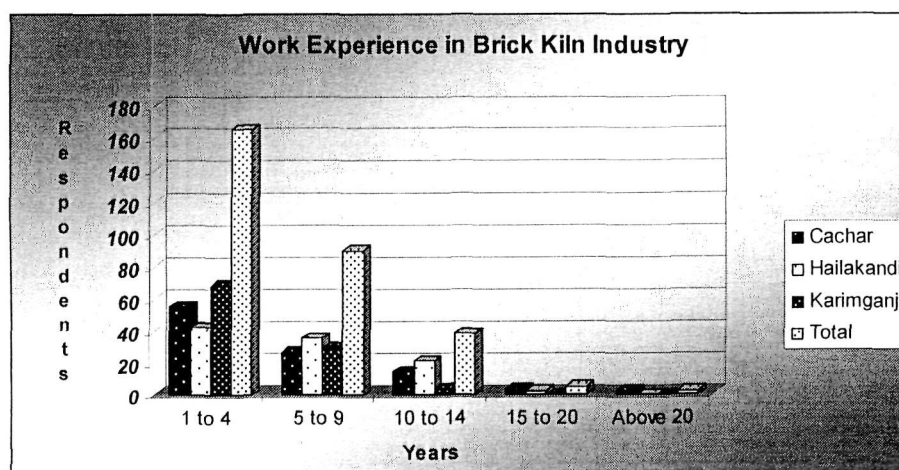
Poverty was cited as main reason for working in brick kilns by nearly 88 per cent respondents. Family compulsion was stated by 5.67 per cent of the respondents as the reason for their entrance into earnings. Here, family compulsion is referred as the condition in which the inability of the bread earner to earn a livelihood on account of illness. Another 4 per cent of the respondents entered into labour market to pay of their debts. Less than one per cent of the respondent expressed that in order to meet their marriage expenses they got engaged in the work for payment. Remaining one per cent of the respondents forced to seek work to make a living due to separation from husband. Before the marital crisis happened these women had not participated in any economic activity.

The nature of job done by them and the category in which they had worked would show that child labour is widespread especially in tea gardens, agriculture and brick kilns. This fact is hidden by not including them in the muster rolls or perhaps by increasing their age on record. With the record on age of joining and who had introduced them to the brick kiln, and the job category they had entered with it appears that there is a large section of child workers work in the brick kilns. The social, economic and health implication on children has been disastrous.

Work Experience

The work experience of the respondents here is mainly in the brick kiln industry in terms of number of years they worked in this industry.

Chart 5.6: Work Experience in Brick Kiln Industry



Source: Primary Data

The work experience of respondents in the brick kiln industry revealed that a majority of the respondents (55 per cent) are engaged for one to four years. A significant number of respondents (30 per cent) had 5 to 9 years of experience. Less than two percent (1.67 per cent) had an experience of 15 to 20 years as against a negligible percent of respondents (0.67per cent) who have put in more than twenty years of work in this sector. Discussion with the respondents brought out that around one fourth of the respondents from the group- 'one to four years' have entered into brick kilns for the first time. It is their first experience to work to make a living. Earlier the head of the family use to support the family. For the large sections of women the traditional attitude still prevails which says that women have to look after family matters first and enter the economic field only after the situation compels them to join it. That is, entrance to paid job outside home is treated as the last resort to earn their livelihood.

At the aggregate level, it is seen that more than eighty per cent of the respondents are engaged in transporting bricks. This could be possible because this activity does not require any skill.

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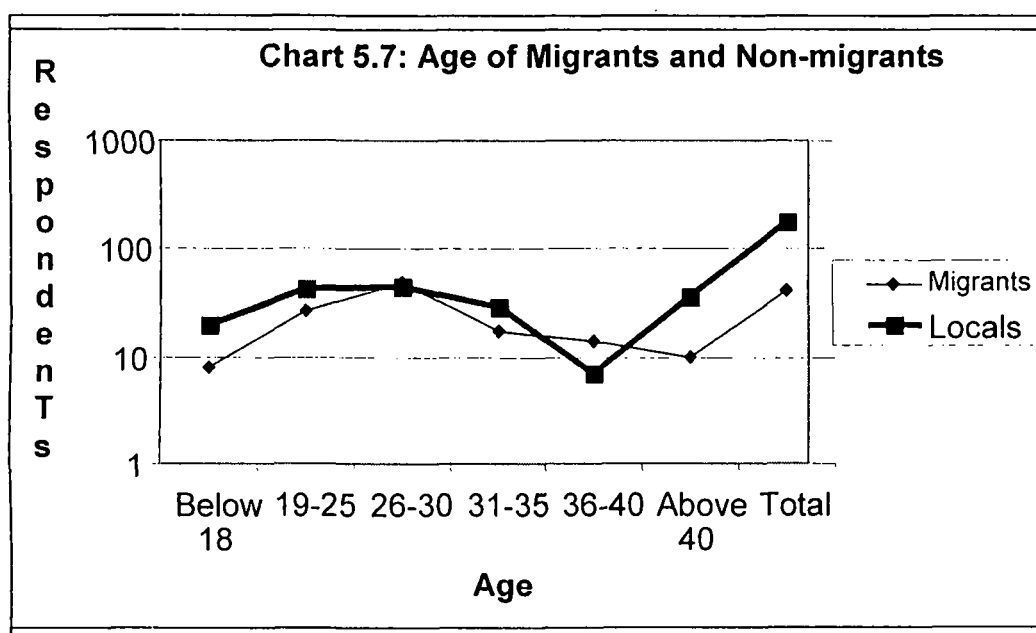
Push and Pull factors for women in Brick Kiln Industry and Migration to Brick Kilns

Migration has seen as an inevitable factor for the survival of large sections of rural population. The labour force move from rural to urban areas in search of a better livelihood. The outcome of many studies provoke assumptions that there are push and pull factors of migration. The poor migrants are either pushed out by economic and social deprivation, or pulled into urban life with the attraction of employment and better wages. Migration is a voluntary decision motivated by economic factors but many of time, migration is forced under various circumstances and some time due to social and biological factors. Migration acts as an equilibrium force for supplying labour from labour surplus to labour deficient areas as last surviving strategy. Indebtedness due to deprivation put them under the clutches of moneylenders from generations, and eventually leads to migration under debt bondage. Numerous instances can be evidence of migration under debt bondage of poor tribals and dalit from chronic poverty stricken

belt of country to various brick-kilns, stone quarry, coal- mines and in several labour intensive low paid jobs.

Demographic Profile of the migrants

The socio-demographic characteristics of migrant women shows that majority of the female migrants (40.04 per cent) belong to the age group 26-30 years. As from the present age of the female migrants, nothing important can be inferred, it is necessary to analyse the age of the migrants at the time of migration as that would reveal the age group among whom the tendency to migrate is large.



Source: Primary Data

The largest proportion of respondents (49 per cent) migrated when they were in the age group 21-30. About 36 per cent of the female migrants moved when they were between 31 and 40 years. In these two age groups, maximum migratory tendency was observed. It should be mentioned here that most of the women who migrate at less than 20 years of age, migrated as daughters of the primary migrants.

More than 40 per cent of the respondents have migrated to this place to work in brick kilns. Muslims dominate the migration stream in Barak Valley. Caste wise study of women migrants shows that most of them are from backward castes. Comparatively greater participation of women from migrated families was found due to the fact that

these groups have no access to employment and landlessness. The women are these groups work with their male-folk at the farm and at brick kilns and other construction works and are the bread earners for the family either directly or indirectly. Migration of women is prevalent in Hailakandi and Karimganj. Though migration is there in Cachar but predominantly by men from Bihar and Jharkhand.

With regards to age, the migrants are predominantly from the age group 26 to 30 followed by the age group 19 to 25. As far as respondents with below 18 years and above 40 years are more from the local than the migrants. It may be because it is easily accessible and this group is mostly engaged in transporting bricks. There is concentration of married women in the migration stream. The educational status of migrant households is depressing with a majority belongs to the category of illiterate.

Migration Pattern

Table 5.13: Distribution of respondents according to their pattern of migration

(Percentage in Parentheses)

Sl.No	Pattern of Migration	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar n = 100	Hilakandi n = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	Non-Migrants	100 (100)	39 (39.00)	21 (21.00)	159 (53.00)
2	Inter district	0 (0.00)	22 (22.00)	61 (61.00)	82 (27.33)
3	Interstate	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	16 (16.00)	16 (5.33)

Source: Primary Data

Inter state migration

It was found from the study that a large number of migrants have resorted to inter state migration mostly from Bihar and Jharakhand. Women's share in interstate migration is negligible. Migration from these states to Barak Valley is predominantly by men. The migrant labourers of the brick kilns resort to distress migration due to poverty and unemployment in the extremely harsh conditions of the drought ravaged districts of the neighbouring states of Bihar and Jharkhand, and some districts of Assam.

Inter District Migration

The vast majority of the migrants in the Barak Valley kilns are from the other districts within the state of Assam. Highest number of labour i.e. 27.33 per cent of the respondents resorted to inter district migration. These migrants come from two districts of Assam, namely Dibrugarh and Kokrajhar of Assam. It was found that the trend of migration in the rural area is still in herd and flock.

Reasons for Migration

This is the excruciating course of migration, which becomes the fate of 60 per cent rural mass; including 70 per cent of them are Tribals, Dalits and most backward caste. Poverty is a multidimensional concept, which is complex in origin as well as in its manifestation (World Bank 1997:3). While the poor suffer in general, women among them are the worst victims. Women's poverty differs from that of men both in degree and in kind. Poverty has thus assumed for itself strong gender connotations. "Poverty has a woman's face" and that 70 per cent of the world's poor are female...but in almost all cases women and girls suffer from them to a greater degree than men (Human Development Report 1995).

Migration can both cause and be caused by poverty. Similarly, poverty can be alleviated as well exacerbated by population movement. The relative impact of migration on poverty varies by the level of development of the area under consideration (Skeldon 002:67).

The present study revealed that the theory of migration not as a voluntarily decision for in search of better employment opportunity but as push factor because the labour is entangled in the vicious cycle of forced distribution of labour. It worked as survival strategy of poor but controlled by various actors. The second largest sector to construction absorbing such a floating labour population and a reserve surplus off the land, is the brick kiln industry. These workers are mostly seasonal migrants.

**Table 5.14: Distribution of respondents by the reasons of their migration
(Percentage in Parentheses)**

Sl.No	Reasons	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar n =100	Hilakandi n = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	Poverty	0 (0.00)	14 (14.00)	28 (28.00)	42 (14.00)
2	Unavailability of Work	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	21 (21.00)	21 (7.00)
3	Irregular Work	0 (0.00)	2 (2.00)	5 (5.00)	7 (2.33)
4	Lower Wages	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	14 (14.00)	14 (4.67)
5	Indebtedness	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (2.00)	2 (0.67)
6	Illness of Family Members	0 (0.00)	3 (3.00)	0 (0.00)	3 (1.00)
7	Death of Husband/ Father	0 (0.00)	3 (3.00)	7 (7.00)	10 (3.33)

Source: Primary Data

Majority of the respondents indicated that lack of employment opportunities in the villages are the prominent factor responsible for their migration to urban areas. 7 per cent and 2.3 per cent labourers were of the opinion that unavailability of work and if available irregular nature of work respectively, are the most prominent factors accountable for pushed them to migrate. The respondents pointed out that there is not enough work in the village during the lean season to give them a livelihood. 4.7 per cent labourer supported the statement that due to lower wages, they bound to migrate from their place in search of sufficient livelihood. Almost every part of rural India, the wages provided for agricultural labour are far less than the prescribed minimum wages. 2.7 per cent labourers indicated various reasons, such as illness or death of their family member, indebtedness are responsible for their migration. Above 10 per cent of the respondents stated that it was decided by their husband so they have migrated with them.

Review of the background of the places of origin of migrant respondents reveal that lack of employment opportunities in their source villages has resulted in the exodus of the labour from rural to urban areas. Dubri and Kokrajhar districts of Assam are considered as the most economically backward districts of the state. It has been one of the worst hit districts of the state in terms of poverty, thereby contributing largely to the migration of population to other districts of the state.

In this context it is necessary to note that the respondents of this study have been rational in their decision to migrate from rural areas to towns/cities. In fact migration has been an important survival strategy among the poorer rural households. Thus women like men tend to move out of areas where economic opportunities are limited to areas where employment is available. The economic motive is seen as the principal force in female as well as male migration.

Conclusively, rural migration in the country, inter-state and inter-district become socio-economic phenomena of the present day society. Seasonal migration become the survival strategy for the rural poor, who evidently facing chronic poverty, deprivation, dispossession from the resources, indebtedness, unemployment, drought and other consequences. The continuous loss of control over resources lead to lose the opportunity of sustainable source of livelihood which eventually through them into the labour market in unorganised sector without any bargaining capacity. It also shows the failure of the government programmes at the source to tackle the problem of poverty.

Occupational Pattern of Women during off season:

The study revealed that the large number of respondents are the landless labourers. They work in others farm during the off season. A large set of respondents i.e. 45 percent of the respondents work in tea gardens to earn their livelihood. In other words, tea garden work is primary and the brick kiln work is secondary for them. A little less than thirty per cent (i.e. 28.67 per cent) respondents survive by way of daily labour. Another 3.33 per cent of the respondents work both in their own farm and wage labour as well. This is because the meager land is not sufficient for their survival. A negligible per cent of the respondents i.e. 0.33 per cent work in their own farm. This is because a predominant respondents belongs to landless category. Poorer women who are mostly

illiterate and unskilled were easily absorbed as cultivators/labourers in agriculture in their place of origin during agricultural season. Remaining nine per cent of the respondents do not work during off season.

**Table 5.15: Work opportunities during off season
(Percentage in Parentheses)**

Sl.No	Off Season Work	District			Total N = 300
		Cachar n =100	Hilakandi n = 100	Karimganj n = 100	
1	Construction work	18 (18.00)	1 (1.00)	6 (6.00)	25 (8.33)
2	Brick Kilns (for loading & unloading)	3 (3.00)	1 (1.00)	12 (12.00)	16 (5.33)
3	In my own farm only	0 (0.00)	1 (1.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.33)
4	In my own farm & wage Labour	0 (0.00)	4 (4.00)	6 (6.00)	10 (3.33)
5	Wage Labour only	23 (23.00)	17 (17.00)	46 (46.00)	86 (28.67)
6	Tea garden	43 (43.00)	71 (71.00)	21 (21.00)	135 (45.00)
7	Don't work	13 (13.00)	5 (5.00)	9 (9.00)	27 (9.00)

Source: Primary Data

It is evident from the study that the women in brick kiln comprising of marginalized section of the society i.e. from the lowest echelons of the society with lower socio-economic status. Migrants are more vulnerable because of the fact that this group is predominantly from the minority community i.e. Muslims are more in migration which is inter-district.

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