

Study of gun widows in manipur sociology essay

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Professor , Chairperson Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies

Submitted by- Kulajit Maisnam

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School of Social Work

Tata Institute of Social Sciences

Mumbai

Statement of the problem

Livelihood in every day discourse refers to the means by which people make a living; it is the means to secure the basic necessities of life. A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living (DFID, 1999). The UK Department of international Development (1999) & United Nations Development Programme (2010) adopts the definition given by Chambers & Conroy: A Livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base. People require a range of livelihood assets to achieve positive livelihood outcomes and no single category of assets on its own is sufficient to yield all the many and varied outcomes that people seek. (The Sustainable Livelihood Framework, DFID). This framework identifies five main capitals or asset categories upon which livelihoods are built (Human capital, Social capital,

Natural capital, Physical capital and financial capital), possession or right to use and manage these assets is necessary for a positive livelihood outcome of an individual or household. The ability to access, control, and own productive livelihood assets such as land, labour, finance, and social capital facilitate people in creating firm and productive livelihood outcomes (Meinzen-Dick, R et al, 2011). Assets have a constructive impact on livelihood security, it affects livelihood through different channels. Assets may: directly impact well-being through the increased status and empowerment that asset ownership conveys; facilitate different members of the household to opt different livelihood strategies; provides a safety net against shocks; and reinforces household members' positions in the broader community and inside the household in terms of decisions over how income is used up or invested (Meinzen-Dick, R et al, 2011). The patterns of asset ownership are integral to livelihood choices that decide how commodities are marketed or consumed within a household. Assets can be used in varying ways to generate income through rents, interest on savings, and profits in business activities, assets also make possible participation of the individual or household in financial markets, like banking facilities which can be used as collateral for credit. (S. Hema et al, 2012). The function of assets is significant since it can be sold or used as a security for credit to survive with the undesired or unwanted effects of economic shocks. By providing aid to income diversification of a household, assets also reinforce households' capacity to deal with, and counter negative shocks (Quisumbing, 2008, Cited in S. Hema et al, 2012). When it comes to women, As culturally based expectations of the roles, responsibilities and behaviours of women and men are assigned to men and women in the society, and as society sees women

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primarily in gender stereotyped roles, it is important to analyse livelihoods from a gender perspective and to see how far women are able to access these resources to sustain their livelihood. In general, men and women have different levels of control and access to the resources required for livelihood. Women's work choices are to a great extent limited by a multiple factors such as access to education, family expectations, gendered roles and responsibilities and the overall livelihood approach of the household (Ranjeeta B et al, 2009). Gender inequality is present and apparent throughout developed and developing societies in varying forms and degrees. Women in general and poor women in particular, are underprivileged of basic economic opportunities and rights which are commonly available to men. There exist a large inequalities and disparities between men and women in terms of access to basic facilities, such as nutrition, health and education, as well as access to employment and possession of various income generating resources (Cited in Pallavi C, 2008). Not only unequally distribution of assets between rich and poor exist, there exist an unequal distribution of assets between men and women, at the national level as well as within communities and households (Deere & Doss, 2006, Cited in Meinzen-Dick, R et al, 2011)." Research shows that within households, assets are not always pooled, but rather can be held individually by men, women, and children" (Haddad et al, 1997, Cited in Meinzen-Dick, R et al, 2011, p 3). Who within a household has the access to which resources and for what purposes is determined both by the larger socio cultural context and by intra household distribution regulations (Meinzen-Dick, R et al, 2011). Different allocation of the resources among man and women is determined by the larger socio cultural context, and women in general are deprived of

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economically productive resources. " Asset ownership by women can have a positive impact on their status and bargaining power, and thereby enhance individual and household well-being" (S. Hema et al, 2012, p 60). " While women may have greater ownership of certain types of assets as compared to men, a growing body of empirical evidence shows that women typically have fewer overall assets than men" (Meinzen-Dick, R et al, 2011, p 4). Agriculture is one of the major sources of livelihood for many man and women in many developing countries. It is a critical productive asset in agrarian country, on the other hand, women are deprived of ownership rights and control land and lesser number of women has direct access to land in their own right (Meera V, 2009). " In India, landownership by women is not more than 2%" (Agarwal, 1994, Cited in Meera V, 2009, p 74). " An International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), (2006) study found that of 402 surveyed women in Kerala, 36% owned property (land or house) while in West Bengal, this figure was 35% in a sample of 450 women"(S. Hema et al, 2012, p 60). " A survey of 400 households conducted in four districts in Karnataka in 2001 found that women in households that owned land had access to land, but rarely had ownership rights to it" (Brown et al 2002, Cited in S. Hema et al, 2012, p 60). The research conducted by in karnataka, India Hema, Suchitra, and Lahoti (2011) shows gendered ownership of assets among man and women, where jewellery was the common and only asset directly owned by women. In Karnataka " Women do not own assets by themselves; they co-own assets with some or all household members. Jewellery is the only asset that they own individually and which shows a reverse gender gap. Since jewellery is often pawned or sold during economic crises, it leaves women asset less and more vulnerable even as it provides a

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coping strategy for households" (S. Hema et al, 2012, p 65). Seeing at the limitations in access, ownership and control of assets by women there is less probability for women to convert these assets into livelihood opportunities, especially when women do not own and manage them. When livelihood is concerned, access to banking services is one important area. There exist gender disparities between man and women when it comes to banking services. While basic banking services are spreading in India, women are largely deprived of the basic banking service. " In India, the available data till 2006 show that women at large remain considerably deprived of basic banking services as compared to men" (Pallavi C, 2008, p 18). " If we consider credit supplied, only about 12 per cent of the individual bank loan accounts belonged to women in 2006; in the same year, women constituted about half of India's population (48. 4 per cent). The remaining 88 per cent of the individual bank loan accounts were held by men" (Pallavi C, 2008, p 18). Also " The substantial growth in women-members of self-help groups has not meant any major change in the access of women to banking" (Pallavi C, 2008, p 18). Another research done by Meenakshi, Vani, Manojit (2011) by examining the national Sample Survey organisation unit record data pertaining to debt and investment (59th round) shows that the relatively weaker sections such as self employed female headed households have much less access to credit both from formal and informal sources. Gender is found to play a very significant role for both amount of income earned as well as the likelihood of an individual being employed. " Women in India are found to have a 12 per cent lower likelihood of being employed than men. But even among the employed, female annual incomes are likely to be lower by 36 per cent than otherwise similar males" (Laveesh B et al, 2006, p 3895).

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Which shows the very fact that there exist gendered discrimination in labor market. Gender also plays a crucial role in distribution and division of labor, in the research conducted by Neetu C, Parthasarathy D (2007) in two villages in Nanded, Maharashtra, India, reveals the clear cut division of labor between men and women. Women were found generally to execute tasks which require so-called feminine endurance and patience. Almost households' works were performed by women irrespective of whether they work and earn outside or not which shows the roles and responsibilities assigned to women defined by the larger socio cultural context and by the household. And even among wage workers, they were paid less as compared to male counterparts for similar work. From various angles women are subjugated limiting their opportunities for livelihood, and the general scenario of women is grim as far as their livelihoods are concerned, starting from assets ownership, opportunities to work, gendered assigned role and responsibilities limiting them to house hold works, access to credits from banking institutions etc and one important aspect is that shocks like " Divorce or death of a husband can lead to women losing their assets especially in cases where marriage is governed under customary laws that do not protect women's right to property" (Peterman 2010, cited in Meinzen-Dick, R et al, 2011, p 11). So there is high chance of women being vulnerable with limited resources when they are single and heading a house alone. It is in this context that the study of the widows affected by armed conflict is being proposed; they are very vulnerable group, their husband or spouses had died in encounters by the state police or Army or killed by non state actors. These widows are those struggling to survive without their husband. After the sock of their husband's death these widows in Manipur are struggling hard for their children's future, <https://assignbuster.com/study-of-gun-widows-in-manipur-sociology-essay/>

fighting against the stigma and isolation of a young widow of a "suspected" man (Frank V L, 2011). "Meanwhile, the state, which has abdicated its responsibilities on all fronts, treats them as garbage, as trouble makers, as bad elements who must watch their step and, above all, need not to bother to turn to the state for a widow's pension or for support for their fatherless children" (Frank V L, 2011, p 14). Seeing at the vulnerability women face in general and this section of women in particular the research proposes to study livelihoods, their vulnerabilities and the gender constraints.

A brief review of literature

Manipur in general the most important employment generating institution is the government institutions, due to lesser number of formal private sectors in the market, mostly people opt for informal sector for their livelihood, and farm based activities, so the literature review section will be mainly on informal sector and women's livelihood. "There is little information in the literature about the day-to-day activities of women in the informal labor market" (Ranjeeta B et al, 2009, p 234). "Dramatic reductions in trade barriers during the past 10 years have caused unprecedented economic growth in India. Little is known about the impact of globalization on the informal labor market, especially the impact on women" (Ranjeeta B et al, 2009, p 231). "The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS) (2007) reports that roughly 79 per cent of informal sector workers earn less than Rs. 20 (less than \$0.5) per day, making them the most vulnerable group in the economy" (Ranjeeta B et al, 2009, p 231). There is a high chance for Women to work in informal sector, like in Manipur majority of the street vendors are women, and there is a specific market for

women vendors called Ima keithel (Ima is a vernacular word which means mother, and keithel means market) and women are also likely to be segregated into the lower segments of the informal labor market, which are characterized by lower earnings and a high risk of poverty (Ranjeeta B et al, 2009). " The informal sector offers employment to a large proportion of the populations of developing countries, including India. This is particularly true for women since the informal sector, and home-based work specifically, offer poor women their best opportunity for work. This is because it provides the flexibility in work hours and location that they require to incorporate market work into their actual family work burdens as well as into the social norms regulating women's economic participation" (Paula K, 2002, p 285). A key constrain to women, in particular, for employability in the formal sector is lack of education, and also women's conventional function within the household limits the opportunity and keeps them in the informal sector (Ranjeeta B et al, 2009). (Paula K, 2002) pointed there major women exclusive constrains in their economic opportunities, first is the limited mobility, which comes from the border socio cultural and traditional context and reinforced by gendered roles assigned to women within the household. This has serious implication limiting women's economic potential; second is the women's more demanding role in the family as compared to man. Limited mobility effects women directly and indirectly in their economic progress, directly they are more likely to work in the home or near the vicinity of her home because of their assigned house hold works, and indirectly limiting economic success because of the work burden on the time, energy, and concentration levels they can apply to the market; third is the

gendered division of labor in productive work which limits the number of opportunities to work available to women.

Issue of female headed households

(Mayura B, Geeta RG, 1997) pointed out the problems with defining and measuring female headed households, first is the use of different definitions of both the term " household" and " head of household" by different countries in their census instruments. Second is the ambiguity inherent in the term " head of household" when the headship is assigned by the judgement of the household members which may differ across culture and geography, " The third and perhaps most serious limitation is that the term " head of household" is not neutral. It is loaded with additional meanings that reflect a traditional emphasis on households as undifferentiated units with a patriarchal system of governance and no internal conflicts in the allocation of resources" (Nancy F, 1990, Cited in Mayura B, Geeta RG, 1997). Three situations in which results in emergence of female-heads: (a) The broad range of domestic situations generally characterised by the absence of a resident male head, viz, widowhood, divorce, separation and desertion. (b) male migration for long periods generally for economic activities living behind wives, and (c) resident male losing economic function due to severe unemployment, disability, illness etc (Buvinic & Youssef, 1978, Cited in Lakshmi L, 1994, p 699). Women who head households are triply disadvantaged as they experience the burdens of poverty, gender discrimination, and nonexistence of support as heads of household (Mayura B, Geeta RG, 1977).

Female headed household and poverty

(Mayura B, Geeta RG, 1997) pointed out the relation of female headed household and poverty: Here the main earners of female-headed families are by default women, who have lower average earnings as compared to men, they possess fewer or no assets at all which is economically productive, and limited access to remunerative jobs and employment. This gendered economic gap adds to the economic vulnerability of female-headed families. Combined with household structure and gendered differences in economic opportunity, make the female headed household leading to poverty.

Rationale of the study

Women being one of the vulnerable group in the society, and the group that the researcher is studying have lost their daily bread earner which makes them more vulnerable. Most literature has spoken about violence inflicted towards women in Manipur and less about their vulnerability and livelihoods insecurity. The research could be a useful insight on livelihood intervention programs by various agencies giving and insight about the realities faced by the widows affected by armed conflict in sustaining their livelihoods.

Objectives

To study the livelihood pattern of widows affected by armed conflict To study the livelihoods vulnerability experienced the widows affected by armed conflict. To ascertain how gender constrains limits the opportunity of their livelihood. The response of state and non state agencies towards them concerning to their livelihood.

Methodology

Qualitative: the proposed research will be a qualitative one. This is because the study of the livelihood vulnerability these particular group faces will require a lot of observations on the part of the researcher and the data will have to be gathered through observing the norms and the life activities of the respondents. In-depth interviews: In-depth interviewing technique will be used to interview the respondents regarding their perceptions and views regarding their day-to-day livelihood activities. Through this interview, the overall nature of the vulnerabilities and the risks that the widows of the gun face will be ascertained. Though the in-depth interviews will be individual interviews, it will take into context the household of the individuals. Universe of the research: the universe of the research will be the widows affected by armed conflict registered in an Imphal based NGO. As the researcher has time constrain with regard to data collection the sample size will be 10 to 15 widows. Sampling will be done by using simple random sampling so that individual has the same probability of being chosen at any stage during the sampling process.