Informal Sector Employment Conditions and Living Standards in Assam: Unveiling the Realities

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Abstract

Growing informality is the common phenomenon of the labour market in both India and Assam. Similar to the national scenario, unorganised sector shares more than 90 percent of the employment in Assam. Workers in the informal or unorganized sector are basically exposed to various occupational and health related risk. However, in many developing and underdeveloped countries, issues concerning the working conditions of informal workers remain unaddressed. Based on a primary survey conducted in four districts of Assam, this paper provides an overview of the working conditions of informal workers. The study reveals that the conditions of informal workers of Assam is not satisfactory, and have a significant scope for improvements.

Key words: Informal, Workers, Assam, Conditions, Component.

Introduction

Assam is the highest populated states among the northeastern states having 98.4 per cent of rural area and 86 per cent of the rural population (Census, 2011). In case of different aspect including demographic, Assam shows similar characteristics like India, sometimes it is also called 'Mini India' or 'India in miniature'. In case of labour market also the situation of Assam is similar to that of India. In other words, growing informality is the common phenomenon of the labour market in both India and Assam. Similar to the national scenario, unorganised sector shares more than 90 percent of the employment in Assam. Workers in the informal or unorganized sector are basically exposed to various occupational and health related risk. Over the years, there has been a growing demand of healthcare services with the increasing size of the population as well as with increasing diseases (both communicable and non-communicable) burden (Tripathy, 2014). But concern about the conditions of informal workers is still a neglected issue in many of the developing and under-developed nations. This study presents a report of the conditions of informal workers based on primary survey carried out four districts of rural Assam. A total of 600 samples from the study area

are collected, out of which 515 from the rural areas and 85 from the urban areas following the multi-stage technique of data collection. Sample respondents are informal workers and information is collected for both personal level and household level with the intent to fulfill the predetermined objective. To define the informal worker, the definition put forwarded by 17th international conference of Labour Statisticians at ILO is followed. In 2003 the 17th ICLS defined informal employment as "all remunerative work (both self-employment and wage employment) that is not registered, regulated or protected by the existing legal or regulatory frameworks, as well as non-remunerative work undertaken in an income producing enterprise".

The first part of this study describes demographic and locational composition of the informal workers. Second part shows social profile of the informal workers by caste, religion, educational level, family type and so on. Third part reveals economic profile of the informal workers in terms of occupation, main source of income, per capita monthly income, per capita monthly expenditure, wealth index, per capita land holding. Finally, fourth part deals with environmental and sanitary profile in terms of housing condition and basic amenities such as toilet facility, bathroom, ventilation, drinking water etc.

Demographic and Locational Characteristics

The initial section of this chapter shows the demographic and location-related characteristics of the informal workers. It counts informal workers by their age, sex, household size, location related information rural-urban composition, migration status and distance.

Age Composition

Age is an important component in both demographic and social science research. The workers in the study area belong to different age groups. The survey covered information of the 600 households, based on the data collected from 600 samples. Among the six age groups i.e., below 18, 18-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60 and above 60, the respective proportion of workers constitute 0.2 per cent, 21.3 per cent, 33.3 per cent, 20.3 per cent, 20.3 per cent and 4.5 per cent.

Age composition of the male and female workers shows that below 18 years age group comprise 0.2 per cent of the male workers. Similarly, more than 21 per cent of males and 19 per cent of females belong to younger age group 18-30 years. Likewise, more than 32 per cent of males and 36 per cent of females fall in the age group 41-50, more than 19 per cent of males and 22 per cent females are belonged to the age group 51-60 and more than 5 per cent of males and 2 per cent of females fall under the age group above 60. Thus, males outnumber females in the younger age below 18 as well as in the age group 18-30 and also old age (above 60). While, females outnumber males in the age group 31-40 and 51-60. Proportion of the young workers of the age group below 18 and 18-30 are more in rural areas, while the
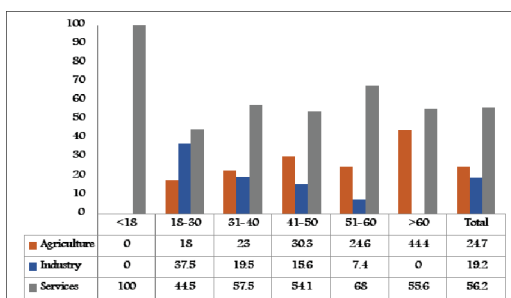
proportion of the workers of the age group 31-40, 41-50, and above 60 are higher in urban area.

Table.1 Area and Gender-wise Distribution of the Workers on the Basis of Age					
Age	Rural	Urban	Male	Female	Total
Below 18	1 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)
18-30	161 (32.2)	18 (3.0)	101 (21.8)	27 (19.7)	128 (21.3)
31-40	99 (19.8)	39 (39.0)	150 (32.4)	50 (36.5)	200 (33.3)
41-50	99 (19.8)	23 (23.0)	97 (21.0)	25 (18.2)	122 (20.3)
51-60	107 (21.4)	15 (15.0)	91 (19.7)	31 (22.6)	122 (20.3)
Above 60	22 (4.4)	5 (5.0)	23 (5.0)	4 (2.9)	27 (4.5)
Total	500 (100.0)	100 (100.0)	463 (100.0)	137 (100.0)	600 (100.0)
Source: Primary Data, 2023. Figures in the Parenthesis indicate percentage to total.					

Sector wise analysis shows that 44.4 per cent workers from the agricultural sector and 55.6 per cent workers from services sector are above 60 years whereas; all the workers of the age group below 18 are engaged in service sector. Similarly, in the age group 18-30, 12.8 per cent workers are belonged to agricultural sector, 39.5 per cent belonged to industrial sector and 18.7 per cent workers are belonged to services sector. This is illustrated in figure 1.

Figure.1 Sector-wise Distribution of Workers on the Basis of Age (in per cent)

	<18	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	>60	Total
Agriculture	0	18	23	30.3	24.6	44.4	24.7
Industry	0	37.5	19.5	15.6	7.4	0	19.2
Services	100	44.5	57.5	54.1	68	55.6	56.2

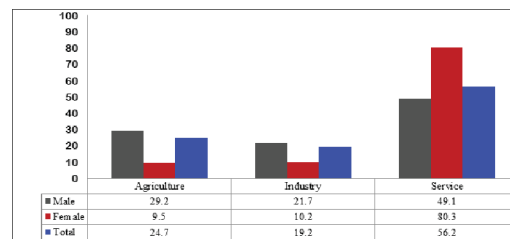*Source*: Primary Survey, 2023.

Sex Composition

A total of 600 workers are selected for the study, of which 148 (24.7 per cent)

workers belong to agriculture sector, 115 (19.2 per cent) from industrial sector, and 337 (56.2 per cent) belongs to service or tertiary sector. The selected sample consists of 463 (77.2 per cent) male workers and 137 (22.8) female workers.
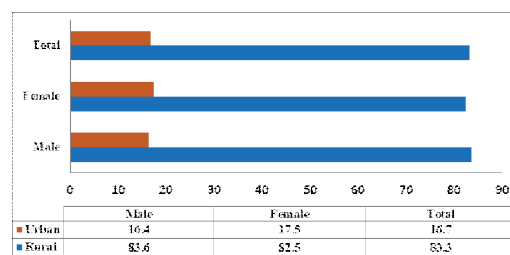
Among total workers, 500 workers reside in rural area and 100 reside in urban area. Among sample workers, 83.3 per cent resides in rural area and 16.7 per cent resides in urban area. The proportion of female workers is more in urban area than the rural area and vice versa.

Figure.2 Sex Composition of the Workers by Sector (in per cent)

	Agriculture	Industry	Service
Male	29.2	21.7	49.1
Female	9.5	10.2	80.3
Total	24.7	19.2	56.2

Source: Primary Survey, 2023

Figure.3 Sex Composition of the Workers by Area of Residence (in per cent)

	Male	Female	Total
Urban	16.4	17.5	16.7
Rural	83.6	82.5	83.3

Source: Primary Survey, 2023.

Household Size

Average size of household among informal workers is found 5.24 against national average of Assam 4.87 (as per Census 2011). Among the sample districts, Dhubri has the highest size of the family 6.92, followed by Sonitpur (4.62) and Dhemaji (4.18). Sector-wise, the average family size data reveals that Dhubri districts has more average family size for the agricultural workers and for Sonitpur and Dhemaji districts, average family size is more for the industrial sector workers. This is shown in table 2.

Table.2 Average Household Size of the Workers by Sectors & Districts		
District (1)	**Sector** (2)	**Average Household Size** (3)
Dhubri	Agriculture	8.27
	Industry	6.75
	Services	5.73
	Total	**6.92**
Sonitpur	Agriculture	4.39
	Industry	5.04
	Services	4.43
	Total	**4.62**
Dhemaji	Agriculture	3.58
	Industry	4.72
	Services	4.24
	Total	**4.18**
Total	***	**5.24**
Assam	***	**4.87**
Source: Primary Survey, 2023, Census of India, 2011.		

Rural-Urban Composition

Based on the size of settlement and occupation pattern, the populations are divided into two groups i.e., Rural and Urban. Total of 600 workers, 83.3 per cent resides in rural area and 16.7 per cent resides in urban area. The proportion of rural workers is the highest in Dhemaji district (89.7 per cent); followed by Dhemaji district (82.0 per cent) and Dhubri district (78.0 per cent). Distribution of the sample household by rural-urban composition is shown below.

Table.3 Place of Residence of the Workers by Districts			
Districts (1)	**Type of Area** (2)		**Total** (3)
	Rural	**Urban**	
Dhubri	192 (78.0)	54 (22.0)	246 (100.0)
Sonitpur	208 (89.7)	24 (10.3)	251 (100.0)
Dhemaji	100 (82.0)	22 (18.0)	103 (100.0)
Total	**500 (83.3)**	**100 (16.7)**	**600 (100.0)**
Assam	85.90	14.10	100
Source: Primary Survey, 2023, Census of India, 2011. Figures in the Parenthesis indicate percentage to row total.			

Migration

Migration is the movement of the population from a place of origin to a place of destination in search of various opportunities, education, or job. It is another important determining factor of the status of the socio-economic conditions of the informal workers. In the study area, majority of migrant workers are belonged to urban area and Dhubri district. In rural area, the highest proportions of migrant workers are belonged to Dhubri district (17.2 per cent), followed by Dhemaji (11.0) and Sonitpur district (9.6 per cent). In urban area, the highest migrants are belonged to Dhubri district (20.7 per cent), followed by Sonitpur district (29.2 per cent) and Dhemaji district (22.7 per cent).

Table.4 Migration Status of the Workers by Districts			
Type of Area (1)	**Migration Status** (2)		**Total** (3)
	Districts	**Migrant**	**Non-Migrant**	
Rural	Dhubri	17.2	82.8	100.0
	Sonitpur	9.6	90.4	100.0
	Dhemaji	11.0	89.0	100.0
	Total	**12.8**	**87.2**	**100.0**
Urban	Dhubri	33.3	66.7	100.0
	Sonitpur	29.2	70.8	100.0
	Dhemaji	22.7	77.3	100.0
	Total	**30.0**	**70.0**	**100.0**
Total	Dhubri	20.7	79.3	100.0
	Sonitpur	11.6	88.4	100.0
	Dhemaji	13.1	86.9	100.0
	Total	**15.7**	**84.3**	**100.0**
Source: Primary Survey, 2023. Figures in the Parenthesis indicate percentage to row total.			

Distance

Distance of the household is important in the determination of availability of some basic facilities. For comparison purposes only, the distance here has been categorized into three dimensions and accordingly, some arbitrary values are given to rank it. For the facilities which were available within 5 KM from the respondent's location, it was termed as 'good', from 6-10 KM, it was termed as 'moderate' and above 10 KM was termed as 'poor' in quality. The distance-wise condition of basic amenities is shown in the table below.

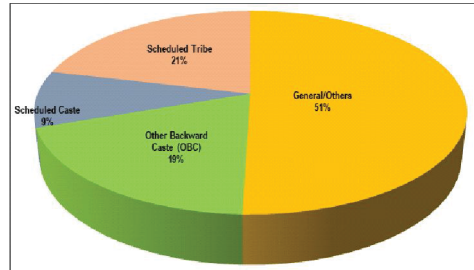| Table.5 Distribution of Sample Households Based on the Nearest Infrastructure Facilities		
Nearest institutions & their Quality	No. of households	Percentage (%)
(1)	(2)	(3)
1. Pre-primary		
a. Good	599	99.8
b. Moderate	1	.20
c. Poor	0	0.0
2. Primary		
a. Good	596	99.3
b. Moderate	4	.70
c. Poor	0	0.0
3. High school		
a. Good	522	87.0
b. Moderate	77	12.8
c. Poor	1	.20
4. Higher secondary		
a. Good	445	74.2
b. Moderate	107	17.8
c. Poor	48	8.0
5. College		
a. Good	183	30.5
b. Moderate	187	31.2
c. Poor	230	38.3
6. Hospitals		
a. Good	225	37.5
b. Moderate	160	26.7
c. Poor	215	35.8
7. Sub- health Centre		
a. Good	509	84.8
b. Moderate	78	13.0
c. Poor	13	2.2
8. Post-office		
a. Good	305	50.8
b. Moderate	225	42.5
c. Poor	40	6.7
Source: Primary Survey, 2023.		

Social Characteristics

Social variables are such variables that are very crucial in any research purpose of social science. In other words, it can also be said that without considering the social background of the sample population, it is impossible to carry out empirical research in social sciences. This section deals shows the social profile of the informal workers by caste, religion, educational level, family type, marital status and information about the head of the household.

Caste Composition

Caste is considered as an important component responsible for determining the social status in many developing countries of the world including India. Caste profile of the informal workers shows that more than 50 per cent of the workers are belong to general or other category, 21 per cent are Scheduled tribe, are 19 per cent OBC and 9 per cent belongs to Scheduled Caste category. The proportion of General or and Other Backward Class workers are recorded more in Dhubri district. The proportion of Scheduled tribe is recorded the most in Sonitpur district, while the most of the scheduled tribe category is recorded in Dhemaji district.

Figure.4 Distribution of the Workers by Caste
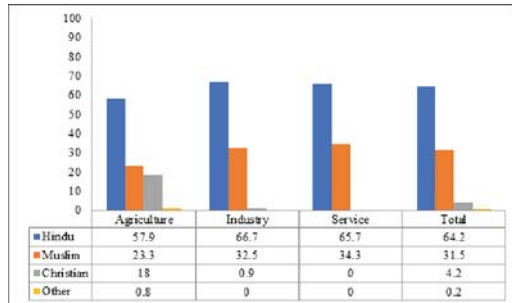

Source: Primary Survey, 2023.

Table.6 Caste-wise Distribution of Informal Workers					
Districts (1)	General/ Others (2)	Other Backward Caste (OBC) (3)	Scheduled Caste (4)	Scheduled Tribe (5)	Total (6)
Dhubri	69.1	25.2	1.2	4.5	100
Sonitpur	42.2	12.5	18.5	26.7	100
Dhemaji	28.7	19.7	6.6	45.1	100
Total	**50.5**	**19.2**	**9**	**21.3**	**100**

Source: Primary Survey, 2023.

Religious Composition

Religion plays an inevitable role in many functions within a social institution. The ideologies, beliefs, and social relations of many people are shaped by their religious identity. So, to determine the social status of a group of people or an individual the role of religion cannot be ignored. Among surveyed workers, 62.2 per cent of the workers in the study area belong to Hindu, 31.5 per cent Muslim, 4.2 Christian and 0.2 other religion.

Figure.5 Distribution of the Workers by Religion

Source: Primary Survey, 2023.

Educational Status

Education is considered as an important instrument to measure vertical mobility in the societal ladder. Higher level of literacy is considered as an important parameter in any development paradigm. In the study area, the highest proportions of the workers have educational qualification up to high school level (24.5 per cent), followed by middle school (24.0 per cent), primary level (22.8 per cent), and illiterate (20.7 per cent), graduate (6.3 per cent), post graduate (1.0 per cent) and other technical education (0.7 per cent).
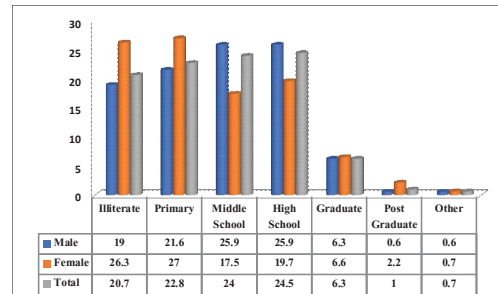
In case of educational qualification categories viz. illiteracy, primary education, graduate, post graduate and others, females outnumber males. In case of educational level up to middle school and high school males outnumber females.

Figure. 6 Gender-wise Distribution of the Workers by Educational Status

Source: Primary Survey, 2023.

Type of Family

Family is the most primary unit of society. It is bondage between/among people by blood relation, adoption, and the process of marriage. The process of socialization starts from the family itself and all the socio-economic activities begin at home. According to George Peter Murdock (1949)[1] family is a universal institution or social group, which is shaped by reproduction, economic cooperation, and common residence.

In general, families are divided into Matriarchal and Patriarchal families. But in our society the experiences of patriarchal values in common, so here patriarchal family are given due emphasis. A patriarchal family is subdivided into two major segments; single-family and joint

Table.7 Sector-wise Distribution of the Workers by Educational Status				
Educational Qualification (1)	Category of employment (2)			Total (3)
	Agriculture	Industry	Service	
Illiterate	27 (20.30)	26 (22.80)	71 (20.10)	124 (20.70)
Primary	30 (22.60)	33 (28.90)	74 (21.0)	137 (22.80)
Middle School	23 (17.30)	40 (35.10)	81 (22.90)	144 (24.0)
High School	41 (30.80)	12 (10.50)	94 (26.60)	147 (24.50)
Graduate	10 (7.50)	3 (2.60)	25 (7.10)	38 (6.30)
Post Graduate	1 (0.80)	0 (0.00)	5 (1.40)	6 (1.0)
Other	1 (0.80)	0 (0.00)	3 (0.80)	4 (0.70)
Total	133 (100.0)	114 (100.0)	353 (100.0)	600 (100.0)
Source: Primary Survey, 2023. Figures in the Parenthesis indicate percentage to total.				

family. But the type of family may also include others, like a single parent, extended family, childless family, stepfamily, etc. A nuclear family consists of a couple and their dependent child, which is also known as an elementary family. A joint family may be referred to as a family which consists of three or more than three generations with their spouses living like a single-family.

In the study area, 66.2 per cent of the workers have nuclear type of family and 33.8 per cent workers have joint family. The proportion of nuclear family is the highest in Sonitpur district (74.1 per cent), followed by Dhemaji district (68.9 per cent) and Dhubri district (57.3 per cent). On the other hand, the proportion of joint family is the highest in Dhubri district (42.7 per cent), followed by Dhemaji district (31.1 per cent) and Sonitpur district (25.9 per cent).

Table.8 Distribution of Workers by the Type of Family

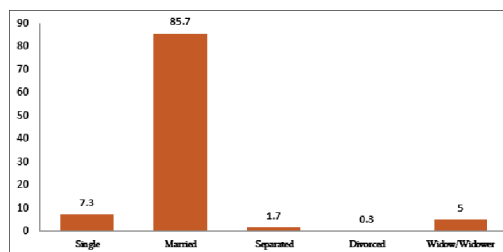| Type of Family (1)	Districts (2)			Total (3)
	Dhubri	Sonitpur	Dhemaji	
Nuclear	141 (57.3)	172 (74.1)	84 (68.9)	397 (66.2)
Joint	105 (42.7)	60 (25.9)	38 (31.1)	203 (33.8)
Total	246 (100.0)	232 (100.0)	122 (100.0)	600 (100.0)

Source: Primary Survey, 2023. Figures in the Parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

Marital Status

The study shows that most of the informal workers are married (85.7 per cent), followed by single (7.3 per cent), widow or widower (5.0 per cent), whereas, only 1.7 per cent workers are separated and 0.3 are divorced by the marital status. It is also revealed that Single marital status category,

married category males outnumber females, while in the marital status separated, divorced and widow/widower category females outnumber male.

Figure.7 Distribution of the Workers by Marital Status (in per cent)

Source: Primary Survey, 2023.

Table.9 Marital Status of Informal Workers by Gender

Gender (1)	Marital Status of the respondent (2)					Total (3)
	Single	Married	Separated	Divorced	Widow/Widower	
Male	43 (9.30)	414 (89.40)	3 (0.60)	1 (0.20)	2 (0.40)	463 (100.00)
Female	1 (0.70)	100 (73.00)	7 (5.10)	1 (0.70)	28 (20.40)	137 (100.00)
Total	44 (7.30)	514 (85.70)	10 (1.70)	2 (0.30)	30 (5.00)	600 (100.00)

Source: Primary Survey, 2023. Figures in the Parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

Head of the Household

The total average age of the household in the study area is 48.15. Among three districts, average age of the household head is the highest in Dhubri (49.65), followed by Sonitpur (47.78), and the lowest in Dhemaji (45.1). With regard to gender of the head of the household, 9.8 per cent of the total households are female head and 90.8 per cent are male headed. Dhemaji district (13.9 per cent) has more household headed by females, followed by followed by Sonitpur (10.3 per cent). In Dhubri district, the proportion of female headed household is the lowest i.e., 7.3 per

cent, less than the total average of 9.8 per cent.

Table.10 District-wise Average Age and Gender of the Household Head

Districts (1)	Gender of the HH (2)	Percentage (3)	Average Age of the HH (4)
Dhubri	Male	92.7	49.65
	Female	7.3	
Sonitpur	Male	89.7	47.78
	Female	10.3	
Dhemaji	Male	86.1	45.1
	Female	13.9	
Total	**Male**	**90.2**	**48.15**
	Female	**9.8**	
Source: Primary Survey, 2023.			

Economic Characteristics

The analysis of economic profile is very effective in bringing out the real picture of different dimensions in society; such as occupational status, income, wealth, and employment opportunities (Muller and Parcel, 1981)[1]. This section includes occupational status, main source of income, per capita monthly income and expenditure of the family, per capita size of agricultural land holding and possession of asset.

Occupational Status

In the study area, 49.2 per cent workers are found self-employed, 32. 40 per cent casual labour, 9.5 per cent contributing family workers and 8.9 per cent other category workers (this includes retired, pension earner, govt. employee or any other category apart from the casual labour, self-employed and contributing family worker) by occupation. The proportion of casual labour is the highest in Dhemaji district (40.80 per cent), contributing family worker is the highest in Dhubri district (11.80 per cent), and self-employed and other category worker is the highest in Sonitpur district (52.20 per cent) and (14.20 per cent) respectively.

Table.11 Occupation of the Workers by Districts

District (1)	Occupational Type (2)				Total (3)
	Casual Labour	Contributing Family Worker	Self-employed	Other	
Dhubri	87 (35.40)	29 (11.80)	119 (48.40)	11 (4.50)	246 (100)
Sonitpur	58 (25.00)	20 (8.60)	121 (52.20)	33 (14.20)	232 (100)
Dhemaji	49 (40.80)	8 (6.70)	54 (45.00)	9 (7.50)	120 (100)
Total	**194 (32.40)**	**57 (9.50)**	**294 (49.20)**	**53 (8.90)**	**598 (100)**
Source: Primary Survey, 2023. Figures in the Parenthesis indicate percentage to total.					

Main Source of Income

The Source of income is also known as the source of livelihood. In the study, the sources of income are broadly divided into three categories viz, Agriculture, Industry, and services. Agriculture and allied activities are included in the primary sector, Industry and construction fall in the secondary sector and services fall in the tertiary sector. It is observed that more than 50 per cent of the informal workers are engaged in services sector primarily for their livelihood. Around 25 per cent workers main source of income is agriculture and 20 per cent worker depends mainly on industries for the survival. Proportion of workers agriculture as primary means of income is the highest in Sonitpur district (34.9 per cent), followed by Dhemaji (21.3 per cent) and Dhubri (16.7 per cent). Similarly, the proportion of workers industry as main source of livelihood is the highest in Dhemaji (38.5 per cent), followed by Sonitpur (15.9 per cent) and Dhubri (12.6 per cent). In case of service sector as primary source of income, Dhubri (70.7 per cent) records the highest, followed by Sonitpur (49.1 per cent) and Dhemaji (40.2 per cent).

Table.12 Main Source of Income of the Workers by Districts				
Total (1)	Main source of income (2)			Total (3)
	Agriculture	Industry	Services	
Dhubri	41 (16.70)	31 (12.60)	174 (70.70)	246 (100.0)
Sonitpur	81 (34.90)	37 (15.90)	114 (49.10)	232 (100.0)
Dhemaji	26 (21.30)	47 (38.50)	49 (40.20)	122 (100.0)
Total	148 (24.70)	115 (19.20)	337 (56.20)	600 (100.0)

Source: Primary Survey, 2023.

Monthly Income and Per Capita Family Income

The socio-economic status and the living standard of the household of any community mostly depend on the family income. In most of the studies in social sciences, it is vital to collect data on the income of the household to determine the economic status. By analyzing monthly income of the workers, we can see that 42.8 per cent of the workers monthly income falls in the range of Rs. 10001-20000. The lowest and the highest income category shares 5.5 per cent and 5.5 per cent of the workers. Gender-wise, the picture of the monthly income shows that the share of females in the lowest income category i.e., income group below 5000 is comparatively higher than the male counterparts and vice versa.

Table.13 Monthly Income of the Worker by Gender						
Gender (1)	Income Group (in Rs.) (2)					Total (3)
	Up to 5000	5001-10000	10001-20000	20001-30000	Above 30000	
Male	23 (5.0)	162 (35.0)	207 (44.70)	43 (9.30)	28 (6.0)	463 (100.0)
Female	10 (7.30)	54 (39.40)	50 (36.50)	18 (13.10)	5 (3.60)	137 (100.0)
Total	33 (5.50)	216 (36.0)	257 (42.80)	61 (10.20)	33 (5.50)	600 (100.0)

Source: Primary Survey, 2023. Figures in the Parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

It is found that in the study area, most of the household's per capita monthly income lies between Rs. 1001-Rs.5000 (Table.12). District-wise data shows that per capita income up to Rs. 1000 is the most in Dhubri district. Per capita income between Rs. 1001-5,000 and Rs. 5,001-10,000 is the highest in Sonitpur district. In Dhemaji district, per capita monthly income is comparatively found more for the income range from Rs. 10,001-20,000, Rs. 20,001-30,000 and Rs. 30,000 above.

Income is closely related to the source of income. In the lowest per capita monthly income category i.e., up Rs. 1000 is associated with agricultural sector, followed by service sector. On the other hand, the highest per capita monthly category i.e., above Rs. 30,000 is associated with industrial sector, followed by services (Table.15).

Table.14 Per Capita Monthly Family Income by Districts							
Districts (1)	Per Capita Monthly Family Income (in Rs.)						Total (8)
	Up to 1000 (2)	1,001-5,000 (3)	5,001-10,000 (4)	10,001-20,000 (5)	20,001-30,000 (6)	Above 30,000 (7)	
Dhubri	27 (11.0)	198 (80.50)	20 (8.10)	1 (0.40)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	246 (100.0)
Sonitpur	7 (3.0)	192 (82.80)	30 (12.90)	3 (1.30)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	232 (100.0)
Dhemaji	3 (2.50)	89 (73.0)	15 (12.30)	8 (6.60)	4 (3.30)	3 (2.50)	122 (100.0)
Total	37 (6.20)	479 (79.80)	65 (10.80)	12 (2.0)	4 (0.70)	3 (0.50)	600 (100.0)

Source: Primary Survey, 2023. Figures in the Parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

Table.15 Per Capita Monthly Family Income by Sectors							
Sector (1)	Per Capita Monthly Family Income (in Rs.)						Total (8)
	Up to 1000 (2)	1,001-50,00 (3)	5,001-10,000 (4)	10,001-20,000 (5)	20,001-30,000 (6)	Above 30,000 (7)	
Agriculture	16 (10.80)	119 (80.40)	12 (8.10)	1 (0.70)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	148 (100.0)
Industry	0 (0.00)	103 (89.60)	8 (7.0)	2 (1.70)	1 (0.90)	1 (0.90)	115 (100.0)
Services	21 (6.20)	257 (76.30)	45 (13.40)	9 (2.70)	3 (0.90)	2 (0.60)	337 (100.0)
Total	37 (6.20)	479 (79.80)	65 (10.80)	12 (2.0)	4 (0.70)	3 (0.50)	600 (100.0)

Source: Primary Survey, 2023. Figures in the Parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

Monthly Expenditure of the Household

Due to the reluctant nature of human, it is difficult to get correct information about family income, so monthly expenditure of the household is taken as an index of economic status of the workers. Monthly expenditure of all the categories was estimated to be highest for workers engaged in service sector as the source of income.

Table.16 Monthly Expenditure of the Household by Sector				
Monthly Expenditure (in Rs.) (1)	Main source of income			Total (5)
	Agriculture (2)	Industry (3)	Services (4)	
Up to 5000	22 (26.80)	21 (25.60)	39 (47.60)	82 (100.0)
50001-10000	85 (26.10)	67 (20.60)	174 (53.40)	326 (100.0)
10001-20000	39 (23.60)	22 (13.30)	104 (63.0)	165 (100.0)
20001-30000	2 (10.50)	1 (5.30)	16 (84.20)	19 (100.0)
Above 30000	0 (0.0)	4 (50.0)	4 (50.0)	8 (100.0)
Total	148 (24.70)	115 (19.20)	337 (56.20)	600 (100.0)
Source: Primary Survey, 2023. Figures in the Parenthesis indicate percentage to total.				

The study shows that monthly family expenditure among the female workers of the urban area is more than the female workers of the urban area. In case of male workers, monthly family expenditure varies between rural and urban area in different income group category.

Table.17 Monthly Expenditure of the Workers by Area and Gender (in Per Cent)						
Income Group (in Rs.)	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Up to 5000	11.9	10.6	21.1	33.3	13.4	14.6
5001-10000	56.8	53.1	50	33.3	55.7	49.6
10001-20000	29.2	23.9	23.7	29.2	28.3	24.8
20001-30000	1.3	12.4	0	0	1.1	10.2
Above 30000	0.8	0	5.3	4.2	1.5	0.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Source: Primary Survey, 2023.						

Agricultural Land Holding Per Capita

Around 42.5 per cent of the informal workers own agricultural land. Households with no agricultural land comprise 57.5 per cent of the total households. Workers with up to 1 bigha constituted 30.5 per cent; those with more than 1 to 5 bighas of land constituted 11 per cent, and finally with more than 5 bighas of land constituted 1 per cent. It is also seen that households without agricultural land are the highest in Dhubri district (71.1 per cent). Households with Agricultural land up to 1 bigha and more than 1 to 5 bigha is the highest in Sonitpur district and the households with agricultural land more than 5 bigha is the highest in Dhemaji district.

Table.18 Per Capita Size of Agricultural Land Holding by Districts					
District (1)	Per Capita Land Holding Size (in Bigha)				
	No Agricultural Land (2)	Up to 1 (3)	More than 1 to 5 (4)	More than 5 (5)	Total (6)
Dhubri	175 (71.1)	70 (28.5)	1 (0.4)	0 (0.0)	246 (100)
Sonitpur	102 (44.0)	82 (35.3)	46 (19.8)	2 (0.9)	232 (100)
Dhemaji	68 (55.7)	31 (25.4)	19 (15.6)	4 (3.3)	122 (100)
Total	345 (57.5)	183 (30.5)	66 (11.0)	6 (1.0)	600 (100)
Source: Primary Survey, 2023. Figures in the Parenthesis indicate percentage to total.					

Possession of Assets

Possession of assets in terms of mobile phone, television, computer, electric fan, refrigerator, car, motorcycle, etc. is important in measuring the standard of living of the households. It is seen that in the study area, around 79 per cent of the workers possess fan, 2.3 per cent have radio, 43 per cent have television, 13 per cent have machine, 5.7 per cent have computer, 93.80 have mobile phone, 35.3 per cent have motorcycle and 3.7 per cent have car. Mean index of the asset

possession for the study area is 0.345. Both Sonitpur (0.397) and Dhemaji district (0.385) more value of mean index than the total average (0.345), whereas Dhubri has the lowest mean score of the index i.e. 0.276.

Table.19 Possession of Asset by the Workers									
Districts	Fan	Radio	TV	Machine	Computer	Mobile	Motorcycle	Car	Mean Index
Dhemaji 122	107 (87.70)	6 (4.90)	56 (45.90)	17 (13.90)	7 (5.70)	121 (99.20)	56 (45.90)	6 (4.90)	0.385
Sonitpur 232	196 (84.50)	4 (1.70)	151 (65.10)	43 (18.50)	10 (4.30)	220 (94.80)	100 (43.10)	13 (5.60)	0.397
Dhubri 246	173 (70.30)	4 (1.60)	51 (20.70)	18 (7.30)	17 (6.90)	222 (90.20)	56 (22.80)	3 (1.20)	0.276
Total 600	476 (79.30)	14 (2.30)	258 (43.0)	78 (13.0)	34 (5.70)	563 (93.80)	212 (35.30)	22 (3.70)	0.345

Source: Primary Survey, 2023. Figures in Parenthesis represent percentage.

Environment & Sanitation Related Characteristics

This section incorporates environment and sanitation related profile of the workers by exploring housing condition and basic amenities of the household in the form of toilet facility, bathroom, ventilation, drinking water sources and so on.

Housing Condition

Housing is one of the basic important needs of every human being and it serves as a parameter which determines living conditions of the workers. Housing is regarded as one of the major elements to measure the material living standard and the status of the individuals in the society. According to (Krieger & Higgins, 2009), good housing has acute influence on people's health[1].

Four types of houses are recorded in the study area: The permanent concrete structure (pucca), semi-permanent bricked wall with tiled roof (Semi-pucca), mud hutment (Kutcha) and other type of houses (temporary tin houses). First type accounts 40.5 per cent, second type accounts 16.7 per cent, third 39 per cent, and the remaining 3.8 per cent of the non-permanent tin houses (type four) are basically found in the Char area (flood prone) of Dhubri district.
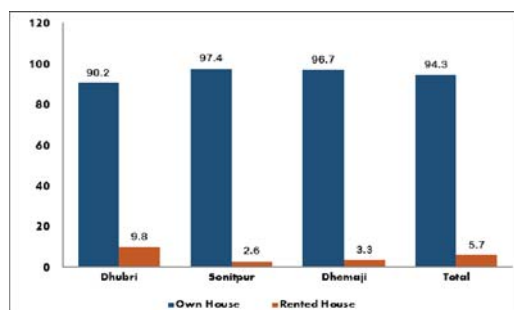
Table.20 Type of Houses by Districts					
District (1)	Housing type				Total (6)
	Pucca (2)	Semi Pucca (3)	Kutcha (4)	Other (5)	
Dhubri	102 (41.50)	30 (12.20)	91 (37.0)	23 (9.30)	246 (100.0)
Sonitpur	98 (42.20)	52 (22.40)	82 (35.30)	0 (0.0)	232 (100.0)
Dhemaji	43 (35.20)	18 (14.80)	61 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	122 (100.0)
Total	243 (40.50)	100 (16.70)	234 (39.00)	23 (3.80)	600 (100.0)

Source: Primary Survey, 2023. Figures in Parenthesis represent percentage.

It is found that majority of the sample workers (94.3 per cent) are residing in self-owned houses and only 5.7 per cent are residing in rented houses. In Sonitpur district (97.6 per cent) workers live in own house and only 2.6 per cent workers live in rented house. While, in Dhubri district the proportion of workers are living in rented house is the highest i.e., 9.8 per cent. Sector-wise analysis shows that 26.3 per cent agricultural workers live in pucca houses; the corresponding share is 36 per cent for industrial workers and 47.3 per cent for service sector workers. On the other hand, 48.1 per cent agricultural workers, 45.6 per cent industrial workers and 33.4 per cent service sector workers live in Kutcha houses.

Figure.8 House-ownership by District (in per cent)

Source: Primary Survey, 2023.

Table.21 Housing Condition of the Workers by Category of Employment (in per cent)				
Housing Type (1)	Agricultural Worker (2)	Industrial Worker (3)	Service Sector Worker (4)	Total (5)
Pucca	26.3	36	47.3	40.5
Semi Pucca	24.8	18.4	13	16.7
Kutcha	48.1	45.6	33.4	39
Other	0.8	0	6.2	3.8
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Primary Survey, 2023. Figures in Parenthesis represent percentage.

Amenities of the Household

Information also collected relating to basic amenities of the household such as road condition, bathroom facility, availability of separate bedroom, separate kitchen, separate toilet, water availability, fuel used, lighting source, and ventilation facility. The analysis shows that 36.3 per cent have pucca road condition, while 44.7 per cent have Kutcha and other 19 per cent have sand graveled road condition. Bathroom condition of the 40 per cent of the household is pucca, 51 per cent have Kutcha and remaining 9 per cent uses open place for bathing. With regard to separate bedroom and separate kitchen, the household having that facility is 69.2 per cent and 68.8 per cent

respectively. It is also found that 58.2 per cent households have sanitary toilet, another 39.1 have pit toilet and remaining 2.7 uses open source for toilet. Around 53.8 per cent household have in house water sources and 46.2 per cent of the households use water from out-house premises. For cooking purpose, 79.2 Per cent of the household are using LPG, 16.8 per cent depend upon firewood and 4 per cent use other sources such as electricity and cow dung. With regard to lighting source, 87.3 per cent use electricity, 3.3 per cent use kerosene and 9.4 per cent use other source such as battery light and solar light. Solar light use is mostly found in Char area of Dhubri district. Information on the condition of Sunshine facility reveals that around 40.8 per cent households have good ventilation facility, 30.2 per cent have moderate condition of ventilation and 28.4 per cent have poor condition of the ventilation in their houses.

Table.22 Information on Basic Amenities		
Type of facilities (1)	No. of household (2)	Percentage of household (3)
1. Road Condition		
a. Pucca	218	36.3
b. Kutcha	268	44.7
c. Stand graveled	114	19.0
2. Bathroom Facility		
a. Pucca	204	40.0
b. Kutcha	306	51.0
c. Open	54	9.0
3. Separate Bedroom		
a. Yes	415	69.2
b. No	185	30.8
4. Separate Kitchen		
a. Yes	413	68.8
c. No	187	31.2
5. Toilet Facility		
a. Sanitary	349	58.2
b. Pit	235	39.1
c. Open	16	2.7
6. Availability of Water		
a. In-house premises	323	53.8
b. Out-house premises	277	46.2
7. Fuel Used		
a. Firewood	101	16.8
b. LPG	475	79.2
c. Other	24	4.0
8. Lighting Source		
a. Electricity	524	87.3
b. Kerosene	20	3.3
c. Other	56	9.4
9. Ventilation Facility		
a. Good	245	40.8
b. Moderate	185	30.8
c. Poor	170	28.4

Source: Primary Survey, 2023.

Conclusion

Analysis of the field survey highlights the status of informal workers in terms of demographic, social, economic, health-related and work-related condition. Demographic profile of the informal worker shows that share of younger population i.e., less than 30 years age is the lowest among the working age population. Compare to women, the share of men in the workforce is found more in the study area. Further, it was also found that the female workers in the urban space are slightly more than that of rural area. Though, feminisation is often related to agricultural sector but present study reveals that the proportion of the share of women in services is considerably higher than the share in manufacturing and agriculture sector. It is quite consistent with the findings made by IMF (Ostry, et.al., 2018)[1]. Average size of the household of the informal worker is found 5.24, slightly more than the national average of 4.87. Among the total workforce migrant workers comprises a 16 per cent worker, the highest in Dhubri district (20.7 per cent). The social profile of the workers shows that the proportion of workers of the background general and other caste shares the highest (51 per cent) and Hindu religion shares the most (64.2 per cent). Further, the educational attainment data shows that, the share of workers having high school level qualification is relatively more (24.5 per cent), and the lowest share is found for the technical education (0.7 per cent). Nuclear family type and marital status (married) is predominant among the workers in the study area. With regard to head of the household, around 90 per cent household's head was male and average age of the head of household was 48.15 years. Economic profile reveals that among the workers, self-employment as occupation is quite popular in the study area; with its share of 49.2 per cent and services is the main source of livelihood providing bread to around 56.2 per cent of the households. Monthly income data shows that around 42.8 per cent household's monthly income falls in the income group more than 10,000 - 20,000 Rupees. Per capita monthly income shows that around 80 per cent household's per capita monthly income fall in the income group between Rs. 1001-5000 categories. Monthly expenditure picture depicts that household's run by services or industrial income made more expenses than household run by agricultural sector. Land holding size data shows that around 57.5 per cent workers in the study area do not have land for agriculture purposes and 30.5 per cent household's per capita land holding is up to 1 Bigha. With regard to asset possession, Sonitpur district is found relatively better than other sample districts. Information on environmental and sanitation profile reveals that around 40.5 per cent workers live in pucca houses, followed by 39 per cent in Kutcha houses. With regard to basic amenities, it is seen that 44.7 per cent workers responded to Kutcha road as means of communication to work place, 51 per cent uses Kutcha bathroom, 30.8 per cent do not have separate bedroom,

31.2 per cent households do not have separate kitchen in their houses, around 39 per cent uses pit toilet, 46.2 per cent depend on out-house sources for drinking water, around 17 per cent uses firewood as fuel, 3.3 per cent as kerosene for lighting, and around 28 per cent lives in the household with poor sunshine conditions.

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