



## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF URBAN WOMEN OF KOKRAJHAR DISTRICT OF ASSAM**

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*Received : 12 February 2021; Revised : 19 February 2021;*

*Accepted : 27 February 2021; Published : 5 June 2021*

**Abstract:** The present paper discusses about the socio-economic status of women living in two urban parts of Kokrajhar District of Assam. The study is mainly based on primary data as well as secondary data. Primary data were collected by filling responses in structured questionnaires and for that purpose a sample of 100 married women from each of the urban area was selected. The study deals with various socio-economic indicators like sex ratio, work participation rate, literacy rate, level of education, patterns of income- expenditure etc. Gender Development Index is calculated to know the relative status of men and women on the basis of literacy rate, work participation rate and earned income. The finding of the study reveals that gender disparity is more prominent in Kokrajhar town than that of Salakati town and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) indicates that women's economic independence is significantly lower than their political participation with respect to their male counterparts.

**Keywords:** Sex Ratio, Work Participation Rate, Literacy Rate, Gender Development Index, Gender Empowerment Measurement, Equally Distributed Equivalent Percentage

### **INTRODUCTION**

Worldwide, the history of development of human society generally indicate a dominant role either instinctively played or influentially assumed by male members at familial, societal, national and even international levels. The apparently hegemonistic behaviour exhibited by male members often stemmed from the perceived need to ensure sustainable livelihood, security of family, and maintenance of social order. The role of female members used to be generally relegated to supporting male members in the latter's discharging of duties, upbringing progeny, and maintaining familial bonds. Although this apparently discriminatory character of human social system

#### **To cite this article:**

Pradip Brahmachary. Socio-Economic Status of Urban Women of Kokrajhar District of Assam. *Indian Journal of Applied Business and Economic Research*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 9-28

may often be deemed natural in the light of observance of distinct roles played by male and female members by many species of the animal kingdom of the world who live in colonies or groups or families, yet the deliberate subversion and aberrations of the spirit of the system by male members of the human societies often result in the despicable phenomenon of “gender discrimination” of women by men which, in turn, cause bias in behaviour, conflicts amongst members, rifts in families, asymmetric development of societies and stymieing growth of the nation.

With technological development, knowledge explosion and creation of new avenues of opportunities worldwide, many societies are opening up their closed systems, and are coming to terms with the realisation that reorganisation of the control system of families by empowering women members of the family to take decisions and to undertake activities traditionally performed by male members would be beneficial. It is also being realized that the status of women in a society is a significant indicator as well as reflector of the level of social uprightness in that society and it is by and large determined by the active roles played by women in various spheres of life.

The discourse on the status of women in India is an age-old multidimensional issue. The status of women in India has been subjected to many great changes since ancient times. In ancient Vedic age, women were treated equally with men. They were enjoying equal rights, status and opportunities like their male counterpart. However the status of women began to deteriorate during late medieval period. In pre-British era, before the emergence of anti-colonial movement, the position of women was very humiliating. Under British rule, some laws were enacted to impose ban on Sati Pratha, Child marriage, female infanticide, etc. in order to liberate the position of women in Indian society.

The Constitution of the independent India not only accorded equality to women but also empowered the State to combat discrimination against women. There are many Articles in the Constitution which reiterate the commitment of the nation towards the socio-economic development of women and uphold their political rights and participation in decision making.

However, despite provisions in the Indian Constitution and legal safeguards, women continue to be victims of exploitation, primarily due to hegemonistic attitudes of their male counterparts in the society.

The focus of the current research primarily being a community namely the ‘Bodos’ of the north eastern region of India in the perspective of gender equality and gender discrimination, it is imperative to present an overview of the region’s socio-economic fabrics that are inter-woven and yet distinctly

positioned. India's North East Region (NER) is a paradise of a large number of ethnic communities represented by an innumerable variety of tribes and plains professing a wide range of beliefs, customs, cultures, languages, traditions and social systems. The NER mainly comprises of eight contiguous states and Assam is one of them. Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) is one of the autonomous regions of Assam which came into existence in the year 2001. The BTAD consists of four contiguous districts — Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri, administered through a council known as Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) which is situated at Kokrajhar. The boundary of this region shares its proximity with Arunachal, West Bengal, Bhutan and other parts of Assam. The region is inhabited predominantly by Bodo language speaking ethnic group, Rajbongshi, Assamese, Bengalis, Rabha, and other indigenous Mongoloid tribes. The region is industrially backward and lagging behind the other states in respect of human capital, employment of human resources, infrastructure development etc.

When the issue of empowerment comes in north eastern perspectives, it becomes more complex due to multifaceted complex, geo-socioeconomic back ground. There is a perception that the status of bodo women is higher in comparison with the status of women in the rest of the country. Though the women in this region generally enjoy greater mobility and visibility compared to the other parts of the country, still like their counterpart of other region, they have also been encountering a number of specific problems over ages such as patriarchal social system, lack of access to productive resources, minimal participation in decision making process, a little financial autonomy etc.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

In the light of the above, the current research was planned to investigate the following objectives:

- i) To examine the socio-economic status of women in selected urban part of Kokrajhar district.
- ii) To examine the relative status of men and women, Gender Development Indices (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) are calculated as the broad indicators of women empowerment.

### **Data and Methodology**

The present study is confined to two urban part of Kokrajhar district namely Kokrajhar town and Salakati inhabited by 16,569 and 2,253 females respectively (as per 2011 census). The purpose behind selecting only two

towns i.e., Kokrajhar town (most populous) and Salakati town (least populous) is that they provide an outline of the rest two towns of the district, which remains uncovered in this study, so that an overview of the overall status of women in whole urban part of the district may emerge.

A sample of 100 women from each of the urban area is selected. All the sample women are married and preferably belong to the age group 18 to 55 years. To cover about 100 respondents, the number of households may be varied from town to town.

The present study is mainly based on primary data. Primary data are collected by filling responses in structured questionnaires whereas secondary data are used mainly from District Census Handbook of Kokrajhar district and other government publications. Objective-wise detailed methodology is explained as follows:

To examine the socio-economic status of the women the analysis has been divided into two parts.

In the first part overall socio-economic status will be examined by using Gender Development Index (GDI) measurement. In the second part, some socio-economic aspects like the educational status of the women, the decision making power of the women, freedom of movement within and outside the locality and monetary accessibility of the women will be analyzed for knowing their present status on these aspects separately. GDI reflects the status of development of the women. GDI will be measured by considering two dimensions viz; social dimension and economic dimension and it will be calculated following UNDP methodology as discussed below.

District wise GDI values are calculated separately for secondary data as well as for primary data. In case of GDI computation on the basis of secondary data, social dimension is reflected by literacy rate and economic dimension is reflected by work participation rate; whereas for primary data, social dimension is reflected by literacy rate and economic dimension is reflected by earned income and work participation. GDI has been calculated by the following three steps. Firstly, female and male indices in each dimension are calculated according to this general formula:

$$\text{Dimension Index} = \frac{\text{Actual Value} - \text{Minimum Value}}{\text{Maximum Value} - \text{Minimum Value}}$$

Maximum and minimum value would be as per the goalposts value given in Human Development Report 2005.

Secondly, the female and male indices in each dimension are combined in a way that penalizes differences in achievement men and women. The resulting index is calculated according to the general formula:

$$\text{Equally Distributed Index} = \left\{ \left[ \frac{\text{female population share} (\text{female index})^{1-\epsilon}}{\epsilon} + \frac{\text{male population share} (\text{male index})^{1-\epsilon}}{\epsilon} \right] \right\}^{1/1-\epsilon}$$

Here,  $\epsilon$  measures the aversion to inequality. The value of  $\epsilon$  is the size of the penalty for gender inequality. The larger the value, the more heavily a society is penalized for having inequalities. If  $\epsilon = 0$ , gender inequality is not penalized. As  $\epsilon$  increases towards infinity, more and more weight is given to the lesser achieving group. The value 2 is used in calculating the GDI. This value places a moderate penalty on gender inequality in achievement.

Thus, the general equation becomes:

$$\text{Equally Distributed Index} = \left\{ \frac{\text{female population share}}{\text{female index}} + \frac{\text{male population share}}{\text{male index}} \right\}^{-1}$$

Equally Distributed Index gives the harmonic mean of female and male indices. Thus GDI is the average of two component indices viz. Equally Distributed Literacy Index (EDLI) and Equally Distributed Work Participation Index (EDWPI), where

Equally Distributed Literacy Index =

$$\left\{ \frac{\text{female population share}}{\text{female literacy index}} + \frac{\text{male population share}}{\text{male literacy index}} \right\}^{-1}$$

Equally Distributed Work Participation Index =

$$\left\{ \frac{\text{female population share}}{\text{female work participation index}} + \frac{\text{male population share}}{\text{male work participation index}} \right\}^{-1}$$

Equally Distributed Income Index =

$$\left\{ \frac{\text{female population share}}{\text{female earned income index}} + \frac{\text{male population share}}{\text{male work participation index}} \right\}^{-1}$$

Gender Empowerment Measurement (GEM) captures the three key areas in the present study such as political participation, economic participation and power over economic resources, such that it can reflect the political and economic status of women. For each of these above three dimensions, an Equally Distributed Equivalent Percentage (EDEP) is calculated as a population-weighted average which is similar to the general formula of Equally Distributed Index. Following UNDP methodology for political and economic participation, the EDEP is then indexed by dividing it by 50. The rationale for this indexation is that in an ideal society, with equal empowerment of the sexes, the GEM variable would be equal 50 percent, that is, women's share would equal men's share for each variable.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### Regional geographical profile

Kokrajhar, an administrative district in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) of the state of Assam lies in the extreme west of the state. The total geographical area of the district is 3,296 sq. Km that constitutes about 4 percent of total geographical area of Assam, and is pictorially presented in Table 1. The total spread of the district is divided into urban and the rural areas of about 16.32 sq. km and 3,279.68 sq. km respectively. Out of four towns, Kokrajhar Municipal Board (MB) town is the most populous town having population of 34,136 while Salakati Census Town (CT) is the least populated one with 4,863 persons as per the 2011 Census of India. As per that Census, the total population of the district is 887,142, which is 2.84 percent of State population, of which 51 percent is male and 49 percent is female. Out of the total population of the district, 93.8 percent inhabit the rural and 6.2 percent live in the urban areas of the district. The less percentage of urban population indicates that most of the population dwells in rural areas of the district. The total urban female population in the district is 26,482 which is slightly more than 50 percent of total urban population.

**Table 1: Geographical Area and Population in various Towns of Kokrajhar District**

Town/District/State	Area (in Sq. Km.)	Total Population		
		Persons	Males	Females
Gossaigaon (TC)	4	9068	4782	4286
Padmabil (CT)	2.94	6874	3500	3374
Kokrajhar (MB)	8.24	34136	17567	16569
Salakati (CT)	1.14	4863	2610	2253
Dist Urban Kokrajhar	16.32	54941	28459	26482
Kokrajhar District	3296	887142	452905	434237
Assam	78438	31205576	15939443	15266133

Source: Census of India 2011 and 2001, Office of the Registrar General, India

Area wise, Kokrajhar (MB) is the largest town occupying 50 percent of the total urban area of the district whereas Salakati (CT) is the smallest town occupying only 7 percent of the total urban area of the district. Kokrajhar Municipal Board has total administration over 7,420 houses to which it supplies basic amenities like water and sewerage. It is also authorized to build roads within its limits and impose taxes on properties coming under its jurisdiction. Salakati Census Town has total administration over 985 houses to which it supplies basic amenities like water and sewerage.

**Table 2: Sex Ratio in Towns of Kokrajhar District**

Town/District/State	Sex Ratio (2011)	Child Sex Ratio (2011) for 0-6 age group	Sex Ratio (2001)	Change in Sex ratio
Gossaigaon (TC)	896	963	882	14
Padmabil (CT)	964	1018	0	-
Kokrajhar (MB)	943	915	906	37
Salakati (CT)	863	986	813	50
<b>Dist(Urban) Kokrajhar</b>	931	947	887	44
Kokrajhar District (Rural+Urban)	959	954	946	13
Assam	958	962	932	26

Source: Census of India 2011 and 2001, Office of the Registrar General, India

### Sex Ratio

An important indicator of gender disparity is the number of females per thousand males. The district had a sex ratio of 959 which is higher than the state sex ratio of 958 as per the Census of 2011.

The Table 2 depicts the sex ratio of four towns in the Kokrajhar district over the period from 2001 to 2011. In 2011, out of these 4 towns, Padmabil (CT) recorded the highest sex ratio of 964, and the lowest of 863 sex ratio is seen in Salakati(CT). Padmabil (CT) has also witnessed the highest child sex ratio with 1,018 females per 1,000males in 2011. Thus, Padmabil census town registered less gender disparity in 2011. The lowest child sex ratio of 915 females per1,000 males is seen in Kokrajhar (MB).

It is observed from the table that the aggregate sex ratio of all towns in the district was 931 as per census 2011 where as in 2001 it was 887. Thus, the aggregate sex ratio of all the towns has increased by 44 females per 1,000 males during the period 2001 to 2011. The highest change in sex ratio was observed in Salakati (CT) town and the lowest change is observed in Gossaigaon town during a decade of 2001 to 2011. Though a positive change in sex ratio of all the towns indicates an increase in number of female population per 1,000 male population during the years from 2001 to 2011, the overall trend of the sex ratio of the various towns of the Kokrajhar district has remained unfavourable towards the female population.

### Literacy rate

Women's access to education which is one of the important sources of empowerment can be measured by gender gap in literacy rates. Table 3 describes the numbers of literates, illiterates and literacy rate(excluding children under 6 years of age) by sex in towns of Kokrajhar district. In the district, the number of literates in urban is 43415, which is 79 percent of the

**Table 3: Number of Literates, Illiterates (along with percentage mentioned in braces) and Literacy Rate in Towns of Kokrajhar District**

Town/Dist	No. of Literates			No. of Illiterates			Literacy Rate			Literacy Gap
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	
Gossaigaon (TC)	7307 (80.58)	4029 (84.25)	3278 (76.48)	1761 (19.42)	753 (15.75)	1008 (23.52)	90.21	93.94	86.01	7.93
Padmabil (CT)	4893 (71.18)	2664 (76.11)	2229 (66.06)	1981 (28.82)	836 (23.89)	1145 (33.94)	81.60	86.95	76.08	10.87
Kokrajhar (MB)	27923 (81.80)	14929 (84.98)	12994 (78.42)	6213 (18.20)	2638 (15.02)	3575 (21.58)	89.96	93.59	86.11	7.48
Salakati (CT)	3292 (67.69)	1940 (74.33)	1352 (60.01)	1571 (32.31)	670 (25.67)	901 (39.99)	76.93	83.77	68.87	14.9
Dist Urban Kokrajhar	43415 (79.02)	23562 (82.79)	19853 (74.97)	11526 (20.98)	4897 (17.21)	6629 (25.03)	87.86	91.97	83.44	8.53
KokrajharDist (Urban+Rural)	489305 (55.16)	275220 (60.77)	214085 (49.30)	397837 (44.84)	177685 (39.23)	220152 (50.70)	65.22	71.89	58.27	13.62

Source: Census of India 2011: Assam, District Census Hand Book, Kokrajhar Part A: Village & Town Directory (accessed through <http://censusindia.gov.in>)



total urban population of which 82.79 percent are males and 74.97 percent are females. If we look at the number of illiterate persons, number of male illiterates surpasses the female illiterates in the case of all four towns as well as the district as an aggregate. Among the towns in the district, Kokrajhar (MB) recorded the highest and Salakati (CT) recorded the lowest number of literates as well as illiterates. In terms of literacy rate, Gossaigaon (TC) is the highest with 90.21 percent and Salakati (CT) the lowest with 76.93 percent. Salakati (TC) recorded the highest gap in male-female literacy rate with 14.9 percent, and the lowest is seen in Kokrajhar (MB) with 7.48 percent. It is notable that the female literacy rate is much lower than male literacy rate in all the four town areas of Kokrajhar district. Though the male and female literacy rates of all the towns under study are much higher than the State's overall average, but the female literacy rates of all the towns are lagging far behind the male literacy rates. This is also clear from the literacy gaps existing in all four towns which indicate a serious cause of concern as men outperform women in basic educational attainment.

### **Work Participation Rate**

The work participation rate indicates the access of the people to the means of livelihood (Barman and Morang, 2016). Women's work force participation is a critical indicator of economic empowerment. Table 4 shows the number and percentage of main workers, marginal workers and non-workers by sex in towns of the Kokrajhar district as per the Census of 2011. It may be seen from this table that the percentage of total workers in all the towns is 38.49 percent, with 58.31 percent males and 17.2 percent females. The main workers recorded 33.17 percent with 52.63 percent male and 12.26 percent female whereas marginal workers recorded 5.32 percent with 5.67 percent male and 4.94 percent female. Among the towns Salakati (CT) recorded the highest percentage of total worker with 47.93 percent, and the lowest is seen in Padmabil (CT) with 32.38 percent. In main-workers category the highest percentage is seen in Salakati (CT) with 42.69 percent and the lowest is seen in Padmabil (CT) with 25.55 percent. In marginal-workers category the highest percentage is seen in Padmabil (CT) with 6.84 percent and the lowest is seen in Gossaigaon (TC) with 2.53 percent. Looking at the male-female participation, huge variation is observed in the category of main workers in case of aggregate urban areas of the district as well as in all four towns. In case of all the towns, much differences are not observed between male-female segregation in the case of marginal workers but a significant variation is observed in main workers category which ultimately leads to colossal variation in male-female in case of total worker category which in the end leads to the conclusion that female work participation rate is far

**Table 4: Distribution of Workers and Work Participation Rate by sex in Towns of Kokrajhar District - 2011**  
(Percentage of workers mentioned in braces)

Town/Dist	Main Workers			Marginal Workers			Total Workers			Work Participation Rate		
	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
Gossaigaon (TC)	2990 (32.97)	2599 (54.35)	391 (9.12)	229 (2.53)	120 (2.51)	109 (2.54)	3219 (35.50)	2719 (56.86)	500 (11.67)	35.50	56.86	11.67
Padmabil (CT)	1756 (25.55)	1515 (43.29)	241 (7.14)	470 (6.84)	291 (8.31)	179 (5.31)	2226 (32.38)	1806 (51.60)	420 (12.45)	32.38	51.60	12.45
Kokrajhar (MB)	11403 (33.40)	9374 (53.36)	2029 (12.25)	1969 (5.77)	1059 (6.03)	910 (5.49)	13372 (39.17)	10433 (59.39)	2939 (17.74)	39.17	59.39	17.74
Salakati (CT)	2076 (42.69)	1491 (57.13)	585 (25.97)	255 (5.24)	145 (5.56)	110 (4.88)	2331 (47.93)	1636 (62.68)	695 (30.85)	47.93	62.68	30.85
Dist Urban Kokrajhar	18225 (33.17)	14979 (52.63)	3246 (12.26)	2923 (5.32)	1615 (5.67)	1308 (4.94)	21148 (38.49)	16594 (58.31)	4554 (17.20)	38.49	58.31	17.20
KokrajharDist	253110 (28.53)	198804 (43.90)	54306 (12.51)	88021 (9.92)	37518 (8.28)	50503 (11.6)	341131 (38.45)	236322 (52.18)	104809 (24.14)	38.5	52.2	24.1

Source: Census of India 2011: Assam, District Census Hand Book, Kokrajhar Part A & Part B: Village & Town Directory (accessed through <http://censusindia.gov.in>)

Table 5: Percentage distribution of the categorical variables of the sample respondents

Variable	Category	Kokrajhar (MB) Town		Salakati (CT) Town	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Religion	Hinduism	82	82.0	75	75.0
	Islam	13	13.0	23	23.0
	Christian	5	5.0	2	2.0
	Other	0	0	0	0
Social Category	General	16	16.0	6	6.0
	SC	7	7.0	11	11.0
	ST	65	65.0	58	60.0
	OBC	12	12.0	25	23.0
Family composition	Nuclear	93	92.0	89	89.0
	Extended	7	8.0	11	11.0
Age of respondent	<25 yrs	8	8.0	16	16.0
	25-35 yrs	41	41.0	39	39.0
	36-45 yrs	49	49.0	39	39.0
	46-55yrs	2	2.0	6	6.0
Marital status	Married	95	95.0	96	96.0
	Divorced	4	4.0	1	1.0
	Widow	1	1.0	3	3.0
	Nil	7	7.0	53	53.0
Occupation	Agriculture	5	5.0	10	10.0
	Self Employed	14	14.0	9	9.0
	Business	39	39.0	12	12.0
	Service	32	32.0	10	10.0
	Others	3	3.0	6	6.0
			82.0		75.0
			95.0		98.0
			100.0		100.0
			100.0		100.0
			16.0		6.0
			23.0		17.0
			88.0		67.0
			100.0		100.0
			92.0		89.0
			100.0		100.0
			8.0		16.0
			49.0		55.0
			98.0		94.0
			100.0		100.0
			95.0		96.0
			99.0		97.0
			100.0		100.0
			7.0		53.0
			12.0		63.0
			26.0		72.0
			65.0		84.0
			97.0		94.0
			100.0		100.0

Source: Calculated from the data of primary survey, June, 2018-Dec, 2020

lower than male work participation rate. This implies that low work participation rate of female is an indication of less women's participation in economic activities.

### **Descriptive Analysis of respondent women and Surveyed Households**

In this section results of an empirical study are presented. In order to carry out this empirical analysis a primary level household survey was conducted in two selected towns of Kokrajhar district of Assam. From this survey and field observations information about socio-economic and demographic characteristics of households of the study areas was collected. The empirical study is based on information collected from 200 households, 100 each from two selected towns surveyed during the period 2018-19.

From Table 5, it is clear that majority of the respondents and their households of both the selected towns are Hindu. Sample households belong to Islam emerges second religious group whereas number of Christian respondents is minimal. In case of social category, the number of Schedule tribe respondent is much higher than any other category (65 percent and 60 percent respectively). This is so because the areas under study are tribal dominated. As the sample survey covers only married women belong to age group 18-55 years, the number of married respondents in both the sample towns is significantly high where as the number of divorcee and widow is almost negligible. Moreover, maximum number of respondents belongs to age group of 36-45 years. Regarding occupation status, 39 percent of women are engaged in business activities, where as 32 percent are job holders in Kokrajhar (MB). On the other hand, in Salakti (CT) more than 50 percent women are not engaged in any economic activities. This means that as far as occupation status is concerned, women in Salakati town are less empowered than their counterpart in Kokrajhar (MB) town.

### **Demographic Characteristics of the Surveyed Population**

From Table 6, it may be seen that on an average each family of Kokrajar (MB) town has 3.69 members while maximum number in a family is 7. This table shows that the half of the sample families has more than 1 child. The average age of respondents in Kokrajar (MB) town is 37.22 years while the average age of respondents' husband is 40.99 years which results in 3.77 years spousal age gap. The high values of Standard Deviation (SD) for 'Duration of marriage' and 'Age at marriage time' reflect wide variation in these two demographic characteristics. The average dependency ratio is 44.93 percent. This means that almost half of the family members on average depend on others for their bread and butter.

**Table 6: Relevant Demographic profile of sample households of Kokrajhar Town**

Descriptive statistics	Family size (in Number)	Number of children	Age of Respondent (in Years)	Age of Husband (in Years)	Spousal age gap (in Years)	(in Years)	Age at marriage time (in Years)	Dependency Ratio (%)
Mean	3.69	1.09	37.22	40.99	3.77	11.85	25.37	44.92857
Median	4	1	55	60	10	12	24.5	50
Max	7	3	21	40	0	31	39	100
Min	2	0	37	42	3	1	18	0
SD	1.0648	0.5495	9.9001	10.2034	2.314541	7.268828	4.74058	17.72531

Source: Calculated from the data of primary survey, June, 2018-Dec, 2020

**Table 7: Relevant Demographic profile of sample households of Salakati Town**

Descriptive statistics	Family size (in Number)	Number of children	Age (in Years)	Age of Husband (in Years)	Spousal age gap (in Years)	Duration of marriage (in Years)	Age at marriage time (in Years)	Dependency Ratio (%)
Mean	5	1.46	32	37	4	8	25	53.5229
Median	5	1	32	35	4	7	25	60
Max	8	3	51	58	12	26	36	100
Min	2	0	20	24	-2	0	18	0
SD	1.694107	0.78	7.0306	7.1177	2.2517	4.9191	3.6874	20.7663

Source: Calculated from the data of primary survey, June, 2018-Dec, 2020

It is also clear from Table 7 that on an average each family of Salakati (CT) town has 5 members while maximum number in a family is 8 and the minimum is 2. It is also obvious that the half of the sample families has only 1 child. The average age of respondents in Kokrajar (MB) town is 32 years while the average age of respondents' husband is 37 years which results in 4 years spousal age gap. The high values of Standard Deviation (SD) for 'Duration of marriage' and 'Age at marriage time' reflect wide variation in these two demographic characteristics; but these variations are less than that of Kokrajhar town.

The average dependency ratio is 53.52 percent. This means that more than half of the family members on average depend on other for their bread and butter.

### **Education status of Sample Households**

Educational status is an important aspect under the social status of women empowerment. Table 8 reveals the status of education between women respondents and their husbands. It is clear that all the respondent women and their respective husbands belong to both the towns had received minimum formal education. In the case of higher education, wives are found more educated than their husbands in both the towns. In Kokrajhar (MB) town, the percentage of men having middle, high and higher secondary education is more than their female counterparts. But in Salakati (CT) town the percentage of women having high and higher secondary education is more than their male counterparts. Thus, women of Salakati (CT) town are found as being more qualified than their male counterparts in comparison to women of Kokrajhar (MB) town.

Table 9 and Table 10 describe income-expenditure figures of sample households of Kokrajhar (MB) and Salakati (CT) town respectively. The average monthly per capita income of the families is more than their median of monthly per capita income (PCI) in both the towns. This means that the majority of the sample households lies above poverty line. The maximum, minimum and Standard Deviation values indicate that the variations in monthly PCI in Kokrajhar town are relatively higher than that of Salakati town. In case of expenditure under various heads, families of both towns spend relatively more on food and less on fuel. The differences between monthly PCI and monthly per capita consumption expenditure indicate that most of the households have the tendency of saving a part of their income.

Thus, it may be concluded from the income as well as expenditure patterns of surveyed households that the focus would be to examine the

**Table 8: Educational Status of Women Respondents and their Husbands (in percentage)**

Towns	Respondent Woman					Husband				
	No formal	Pri-ary	Middle	High	H.S. Graduate & above	No formal	Primary	Middle	High	H.S. Graduate & above
Kokrajhar Town	0	7.0	15.0	36.0	27.0	15.0	4.0	22.0	37.0	30.0
Salakati Town	0	16.0	26.0	35.0	20.0	3.0	16.0	51.0	28.0	5.0

Source: Calculated from the data of primary survey, June, 2018-Dec, 2020

**Table 9: Income-Expenditure (in Rs.) characteristics of sample households of Kokrajhar Town**

Descriptive statistics (monthly)	PCI (monthly)	Monthly Exp on Edn	Monthly Exp fuel	Monthly Exp food	Monthly Exp health	Monthly Exp tele	Monthly Misc	Per Capita consium exp
Mean	16431.17	4066.00	1862.00	15000.00	7845.00	3360.00	11395.00	12115.00
Median	15000.00	3500.00	2000.00	15000.00	8000.00	3500.00	10000.00	12000.00
Max	60000.00	25000.00	3500.00	25000.00	20000.00	7000.00	25000.00	28750.00
Min	3333.33	0	500.00	5000.00	800.00	500.00	500.00	2950.00
SD	8588.99	3682.016	670.34	5035.87	3966.65	1690.56	5717.21	4682.94

Source: Calculated from the data of primary survey, June, 2018-Dec, 2020

Table 10: Income Expenditure (in Rs.) characteristics of sample households of Salakati Town

Descriptive statistics	Monthly PCI	Monthly Exp on Edn	Monthly Exp on fuel	Monthly Exp on food	Monthly Exp on health	Monthly Exp on phone	Monthly Misc exp	Per Capita consum exp (monthly)
Mean	8905.29	4012.00	2110.00	14010.00	6125.00	2832.00	7880.00	7943.58
Median	8309.29	4000.00	2000.00	15000.00	6000.00	3000.00	8000.00	7416.67
Max	25000	10000.00	4000.00	22000.00	12000.00	5000.00	20000.00	20500.00
Min	2500.00	0	800.00	6000.00	1000.00	500.00	1000.00	534.65
SD	3905.3	2439.77	787.85	3761.64	2681.77	1282.80	3707.51	3167.77

Source: Calculated from the data of primary survey June, 2018-Dec, 2020



empowerment status of women of middle income grouped society of the two selected towns.

### Construction of Gender Development Index (GDI)

In this section, an attempt is made to construct town-wise Gender Development Index (GDI) on the basis of available secondary data and information collected from surveyed data as shown in Table 11. In fact, the GDI is a gender-inequality adjusted measure of overall human development (Klasen and Schuler, 2009) and is calculated to know the relative socio-economic status of men and women. In Table 11, the Equally Distributed Literacy Index (EDLI) and the Equally Distributed Work Participation Index (EDWPI) were first calculated on the basis of Census data of 2011, separately for both the towns, and then GDI was calculated by taking the average of these two indices. Thereafter Equally Distributed Income Index (EDII) and Equally Distributed Economic Index (EDEI) in addition to EDLI and EDWPI were calculated on the basis of primary data (the procedures of calculation are elaborately discussed in methodology part). EDEI is the average of EDWPI and EDII whereas GDI is the average of EDLI and EDEI.

**Table 11: Town wise Gender Development Index in Kokrajhar District**

Town	Calculated on the basis of Secondary Data			Calculated on the basis of Primary Data			Rank		
	EDLI	EDWPI	GDI	EDLI	EDWPI	EDII		EDEI	GDI
Kokrajhar (MB)	0.29133	0.10573	0.19853	0.97542	0.34737	0.49499	0.42118	0.69830	1
Salakati (CT)	0.23481	0.13882	0.18681	0.94457	0.33686	0.40406	0.37046	0.65751	2

*Source:* Calculated on the basis secondary data collected from census 2011 as well as from the data of primary survey, June, 2018-Dec, 2020

Income indicator is considered as PPP US\$. Income in terms of Rs. is converted to US\$ (1 US \$ = Rs. 76.48 as on April, 2020).

The goal post values are considered from the Human Development Report 2005

**Table 12: Calculation of Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) based on Primary Data**

Town	EDEP (Political participation)	EDEP (Work Participation)	EDEP (Income)	GEM	Rank
Kokrajhar MB)	1.65267	0.69474	0.04164	0.79635	1
Salakati (CT)	1.36719	0.67372	0.01721	0.68604	2

*Source:* Calculated from the data of primary survey, June, 2018-Dec, 2020

Income indicator is considered as PPP US\$. Income in terms of Rs. is converted to US\$ (1 US \$ = Rs. 76.48 as on 12th April, 2020).

The goal post values are considered from the Human Development Report 2005

It may be observed from the Table 11 that there is a wide difference between Equally Distributed Literacy Index (EDLI) and Equally Distributed Work Participation Index (EDWPI) in two towns as far as secondary and primary data are concerned. The EDLI values are much higher than EDWPI of which means that most of the literate women in these two towns are having very low work participation rate. When towns are ranked as per GDI value it is clear that Kokrajhar (MB) town is ahead of Salakati (CT) town. In other words, women in Salakati (CT) town are relatively underprivileged in respect of literacy rate, work participation rate and earned income. The high values of Equally Distributed Indices calculated on the basis of primary data indicate that gender inequality in education is comparatively very high.

The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), an index that focuses on three variables that reflects women's participation in political decision-making, their access to professional opportunities and their earning power is calculated in Table 12. It is observed that gender empowerment is relatively high in both the towns. The Equally Distributed Equivalent Percentage (EDEP) of political participation is very high compared to that of work participation and income. The Equally Distributed Equivalent Percentage (EDEP) of income is very low in all the areas which in turn results in lowering the value of GEM. This means that women's economic independence is significantly lower than their political participation with respect to their male counterparts.

## CONCLUSION

In recent perspectives, empowerment of women has become a serious area of study. In fact, empowerment of women is a social-political ideal envisioned in relation to the wider framework of women's rights. It would be achieved only when advancement in the conditions of women is accompanied by their ability to influence the direction of social change gained through equal opportunities in economic, social and political spheres of life. In light of results and analyses appeared above, the findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

1. Sex ratio in selected towns is well below District's aggregate sex ratio. This brings out the fact that there are less number of women per 1000 men in the area under study which is not at all a healthy trend for any society.
2. There exists significant gap between male and female literacy rate which indicates that a significant number of women are devoid of getting basic education facility.

3. In case of work participation rate female work participation rate is far lower than male work participation rate which is an indication of less women's participation in economic activities.
4. The percentage of bodo and non-bodo women in Kokrajhar town was 65 and 35 percent respectively whereas in Salakati town it was 60 and 40 percent respectively. This is so because the areas under study are tribal dominated and therefore status of women can't be analysed separately for bodo and non-bodo women.
5. Incidents of less domestic violence in both the towns indicate that women are not physically humiliated.
6. It is observed that there is a wide difference between Equally Distributed Literacy Index (EDLI) and Equally Distributed Work Participation Index (EDWPI) in two towns. The EDLI values are much higher than EDWPI which means that most of the literate women in these two towns are having very low work participation rate. If we rank towns as per GDI value it is clear that Kokrajhar (MB) town is ahead of Salakati (CT) town. In other words, gender disparity is more prominent in Kokrajhar town with respect to literacy rate, work participation rate and earned income.
7. The various components of GEM reveal that women's economic independence is significantly lower than their political participation with respect to their male counterparts in case of both the towns. The greater GEM value of Kokrajhar town divulges the fact that women of Kokrajhar are more empowered than their counterpart of salakati town.
8. In case of educational qualification, though the total number of highly qualified women is more in Kokrajhar (MB) but the women of Salakati (CT) are found as being more qualified than their male counterparts in comparison to women of Kokrajhar (MB) town.

### ***Acknowledgement***

This paper is an outcome of the project work funded by ICSSR New Delhi vide F/No F/NO 02/15/2017-18/RP/Major. The author is thankful to the funding agency for awarding and sponsoring the project and his institution Central Institute of Technology Kokrajhar for providing necessary support while carrying out this project work.

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