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OF MAMIT DISTRICT, MIZORAM**

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A Study on Labour Requirements, Production Cost and Output of Bru People in Bawngva and Darlak Villages of Mamit District, Mizoram

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The villages of Bawngva and Darlak are situated on the western side of Mamit District; Mizoram, on the bank of the river Teirei between the latitude 23o.52' to 24o.30' north and the longitude 90o.22' to 92o.30' east¹. These villages are passed through by the National Highway No.44A from Tripura, about 20 kms and 24 kms Away from the District Headquarters, Mamit respectively.

Bawngva and Darlak villages are mainly occupied by the Brus (Reang). They are tribal and they are living below the poverty line². The main occupation of the villagers is agriculture and its allied activities. The main heads of family income in these villages are crop production, agricultural wage employment, (in the neighboring Mizoram), non-agricultural wage employment, small trading, fishing, etc. It would be interesting to note down the distribution of the Bru population by different age groups, sex composition in the selected villages, which is presented in the form of simple frequency Table 1.

In the year 2008, about 42.30 per cent of the population of Bawngva and Darlak villages are 14 years and below. About 47.73 per cent of the

population are females and about 52.26 percent of the total sample population are male's as given in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Age Distribution of Bru Population in Bawngva and Darlak Villages of Mamit District

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
0 - 4	88 (16.60)	75 (15.50)	163 (16.07)
5 - 9	74 (13.96)	70 (14.46)	144 (14.21)
10-14	64 (12.08)	58 (11.98)	122 (12.03)
15-19	52 (9.81)	49 (10.12)	101 (9.96)
20-24	41 (7.74)	46 (9.51)	87 (8.58)
25-29	40 (7.55)	38 (7.86)	78 (7.70)
30-34	37 (6.98)	31 (6.40)	68 (6.70)
35-39	31 (5.85)	28 (5.79)	59 (5.81)
40-44	26 (4.91)	23 (4.75)	49 (4.83)
45-49	22 (4.15)	18 (3.72)	40 (3.94)
50-54	18 (3.39)	14 (2.89)	32 (3.15)
55-59	13 (2.45)	12 (2.48)	25 (2.46)
60-64	11 (2.08)	8 (1.65)	19 (1.88)
65-69	7 (1.32)	6 (1.24)	13 (1.29)
70&above	6 (1.13)	8 (1.65)	14 (1.39)
Total	530 (100)	484 (100)	1014 (100)

Note : Percentage are given in parentheses

Source : Hnamte. M.S Dawngliana, Contributions of Bru Minority Children to Family Economics (Unpublished) M. Phil Thesis

¹ Agricultural Finance Corporation Limited, Teirei Watershed Management Project – Mizoram, Part I, North Eastern Council, Shillong, 1984, P-16, and see in Singh, Y. Nilachandra, Children Economics of Tuikuk Community in Mizoram with Special Reference to Bawngva and Darlak Villages of Mamit District, Mizoram, Journal of North – East India Council for Social Science Research, Shillong, 2005, vol. 29 (1)

² Local Administration Department, Village Record Survey (Abstract), Mamit District, Mamit, and see in Singh, Y. Nilachandra, Poverty as a Determinant of the Timing of Living Standard Falls in Mizoram with special reference to Mamit District, Serial Publications, New Delhi, 2009, PP. 711 – 737.

Agriculture is the main occupation of the Bru in Bawngva and Darlak villages. About 90.00 per cent of the total work force in these villages is engaged in agriculture and its allied activities³. The type of cultivation practiced by the villages is shifting cultivation (locally it is known as jhuming). The villages depend on the cultivation of rice, maize, yam, pumpkins, beans, cucumbers, chillies, sesame, tobacco, cotton, etc. for subsistence⁴.

In Bawngva and Darlak villages of Mamit District of Mizoram, household activities need a large scale of labour⁵. Labour requirements can be divided into two :

Labour mandatory for the nurture and upkeep of the household, that is not productive in the sense of creating the family income to the capital formation physically.

Labour mandatory for creating the family income and capital, what we called productive works.

Incorporated in the first type, which it typifies as enabling labour in so far as it sets free other household members to occupy in activities. These are directly productive and are house work activities such as cleaning and sweeping house as well as compound, washing clothes and utensils, preparing food, cooking, providing cooking fuel and water, looking after young children and for other dependents and incalculable other small domestic works. The second type, productive works is made up principally of activities associated with agricultural incorporating animal husbandry⁶.

There is a clear cut separation of labour between the sexes in this community as there in rural Mizoram in general. Women are out of the ordinary in work which keeps them within or else to the homestead and men are out of the ordinary in field works and other activities compelling physical mobility. The high degree of sex role specialization is embedded in this community. Owing to the fact that most productive activities are carried on outside the homestead, and generally by men indicate the role played by sex is very glaring in this community and those men are the primary producers of income in the general households.

UPKEEP OF THE HOUSEHOLD

³ Y. Nilachandra singh, Status of Tuikuk Minority Children in Mamit District , Indian Journal of Human Rights & Justice, Vol.2, 2006, Serials Publications, New Delhi.

⁴ Chib,S.S., Caste, Tribe and Culture of India : North Eastern India, Vol.8, New Delhi, 1984 P.309

⁵ Singh, Y. Nilachandra, The Interaction of Population and Economic Development Policy ; Evidence from Aizawl District of Mizoram, Journal of North – East India Council for Social Science Research, 2007, Vol. 31 (1)

⁶ Tribal Research Institute, Riang Chanchin,(History of Riang) Aizawl, 1996, PP.64- 74.

The works related with food preparation and arrangement incorporating provision of fuel and water, are the most time consuming forms of household nurture work. Food commonly flows into the household in forms that compel substantial operating before consumption, and the technology available to household for food processing or operating is primitive⁷. For example, un-hulled rice must be dried, husked and cleaned. Husking is done by using a cumbersome, a heavy wooden plank with a pestle on one end that is operated see-saw style. One woman compels about 4-5 hours to husk 40 kgs of paddy. Therefore, presuming that a household having seven members take about 7 or 8 kgs of rice a day, a full day of husking is called for, on an about 7 or 8 kgs of rice a day, a full day of husking is called for, on an average, every five or six days. They take food thrice in a day - morning food, noon food and evening food respectively. Rice processing also requires repeated winnowing and drying. During the long summer drizzly season, because of inadequate grain storage facilities, paddy must be brought and dried at every opportunity. Such other crops as chillies compel equally time intensive processing but the large scale of households are forced to engage in the less time consuming searches to meet fuel needs. Generally common source of the family fuel is dried bamboo.

Many of the activities typified as an enabling labour may also be construed as productive. Husking, for example, adds a computable amount of market value to paddy. Husking is regarded as housework in this context, however, because rice is most often marketed un-husked by cultivators (i.e jhumias) and husking at home is virtually always for the purpose of home consumption rather than sale. These activities become comparatively insignificant when one observes the interdependent of housework and un-obscurely productive work. Both types of work are mandatory and within limits recommended by the nature of social organization and levels of technology and opulence, both must to a great extent be satisfied by household labour.

INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES

In these villages the main heads of the family income are crop production on own land, agricultural wage work, non- agricultural wage work, petty trading and fishing. The present study observes that crop production is the most important well-head of the family income for 81.00 per cent of all the households and the second most important well-head for an additional 11.00 per cent. The cropping patterns are dictated by the slope of the hills and the monsoon climate. The main crops in these villages are rice, chillies and sesame, virtually all the land holdings in the villages are planted with the mixed cropping pattern. None of their land is

⁷ Singh, Y. Nilachandra, Population in North Eastern Region of India, Raj Publications, Manipur, 2000, PP.24 – 37.

irrigated, and the varieties of paddy grown are all local, no high yielding varieties are grown. The technology employed in crop production is very simple and production is very labour intensive⁸. The estimates of the man – days of labour mandatory for holding one acre area of each of the three main crops are presented in Table 2.

The total labour requirements for rice cultivation is more than chillies and sesame in view of the fact that under the multiple cropping pattern, the jhumias spend on the selection of site, cutting trees, bushes, etc. and set the fire while no labour is engaged on the first three items (Table 2) for the cultivation of chillies and sesame.

TABLE 2

Labour Requirements, Production Cost and Output for Bawngva and Darlak Villages of Mamit District

Particulars	Rice	Chillies	Sesame
Labour (Man- Days)			
Selection of site	1	na	na
Cutting trees etc.	8	na	na
Fire	1	na	na
Dibble the seeds	8	1	1
Weeding (3 times in a year)	24	18	21
Harvest	8	5	5
Carrying charge	8	2	4
Thresh	6	5	4
Total man-days	64	31	35
Variable Costs			
Mean wage rate (Rs.per head & day)	37.39	37.39	37.39
Labour costs (Rs.)	2,392.96	1,159.09	1,308.65
Seeds (in kg.)	16	2	5
Seeds (Rs.per kg.)	2.81	100	20
Seeds (Rs.)	50	200	100
Gross Output			
Yield (in kg.)	960	100	200
Price per kg.	2.81	100	20
Gross output (in Rs.)	2,698	10,000	4,000

Note : Na = not applicable

Source : Hnamte. M.S Dawngliana, Contributions of Bru Minority Children to Family Economics (Unpublished) M.Phil. Thesis

These crops are the depended crops. Rice is the main food. Generally, the bulk of shifting cultivation households incur some labour costs in their production owing to the fact that labour demand for certain operations is congregated in brief time periods. The range to which labour must be hired to meet these requirements depends on the size of the shifting cultivation area and the size of the household labour force. There are substantial advantages to households

supplying most or all of their cultivating labour. A high cost for labour may be complication for a family even though the labour is a must to help yield the family income. Most households face persistent cash difficulties and a high wage bill at the harvest time may force jhumias to sell yields at unenthusiastic prices in order to pay labourers or repay loans from the neighbouring Mizos. In general wage labour needs more administration than family labour and is probably less efficient⁹. Moreover, while it is simple in shifting cultivation accounting to value family labour at the market price of labour, the opportunity cost of family labour is conventionally less than the market wage rate³². A household in which the only bodily competent children are female has to hire male wage labourers rather than employing female family members in field operations especially in cutting the trees, etc. Among other well-head of the family income in these villages, agriculture wage employment - fundamentally in the crop production of the neighbouring Mizos – is one more important well-head of the family income for 11.00 per cent of the households in Bawngva and Darlak villages. The opportunities for such employment and the wage rate differ with the seasonal timing of major operations in the shifting cultivation. The culminated periods in the village and surrounding areas are during the month of April and May for sowing, June, July and August for weeding and the last part of September and October for harvesting respectively. In sluggish periods some men and women leave their village ephemerally to be on the lookout for employment in other Mizo village with various crop cycles¹⁰.

Non-agriculture wage employment is the most important well- head of the family income for 2.00 per cent of all households. For both sexes the opportunities for temporary, non-agriculture wage work are fewer than for agricultural work. One important well-head is the PWD road maintenance activity that is congregated in the rainy season. For this, generally some young boys are engaged. For women, almost the only opportunity for nonagricultural employment is as maid servants in the households of the Mizos.

Trading supplies the primary well -head of income for 3.00 per cent of the Bru households in these two villages and is an extra well- head of income for many more. The scale of operation is invariably small and the trading commodities are for the most part foodstuffs. They have established stable

⁹ Singh, Y. Nilachandra, Status of Tuikuk Minority Children in Mizoram with Special Reference to Bawngva and Darlak Villages of Mamit District, Indian Journal of Human Rights and Justice, 2006, Vol.2 (1-2).

¹⁰ Subrahmanyam, K.V. and Ryan, James G., an Analysis of Rural Labour Market in India: Kanzara Village, Maharashtra, ICRIAT, Hyderabad, July, 197

⁸ Hunter, W.W., A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol.5, London, 1877, P.93

dealings with clients and suppliers of Damcherra (Tripura) that secure a relatively steady stream of the family income. Part time trades flow into the market for brief periods, usually during the eve of Christmas festival and other festivals as well as deal in seasonal commodities such as chilies, sesame, etc. whose prices fluctuate very often. Hence, they act at a higher level of risk than full time Mizo traders.

Fishing is an extra well-head of income for a few segments of households. The fishing season extends as over the period from late summer through December when the monsoon waters move further off. For a very few households fishing is the most important well-head of income, however the great majority of households catches fish on a small scale and only for home consumption.