

## Rural Women and Non-Farm Employment - Result of a Field Study in Irengbam Village of Manipur

**Dr. Silvia Lisam**

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics  
G.P. Women's College,  
Dhanamanjuri University, Imphal  
Email: silvie.lisam@gmail.com

**Abstract:** The paper attempts to examine the economic contribution of rural women in Manipur through their earnings from various activities in the non-farm sector. The paper shows that non-farm sector employment plays a significant role in supporting the livelihoods of rural families in the state of Manipur. The paper is based on a field survey in Irengbam village of Bishnupur district in Manipur.

**Keywords:** Women, Non-farm Employment, Economic contribution, Rural households

### Introduction-

The agricultural sector plays a significant role in providing livelihood to all sections of the people in the rural areas of India. However, agricultural activities being seasonal in character, and in some regions where the mono-crop cycle is still prevalent, the rural people engage themselves in various non-agricultural activities as the employment potential in the agricultural sector is limited in nature. Given this fact, the rural non-farm sector is being considered as an important sector both in generating productive employment and also in alleviating poverty in rural areas. (Dev 2018). Rural Non-farm activities include all economic activities in rural areas except agriculture, livestock, fishing and hunting (Panja and Mondal, 2022). A study by Rajeev and Bhattacharjee on "Farm and Non-farm Linkages" in three states of India, namely, Karnataka, Assam and West Bengal, also pointed out that the presence of a well-functioning Rural Non-farm Sector acts as a mechanism to cope with agricultural income fluctuations of rural households. (Rajeev and Bhattacharjee, 2018) The present study attempts to examine the economic contribution of rural women from non-farm activities in supporting the livelihoods of their families. It is worth mentioning here that women's participation in work and their economic contribution act as an important factor in enhancing their status in any society. (Lisam, 2021)

Their earnings from the non-farm sector not only support their families but also help in empowering themselves and the rural society as well.

The state of Manipur lies in the extreme north-eastern corner of India. The total population of Manipur, according to the census 2011, is 28,55,794, out of which the number of male population is 14,38,586 and that of female is 14,17,208 (Statistical Yearbook, 2015). The total Literacy rate of Manipur, according to the Census 2011, is 76.94 per cent and, out of which the male literacy rate is 83.58 per cent and the female literacy rate is 70.26 per cent (Census of India, 2011)

### **Broad picture of the village under study-**

The village that has been chosen for the field study, namely Irengbam, is located in the Nambol sub-division of Bishnupur District and comes under the Oinam assembly constituency of the inner Manipur parliamentary constituency. As per the population census 2011, the total number of households in Irengbam village is 702, with a population of 3384, out of which 1660 are males and 1724 are females. The children population (age group of 0-6 years) constitutes 13 per cent of the total population of the village. As regards literacy rate, in 2011, the village has a higher literacy rate as compared to the average literacy rate of Manipur; that is, the literacy rate of Irengbam village was 79.77 per cent as compared to 76.94 per cent of Manipur. In Irengbam, the male literacy rate stands at 90.73 per cent, while the female literacy rate was 69.27 per cent. The village is situated about eighteen kilometres from Imphal and lies on the western side of Tiddim road, connected through an inter-village road. The village of Oinam is located in the east of Irengbam, Yumnakhunou on the south, Heinoubok on the north, and Aimol village of Kangpokpi district on the west of Irengbam. The settlement area of the village is divided into four Leikais (settlement area) - Irengbam Awang MamangLeikai, Irengbam Awang Maningleikai, Irengbam Makha MamangLeikai and Irengbam Makha Maningleikai. Each leikai has a local club with office bearers from the respective leikai for taking up developmental activities in the village. The village is surrounded by paddy fields. The village has a post office and a primary health sub-centre. There are four government schools in the village (3 primary schools and one government high school). It was considered appropriate to choose Irengbam Awang MamangLeikai only for the study. This is due to the vastness of the area and the time constraints while undertaking the census survey.

### Objectives of the Study-

- i. To study the occupational structure of the population in farm and non-farmsectors in the village.
- ii. To examinethe economic contributions of rural women from non-farm activities in the village.

### Methodology-

The study is based on a census survey. Information was collected in two rounds of survey. The first round of the survey was a preliminary round where no structured questionnaire was used, and only informal conversation with the villagers was carried out. An ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) worker, a multipurpose health worker (an employee under the State Health Mission) and some active members of the village club, namely *Chumandharam* Young Star Club of Irengbam Awang Mamang Leikai, were contacted to get their assistance. The preliminary survey was conducted in the month of July 2022.

In the second round, a census survey of Irengbam Awang MamangLeikai was conducted in the first week of September 2022. Each household was visited to find out a broad picture of the occupational profile of both the male and female population in the village and also to identify the nature of Farm and Non-farm activities. The total number of households in Irengbam Awang Mamang Leikai is 142.

### Findings of the Study-

Table 1 shows the occupational structure of both the male and female population in the village. The total population of Irengbam Awang Mamangleikai during the surveyed period is 660, out of which the male population constituted 344 (52.1%) and the female population constituted 316(47.9%). Table 1 also comprises old aged, children and student population in order to present a complete picture of the total population in the village.

**Table 1**

**Occupational Structure (Main Occupation) of the male and female population of Irengbam Awang MamangLeikai**

Type of Occupation	No. of Male Population(%)	No. of Female Population(%)	Total
1.Cultivator	63(18.3)	43(13.6)	106
2.Agricultural Labour	09(2.6)	23(7.3)	32
3. Garden Horticulture	50(14.5)	43(13.6)	93
4.Handloom	-	84(26.6)	84
5. Banker	01(0.3)	-	01
6.Govt. school teacher	-	06(1.9)	06
7. Private School teacher	02(0.6)	-	02
8. Govt. College teacher	03(0.9)	01(0.3)	04
9. Govt employee (excluding teachers)	15(4.3)	01(0.3)	16
10. Retired govt. employee (excluding teachers)	11(3.2)	-	11
11. Retired govt. teachers	10(2.9)	-	10
12.Mason	09(2.6)	-	09
13.Carpenter	02(0.6)	-	02
14. Tractor owner	02(0.6)	-	02
15. Kabok making Business (traditional puffed rice)	-	01(0.3)	01

<b>16. Business</b>	10(2.9)	01(0.3)	11
<b>17. Private Sector employee</b>	10(2.9)	02(0.6)	12
<b>18. Hostel Warden (Private)</b>	01(0.3)	-	01
<b>19. Grocery shop</b>	02(0.6)	06(1.9)	08
<b>20. Poultry farming</b>	02(0.6)	-	02
<b>21. Private Driver</b>	11(3.2)	-	11
<b>22. Govt. Driver</b>	02(0.6)	-	02
<b>23. Auto owner (three-wheeler)</b>	10(2.9)	-	10
<b>24. Tea stall</b>	01(0.3)	-	01
<b>25. Tailor</b>	03(0.9)	05(1.6)	08
<b>26. Home tutor</b>	03(0.9)	05(1.6)	08
<b>27. mechanic</b>	02(0.6)	-	02
<b>28. NGOs</b>	02(0.6)	-	02
<b>29. Arangfam</b>	01(0.3)	-	01
<b>30. Electrician</b>	01(0.3)	-	01
<b>31. Female health Worker (Nurse)</b>	-	05(1.6)	05
<b>32. Children</b>	34(9.8)	21(6.6)	55
<b>33. Student</b>	66(19.2)	57(18.0)	123
<b>34. Old aged (75-80 and above)</b>	6(1.7)	12 (3.8)	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>344(100)</b>	<b>316(100)</b>	<b>660</b>

Note:i) The number of old aged ,children and students population have been included to show the picture of the total population

i) The figure in the parenthesis indicates the percentage

It is well reflected in the table that Non-farm employment in the village includes all sorts of jobs other than pure agricultural activities such as tailoring, handloom, handicraft, food processing, opening of tea stall, mini grocery shop, government employee, private sector employee, health workers, masonry, carpentry etc. The table also gives a picture that female members in the village are engaged in a wide range of Non-farm activities such as handloom, tailoring, mini grocery shops, *kabok making*, tutors, health care workers, etc. Out of these Non-farm activities, the handloom sector constitutes a major proportion of the total non-farm activities for female members in the village. Out of the total 316 female population of the surveyed village, there are 84 female members in the village with handloom as their main occupation, and the percentage share is 26.6 per cent. The table also shows that there are even government and private sector employees among female members in the village. This shows that rural women also contribute immensely to their families through their earnings from non-farm activities.

### Conclusion-

The rural non-farm sector is being considered as a significant source of generating employment in the rural areas, and the economic contribution of rural women from the non-farm sector would significantly help in poverty alleviation and development of the rural regions as well. Therefore, the encouragement of rural women and providing them training for the improvement of skills would enhance employment opportunities in the non-farm sector, which will further lead to overall rural development.

*Kabok making\* kabok is an indigenous snack made with puffed rice, one who prepares this snack is known as kaboksaabi*

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