

A BRIEF REPORT ON THE UGC MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT

On

Structural Changes in the Rural Economy of South Assam

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In the post independence period and particularly during the last decade, there has been a significant change in the rural scene of Assam- a change in the socio-economic conditions of the people in the entire state including her southern part. The change is all-round and all encompassing. It covers the entire range of social, political, cultural, economic and even religious aspects of rural life in South Assam.

No change in the socio-economic perspective can take place without a change in the basic economic structure. More or less seven aspects of structural changes can broadly be identified in the rural economy in the state of Assam in general and South Assam in particular. They are as follows:

- (i) Demographic transition resulting from change in the birth and death rates;
- (ii) Institutional changes in the field of agriculture;
- (iii) Technological changes in the field of production;
- (iv) Shift in the pattern of production, consumption and employment;
- (v) Increased savings making possible expanded investment in productive fields;
- (vi) Trend in urbanization resulting from administrative expansion, development of communication and health care, expansion of educational facilities, rural employment etc.; and
- (vii) Change in the share of SDP in the form of produce from agriculture, forestry, fishery etc.

Due to time and resource constraints the present study was undertaken with following two important objectives:

1. To study the trend of urbanization and literacy rate; and
2. To study the extent of change in the technology of production and its effect on total production and productivity in agriculture.

Major Findings:

In Assam there are 23 districts of which five are in South Assam. They are Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi, Karbi Anglong and N.C. Hills. The two hills districts, Karbi Anglong and N.C. Hills covers 68 per cent of the total area of South Assam whereas the other three plain districts covers only 32 per cent. Karimganj is the most thickly populated district. About 75 per cent of total population in South Assam live in this plain district only. Cachar is the leading district in South Assam where maximum number of people is living in the urban areas in comparison to other districts. About 67 per cent of the total urbanites in South Assam are living in the plain districts. Extent of urbanization is too low (9.6%) in South Assam as against the corresponding all India figure of 25.7 per cent and all Assam average of 11.1 per cent. Growth of urban population in the plain districts is lower than that of hill districts.

Though a good progress has been achieved in the literacy rate in South Assam it is still lagging behind the country. Within South Assam highest literacy rate was achieved in the Cachar district and lowest in Karbi Anglong.

About 76 per cent of the female population in South Assam are living in plain districts. Percentage of female population living in rural areas is always higher than that in rural areas. Female literacy percentage in South Assam is much higher than that in entire Assam and India as a whole.

Creation of irrigation facilities is poor in South Assam and plain districts within it are in worse position compared to hill districts. Karbi Anglong is the only district having both the minor and medium/major irrigation facilities. Utilisation of irrigation potential is too low in all the districts in South Assam except in Karbi Anglong. The farmers in plain districts are less responsive to the utilisation of irrigation potential. Utilisation of irrigation potential, particularly in rabi crops, is highly unsatisfactory. Similarly use of HYV seeds is not very popular and its importance is going down day by day. It is relatively popular among the farmers in plain districts as against hill districts. Even for summer crops HYV seeds are not popular. Besides fertiliser consumption is very poor and its use is almost insignificant in hill districts.