

Livelihood Vulnerability of Riverine Rural Dwellers: A Study in Morigaon, Assam

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Abstract

River bank erosion is an endemic and recurrent natural hazard in Assam. River bank erosion has its both direct and indirect impact on human being and socio-economic aspects of riverine people. Numerous vulnerabilities associated with flood and river bank erosion e.g. loss of homestead land, economic loss, shifting occupation, displacement etc. Morigaon is one of the most disaster prone districts of Assam. The riverine dwellers of Morigaon district face continuous riverbank erosion. The present paper is based on both primary and secondary data. The present study investigates the riverbank erosion hazards in Morigaon district and its impact on riverine people and livelihood vulnerability due to loss of land.

Keywords: Bank Erosion, Livelihood, rural people, Morigaon

Introduction

Flood is a major natural calamity of Assam. The major river Brahmaputra under the influence of southwest monsoon causes recurrence flood in every year. Most of the people of Assam dependent on agriculture and facing riverine erosion problem every year and closely related with flood problem. Flood along with river bank erosion has destroyed lots of croplands of farmer every year.

River bank erosion is one major natural calamities and common phenomenon in Morigaon district that takes place every year. The effects of this disaster are widespread in Morigaon district. Therefore the objective of the present study is determined to explore the effects of river bank erosion on livelihood of riverine rural people of Morigaon district.

Objectives

The main objectives of the paper is to

1. To study the livelihood issues of the char land people of Morigaon district.
2. To study socio economic issues of the char land people of the study area.

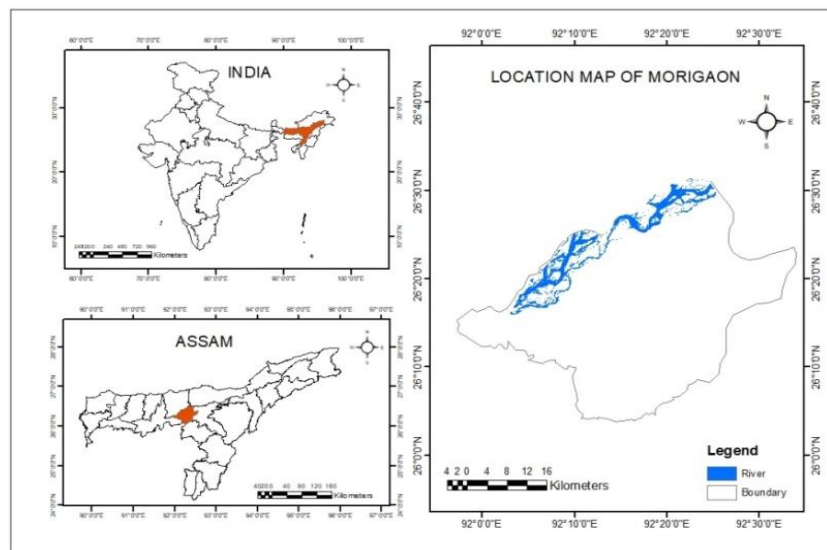
Methodology

The relevant data regarding the present research paper has been collected both primary and secondary sources. The primary data collected from the respondents of the ten selected villages of northern part of Morigaon district. For the present study multistage sampling technique has been used for the collection of the primary data. While the secondary data is collected from census of India (2011), published books, journals, Government records. The findings have been summarized using statistical technique, cartographic technique, tabulation, analytical and descriptive method.

Study Area

Morigaon district is located in central part of Assam extending from $26^{\circ} 06'25''$ north to $26^{\circ} 28'47''$ north latitudes and $92^{\circ} 20'50''$ east to $92^{\circ} 33'32''$ east longitude. The district is surrounded by the Kamrup in the western side, Karbi Anglong and the state Meghalaya in the southern part, Nagaon in the eastern part. The river Brahmaputra flows to the northern side of the district. The total geographic area of the district is 1551 sq km (statistical Handbook Assam, 2016).

Morigaon is a Riverine district of Assam. The major River Brahmaputra passes northern part of the district and affected more than 100 villages every year. Most of the villages of northern side are now fall under River Brahmaputra. The river Brahmaputra carries huge volume of water each year. Volume of water is main root flooding and bank erosion in the district. More than 100 villages are partially and fully eroded till 2019. People who are living closed to the river banks are facing economic and social problem during flood and after flood each year. Flood and river bank erosion is responsible for more than 80% of people homeless in Morigaon District (Disaster Management office. Morigaon).



Result and discussion

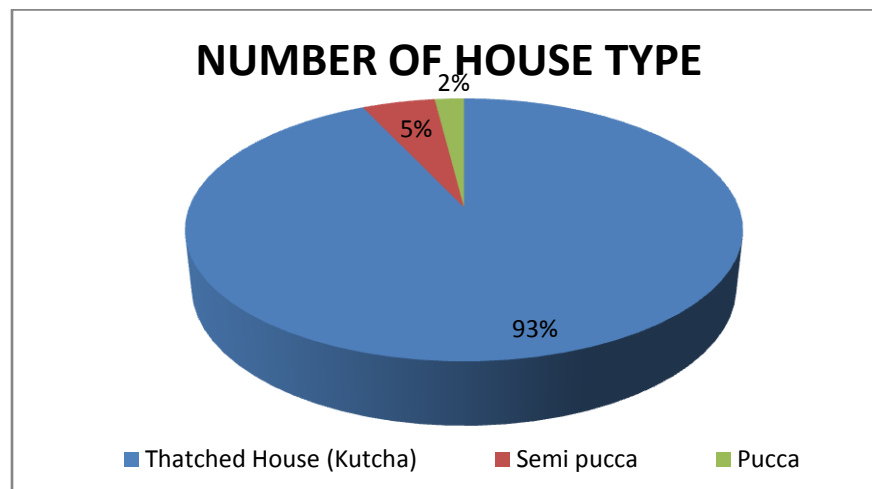
1.1 Housing Condition of the Surveyed Village People

Housing condition is one of the important indicators which reflect the socio-economic condition of village people. The housing condition of the study area is very poor. During field survey, the following types of houses are observed- thatched houses and some semi pucca and pucca houses are found in the study area.

1.1 Pattern of Houses in the Surveyed Village

SL NO.	House Type	Number of Houses	Percentage (%)
1	Thatched House(Kutchha)	93	93
2	Semi Pucca	5	5
3	Pucca	2	2

Source: Field study, 2019



It is revealed from the study that among the hundred sample surveyed household nearly 93% household of the riverine area are kutchha which is made by thatches, bamboo etc. and their walls made by mud followed by 6% people have semi pucca and two percent have pucca houses in the study area. The housing condition of the riverine people reveals the poor socio- economic condition of the village dwellers of the study area.

1.2 Loss of Crop Land

The surveyed village people dependent on Agriculture. Therefore cultivable land loss causes heavy impact on people. The present study area out of the 100 respondents 94 respondent has lost their cultivable lands.

Table 1.2: Loss of Croplands in surveyed village

Land(bigha)	Respondents	Percentage
<2	14	14.89
2-4	18	19.15
4-6	25	26.60
>6	37	39.36
Total	94	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

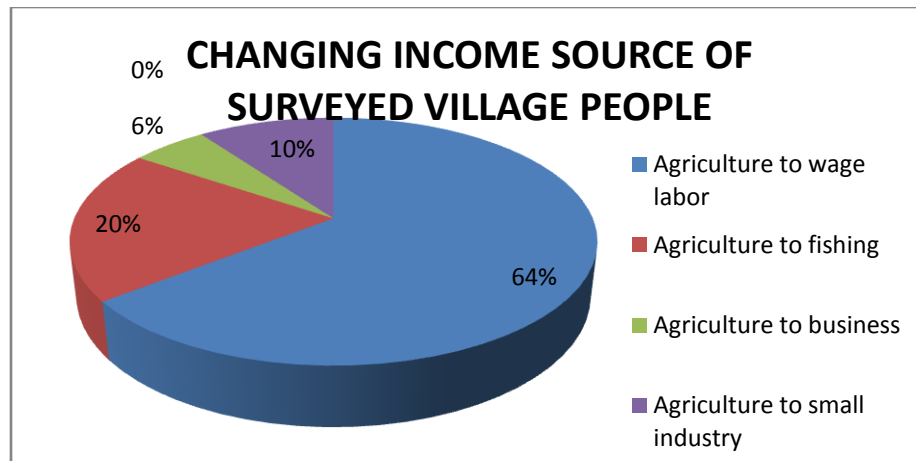
1.3 Changes the income source or Occupation of the displace people

After displacement there is a drastic change observed in occupation of the surveyed household in the study area. The respondents are classified into five categories on the basis of income sources which are shown in Table: 1.3.

Table 1.3: Changing nature of occupation or Income source due to flood and bank erosion

SL NO.	Variables	Responses	Percentage of Responses
1	Agriculture to wage labor	58	64.44
2	Agriculture to fishing	18	20
3	Agriculture to business	5	5.56
4	Agriculture to small industry	9	10
5	Agriculture to service	0	0
		90	100
	No Change	10	

Source: Field study, 2019



The above table and the pie graph shows the details of changing occupation of the surveyed village people due to severe effects of flood and bank erosion. Most of the surveyed village people were engaged in agriculture and about 90 surveyed household has changed their income source because of their displacement. Out of the 100 respondents it has been seen that occupation has changed among the 90 respondents and there is no change among the ten respondents. Most of them basically engaged with agriculture activities. About 64% of the respondents from the agricultural activities are now involved in wage labor and rest of the others about 20%, 10% and 6% which is also from agricultural activities are now engaged in small industry, non firm activities, fishing and business etc.

1.4 Income Status of the Surveyed Village Respondents

It is seen from the table that among the 100 respondents fifty four percent (54%) of the flood affected families. They have annual income less than thirty thousands and these fifty four percent people are wage labor. About 37% people have annual income between thirty thousand to fifty thousands and

Table 1.4: Annual Income Status of Surveyed Village People

Income Level	Respondent	Percentage (%)
<30000	54	54
30000-50000	37	37
50000-70000	9	9
>70000	0	0

Source: Field Survey, 2019

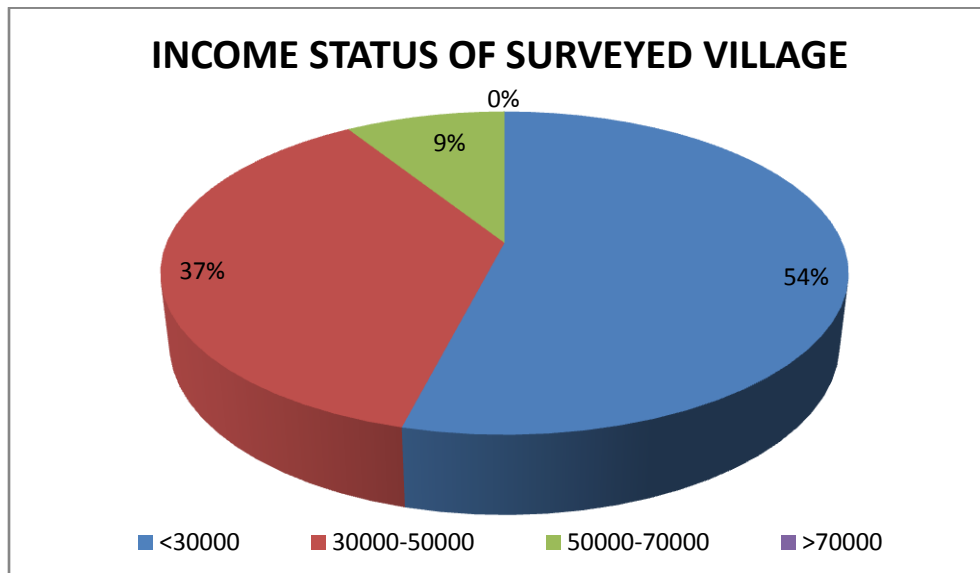


Fig 5.15: Income status of the Surveyed Village people

Only nine percent people are engaged with business and working in some small scale industry and earns fifty to seventy thousand annually. It is seen from the above table that 54% flood affected people have annual income of below thirty thousands and 37% people have annual income of thirty thousand to Fifty thousand and only 9% people have annually earn money from fifty to seventy thousand

Conclusion

River bank erosion forced people to shift to or displacing riverine dwellers. A large number of people displaces from their own household and bank erosion adversely affecting their social and economic circumstances, triggering the flow of displacement which causes many difficulties in the lives and livelihoods of the riverine people. Although a number of policies have been provided for the riverine poor people of extreme river eroded area, the district is still lagging behind from development strategies.

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