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Livelihood status and socio-economic condition of fisher of the adjoining area of muduki bajar, a market near to Chandubi Beel and Batha river of Kamrup district of Assam

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Abstract
The study relates to the socio–economic condition of the fisher community of adjoining area of Muduki Bajar, which is situated near a well-known tectonic wetland, Chandubi and the river Batha, which is originated from Meghalaya and joins to Kulsi River at Kukurmara. The result reveals a very miserable condition. Fishing is found to be the prime business of the studied area where the literacy among the respondents is very poor of which a majority of them are illiterate. Most of the fisher is in late middle age with daily income ranging from Rs.500 to Rs. 1500. The prime cause for poor condition observed to the most of the fisher may be due to lack of social infrastructure, non-development of education, high family size, scarcity of alternate employment opportunities, non-availability of own fishing net etc. It is important to note that the most of fishers have to depend on the river Batha and Kulsi because fishing is actually banned in Chandubi Beel as this wetland is under the forest department and interestingly 12% fisher has shifted to agriculture as prime business which is also not economical and act as one of the important factors for their poor socio-economic condition. However, their financial condition is inclined by the ecotourism development in Chandubi beel, but still it cannot fulfil their minimum requirements.

Keywords: Fisher community, Muduki Bajar, Chandubi Beel, Batha River, Socio-Economic

1. Introduction
Fishery resource of Assam is endowed with many flood plain wetlands from the Brahmaputra and the Barak river system, the two major river system of Assam exhibiting enormous diversity of fish fauna supported by the subtropical climatic condition, favourable ecological and geographical condition with about 3.9 lakh hector of water area with wealthy aquatic biodiversity having the largest number of fish species (217), followed by Arunachal Pradesh (167) (Mahanta *et al.* 2003 [7]). The wetlands and lakes are major fishery resources of Assam contributing to about 25% of the fish production (Chakravartty *et al*., 2012 [3]) which not only provide nutrition but also provide diverse benefits to the society generating economy and livelihood for the poor people thus strengthening socio-economic condition of the fisher. In India, developments of fisher are, however, often restricted to the traditional fishing communities near the coastal areas while the interest of those associated with inland fishery is relatively neglected (Dutta and Kundu, 2007 [4]). The state has to import fish from other states of India like Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar to supply the demand which is about 13 thousand metric tons per year (Directorate of Fisheries, Assam). Fishing is, therefore, a prime business in view of income, employment generation and supporting livelihood and in this regard the fisher community plays an important role for the same. However, the research related to the socio–economic condition of the fisher community is very scanty in flood plain wetlands in India particularly in Assam causing lack of information to formulate developmental programmes for them. The present study is therefore, an attempt with an aim to investigate the socio–economic condition of the fisher community of adjoining area of a market called Muduki Bajar which is situated near a well-known tectonic wetland, Chandubi and the river Batha,

2. Materials and Method
The present work was based on the studies carried out for a period of 6 months, commencing from December, 2015 to May, 2016 in adjoining area of a market called Muduki Bajar which is situated near a well-known tectonic wetland, Chandubi and the river Batha, which is originated from Meghalaya and joins to Kulsi river at Kukurmara. The study area is located between the Loharghat and Chandubi beel.
The study was based on the analysis of data regarding various aspects of livelihood status and socio-economic condition of fisher community who were involved in fishing both permanently (as the primary income source) and partially (as the secondary source of income). A household survey was conducted with prepared questionnaire. A door to door survey was done and in that process; the fisher mostly the one who earn a living for the whole family were interviewed. Since some of the people were illiterate, each item of the questionnaire was discussed in detail and their verbal responses to the questions were recorded in the appropriate column of the questionnaire. During this process, the problems were discussed one by one and the outcome of the discussions were recorded to know more about the socio-economic conditions of the people living in the studied area. During the study, data were collected from twenty five fisher families selected randomly using well-structured questionnaire from the area adjoining to the Muduki Bajar.

3. Results
From the present study it has been observed that fishing is the

common occupation of the people found in the adjoining area of Muduki Bajar. However, along with fishing some of them are also engaged in agriculture (20%). Some of the fishers (16.0%), however, are engaged in boating for entertainment for tourist at Chandubi Beel and 12% of fisher engaged in other ecotourism purpose. It is interesting that 12% of the fishers of the adjoining area of Chandubi beel shifted their livelihood to Agriculture (Figure-1). Notwithstanding, daily income (Figure-2) from fishing was ranged from Rs 100-1500, where Rs 100-500 daily income was found to be the maximum (40.0%) and 1000-1500 was the minimum (20%), with an average labour work of 1-6 hrs a day in fishing (Figure-3).

From the study and data collected from the fishers, it was observed that the highest production of fish was found from February to May (as per opinion of 36% fisher) (Figure-4).

During the study, it was found that the age of the fishers surveyed varies from 20-60 years or more. In the study, age of the fisher were classified into four groups as young aged (20-30 years), early middle aged (31-40 years), late middle aged (41-50 years) and old (51-60 years or above). The study shows that majority of individuals involved in fishing in the age range between 20 and 30 years (36%) and the least in between the age range 31 and 40 years and between 51 and 60 or more (16%) (Figure-5).

The family size of the fisher was divided into three classes - small, medium & large. From the study, it was found that, the most of the fisher families were composed of 5 to 6 members (56%), marked as medium family, small sized (2-4 persons) was the intermediate (40%) and large family (7 or above) was the minimum which is only 4% (Figure-6). Among the people surveyed, it was observed that maximum numbers of individuals were educated to primary level (60%) only. Interestingly, it has been observed that 20% of the fishers were illiterate (Figure-7).

The study also reveals that 52 % fisher have equipped with their own fishing gear, the rest of the fisher have to depend upon their neighbour, retailer, wholesaler or any other intermediate person for fishing gears resulting low income (Figure-8).

During the survey attempts were made to find out the living condition of the fishers. The housing conditions of fishers were divided into four categories - 1. House with straw roof 2. House with tin roof 3. Semi pacca house and 4. Pacca house with brick walled and concrete floor. From the survey, it was found that the 48% of the people have tin roofed house whereas only 8% of the people have *pacca* house and the rest have *semi-pacca* and straw roof house. This indicates that the people in the adjoining areas of the study area were in moderate condition.

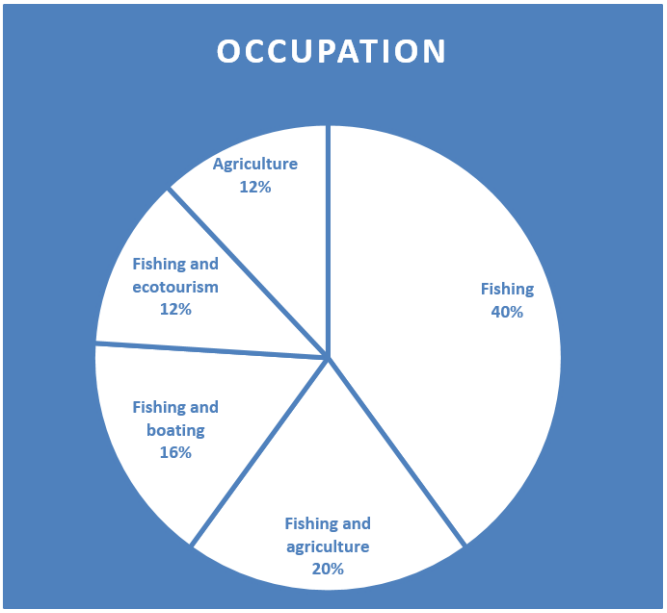

Fig 1: Occupation of the people

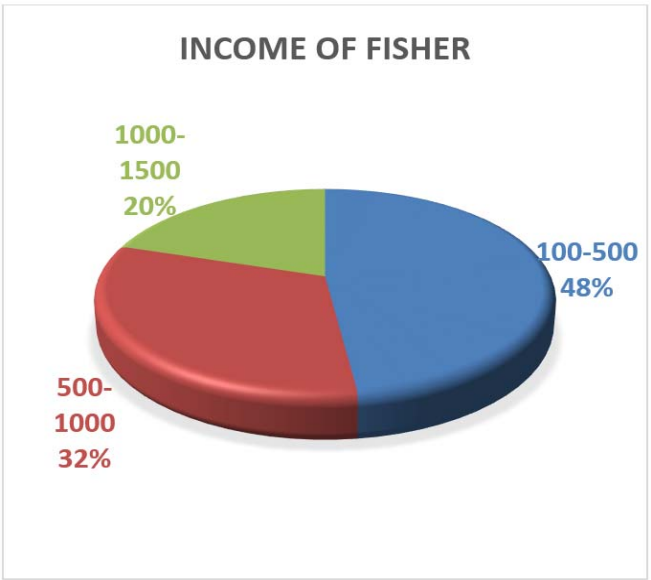

Fig 2: Income of the people

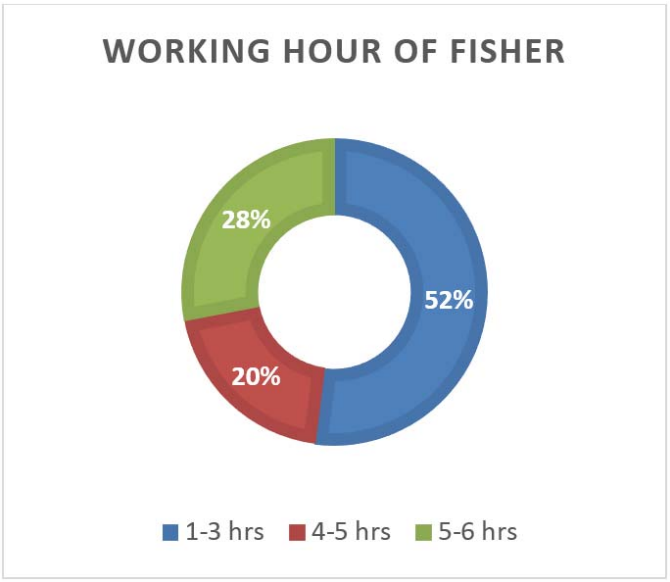

Fig 3: Working hour of the fisher

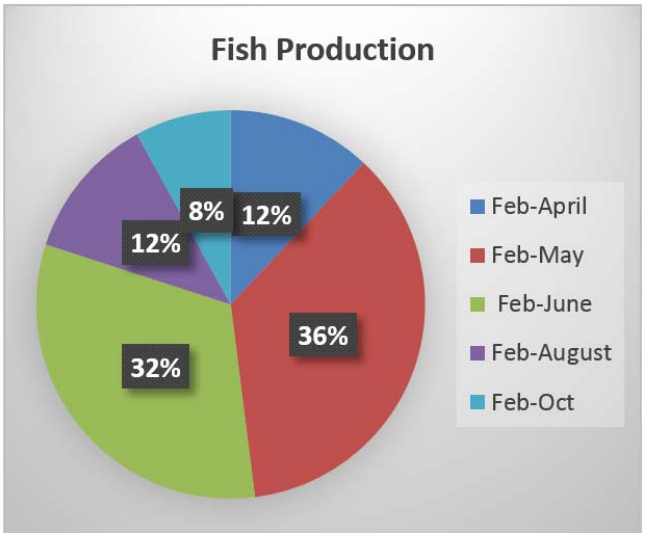

Fig 4: Fish production statistics

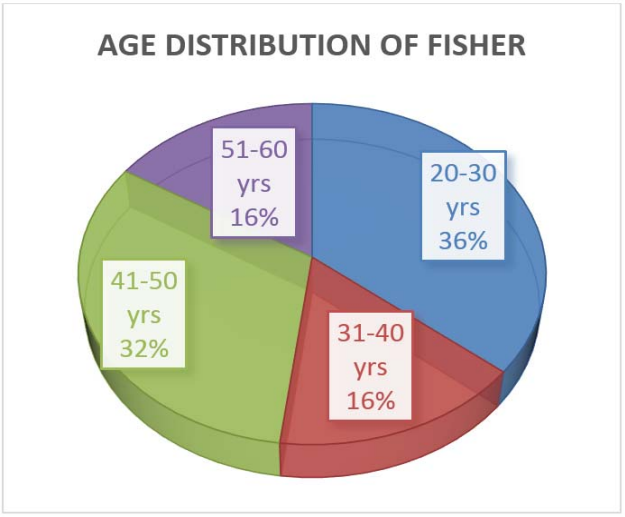

Fig 5: Age distribution of the fisher

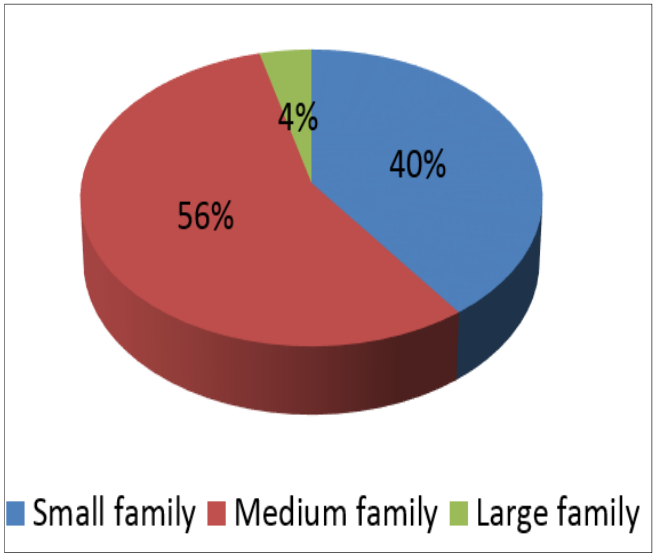

Fig 6: Family size of the fisher

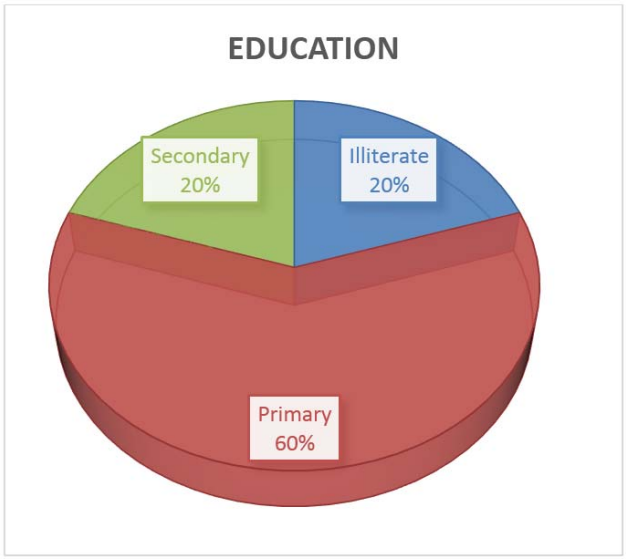

Fig 7: Educational qualification

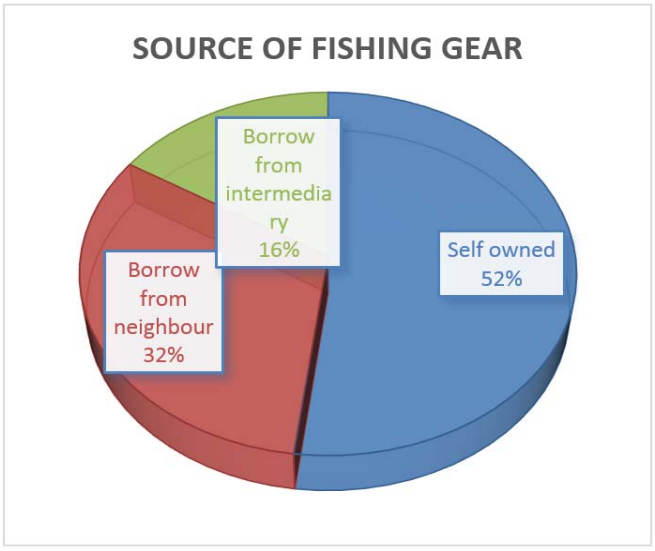

Fig 8: Source of fishing gears

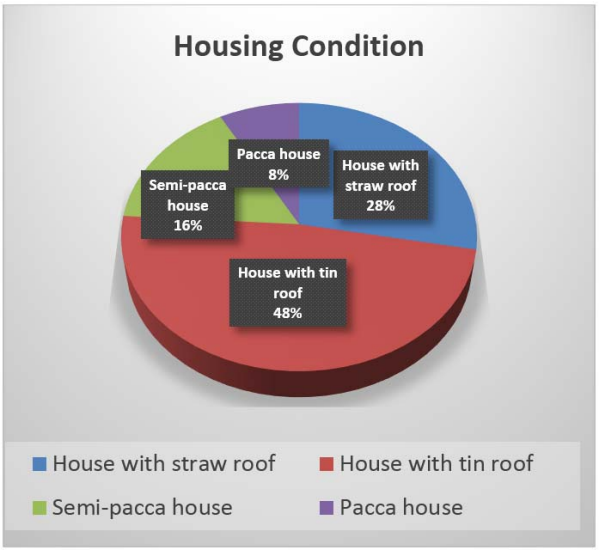

Fig 9: Housing condition of the people

4. Discussion

The present study reveals some factors responsible for the poor socio-economic condition and low living standard of the adjoining area of the Muduki Bajar. The socio-economic condition of the fisher where fishing is the main business of the area is very poor and miserable. The fishers are still in the stage with limited or no scientific and technical guidance for the use of wetlands and rivers more economically and sustainably (Sheikh and Goswami, 2013 [8]). The primary factor for this is the lack of social infrastructure which is also reported from different studies on fisher communities by Bhaumik and Pandit 1991 [2]; Goswami *et al.*, 1994 [5]; Sheikh and Goswami, 2013 [8]; Kalita and Deka, 2015 [6], Baruah and Deka, 2016 [1]. Secondly, development in education is not satisfactory which is the most crucial prerequisite for all round development to fight against social injustice as the same play an essential role regarding methodological and economical information about their occupation (Sheikh and Goswami, 2013 [8]; Kalita and Deka, 2015 [6]; Baruah and Deka, 2016 [1]). Thirdly, most of fishers have to depend on river Batha and Kulsi because fishing is actually banned in Chandubi as this wetland is under the forest department. Lastly the uneconomical alternate business opportunity through agriculture is one of the important factors for their poor socio-economic condition. Moreover high family sizes and non-availability of own good fishing gears leads to poverty of fishers. However, their financial condition is inclined by the ecotourism development in Chandubi beel, but still it cannot fulfil their minimum requirement.

5. References

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