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A study of RSETI Training Programme and a unique self-employment Project at *Darrang* District of Assam

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Abstract

The study was carried out at *Darrang* district of Assam to get an idea about the implementation of projects under Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI). RSETI is a replicated model of Rural Development and Self Employment Training Institute (RUDSETI) and a unique initiative which not only imparts training to the rural youths for different economic activities but also extends supports to beneficiaries to settle through self-employment by providing bank loan.

In this research paper, the findings based on the study carried out in February 2018 about implementation of RSETI training programme which was at nascent stage in the district are presented and for this purpose few beneficiaries, who were trained under different economic activities under RSETI, were interviewed to get an idea about the economic activities carried out, earning of income etc. Further, a case about cultivation of a special variety of fish *viz*. "*Magur* fish" by a progressive farmer is highlighted here.

Keywords: *Darrang* district, Income, RSETI and Self-employment.

Introduction:

The district *Darrang* was created on 1st July1983 by upgrading the erstwhile Sub-Division of *Mangaldoi* which was part of *Sonitpur* district. The district headquarter is located about 70 kilometres away from the State capital *i.e.* Guwahati, so most of the surplus agricultural goods are transported to Guwahati for selling as forward linkage is favourable.

It is pertinent to mention that, the name *Darrang* was derived from the *Bodo* word *Dourang,* which means *'Lilabhumi'* (Playground) of Gods. According to Scholar *Late Dineswar Sarma, the*

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word Darrang came from *Dawrang* which means 'Gateway', as there was direct entry to Bhutan and from there to Nepal, China etc. Gradually this was known as *Darrang*.

Darrang consists of a narrow strip of plain lying between Himalayas and Brahmaputra River in the north-west part of Assam. The land which is now known as Darrang district was included in the Hindu Kingdom of *Kamrupa* as mentioned in Mahabharata. Its antiquity dates back to the beginning of the sixteenth century when the Koch King Nar Narayan incorporated this district in his Kingdom. In 1637, the *Ahom* Kingdom was established in the land after the death of the then *Koch King Bali Narayana*. In 1792, *Darrang Raja* was defeated by an expeditionary force under the command of Captain Welsh and in 1826, Darrang with rest of Assam annexed under the British rule. The district is famous for "farmers' agitation" against the British. In the village of *Patharughat* in 1894, more than 15 villagers were killed by the British while they were in protest against the enhancement of land revenue and imposition of local taxes (http://darrang.nic.in). But when interacted with local persons in February 2018, many elderly persons informed that actual number was difficult to ascertain as there was no record but more than 100 villagers were killed by the British police. However, the district has been developing with new speed as it was observed that the district Deputy Commissioner Sri A .K. Barman (in other place known as District Magistrate/District Collector) was taking keen interest in development spheres. For instance, the own building of Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI) is expected to be completed by the end of 2018 as its work was going on in full swing which was being monitored by Sri Barman himself. Since the study is based on RSETI so the case has been referred here.

However, it may be mentioned that prior to RSETI, there was an organisation known as RUDSETI so few lines about RUDSETI as well as RSETI are highlighted here.

About RUDSETI:

Rural Development and Self Employment Training Institute (RUDSETI) was established in the year 1982 at *Dharmasthala*, Karnataka by *Dr D Veerendra Heggade* jointly with Syndicate *Bank* and *Canara* Bank. The main objective of RUDSETI was to reduce the problem of unemployment and poverty among the rural youth through self-employment.

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The Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India was impressed by the functioning of RUDSETI model and decided to establish one RUDSETI type institute in all the Lead Districts known as Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs) in 2009. So, RSETI, a replicated model of RUDSETI, is a unique initiative which not only imparts training but also extends supports to beneficiaries/trainees to settle through self-employment by providing bank loan. All the expenditures pertaining to establishing of RSETI's building and training materials are borne by the Government of India. The youth in the age group of 18-45 years, irrespective of caste, creed or religion are eligible to undergo training in RSETI at free of cost. The data reveal that 587 RSETIs were operational in the different districts of the country. Altogether 23.66 lakh rural youths were trained of which 15.64 lakh were provided with employment (66%). Further, it was observed that Government of India spent an amount of Rs. 331 crore for the development of RSETI including training and altogether 35 Banks were involved in different districts for RSETIs' activities (http://www.nird.org.in/rseti/index.aspx/17/2/2108).

Case of RSETI: *Mangaldoi* of *Darrang* District:

RSETI, in *Darrang* district, was started on 19th December 2011 and first training programme was organized on 21st January, 2012 at district headquarter at *Mangaldoi*. Till the day of study (in first part of February 2018), it was observed that the training programmes were conducted in a rent free building provided by the Deputy Commissioner of the district with limited training materials available as well as with no hostel facility. The officials informed that by the end of December 2018 new building with all facilities would be completed. As mentioned already, the work was being monitored by the Deputy Commissioner Sri A.K. Barman.

While study was carried out, the Lead District Manager (LDM) who was in charge of the RSETI during the time of study informed that the RSETI had been managing by U.Co. Bank as it is the Lead Bank in the district. The RSETI was functioning with one Director, one faculty, two assistants and one attender. The master trainers, known as guest faculties of the RSETI, are invited on payment basis who mostly are local persons or invited from State Capital Guwahati (70 kilometres away). In addition to training conducted by RSETI, the institute also conducts training on behalf of Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), Assam Skill Development Mission etc.

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To get an idea about the impact of training programmes conducted by the RSETI of *Darrang*, few beneficiaries who were trained earlier were interviewed and the cases are presented here.

Case - 1 : *Ms. Poly Seal* (32 years/HSLC Pass) along with 23 women were trained in soft toy making. The training was conducted in the month of November 2017 for 13 days. Her husband had petty business so she took interest about RSETI's soft toy making training to earn some income. While the author interviewed her in February 2018, she informed that she had applied loan to the Punjab National Bank (PNB) to the tune of Rs. 2 lakh and if the same is sanctioned she would expand her business. Because, till the day of study she was making the toys at a small scale in her home fetching average monthly net income of Rs. 4,000.

Case-2: *Ms. Mousami Saikia Gogoi* (35 years/HSSLC Pass) had undergone training on beauty parlour in May 2017. Husband is in a job and son will be appearing HSLC examination so she was taking more care of her son than earning of income. Even than she was doing her activity from her home only, which fetches monthly earning of Rs. 5,000. According to her after completion of son's examination, (within few months) she would start her activity in full scale.

Case-3: This case pertaining to agricultural development which is an important training part of RSETI, *Darrang*. The economy of Assam is largely agriculture based with around 70 per cent population engaged in agriculture. In view of this conducting training programme on agriculture is praiseworthy step.

Ms. Mira Medhi (27 years/HSLC pass) came to know from self-help group (SHG) members about the training conducted by the RSETI. Her husband works in a private company earning meagre wage. The family had 0.5 acre of agricultural hand so after the training in October 2017 (for 10 days) she cultivated mustard and paddy in Rabi season in November 2017. According to her the training was quite useful.

Case-4: Ms. *Sabita Koch* (40 years/10th pass) with husband were involved in agriculture as the family had two acres of agricultural land. She was trained in agriculture is October 2017 and after the training in Rabi season the family cultivated mustard, cauliflower and cabbage. And by selling the crops, after consuming at home, the family could earn a net income of Rs. 12,000 in the season.

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Case:5 *Ms. Aloka Koch* (40 years, 9th pass) also undergone training in agricultural development which was quite useful to her. The family had two acres of land and in Rabi they cultivated mustard, paddy etc.

Thus, is evident that all the trainees expressed their happiness about RSETI training.

In addition to RSETI study, a case of fishery development taken by a progressive farmer is presented here.

Fishery Development as Self-employment:- This case is from *Sanowatar* village, *Siphajhar block of Darrang* district of Assam. In the states of Assam and West Bengal also in Bangladesh a live fish locally known as "*Magur*" fish ("walking fish") is having high demand as it is considered good for health. This type of fish, *albeit* known as 'walking fish' but cannot walk; only it moves slowly and can survive in little water. Further, it is having no scale and its weight (local breed) can be around 250 grams on an average. Although weight of high breed can be more, even 2 kilograms but local breed is always preferred.

Mr. Hanif Ali (49 years /HSLC pass) after undertaking training at district headquarter to culture "*Magur*" fish at *Mangaldoi* town (35 kilometres) away decided to start this business. He had three acres agricultural land and for four members' family (husband, wife and two sons) agricultural land derived from the land was adequate to sustain the family members. But as a progressive farmer, he wanted to earn more to improve his living standard with diverse cultivation. After completion of the training, he by spending his own amount around Rs. 80, 000 constructed a tank in a portion of his agricultural land - the tank was 40 feet in length, 15 feet width and around 6 feet in depth. And all these sides were cemented plaster for which he spent Rs. 80,000, as mentioned already and the activity was started in June-July 2017 and the first crop (as expected) would be harvested at the end of February/ first week of March 2018 (study was in first week of February 2018). According to him, by incurring all expenditures, he expected to earn a net income of Rs. 1.50 lakh in a period of nine months. He further informed that during *Kharif* he always used to cultivate paddy and vegetables and by consuming at home, he could earn around Rs. 1 lakh as net profit in recent years. But Rabi crop mainly maize is destroyed by wild boar who invade from nearby areas. Thus, he is dejected to cultivate maize in Rabi. It was

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reported that he had few local varieties of cows, chickens and ducks. Lastly, according to him, he had the plan to expand his "*magur fish*" cultivation, if first crop is successful.

Conclusion: It has been observed that RSETI is having huge scope in the district for the unemployed youths who are interested in self-employment. Because, after interaction with the few women members who were trained by the RSETI reveals the fact that they were all happy after the training. And the important issue is that many women who were trained in agricultural development were involved along with their husband in this activity. Rather, they were guiding their husband as the women had undergone training.

The case of *Hanif Ali* is important here as he being a progressive farmer developed a new crop *i.e. Magur fish* cultivation. In Assam in general and *Darrang* in particular, since '*Magur fish'* is having high demand so other rural youths can think of it.

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