

# Women at the Margin: A Study of Female Domestic Workers in Assam's Karbi Anglong District

Dr. Mousumi Choudhury  
Assistant Professor  
Diphu Government College  
Diphu, Karbi Anglong District, Assam

**Abstract:** Domestic workers are indispensable parts of households. Though they play a significant role in the employer's family by ensuring them rest, leisure and ease their burden, their work largely remains unnoticed and unacknowledged. Female domestic workers are more vulnerable and they are doubly marginalized group as being women and poor. In the absence of any national legislation to ameliorate their plight, they suffer from insecurity in job and poor living condition. Children are also engaged as domestic workers in urban households despite the prohibition encapsulated by the Indian constitution, child rights covenants and other relevant laws. In the North eastern part of India, though women enjoy a marginally better position than the caste society, the condition of the domestic workers in this part is no better than the domestic workers elsewhere. Moreover, many of those women are trafficked to other parts of the country and even abroad. Since parts of North East are infested by terrorism, poor women are more vulnerable in such set up. Karbi Anglong district of Assam suffers from a complex web of problems. Economic backwardness, inefficient and immoral governance are reinforced in the everyday living realities of the people of the district. Consequently, formal sector jobs are limited and this is the pull factor to draw poor women to the informal sector of domestic work in large number. This paper delves into the plight and predicament of female domestic workers in Karbi Anglong district of Assam, a case study in Diphu.

**Key words:** marginalization, vulnerable, insecurity, trafficking, abuse

## I. Introduction

Domestic workers contribute significantly in the informal sector of production. Though men are also engaged as domestic workers, yet the female domestic workers<sup>1</sup> relatively outnumbers them. Domestic work, child and elderly care are characterized as 'women's work' perhaps due to the gendered division in the society. "Since domestic workers in much of the world today are primarily female, domestic service has appeared to be synonymous with women's work in recent research" (Ray and Qayum 2010:10). The International Bureau of Statistics Database shows domestic work as an important source of employment for women. Since the increase in national income do not significantly contribute to employment generation, women generally from the poor background have fewer options but to opt for domestic work as a means of sustenance. Janet Henshall Momsen in her book *Gender, migration and Domestic Service* (1999) observed that in every corner of the world, domestic work is done by women who are in some way 'different' from their employers (on grounds of race, class, origin religion, citizenship) (Momsen 1999). Globally over 100 million people work in domestic services (ILO 2008). It is ranging between 5 and 9 percent of total employment in developing countries, and making upto 2.5 percent of total employment in developed countries (ILO 2010). As per ILO Survey 2009, 18 percent of the countries in Asia, 70 percent in Africa, 5.7 percent in Latin America and 50 percent of the developed countries partly covered by labour laws or social protection schemes but poor implementation of the schemes deprive them to enjoy the benefits (ILO Report 2009). According to National Sample Survey organization (NSS) 2004-05 there are 4.75 million domestic workers of which 3.05 million in urban areas were employed by normal households in India. Out of this total number, 92 percent are women and children. About 20 percent of workers working as full time and the vast majority are working as part time workers (Devos 2010)

Jayati Ghosh observed that "no society can survive without the massive contribution that domestic work makes to national income". Yet it remains largely invisible and under-valued, a reflection of the low value India places on social reproduction (Ghosh 2014:5). Ghosh identified two factors for the significant increase in domestic work in India –one, high rates of economic growth have not translated into an adequate increase in employment in the formal sector. Second, rising inequalities meant on the one hand, an increase in self-employment with more and more people desperate to supplement incomes and, a rising middle class that can afford to hire domestic work (*The Economic Times*, March 1, 2014). "Inequality in India permits lower wages for domestic work" (Ghosh 2014). The emergence of nuclear families is also a reason for their appointment to look after household tasks. India does not include domestic work in the minimum wage legislation (ILO 2010). In fact, it is "considered as a domestic unskilled labour, this labour is generally perceived as 'naturally given', intrinsically related to women's socialization" (Gutierrez-Rodriguez 2010:101).

## II. Objectives of the Study

Karbi Anglong district is one of the sixth schedule districts in Assam. The people of district are the victims of colonial apathy and in post colonial Assam also, there is no significant stride in development. Consequently, perpetual under development paved the way for insurgency and subsequently militancy gained ground in the picturesque hill district. Lack of political will to cater development has created an increasingly volatile situation in the district. Given the marginal position that women hold in the society and being passive recipients of state's development schemes, the plight of poor women is more severe. A large number of urban households in the district engage domestic workers who are largely females. In view to this, this paper is an attempt to explore the plight and the predicament of the women working in domestic households.

## III. Methodology and Data collection in Assam.

The methodology that we have adopted to conduct the study is sociological and anthropological. My analysis is based on field works that was conducted in and around Diphu town of Karbi Anglong district since April 2 to June 31 2016. We have basically used primary data to conduct the study. The study consisted of household surveys of domestic workers across different communities. We have collected 40 samples by conducting in-depth interviews and informal interactive conversation with female domestic workers and some employers as well. We also have used secondary sources like books, journals, internet sources, newspapers etc. in order to articulate our understanding of domestic workers in the country and the region.

## IV Between Rhetoric and Reality: the trajectory of the female domestic workers

It is amazing that in spite of wide range of functions and care services rendered to the employers, domestic workers are subjected to multiple vulnerabilities like physical, verbal, sexual abuses, trafficking and bad working conditions etc. Furthermore, they perpetually suffer from insecurity since the duration of their job depends on the whims and caprices of their employers. Quite often, they are unable to send their children to school due to financial hardship or tend to discontinue studies in the midway. Invariably, in many cases, their children end up being the potential domestic workers. Though the fundamental rights enshrined in the Indian constitution prohibits the employment of children below 14 years age in certain occupations and also the Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act in 1986, a lot of children are engaged in domestic work. By 10 October 2006, the ban on child labour included employment of children in domestic work. The Central Government amended the Central Civil Service Conduct rules to prohibit any government official/ civil servants from employing children below the age of 14 years as domestic servants.

According to the Report of the National Commission on Self-employed Women and Women in the informal sector (1987)–“of all the services in India, domestic work is the most unregulated and disorganized and often the most denigrating and humiliating” (Sharma 1988). The National Survey on Domestic Workers shows that they are in a state of dependency, exploitation and quasi-bondage. They do not have protection against employers who in many cases exploit them sexually, physically and psychologically (Badiges and Gudagunti 2014:5).

International Labour Organization (ILO) has organised a covenant on “Decent Work for Domestic workers” (care workers) in June 2011 in Geneva (Switzerland) in its 100<sup>th</sup> international Labour Conference to ensure better living conditions for domestic workers (ILO Geneva. <http://www.ilo.org>). India does not include domestic work in the minimum wage legislation (ILO 2010) and there is no national law to regulate the services of the domestic workers. Consequently, they do not have access to legal rights, social security measures like maternity benefits and old age pension etc. However, in Kerala and Karnataka, there are minimum wage legislations for domestics and Maharashtra has adopted a minimum social security scheme for them (Ray and Qayum 2010: 197). The National Domestic workers' Movement (NDWM), a worker's right organization with offices in twenty-three states and over two million members is fighting for the recognition of domestic workers and improved working conditions (ibid).

The domestic workers are unable to form trade unions because they live in scattered places and are afraid to raise their voice against their employers due to the fear of termination and stern action given their powerlessness. Since they are left with less option, they suffer silently or leave the job. The women organizations also hardly highlight their pangs. Raka Ray observed that few autonomous women's organizations have genuine interest in including poor and working women due to their middle class membership (Roy 2010). State and its development initiatives also ignore women (Hapke 2001:1106) due to cultural constructs of gender.

## V. Fluidity, vulnerability and powerlessness: Female Domestic workers in North East India

Female domestic workers of the North Eastern part of India could be leveled as doubly silenced subaltern in terms of class, gender and its work deficit peripheral location etc. The region's engagement with intra-region and inter-region human trafficking is an established fact since a large number of girls and women from the region are trafficked to other parts of the country and outside. It is found that Bodo and Garo girls are taken out for domestic work and for flesh trade. Places like Shillong and Guwahati have thousands of *Adivashi* domestic help. In Nagaland, families 'adopt' them in order to get workers free of cost instead of employing them and paying them a salary (Fernandes 2010). Teresa Joseph and Anjali Shukla run an NGO called Domestic Workers Movement that takes up issues related to recognition of domestic workers and their improved working conditions. It also campaigns against the use of child labour in domestic services. Teresa Joseph who is a co-coordinator for North East India dealt with a case involving a female domestic worker who had borrowed money from her employer and was unable to repay in time. Her employer coerced her into giving him her daughter to work in his home for two years. The girl was only eleven

and was forced to work for two years without being paid. The employer was a very powerful person and threatened legal proceedings against the women unless she agreed to work for one month without pay. Teresa Joseph and her team had to intervene to rescue her (Joseph and Sukla 2014).

## VI. Vulnerable terrain and shaken self: Female domestic workers in Karbi Anglong District

Karbi Anglong district is the largest district in Assam. It is administered according to the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution. In Colonial Assam, the district was isolated as a partially excluded territory that prevented it to integrate with the mainstream development. In post colonial Assam too, the district could not make any significant stride in economic or human resource development. The statistics related to male female ratio in literacy, work participation and the dropout rate among girls show the relative disparity. The sex ratio has declined to 916 in 2011 from 973 in 2001 per 1000 boys (Census of India 2011). The literacy rate in female is recorded only 64.62% against 82.12% of male (Census of India 2011). The dropout rate is higher among the girls in BPL families and other disadvantaged groups (Annual Report 2011-12, SSA, Karbi Anglong). The district abounds in a wide array of flora and fauna, geo-politically and culturally an active zone but the resources largely remain untapped. Corruption is a severe impediment for tapping up resources and percolating benefits to the poor. Bad politicking and competing claims over scarce resources have created an ethnically volatile situation. This have severe impact in public life and especially on poor women who are less mobile, less acquainted with the outside world and are hardly politically conscious. Given the slim prospects of employment generation and the increasing demand for domestic servants, poor women pick up domestic work as a means of sustenance. Even the number of girl children in this labour market is not negligible<sup>4</sup>

## VII. Case Study

### Case 1

Parvati Kurmi, aged 66 years who originally belonged to Lanka area of Assam. Her father was defense personnel who disappeared leaving her barely a year old. Her mother lost her mental balance after the incident. Given that, Parvati and her mother were taken to the custody of her maternal uncle. She was married off early as they were the additional mouth to feed. She was 10 years old at the time of her marriage and her husband at the ripe age of 56 years. In her matrimonial home, she was subjected to abuses by her brother-in law. After spending 10 years there, she along with her husband and two children migrated to district headquarter Diphu in Karbi Anglong district in search of living three decades back. She is presently located in Panbari area of Diphu town and is engaged as a domestic servant. She took a house in rent for Rs.500 per month. After their migration to Diphu, her husband took up collecting and selling firewood as a means of sustenance. But the earning was not sufficient to fulfill the necessities of survival. This compelled Parvati to get engaged as a domestic servant. Meanwhile, her husband became the victim of old age diseases. In her interview, she narrated the unrelenting struggle to bring up her two children with the added responsibility of looking after her ailing husband. She stated that the income was meager to meet the ever increasing necessities. In such a situation, she could provide education to her children only up to class four. Her husband died suffering from long ailments. She was quite young at that time and offered to remarry but she turned down apprehending the possible discomforts of her children. Her son as he stepped to his adolescence fell into the prey of alcoholic friends. Getting addicted he used to create ruckus in the house and indulged in beating her daughter. Parvati decided to shift the place of her residence to save her son from the evil company. She gave her entire savings to a relative to erect a straw house in Sarupathar area of Golaghat district in Assam. Changing place did not materially affect the change in her son's attitude. Rather, it accentuated her troubles. One unfortunate morning, she was evicted from her house since it was constructed in a reserve forest area. Her relatives exploited her by hiding the facts and misappropriated her money. She lost her previous jobs and the entire savings. Under compelling situation, she came back to Diphu to re-install her job as a domestic worker. Due to excessive alcoholism, her son died at the premature age of 40. She is also worried about the prospect of marriage of her daughter. Still Parvati is working as a domestic maid in a college professor's house with poor physical health and utter frustration. She said that her long experiences as a domestic servant was a mixed bag- help and hospitality from her employers especially from two college professors and insensitivity from others. She articulated her fear and insecurity related to *bandh*, ethnic clashes etc. that are intrinsic parts of life in the district. She is not aware about any government scheme for the poor. Her daughter is also working as a domestic maid (My conversation with Parvati Kurmi in an inter-face on 1 May 2016).

### Case2

Meera Ghosh is 48 years old and originally hailed from Agartala town of Tripura state and is presently located in Diphu town. She narrated that her father was a cultivator and there were seven members in her natal family— her parents, two brothers and three sisters. She was 14 years and her husband was 32 years old at the time of their marriage. Soon after her marriage, she along with her husband migrated to Diphu. Therein her husband got a job in a tailor shop. But he died early due to wrong treatment in the Diphu Civil hospital leaving behind a five years old son and a two years old daughter. The relatives from her natal as well as matrimonial home attended the funeral of her husband that was performed at the thirteenth day of her husband's death. After that, no one enquired about their plight except her old helpless mother who is not looked after by her brothers. Since the couple had no savings and no support was extended from her relatives, she was compelled to step outside the house at the fifteenth day of her husband's death as a domestic maid. In her conversation, she narrated the inexorable struggle and drudgery in the sustenance of her family. To meet the ever increasing expenditure, she worked in four households simultaneously. The children were left alone at home with no one to look after them even though her elder brother and his family stayed in the same house. At regular intervals, she suffered from health related problems due to long hours of work and lack of nutritional diet.



Moreover, there was no security related to her job that drew her into perpetual trouble. She rendered care services to the family of her employers but this was never acknowledged. In one incident, she requested one of her employer who was a teacher to help her daughter to solve some problem sums in mathematics. But he turned down. Mira highlighted that their job is looked down upon though it released the burden of the employers and create for them a space for rest and leisure. Her younger sister have disappeared a couple of years back. At present, her son is working in a cloth shop and daughter is pursuing graduation. Still she is working as a domestic maid but with slightly lesser burden. A part of the expenditure is taken up by her son. The recollection of her life is full of agonies, drudgery and desperate struggle (My conversation with Meera Ghosh on 10 April 2016).

### Case 3

Anjali Chetry aged 46 years originally hailed from Poilapur area of Cachar district of Assam who is presently located in Panbari area of Diphu. The family migrated to Diphu four decades back. Her father was a daily wage earner who pulled on the family with utmost difficulties. She belongs to the *adivashi* community and was married 15 years back. Her husband was defense personnel from the Nepali community who died five years after her marriage due to excessive consumption of alcohol. Her in-laws usurped the family pension by showing her and her daughter dead in the government record. Without any financial support, she took up domestic work at the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the death of her husband. She expressed the difficulties in carrying her child in the places of her work. Anjali narrated that her daughter demanded food out of hunger but the employer was reluctant to provide that only a few with exceptions. Though her elder brother and his family did not desert them but she was subjected to harsh treatment by them. Additionally, she had to look after her younger alcoholic brother who lost his wife a few years after his marriage. Recently, he died due to multiple organ failure. The daughter of his brother works in a domestic household but her employer was reluctant to send her at home even during the funeral of her father. Anjali narrated that she accumulated Rs.10000 with hard toil but her brother took it away. She is trying hard to provide education to her daughter and is apprehensive due to financial hardship and uncertainties related to her job. She narrated that the government has enunciated various schemes for the poor but she could not avail any benefit out of these schemes. She put a lot of efforts to get the widow pension and was even compelled to pay bribe to an official for getting it done. Even then she was not provided the pension. Anjali acknowledged the kindness and help extended to her by a Marwari businessman with whom she stayed eight years. She also expressed gratitude to a college professor in helping her in several ways especially in bearing the expenditure in her daughter's education (narrated in an interview by Anjali Chetry on 12 May 2016).

### Case 4

Bimala Nath aged 50 years of Howraghat area of Karbi Anglong district, presently located at Diphu town. She narrated that her father was a cultivator with four children—three sons and a daughter. She was married off at the age of 14 with a cultivator. Surprisingly, her husband got marry with another woman six months after her marriage. She was pregnant by then and was taken to her natal home due to her husband's treachery. Her father filed a case against her husband wherein he was to spend a huge amount of money. Consequently, her husband was put into jail as per the Hindu Marriage Act 1955. After two years, her father brought her to the same lawyer's house in Diphu town who fought the suit against her husband. She was engaged as a domestic maid in the lawyer's house and simultaneously worked in two more households to meet the household expenses. Her son was kept into the custody of the lawyer's wife in her absence. Subsequently, the lawyer arranged a small piece of unused land nearby his house on the condition to vacate in case of requirement since it is a government land. She constructed a straw roofed thatched house. She put her son to a government primary school and then to the Boy's Higher Secondary School and subsequently to the Diphu Government college. Her son studied up to degree second semester. Meanwhile, he got marry without informing her and could not accomplish graduation. Bimala ran pillar to post to get him engaged in a job. Meanwhile, she became the victim of epilepsy. Her tough efforts to bring up her son did not meet with any reward. She is subjected to abuses by her son and daughter-in law. Due to epilepsy, quite often she gets fainted on the road and suffers grave injuries. Still she is working in three households to meet her expenditure. A big part of her income is spent on medicines. She has to buy nutritious food as per the doctor's advice that was mostly taken away by her daughter-in law. She has connectivity with her immediate siblings and visits them quite often. She is struggling with her poor physical health and suffers from severe mental agony (My interview with Bimala Nath on 2 May 2016).

### Case 5

Minati Kalita aged 51 years of Nalbari town of Lower Assam, presently located at Diphu town. She articulated that her father was a daily wage earner and their family consisted of her parents, three brothers and two sisters. With the death of her parents, she along with her elder brother migrated to Diphu town two decades back. She was sent immediately to Jorhat town of Assam to work as a domestic maid in an advocate's house. Though the wife of the advocate was sympathetic to her, their daughter who was similar to her in age frequently assaulted her in her parent's absence. She was even deprived of her salary that was taken away by her sister-in law. The torture of the employer's daughter compelled her to run away from Jorhat to her brother's house in Diphu after a year. In one night she went to the toilet and on her return found the door of her room locked from inside. She appealed helplessly for opening the door but her brother and sister-in law intentionally did not open the door to chase her away from the house. She spent outside the room in that night with utmost fear and was at a loss. In the following morning, she appealed for help to a Marawari businessman who sheltered her given her helpless condition. Therein she worked for three years as a domestic maid. Subsequently, she rented a room and worked in three households for her sustenance. After a couple of years, she got marry with a daily wage earner without knowing that he was already married. Even then she gave birth to a daughter who died after two months. She did not solicit any help from the government as she is not aware about any scheme

meant for the poor people. She did not have any connectivity with her siblings and expressed her reluctance to share the same house with his husband's first wife. She extends financial help to the children of her husband's first marriage. She narrated her inclination to Goddess Durga who is the source of her strength. She celebrates *Navaratri* festival with utmost dedication. She narrated that she is the victim of cheating in many ways. Once she handed over her ATM card to one of her employers to withdraw some money in dire necessity but he took away all her money except Rs.500. Thus she lost all her savings to a treachery and afraid to file a case since she is poor, illiterate and powerless (My interview with Minati Kalita on 21 May 2016).

### VIII. Analysis and Discussion

From the case studies and interaction with the domestic servants and employers, we have found that women especially from poor background have opted to work as domestic workers under compelling situation either due to death of their husbands or husband's inactivity to support the family. Some others opted for it to supplement family income in view to skyrocketed prices of the essential commodities. Since formal sector job is almost limited in Karbi Anglong district, the poor women were compelled to take up domestic work to support their lives. A significant section of them belonged to the lower strata of the society. Majority were found illiterate except a very few young girls who studied up to primary level. The houses wherein they reside are largely straw-thatched roofs with clay walls. Some of them live in unused government lands subject to eviction at any point of time. Some others stay in rented houses. Open wells and river water are the sources of their drinking water. Firewood is the fuel commonly used for cooking. Other types of fuel used for cooking are kerosene, cow dung and coal etc. They had to spend more on eatables followed by fuel, studies of their children, health care and house rent. Post-office is the major place of savings followed by bank and co-operatives etc. Some of the domestic servants were found with job cards, PAN Cards, voters identity cards etc, others are not aware of these. Some of them provide their job cards to others who work on their behalf and they share the money. Majority of them are part time domestic servants who work more than two households. Kache Ingtipi narrated those girls from interior areas of Karbi Anglong work in several households in urban areas. Their guardians ensured their schooling along with the work and they are largely whole time domestic workers from very poor families. They are also sent to other areas of Assam too (My interview with Kaache Ingtipi on 12 May 2016). The work of domestic workers ranges from sweeping, mopping, cleaning utensils, cleaning clothes, fetching water, kitchen work to furniture dusting and other allied activities. They work seven days in a week and 30 days in a month. In majority cases, they take leave from work themselves except a few employers who provide them leave in festivals and otherwise. Remaining absent from the work did not entail cut in wage payment. The mode of payment is usually in cash and at the time of festivals the employers provide gifts in cash or kind and both in some cases. Besides, they are provided old clothes, shoes, woolen garments in winter etc. Though caste is not a bar to entry into the kitchen of the employer except a very few cases, religion is a bar in many cases.

Some of the respondents narrated the insensitivity and lack of understanding of their employers while some others appreciated the hospitality. In some other cases, it is found that sporadic delay in duty has entailed termination of their jobs. Since their income is meager, such termination amounts to financial crunch in running households, inflicts mental sufferings and feeling of insecurity. A domestic servant narrated that since she was late once in a festival day, the employer terminated her and blamed her as a thief (My interview with Anita Kurmi on 23 April, 2016).

Rumi Kumari narrated in an interview that she borrowed Rs. 5000 from her employer on account of her illness and returned the entire sum of money subsequently in small installments. After few months when she was in need of leave her employer reacted brutally and asked her to pay the money that she already paid. Finding no way out, Rumi took the refuge of police and the interference of officer in-charge of Diphu Police station, the matter was resolved (My interview with Rumi Kumari on 16 April 2016).

The domestic servants articulated that they provide care service to their employers but trivialized due to their low social status. There is a huge cultural lag that persists between them and their employers. It is pertinent to mention that domestic workers could not solicit any support from their relatives and more or less are left alone in their struggle for survival. In many cases, they were deserted by their relatives and in some cases even exploited by them given their helpless situation. It is observed that alcoholism by the male members of their family affect their lives perniciously. Due to financial crunch and rising prices of the commodities, they found it difficult to provide education to their children and cases are abound when their children have ended up as potential domestic workers. Girl children as domestic servants are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuses.

Due to rampant corruption and poor governance, these poor women are not stake holders of the government schemes. Some of them narrated that the persons dealing with the government schemes took money from them without getting their job done.. They articulate the apathy and insensitiveness of their elected representatives who are visible only during elections. It is observed that these women themselves are vulnerable in the present social and cultural setting in a conflict-zone like Karbi Anglong but are often in charge of elderly, children infirm and sickly relatives. They expressed their helplessness to constitute trade union due to fear of being buttressed by their employers. The subalternity related to their status internalised subordination and tolerance. There is a growing consciousness among the domestic workers in Diphu town about the need to provide education to their children for better life. They put serious efforts in doing that but very few are successful in their endeavour. They lack the agency to represent them and their plight<sup>5</sup>. They are the victims of impeccable violation of human rights and humanitarian assistance.

We also interviewed some employers to extract some insights from them. Many of them have expressed dissatisfaction towards their domestic help like non-compliance, absenteeism without information, unsatisfactory work, theft, argumentative nature of the domestic servants etc. Some of the employers alleged that they are fabulously demanding and ungrateful. Even if

generous help was extended to them, they are reluctant to acknowledge and tend to become more demanding (My interview with Parinita Bora, Purnima Das, Beena Terangpi, Urmilla Singha, Reena Jain and others from April 2014-May 2016).

### Conclusion

Domestic workers are the deprived groups due to their marginal location in the society. The invisible contribution made by them largely remains confined to their private lives. In recent times, academic contributions are forthcoming to explore the plight of the domestic workers and the ways to improve their living conditions. The International Labour Organisation adopted a convention which covers decent work conditions for domestic workers. Jayati Ghosh in her Second United Nations Public Lecture called on India to ratify the ILO Domestic Convention No.189 that guarantees the fundamental rights of domestic workers to decent and secure work (Ghosh 2014). To ameliorate the plight of the domestic workers, it is the high time to recognise domestic work as a skilled labour and an urgent necessity to draft a national legislation to mitigate their plights. Recently, the United Nations Development Programme ushered people-centric human security programme whose principal component was “freedom from fear and freedom from want”. This kind of security offers safety from chronic threats like hunger, disease and political repression as well as “protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life”. According to the UNDP, the new level required two levels of urgent change by the societies of the world “from exclusive stress on territorial security to a much greater stress on people’s security...[and] from security through armaments to security through sustainable human development....” (Henk 2005:93). The government and the civil society groups should look into the human security perspective outlined by the U.N.O and awareness to be created to ensure the security, rights and respect of the domestic workers. Domestic works should not be trivialized due to significant contribution it makes to the society and the nation.

### Notes

1. Due to patriarchy it is observed that women are mostly engaged in low paid jobs than their male counterparts.
2. In North East India, though the social position of women is marginally better than the mainland India, women are more vulnerable here due to insurgency, huge deployment of armed forces who are largely insensitive to the plight of women. Rather, there is an increasing tendency of sexual abuses by the para-military forces as well as by the militant groups. In that situation, poor women are more vulnerable.
3. In the colonial period, Karbi Anglong was put under the partially excluded categories that prevented it from the mainstream development. The backwardness was further reinforced by the post-colonial ruling elites in Assam as colonial stereotypes. The elected members and bureaucrats of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council are less interested in governance and are more engrossed in self-interests. Dynastic politics which is strongly grounded in the political scenario of the hill district largely promoted family welfare and wealth. The leaders and elected members of KAAC are seen to be oblivious of the people who voted them to power. In fact, lack of accountability to the people is one of the major reasons of under development. Consequently, funds do not percolate down to the beneficiaries.

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