Chapter 1

INSURGENCY IN ASSAM

The state of Assam has been under the grip of insurgency for more than three decades. Located in the strategic northeastern corner of India, it is part of a region which shares a highly porous and sensitive frontier with China in the North, Myanmar in the East, Bangladesh in the Southwest and Bhutan to the Northwest. Spread over 2,62,179 sq. km, the strategic importance of Northeast India can be determined from the fact that it shares a 4,500 km-long international border with four South Asian neighbours but is connected to the Indian mainland by only a tenuous 22 km-long land corridor passing through Siliguri in the eastern state of West Bengal, fancifully described as the ‘Chicken’s Neck.’

The northeastern region is also an ethnic minefield, as it comprises of around 160 Scheduled Tribes, besides an estimated 400 other tribal or sub-tribal communities and groups. Turbulence in India’s Northeast is, therefore, not caused just by armed separatist groups representing different ethnic communities fighting the central or the local governments or their symbols to press for either total independence or autonomy, but also by the recurring battles for territorial supremacy among the different ethnic groups themselves. Being part of such a region, the state of Assam has also had its share of insurgency movements, which are yet to completely die down.

Insurgency began in Assam with the birth of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) in 1979. On 7 April 1979, six radical Assamese youths met at the Rang Ghar, the famous amphitheatre of the Ahom royalty (the Ahoms ruled Assam for 600 years, beginning 1228 AD) and formed the ULFA, vowing to fight against the “colonial Indian Government” with the ultimate aim to achieve a “sovereign, socialist Assam”. At the meeting at Rang Ghar in Sivasagar district of Assam, the youths agreed that the Indian state has been “exploiting” Assam’s rich tea, oil and forest resources without benefiting the people of Assam. This was the starting point of ULFA insurgency, or we can say, insurgency in Assam.

The late 80s witnessed ULFA’s influence in Assam reaching new heights. Rebels of the outfit killed, kidnapped and threatened tea planters and businessmen in the State to procure funds to purchase weapons and to send its cadres for advanced training in Myanmar, Afghanistan and other places. A reign of terror prevailed as ULFA assassinated and threatened businessmen and industrialists across the State. In 1990, the governance in Assam broke down on the night of November 27-28, 1990.

2 Ibid.
4 The Government was then headed by a regional party, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) with Prafulla Kumar Mahanta as the Chief Minister. The government broke down on the night of November 27-28, 1990
Government of India. Two army operations: Operation Bajrang (between 27 November 1990 and 10 June 1991) and Operation Rhino (between 15 September 1991 and 13 January 1992) against the outfit forced its leadership to take refuge in Bangladesh. ULFA also had camps in Bhutan, but in December 2003, a Bhutanese military operation flushed them out of the Himalayan nation. The outfit continued to launch periodic strikes in Assam, mostly from its facilities in the Sagaing division in Myanmar. In 2009, there were reports of the ULFA setting up a base in China’s Yunnan province, established by the group’s military chief Paresh Baruah. In November-December 2009, all the top leaders of ULFA were arrested except Paresh Baruah. As of now, though the outfit is engaged in talks with the government, a breakaway faction of the group led by Paresh Baruah (known as ULFA-Independent) is still continuing its war against the State.

The ULFA insurgency paved way to formation of other insurgent outfits in Assam. The Bodos, the largest plains tribes of Assam initiated a violent movement in the 1980s. In 1986, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland was formed to attain their dream of an independent Bodo country. The All Bodo Students’ Union (ABSU) too launched a parallel movement till February 1993 with the signing of the Bodo Accord between the Bodo Volunteer Force (BVF) and the Union Government. But a section of the BVF rejected the accord and formed the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) in 1996. The BLT was engaged in several violent acts, especially in the districts of western and northern Assam, particularly the Bodo heartland of Kokrajhar. On 29 March 2000, the BLT signed ceasefire agreement with the Government and Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was created in February 2003. The NDFB, too, announced unilateral ceasefire in October 2004 and signed a ceasefire agreement on 25 May 2005. But the anti-talk faction of NDFB continued to be involved in gun fights and bomb blasts, including nine coordinated blasts on 30 October, 2008 that killed around 100 people and wounded more than 300 in four towns of Assam – Guwahati, Barpeta, Bongaigaon and Kokrajhar. On 1 May 2010, Ranjan Daimary, the leader of the anti-talk faction of NDFB fell into the hands of Indian authorities, but the violence and killings continued. In January 2011, the faction declared a unilateral truce with the government of India in response to the government's call for negotiations.

But, again another splinter faction of the Ranjan Daimari faction of NDFB was formed in November 2012 under the leadership of IK Songbijit, who was the ‘chief’ of Boroland Army of the NDFB-Ranjan Daimary faction. The faction is against talks with the government and has been involved in various incidents of violence since its formation. It killed six persons at Athiabari near Ramfalbil along National Highway 31 in western Assam’s Kokrajhar district on January 17, 2014, by firing indiscriminately at passengers of a bus proceeding from Siliguri in West Bengal to Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya. Then, again on January 28, 2014, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) of Sonitpur district and a police informer were killed, and five policemen seriously injured when insurgents of the NDFB-Songbijit faction ambushed a patrol at Dhekiajuli area in Sonitpur district of Assam. Assam Police has already declared 15 members of

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6 Ibid.
the outfit, including its chief IK Songbijit, as 'most wanted'. Cash rewards have also been announced against their names.\(^{10}\)

Apart from ULFA and the Bodo insurgency, Assam has been affected by insurgent movements initiated by Karbi and Dimasa tribes and the Adivasis. Karbi and Dimasas have demanded autonomy for their homelands whereas the Adivasis have demanded greater recognition of their rights. However, the government has been able to bring most of these groups to the negotiation table.

In Karbi Anglong district of Assam, the insurgent group, United People’s Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) was formed in March 1999 with the merger of two insurgent groups Karbi National Volunteers (KNV) and Karbi People’s Front (KPF). UPDS entered into a cease-fire agreement with the government on May 23, 2002.\(^{11}\) On 25 November 2011, the Centre and the Assam Government signed a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS)\(^{12}\) with the UPDS and the outfit was formally disbanded on December 14, 2011.\(^{13}\) Another Karbi insurgent group, Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF), was formed in 2004 as a breakaway faction of the UPDS. The split was triggered by the ceasefire agreement between the UPDS and Union government. The KLNLF also laid down their arms on February 11, 2010 and the outfit is presently engaged in talks with the government. Meanwhile, another insurgent group Karbi People’s Liberation Tigers (KPLT) was formed on 8 January 2011, by the anti-talk faction of KLNLF with the objective of carving out an Autonomous Karbi state out of Assam. The KPLT continues to remain a major agent of violence in the Karbi Anglong district of Assam.

In the North Cachar Hills district, Dima Halam Daogah (DHD) was formed on 1 January 1995, following the en masse surrender of the Dimasa National Security Force (DNSF) in November 1994. After the DHD signed a ceasefire agreement with the government on 1 January 2003, its erstwhile president Jewel Garlossa formed the breakaway faction ‘the Black Widows’, also known as DHD-J, and unleashed a reign of terror in the district. There was an increase in the number of militant activities, killings, abductions, extortions, etc in the region. It had thrown spanner in all development works in the hill areas, including work on the East West Corridor project of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and a railway gauge conversion project. However, the arrest of the outfit’s leader Jewel Garlossa along with two of his associates in Bangalore on 4 June 2009 changed the insurgency scenario in the district. Immediately after his arrest, the outfit announced a unilateral ceasefire with the state government. Finally on 2 October 2009, 382 cadres of DHD-J laid down their arms in front of the authorities at Haflong, headquarters of NC Hills district.

In November 2009, the National Investigation Agency (NIA), which was probing the alleged diversion of funds of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council to the DHD-J, charge-sheeted

\(^{10}\) http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/15-NDFB-S-militants-declared-most-wanted/articleshow/29158241.cms

\(^{11}\) United People’s Democratic Solidarity (UPDS), http://cdpsindia.org/assam_mgp.asp

\(^{12}\) For the text of the MoS, see http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/documents/papers/UPDS_accord.htm

the outfit’s 'chief' Jewel Garlossa and 'commander-in-chief' Niranjan Hojai. On 16 August, 2011 both the leaders were released from jail by an interim order to participate in formal peace talks. Subsequently, both factions of the Dima Halam Daogah (DHD) signed a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) with the government on October 8, 2012. These two outfits were then disbanded - DHD-J on November 27, 2012 and DHD-N on March 9, 2013.

Table 1: Insurgency related killings in Assam 1992-2014 (till November 30)

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17 http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/data_sheets/insurgency_related_killings.htm
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The spread of Maoism to Assam has added a new security dimension in the already volatile State. The arrests of several top CPI (Maoist) leaders from various parts of Assam have revealed that the Maoists have been active in the State since the nineties. The fact that Maoist activities have been taken seriously by the security establishment is indicated by the fact that the Assam government sent a proposal to the Centre in May 2013 to declare nine districts of the State as Left–wing Extremism affected districts. These nine districts are: Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Golaghat, Sivasagar, Goalpara, Cachar and Karimganj. But the Government of India responded that the Maoists are in a ‘latent phase’ in Assam, and have not been engaging in enough violence, and, therefore, was not keen on declaring the nine districts as Maoist-affected immediately. In February 2014, the Chief Minister of Assam said that Maoists, apart from having a clear nexus with insurgents groups in the Northeast like the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) of Manipur, the ULFA (Independent), and the NSCN (IM), have also established links with the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) as well as ‘Jihadi elements.’

On November 22, 2013, Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), 1958 was extended in Assam for another year with effect from December 4, 2013 and for the first time the Union Home Ministry cited Maoist activities in the state as one of the reasons for extending this Act.

At present, 12 insurgent groups are still active in Assam, of which six are recently formed. The active militant groups in the State are the Paresh Baruah-led United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) or ULFA-I, which has around 240 members, the Songbijit faction of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) with 300 members, Karbi People's Liberation Tiger (KPLT) with 40 members, Kamatapur Liberation Organization (KLO) with around 100 members, Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA) with 40 members and the Assam Unit of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM) with 40 members. The MULTA is headed by Mansur and Ibrahim, while, the HUM is headed by Fazlur Rahman.

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21 Ibid.
The six newly formed militant groups in Assam are - the Karbi National Liberation Army (KNLA), headed by Bidi Kuru Engjai and Ale Deng Eh, the United People's Liberation Front (UPLF), headed by U Karbi and P Dimassa, the Dima Halam Daogah (Action) (DHD-A), headed by Action Dimassa, who has been arrested, the Dima Jadi Naisao Army (DJNA), headed by Ramesh and Aiganon Dimasa, the National Liberation Front for Bengali (NLF), headed by Abhijit Das and the United Dimasa Kachari Liberation Front (UDKLF), headed by Sasiron Langthasa, D Dimasa and Anuj Nunisa.  

At present talks are going at the official level between the central government, Assam government and 13 insurgent outfits. These outfits are: ULFA pro-talk faction, NDFB-Progressive, led by Govinda Basumatary, NDFB-Ranjan Daimary faction, Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF), Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), United Kukigram Defence Army (UKDA), Hmar People's Convention (D) (HPC-D), Kuki Liberation Army (KLA), Adivasi Cobra Military of Assam (ACMA), Birsa Commando Force (BCF), Santhal Tiger Force (STF), All Adivasi National Liberation Army (AANLA) and Adivasi People's Army (APA).

This insurgency-related violence raging in Assam has pulled many women into the vortex of conflict. In the last two decades, insurgency has claimed many lives and injured and disabled many others in the State. Between 1992 and November 2014, 8031 insurgency related fatalities were reported in Assam (see Table 1). Out of this, 4172 were civilians, 822 were security force personnel and 3037 were insurgents. Besides, the number of people killed in ethnic riots is estimated to run into several hundred, although accurate statistics are not available. Anti-insurgency operations conducted by the security forces have also taken many lives including family members of the insurgents or others who did not have any direct links with any rebel group. There are innumerable instances of women losing their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers, besides women themselves getting killed at the hands of either insurgents or the security forces.

This has led to a situation where scores of households across Assam have come to be headed by women who have lost the breadwinners of their families, be they husbands, sons or brothers. Setting aside their own personal loss, these women often have to earn their livelihoods, sometimes venturing out to earn for a living for the first time in their lives. Widows of this kind of violence have to take care of the well-being and education of their children as single parents, and determinedly create a cheerful atmosphere in their homes, so that the children can successfully emerge from their trauma to some kind of normalcy. These women have been forced to run their families in the face of heavy odds.

22 Ibid.
23 www.satp.org
IMPACT OF INSURGENCY ON WOMEN IN ASSAM

The impact of armed conflict on women is usually different from men. This is because such conflicts compel them to take on different functions, play different roles, and shoulder different responsibilities, depending on the situation. Violence and its consequences can have severe impact on the lives of women and subsequently on their children. Combined with emotional and psychological stress, women become overwhelmed with the magnitude of tasks and responsibilities when circumstances force them to head a household and be the bread winner of the family. If this is unusual enough, many such women often meet with disapproval from sections within the society since her role as the breadwinner demands her to come out beyond the social and cultural boundaries, within which she is normally confined to. As noted in paragraph 135 of the Beijing Platform for Action, “while entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society and their sex.”

The United Nations in its study titled ‘Women, Peace and Security’ in 2002 states that understanding the impact of armed conflict on women requires attention to specific themes. (1) Women tend to experience conflict differently than men. Women often see their needs and interests as interwoven with the needs and interests of their male partners and other family members. (2) Just like men, women are both actors and victims in armed conflicts. Women participate in armed forces as combatants and by playing supporting roles. They may assume these roles willingly or be forced to play them. Women are also peace activists, working to heal communities in trouble and bring about sustainable peace. (3) Although many trends and observations regarding women are common to conflict across countries, regions and continents, each situation must be understood on its own terms. Women are not a homogenous group and may have contradictory interests and priorities. The economic, social and political conditions also vary from country to country and it is crucial to ground programmatic responses in concrete realities.

Assam, Northeast India’s largest state, has been experiencing insurgency and conflict for more than three decades now, and the ‘little wars’ or ‘low intensity conflicts’ have been persistently disturbing the people of the State. Spread over an area of about 78,438 square kilometre and home to a population of 31 million, the State is one of the hotbeds in South Asia’s insurgency theatre. Conflict, however, is not a surprise element here as the State is an ethnic minefield—being home to diverse ethnic groups and communities.

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26 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Low_intensity_conflict
A large number of militant cadres belonging to the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and other insurgent groups have been killed by security forces during anti-insurgency operations. Similarly, militants have killed many security personnel and ordinary civilians. These incidents have left many women widows; many women lost their children, fathers, brothers and other family members. And, because of these incidents, the responsibility to run the household fell in the hands of these women. This present study analyses the socio-economic and psychological condition of these women and how they faced the situation after they lost their bread-earning family member.

**Status of Women in Assam**

The population of Assam stands at 31,160,272 as per the 2011 Census, of which 15,954,927 are males and 15,214,345 are females—the sex ratio (females per 1000 males) being 954 and the female literacy ratio being 67.27 per cent. Preference of the male child over the female due to traditional beliefs, deliberate neglect of the girl child and malnutrition has caused this imbalance in the male-female ratio.²⁸ Though Assam is not one of the worst-hit states of India in terms of human development and gender equality, its ranking is quite low. The State ranks 11 (out of 19) at Inequality Adjusted Human Development Index Rank according to 2011 Census.²⁹ The female work participation rate in Assam is 20.8 per cent against the national rate of 35.6 per cent.³⁰ The status of women is decided to a large extent by indices such as income, poverty, education and skills that open up opportunities of development.

Participation of women in the decision making process at home, in society and in the public sphere, and accessing the rights and opportunities provided by the state and the society at large carries much significance as far as the status of women is concerned. In this regard, the position of women in Assam is quite unsatisfactory. Number of women candidates in 2011 Assam Legislative Assembly elections was just 85 (9 per cent) out of 981 candidates.³¹ And out of these, only 14 women candidates managed to win in total of 126 seats, which means there are only 11 per cent women in the Assam Legislative Assembly at present. Even in the recent Lok Sabha election in 2014, there were only 16 women candidates (10 per cent) out of total 162 candidates for the 14 Lok Sabha seats from Assam, out of which only 2 women managed to get elected.³² The scenario is much worse in the tribal autonomous councils in Assam, with only 1 woman member (4 per cent) in the 28 member Dima Hasao Autonomous District Council, 3 women member (11 per cent) in the 26 member Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council and no women member in the 40 member Bodoland Territorial Council.³³

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²⁸ ‘Education And Gender Bias in the Sex Ratio At Birth: Evidence From India’, http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3000011/
²⁹ http://www.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/assam_factsheet.pdf
³³ Respective Websites of Bodoland Territorial Council (http://bodoland.in/jaores/), Dima Hasao Autonomous District Council (http://diprnchills.gov.in/nchac.htm), Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council (http://kaac.nic.in)
It is generally perceived that women from Assam enjoy more freedom of movement and visibility than many other communities in the country. Barring several cases that have come to light in the recent years, normally, practices of bride burning for dowry are not in vogue in the region. This often-cited argument to portray a picture of equity between men and women in the region has brought forward the presumption that violence against women is not really a major concern in the State. But, over the years, the idea has been proved wrong by statistics of registered cases of violence against women in different police stations in the State. According to the ‘Crimes in India 2013’ report of National Crime Records Bureau, Assam recorded the highest number of incidents of crime against women among the eight northeastern states in 2013 with 17,449 such instances. At all-India level, the state stood seventh in 2013.

The prolonged insurgency and armed conflict situation in the State has intensified the woes of violence faced by women in the form of sexual, mental or physical abuse, torture and bloodshed, the manifold social and economic burden and the psychological trauma related to violence. No doubt, the society as a whole, with all its members, may be affected by insurgency violence. Yet, the impact has been worse on women due to their gender and status in society. The culture of violence had brought with it new restrictions on the movement of women, the dress they wear and obviously physical violence such as rape, which is systematically used as a tactic against a particular community.

**Women Headed Households**

The National Family Health Survey (phase-2) states that the percentage of women-headed households in Assam was 12.1 per cent, that was above the total all-India average of 10.3 per cent. The State’s urban population has 12.1 per cent women-headed households against the all-India average of 11.1 per cent. Only the rural percentage (8.4) is below the all-India average (10.0). It is observed that the number of women-headed households in the urban areas of Assam is on the higher side.

**Socio-economic Dimensions**

The loss due to insurgency violence that the women had to bear is not simply physical and emotional, caused by the loss of their near and dear ones. It always transfers to their social and economic spheres of life. In most cases, women experience a decline in social importance or legitimacy. The economic impact of insurgency violence or anti-insurgency operations and killings in Assam is visible by the increase in female-headed households—a sudden change both in the social and economic status of a family that was earlier supported by a man (a husband, a father or a brother)—and now bound to be headed by a women who may or may not have the capacity to work and run the family as it was run earlier. It is just an after-shock to the affected women—the first shock being the death of her husband or son or father, the magnitude of which can only be felt by those affected women.

34 ‘Crimes against women up in 6 NE states; Assam tops list’, The Times of India, July 5, 2014, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Crimes-against-women-up-in-6-NE-states-Assam-tops-list/articleshow/37823559.cms
35 http://ncw.nic.in/pdfReports/Gender_Profile_Assam.pdf
36 Ibid.
According to a report on “Violence against women in Northeast India: an enquiry” by National Commission for Women (NCW), women have been forced to depend on their neighbours or relatives for work and for help to access the formal economic sector. Women in relief camps are deprived of their livelihood and are unable to take up alternative income generating activities. The NCW study states:

“Although all the members of communities are affected by the armed conflict, the impact on women and girls is far greater because of their status in society and their sex. The region, under the shadow of conflict, has witnessed a resurgence of patriarchal values and norms, which have brought with them new restrictions on the movement of women, the dress they wear and more overtly physical violence such as rape, which is systematically used as a tactic against a particular community. All this is compounded by the long social, economic and psychological trauma of armed conflict.”

The economic effects of insurgency may be varied in different countries, and in different contexts. In Nigeria, the militants, mainly the Boko Haram (Boko Haram is a shadowy Islamist insurgency group which operates in northern Nigeria), alone by their nature are used to crippling the economic activities of any place they spread their tentacles. This has also led to migration of people from the affected place due to restiveness. Here insurgency has reduced investment and growth of business in the affected places. Even government executed projects do not get implemented in such areas. No wonder, the 2011 World Investment Report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development reported that lull in business activities caused by insecurity in Kano State alone has cost the Nigerian economy N1.3 trillion ($6 billion) as a result of attacks by the Boko Haram group.

In Nepal, as impact of insurgency on the economy of the country, it is observed that the rich are becoming richer, while the poor becoming poorer. Big industries have been closed, multinational companies are withdrawing. This draws a bleak economic future for Nepal for the coming years.

The socio-economic impact of insurgency also varies from lives of women at relief camps and outside the camps. Reports state that decades of violent insurgency in Assam have forced many women, including homemakers, to even take to prostitution after their husbands or close family members were killed or maimed in terror attacks. “Women hit by terror attacks are exploited very cruelly with some of them forced into nasty things like prostitution,” said Manumati Barman, the Coordinator of a women’s shelter home run by the Global Organization for Life Development (GOLD), an NGO in Guwahati. Insurgency is the root cause behind thousands of shattered families, orphaned children, widowed women, some of them forced to beg for making ends meet.

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37 http://ncw.nic.in/pdfreports/Violence%20against%20women%20in%20North%20East%20India%20An%20Inquiry.pdf
38 http://www.academia.edu/3559251/BOKO_HARAM_INSURGENCY_IN_NIGERIA_ITS_IMPLICATION_AND_WAY_FORWARDS_TOWARD_AVOIDANCE_OF_FUTURE_INSURGENCY
40 Terrorism forces many Assam women into prostitution, Friday, 30 April 2010, IANS
In Kokrajhar and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam, survivors of violence have been living for years together in relief camps. The adverse conditions in such camps deprive the women even of their reproductive rights since she cannot prevent an unwanted pregnancy. This results in delivery of a child in extremely unpleasant circumstances. The difficulties are doubled due to poverty and bad health—a common phenomenon at the relief camps. Again, during conflict times, militants too, try to exercise control over the sexuality as well as reproductive rights of women. They keep close watch over women to see who they are socializing with and dictate the women not to do family planning in order to multiply the race.\(^{41}\)

There are hundreds of widows of insurgency in Assam who have not got the promised ex-gratia payments or jobs promised by the government. "I have not received any money from the government. I have four children and without any financial support from the government, life is simply like hell," said middle-aged Khudija Khatun who lost her husband, Mohammad Arab Ali, to militants’ bullets in 1998.\(^{42}\) In Assam, whenever there is an insurgency violence causing casualties, it has been a government exercise to announce an ex-gratia (since 2008 the amount has been raised to Rs.300,000 from Rs.100,000) and sometimes to promise jobs to the next-of-kin of those who died in such attacks. While some of the women were ‘lucky’ to receive the ex-gratia amount, jobs have been actually provided to only a few.

Women had to travel many times to the Deputy Commissioner’s office of the concerned districts to get their due ex-gratia spending time, energy and money. “I had to make around 40 visits to the DC’s office for two years after my husband’s death before I received Rs 70,000 as ex-gratia”, said Tillottama Basumatary, wife of Romel Chandra Basumatary who was shot dead, along with five others, by rebels of the outlawed NDFB on November 19, 1996.\(^{43}\) If it took two years for Tillottama to get the ex-gratia amount, it was after four years that she started receiving her family pension. The manner in which the officials at the Kokrajhar DC and the DIS offices made Tillottama run around to get her dues without considering the fact that she had just lost her husband who was also the sole breadwinner of her family clearly explains the sense of detachment of the authorities. After three decades since insurgency took roots in Assam, the State Government is yet to form a mechanism or a special cell for the survivors of insurgency to get their dues without difficulty or their grievances heard.\(^{44}\)

The accounts of Anita Mashahary and Janaki Brahma—the two Bodo women who were married to the then top leaders of the powerful All Bodo Students’ Union (ABSU)—deny the general belief that society cushions and protects the survivors of terror, especially if they are women who have lost their husbands or sons to violence.\(^{45}\) As such, women like them had no way but to strengthen their resolve to meet the challenges of life on their own, and move on. They both lost their husbands in the hands of militants - Anita’s husband was abducted and killed on October 13, 2000 and Janaki’s husband was kidnapped by militants in 2001, to be never heard of again. And the way society responded to Anita and her two little children after the tragedy, was

\(^{41}\) Mukhim, Patricia, ‘Women and Insurgency’, The Telegraph, 29 November 2005  
\(^{42}\) Government breaks promise to widows of Assam militancy, Syed Zarir Hussain, IANS, 3 March 2009  
\(^{43}\) Hussain, Wasbir, Homemakers Without The Men: Assam’s Widows Of Violence, Indialog, 2006  
\(^{44}\) Ibid  
\(^{45}\) Ibid
surprising. Her husband, Bagrangsu Masahary, was member of a political party called People’s Democratic Front (PDF), formed in 1996 in the Bodo heartland. The party was supposed to be close to the NDFB. According to Anita, “For a long time after my husband’s death, hardly anybody visited us, perhaps out of fear of being linked to the PDF. Some people may have sympathized with us, but they kept away. Perhaps they thought that they would be targeted by those who killed my husband,” said Anita. While Anita received her ex-gratia after more than 30 visits to the Kokrajhar DC’s office, Janaki—the mother of an infant girl at the time of death of her husband—was deprived of her due. “I did not receive help from the people around me on any front. I never even got any ex-gratia payment as I did not know how to go about claiming it”, Janaki said.46

Many of these women have no fixed income, and those who have some land depend on half the paddy that they get from those who till their land. Many have lost their faith in civil society for its indifferent attitude towards their misfortune and for not contributing anything to help them deal with their trauma. In most of the cases, the only people who backed these women were their parents.

Widows of men related to militants seem to receive a negative approach from the administration and the society at large. While these women may be deprived of their due ex-gratia and job, the people around them may avoid visiting them for the fear of security forces or being tagged as sympathizers of insurgents. When Dimba Rajkonwar, brother of the then ULFA chief Arabinda Rajkhowa47, was gunned down from behind by two motorbike riders on 11 August 1998 at Dibrugarh town, his wife Bharati Rajkonwari was deprived of the ex-gratia payment of Rs 100,000. Shattered after the shocking death of her husband, she became a single parent, saddled with the responsibility of looking after the three young children. Bharati believes that the authorities decided to deprive her of her ex-gratia payment just because she belongs to a family, one of whose members is a militant leader. “My only resolve after the tragedy was to bring up my children well and make them independent in life”, she said. In spite of all the odds, Bharati was keen to form an organization to help those women widowed as a result of violence in Assam.48

Impact on Education and Health

In conflict situations, the girl child is often asked to sacrifice her education on grounds that it is unsafe to venture out of the camps to attend schools. Personal security is cited as an example. Relief camps do not have facilities for education. Economic reasons also compel families to stop the education of their children, particularly daughters. But it is also true that many schools in the vicinity of the conflict are taken over by security forces for their temporary shelter. This further reduces the opportunities for education of girls. Assam is a good example of such type of adverse impact of violence on education.49

46 Hussain, Wasbir, Homemakers Without The Men: Assam’s Widows Of Violence, Indialog, 2006
47 ULFA Chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa was arrested in December 2009. He was released on bail in January 2011 and currently he is heading the ‘Pro-talk’ group of the ULFA and engaged in Peace Talks with the Government.
Children from households headed by women often have to drop out of school to supplement the family income. This creates a psychological and mental block that affects them throughout their lives. No school or state institution has emerged to help deal with the hidden trauma that such children suffer.50

During anti-insurgency operations, there have been increased mobilizations of army and paramilitary forces leading to increased sexual harassment and loss of privacy even within the four walls of the house, often considered as so called safety zone. Women face psychological trauma, physical violence, casualties and even death. Women have special medical needs in conflict situations such as extra nutritional requirements and food during pregnancy and breast feeding. Moreover, as victims of sexual violence, the affected women are prone to sexually transmitted diseases as well as unwanted pregnancies.51

**Psychological Impact (Mental Health)**

Insurgency results in violence that has both tangible and intangible effect. Violence could be either threatened or actual use of force which may be physical, emotional, sexual or social, against oneself, another person or against a community. While in general, violence always ends in loss of personal dignity, liberty and the right to self-determination, in the case of women it has been oppressively directed against them in order to regulate their lives and behaviour. The United Nations General Assembly offered the following definition of violence against women in its Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women:

> Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.52

In 2006 the UN Secretary General stated that “women experience all forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated by both State and non-State actors” during times of armed conflict.53

In general, the State responds by formulating strategies to address the visible impact of insurgency violence by paying compensation to the victims or their next of kin in case of death. But such compensations do not take into account the social and psychological needs of the affected people. The plight of women victims at conflict times and after is something that is mostly ignored and unattended. Very often, when peace returns in an area of conflict, even if it is temporary, the general tendency is to forget the subtle effects that violence brought about to the lives of the women. People believe that life goes back to normal. But does it really?

50 Mukhim, Patricia, ‘Women and Insurgency’, The Telegraph, 29 November 2005
51 Phukon, Dolly, ‘Conceptualizing Gender, Peace And Conflict: The Assam Case’, Peace Tools and Conflict Nuances In India’s Northeast, Wordweaves India, 2010
53 The Secretary General, In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence Against Women, ¶ 1, U.N. Doc. A/61/122/Add.1 (6 July 2006)
The psycho-social vulnerability of women makes them worst-affected victims of violence. Women suffer as wives, mothers and daughters. Stress, strain, anxiety, hysteria, depression, high blood pressure and other psychiatric illnesses increase manifold. Women have to shoulder the responsibility of supporting their families after the death of a husband, a father, a son or a brother. Their injuries are deeper than physical injuries and unlike men, they do not share their tragedy with anybody and that makes them all the more ill. On top of it all, they also face the added problems of abuse and harassment at home or locality. According to a study conducted by the Centre for Northeast Studies and Policy Research (CNES) among women in conflict-ridden areas of Nagaland and Assam, the women survivors of violence in Assam were found suffering maximum trauma from Bodo insurgency, the anti-foreigner movement and ULFA insurgency. “In Dhemaji, many villages were attacked and burnt during the 1983 anti-foreigner riots because they had settlements of a sizeable population of the Bengali-speaking migrant community. In Kokrajhar, women from the Bodo community had suffered in the vicious cycle of insurgency and political violence, which disrupted entire families...While many women victims seemed deeply traumatized, their children, too, appeared to be similarly affected. Families had fallen apart in instances where the sole bread-earner had been killed; the associated stigma of the killing had compounded societal problems,” the report said.

**Trauma, Social Stigma: Impact on Women Victims of Conflict**

“Sujata is unable to sleep. She wakes up in a cold sweat at night remembering the gory sight of burnt human flesh, walking over dead bodies of her family members to reach a safer place..... Bichitra is afraid that she will be branded by the community as a witch. The question that all these women are asking is — Why me?” This is usually the first reaction to trauma and violence.55

The case of seven-year-old Farid (son of a local politician hailing from Tengakhat in Tinsukia district who was shot dead by militants on 20 January 1991), who watched his father crash onto the ground when hit by bullets triggered by unknown gunman, is a classic one. In the aftermath of the incident, the child was hit by post-traumatic stress disorder. He used to keep repeating the number of the car apparently used by his father’s killers, and would often say, “That’s the car they used”. “For a year he did not sleep at night. He refused to go to school and I had to keep him on my lap most of the time. He was gripped by fear. It was tough bringing him back to a semblance of normalcy”, said Kamrun Nissa, his step mother who looked after him and his small brother after their own mother eloped with some other man.56

There is a complex relation between trauma and mental health, something that is not easily clear to an ordinary person. Combined with poverty, violence and trauma affect general mental well-being, and can induce mental disorders in the most vulnerable way. 57 Talking about women, depression, anxiety, stress disorders, personality disorders, dissociative identity disorder, psychosis, and eating disorders are the problems most commonly associated with the experience

54 Women Worst Hit in Strife, Says Report, *The Telegraph*, 16 September 2011
55 Sangeeta Goswami, counselling psychologist and president of MIND India, an organization working on positive mental health
57 *Investing in Mental Health*, a WHO publication, 2008
of violence. Among these, the most damaging problem is stress disorder. Two types of stress disorders are found: acute stress disorder (ASD) and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). ASD occurs within two days of a traumatic event and lasts for a month or less, while PTSD begins within a month but not more than three months. It has been observed that though women are more prone to PTSD, most cases go untreated as the symptoms are rarely taken seriously. A substantial stress has been associated with the anxiety of living in an ambience of constant aggression, particularly on women.

The effect of insurgency violence on women naturally impacts on the lives of children in terms of the child’s well being, personal development and social interactions that may continue after the child turns an adult. Many children develop a sense of taking revenge on the killers of their father. When Premadhar Konwar, 53, was shot dead on 27 July 1993 by armed insurgents in Namrup, three lives were affected the most—his wife Hemoprova and the two sons, Preeti Bhushan and Bibhuti Bhushan. The impact on the 14-year-old Preeti worried his mother, who herself was in a daze after the tragedy. “Preeti was getting increasingly restive. He began to talk about taking revenge. He kept asking why his father was killed, why anyone would want to do that”. Preeti Bhushan was probably suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and in the absence of any professional counseling, the family was unable to calm him down. His mother Hemoprova sank into depression. “I stopped visiting anybody in case they thought that I had gone to them to seek help. I also hesitated to venture out in the market. I was apprehensive of the people’s response. I was slowly becoming an emotional wreck. I remember just sitting and doing nothing for long stretches of time. When my younger son would come to me for help with his school homework, I would send him away, asking him to manage on his own”, said Hemoprova.  

Tribeni Baruah of Nalbari district, who lost her husband in a car blast on 27 February 2000, had a tough time as she had to run the family and counsel her children, leaving her own trauma aside. “My children turned a little aggressive. My daughters developed revulsion for black cars as their father had been riding one such on that fateful day. Besides, they began to hate politicians and ministers, and would either switch off or change channels on TV if any minister appeared in the programme.” Such behaviour indicates post traumatic stress disorder. "The trauma and stress of mothers and children is something that cannot be quantified. We do frequent counselling so that they feel they have someone to fall back upon, something like social security," said Dr Jayanta Das, a well known psychiatrist and counsellor for the Project Aashwas, conducted by the Assam Police.

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58 Hussain, Wasbir, Homemakers Without The Men: Assam’s Widows Of Violence, Indialog, 2006, pg. 67
The present study tried to gauge the social and psychological impact that insurgency have had on the womenfolk of Assam, including those women who have been impacted directly by such violence. The study also made an assessment of the relief and rehabilitation measures taken by the government for the women affected by violence. The study further put forward recommendations that can be taken up for the betterment of these women and their households and to restore their mental peace.

A. Objectives of the Study

- To study the social and psychological impact of violence on women.
- To make an assessment of the relief and rehabilitation measures taken by the government for the women affected by violence.
- To assess the mental disturbance of the affected women.
- To recommend measures that can be taken up for the betterment of these women and their households and to restore their mental peace.

B. Coverage

The study covers four districts of Assam, namely, Kamrup, Tinsukia, Nalbari and Dima Hasao. All these districts have witnessed insurgent violence over the years and have been witness to numerous counter-insurgency operations by security personnel. Womenfolk in these districts have been worst affected by the violence raging in the state for decades.

C. Universe of the Study

Elements: People of the selected districts

Sampling Unit: People of the selected districts

Extent: Four districts of Assam, namely, Kamrup, Tinsukia, Nalbari and Dima Hasao.

D. Sampling Procedure

Stratified Random Sampling
E. Sample Size

A total of 600 people were surveyed spread over four districts of Assam. The Sample consisted of 120 women directly impacted by Insurgency-related incidents, 200 women in households located in insurgency-affected areas of the target districts and 280 Experts/Opinion Makers.

F. Data Collection

The Data was collected through both primary and secondary sources.

Primary Sources of Data:

The data was collected from the field through three questionnaires. Questionnaire I targeted the women directly affected by insurgency, Questionnaire II targeted experts on the field and Questionnaire III was administered among women of the households located in the insurgency-affected areas of the targeted districts. Questionnaire I and III contained questions to analyse the impact of insurgency on the social life, livelihood, education of children and response of government towards the insurgency affected women in the state. Questionnaire I also had a separate set of twenty five questions to gauge the psychological impact of insurgency on the respondents. The second questionnaire was targeted towards experts and opinion-makers of the state and the respondents included academicians, activists of NGOs working on women issues, student activists, government officials, panchayat members and security force personnel among others. All the questionnaires had open ended as well as close ended questions. In all the questionnaires, the close ended questions were pre-coded to be used later in data entry (using SPSS format) and data analysis was done using SPSS statistical software package. The questionnaires also had questions to record the socio-economic data of the respondents.

The questionnaires were administered without anyone interfering/influencing the particular respondent and in areas where questionnaires were required to be filled in crowded places, care was taken to ensure no one directs a respondent to present her views in a particular manner.

Secondary Sources of Data:

Books, Journals (Both print and online), Articles in Newspapers and Magazines, Websites, Government and NGO reports.

G. Data Processing

Data entry and processing was done using the software called SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The information collected from the sample areas chosen were tabulated to provide continuity in data sets. The assumption underlying the approach is that the data collected from the sample areas can be transformed and aggregated to shed light on the general issue under study. The next phase involved processing of the data and its analysis.
Chapter 4

FIELD SURVEY ANALYSIS: WOMEN-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

The insurgency situation in Assam has impacted women, both young and old alike, in the state. Decades of violence have left many women in the state widows at a young age and many have lost their young children in violent incidents. These women, having lost the bread-earning member of their family, had to take up the responsibility to run their households. The study tried to assess the present socio-economic conditions of these women and the psychological impact that these violent incidents have had on their minds.

A. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

A.1. Residential status

Majority of the surveyed women (49 per cent), who have been hit by insurgency related incidents, live in the rural areas of Assam. As most of the cadres of the insurgent groups belonged to the rural areas of the state, these areas witnessed a heavy movement of insurgents. And it also led to various counter-insurgency operations in these areas. In addition to that, the rural areas, having less presence of security personnel, witnessed more violence perpetrated by the insurgents. As such, many families living in the rural areas lost their sole bread winners. The urban and semi-urban areas also witnessed violence in the form of bomb blasts and a few targeted killings, and 35 per cent of the surveyed affected women live in the urban areas and 16 per cent live in the semi-urban areas.

Graph 1: Area of Residence of the surveyed women
Majority of these surveyed women (78 per cent) lived in nuclear families and as such the death of their bread earning member has been a blow to them. Staying away from their relatives added an extra sense of insecurity to these women. However, one sense of satisfaction was that, majority of these women (72 per cent) lived in their own house. These women expressed that this was a huge relief because they had a permanent shelter. The rest of the women lived in rented house (21 per cent), some have gone back to their parents’ house (5 per cent), while a few are now living with their in-laws (2 per cent).

Graph 2: Family Type

Graph 3: Residential Status
A.2. Educational Qualification

The study assessed the educational qualification of the women, who are now heading their respective households after the death of their bread-earning member. It was noticed that the illiteracy rate was high amongst these women with 23 per cent of the women bring illiterate; while 17 per cent read till the primary level, 12 per cent women read up to the middle school level and only 30 per cent studied till their matriculation. Thus majority of these women (82 per cent) have not studied past High School. Only 7 per cent of the women have passed higher secondary and 11 per cent of the women have done their graduation. This low level of literacy became a hurdle for these women to get proper jobs. As mentioned by Mrs. Dipali Baruah, “Majority of the women in our society are dependent on their husbands for running their households. The women mainly play the part of a home-maker and rarely do a job themselves. Not many women have completed higher studies, especially those women who have now crossed the age of 40 years and were residents of rural areas. So, if something happens to their husbands, like it happened to me, it becomes difficult for women like us to get a decent job due to lack of educational qualification.”

![Graph 4: Educational Qualification](image)

A.3. Income Source

After the loss of the bread-earner of a family, the responsibility to run the household usually falls in the hands of the women. The very first thing that is needed then is a source of income to meet the household expenses. The study tried to assess how these women, who came to head their families, are now earning financially. The survey found out that only 22 per cent of the women are now presently employed in a job. Another 30 per cent of the women are now earning their living through some ventures of their own. Some of them earn through tailoring and sewing jobs, while a few rural women are involved in farming. Some of the women work as maids, while some women are running the shop that their husband used to run before his death.

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61 Interview with Mrs. Dipali Baruah, Rupnagar, Guwahati on September 14, 2013
However, the majority of the surveyed women (48 per cent) were unemployed. These women are now dependent on their in-laws, brothers, sisters or other relatives and well-wishers, for financial support to run their households.

Graph 5: Employment Status

Of those having jobs, 11 per cent are working for the central government, while 65 per cent are working in state government departments. The rest of the employed women are working in the private sector.

Graph 6: Areas of Employment
A.4. Income per Month

The monthly income of majority of the women (87 per cent) is below Rs. 10,000. Even the women who are working in government jobs are working at lower level posts and as such do not earn much. While 21 per cent of these women have a monthly income range between Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 10,000, the rest earn less than Rs. 5,000 per month. Only 1 per cent of the women earn above Rs. 30,000 per month, while 6 per cent each of the women earn between Rs. 10,000-Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 20,000-Rs. 30,000.

![Graph 7: Monthly Income](image)

The monthly income of majority of the women reflects their family conditions. These women find it very difficult to meet their day-to-day family needs and have to live in misery. The subsequent sections in this report would analyse how these women have been affected economically due to the death of their family’s sole bread earner.

B. SOCIAL IMPACT

Decades of insurgency in Assam have had a wide impact on the social fabric surrounding the women in the state. The activities of the insurgents and the counter-insurgency operations carried out against them by the security forces have had serious physical and psychological effects on the women. Insurgency and counter-insurgency have left countless women widows; have led to the death of their parents, their children and other close relatives. Women have been witness to violence and killings which have affected their psyche and left many of them with weak minds and heart. Many a times they have been forced to provide shelter and feed cadres of insurgent groups and many such families, in turn, had to face the wrath of security forces for ‘helping’ insurgents.

During the field survey, women were asked about the impact on their social life due to the insurgency scenario prevailing in the state. There were varying responses from the women, with women residing in the rural areas being found to be more adversely affected then their urban counterparts.
B.1. Impact of Insurgency

B.1.1. Paying ‘Tax’ to Insurgents

Various insurgents groups in the state have been collecting money from the people as well as business establishments in the name of ‘tax’ for continuing their struggle. This illegal ‘taxation’ was quite extensive in the state at one point of time. Though such activities have reduced to a large scale extent in recent times, it is still rampant in many interior areas where there is less presence of the security apparatus of the state.

The women respondents were asked whether they had to pay such taxes to insurgent outfits. In reply, 10 per cent of the women said that they had to pay such money to insurgents. All these women, who had paid ‘tax’ to insurgents, stayed in the rural areas of the state and had to part with their hard earned money. None of the women staying in urban or semi-urban areas had to pay money to insurgents. The women who admitted that they had to pay taxes to the insurgents said that they had paid such money many years ago and that now they no longer pay money to insurgents. This shows that such extortions activities have declined over the years and are now limited to a few interior rural areas of the state.

Graph 8: Whether paid ‘tax’ to insurgents

B.1.2. Providing Food and Shelter to the Insurgents

On numerous occasions, cadres of the various insurgent groups in Assam have taken shelter in the houses of the people, especially in the rural areas. These families were forced to provide them food and shelter, and if the family objected, there were instances when the family members were physically assaulted. Apart from that, adding to the woes, many such families had to face the wrath of the security forces for providing shelter to the insurgent cadres.
During the survey, the women were asked whether they had such experience. In reply, 12 per cent of the women said that they were forced to provide food and shelter to cadres of insurgent groups. All these women lived in rural areas and witnessed the movement of insurgent cadres through their villages. Though none of their families were harmed during these stays, still the family had to live in fear and tension for many days during and after their stay.

Graph 9: Whether provided food and shelter to insurgents

B.1.3. Attacked by Insurgents

Insurgent outfits in Assam have numerous instances of targeting innocent common people either to showcase their supremacy or for vendetta killings. This has led to numerous civilian deaths in the state. They also physically assaulted people for not meeting their extortion demands or for not providing them with food and shelter. Such assaults have left many people physically handicapped and at times, have also caused death. There were instances when family members of cadres of insurgent groups were killed by members of rival factions or by surrendered members of the same outfit.

The surveyed women when asked whether they had faced any such attacks from insurgents, 10 per cent of them said that they have been attacked. Some were assaulted for refusing to meet extortion demands; a few were physically hit when they refused shelter, while some were target of random fights between rival insurgent factions.
B.1.4. Abandoning Home/Village

The grip of insurgency was so much in the rural areas of Assam that many families had to abandon their homes and villages and move to a new location. The reasons were several – they wanted to escape from paying extortion money to insurgent groups, there was fear of cadres of such outfits demanding food and shelter and on addition to that they also had to face the ire of the security forces.

During the survey, the women were asked whether they had to abandon their home/village due to the insurgency situation. In reply, 6 per cent of the women said that they had moved from the rural areas to urban areas to escape from the grip of insurgency prevailing in their area.
B.2. Complaint to Authorities

The womenfolk in Assam have been victim of the violence perpetrated by the various insurgent groups as well as during the numerous counter-insurgency operations carried out in the state. This violence has led to the deaths of numerous civilians. Countless women in the state have lost their husbands, children, parents or other close relatives during such violence. The agony that these women had to face in the consequent years cannot be described.

After such incidents, many women had complained to village, local or state authorities to take action against the culprit responsible for death of their close ones or to support their families. When asked, 67 per cent of the women said that they had complained about the incident to the government authorities. But, out of these, response was received by only 45 per cent of the women. Some women were visited by state ministers or local MLAs, while some were visited by district authorities including the Deputy Commissioner.

Graph 12: Whether complained to authorities

Graph 13: Whether authorities responded to complaints
B.3. Counselling Service

With the death of near and dear ones, it is quite natural that the women have to face lot of mental agony. In such moments, if some professional counselling services are provided to the women, it would have helped these women to cope with their loss without breaking down mentally. It is the duty of the government as well as of the civil society organizations to arrange for some kind of counselling service for such women. However, 93 per cent of the women said that they did not receive any kind of counselling.

![Graph 14: Whether received any counselling](image)

B.4. Feeling of Security

The women of the state have suffered a lot in various insurgency-related violent incidents over the years. Loss of family earners, that too bread earners, have left them helpless and in despair. The agony and pain has been constant. But has that feeling subsided over the years or is it still there? The surveyed women were asked this very question, whether they now feel secure for themselves and their family. In reply, 63 per cent of the women said they still do not feel secure.

These women gave various reasons for their fear. Some of them said that there are still many active insurgent groups and factions and as such chances of occurrence of violent incidents are still there. A few women said that they have lost trust and faith in the outside world and fear has found a constant place in their mind. They said that they have been unable to take the fear out of their mind even after many months of the incident. There were also a few women, residing in the rural areas, who said that they are quite alone and have no one to protect them. As such they always have to live in fear and never feel fully secure.
The women who said that they now feel secure pointed out the improvement in the law and order situation in the state. They expressed that the situation is better than what it was a few years ago and they can now move about more freely than before. A few women said that they now feel secure after they have moved out from the rural areas to urban areas. Some women cited the help and support received from their family members in taking the fear out of their minds and helping them lead a normal life.

B.5. Marriage of Daughter/s

With the death of the main bread-earner of a family, the burden of the household falls on the shoulder of a woman. The mental and physical stress of this burden, sometimes takes a toll on these women. They want to loosen their burdens as quickly as possible and there is a perception that sometimes a daughter is considered one of such burdens. Some women may want to marry off their daughters as early as possible, even before she attains a marriageable age of 18 years.

The study wanted to see whether such a perception exists among the women who have lost their bread earners in violence incidents in Assam. Out of the total number of women surveyed, there were 82 women who had daughters and 80 out of these said that they never believe in marrying off their daughters at an early age. All of these women wanted that their daughters get the best education and get a good job or do something of their own before getting married. Many of these women had married off their daughters, but not before they had completed their education or were settled in some jobs or business.

B.6. Response from Society

The response that the society gives to women who have lost a family member, very much affects the psyche of such women in the subsequent days and months. A supportive response would
make women feel secure even after carrying the whole burden of a family on their shoulders but an unfavourable response from the society can trouble the mind and body of such women.

The study tried to find out how the society responded to the loss that these women had to face. They were asked about the response of their relatives and neighbours after the death or injury of their family members. Majority of the women (87 per cent) said that their neighbours had come forward to show their sympathy after such incidents and 52 per cent of the women were also helped monetarily by their neighbours.

Graph 16: Whether neighbours came forward to show their sympathy

Graph 17: Whether neighbours helped monetarily
The relatives also came forward for help, as mentioned by 81 per cent of the women. Thus, majority of these women had the support of their relatives and neighbours during this tragic time of their lives. Many women stated that the support from relatives and neighbours had given them the most satisfaction after the death of their family members. However, some women said that this help and support have dwindled over the years and a few women have now no touch with their extended family members.

Graph 18: Whether received help from relatives

The women were asked whether they felt that people tried to avoid them or their family after the death of their family members, to which 85 per cent of the women replied in negative. However, a few women had faced such situation. According to Mrs. Naila Lakshmi Kakati, her neighbours didn’t let their children play with her children and some neighbours also didn’t let her children play in front of their homes too.62

Graph 19: Whether felt that people tried to avoid them or their family

62 Interview with Mrs. Naila Lakshmi Kakati, Maligaon, Guwahati on July 16, 2013
The women were also asked if male persons stopped talking to them after the death of their husbands fearing backlash from the society. Majority of the women (88 per cent) said that that has not happened. On being asked whether they felt that they were being treated as an object of fear, majority of the surveyed women (87 per cent) said that that was not the case.

Graph 20: Whether male persons stopped talking to them

Graph 21: Whether they felt being treated as an object of fear

The field survey established that the response of the society in Assam has been favourable to the women who had lost their husband, father, son, brother in insurgency-related violent incidents. The society has extended help and sympathy to these women during the time of their agony and these women appreciated this fact during the survey.
C. IMPACT ON EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

With the death of the main bread-earner of the family, the financial position of the family is adversely affected. The income goes down and the effect is felt in almost every sphere of the personal lives of the family members. Education of the children of the family also suffers because of this. Also, when a child has to witness the death of his father or a close family member, it is sure to cause some sort of emotional disturbance in their mind. Such disturbances can have an impact on the studies of the child as well.

The study tried to assess what has been the impact on education of the children of the surveyed women. It was found that in 27 per cent of the surveyed families, at least one child of the family had to discontinue his/her study and out of these, children in 81 per cent of these families had given up their studies to start working for earning a livelihood. As stated by Mrs. Dipali Das – “My husband ran a fruit shop and was killed during a bomb blast that took place near the shop. He was the only bread earner of our family consisting of me and my one son and two daughters, who all were studying at that time. After the death of my husband, my son had to leave his graduation studies and start running the shop so as to run the household.”

Then, again, in case of 32 per cent of the families, the children had to discontinue their tuition/coaching classes. The children in 11 per cent of the families had to change their schools after the death of their father. The reasons cited by the women for change of schools of their children were inability to afford the fees of the school their children were studying and relocating to a new place after the death of their husband.

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Graph 22: Whether children had to discontinue studies

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Interview with Mrs. Dipali Das, Ganeshguri, Guwahati on July 10, 2013
The mental trauma faced by the children was also evident from the fact in case of 23 per cent of the families the children were initially reluctant to go to school after the death of their father. Only after repetitive persuasion did they finally agreed to go to school. The survey also found out that in 33 per cent of the families, the children had turned inattentive to their studies.
Graph 25: Whether children were reluctant to go to school

Graph 26: Whether children turned inattentive to studies

D. IMPACT ON LIVELIHOOD/ECONOMY

Death of the main bread-earner of the family in various insurgency-related incidents in Assam has led to the existence of numerous women-headed households in Assam. These women have been heading their families after the death of their husband, father, son or brother or after they have been left maimed after some violent incidents. These women have since then been carrying the burden of their respective households. The situation before they picked up this responsibility was quite different from what they face now. There has been a change in every sphere of life since then for these women.
The livelihood and economic condition of such families have been most hard hit after the deaths of the main bread-earner. In majority of the families (80 per cent), the household income fell down drastically. In case of 32 per cent of the women, it became difficult managing two square meals a day also in the initial months after they came to head their households.

Graph 27: Whether household income came down drastically

Graph 28: Difficulty in managing two square meals a day
Even managing the education expenses of their children also became difficult for some of these women (33 per cent). In some cases (27 per cent), the conditions were such that the women found it difficult to work outside because they had to look after their baby or ailing parents or, in some cases, their husband, who was injured in insurgent violence. Because of this reason, these women had to do some odd jobs like sewing, tuitions, etc at their own home and were not able to make much of an income.

Graph 29: Difficulty in managing educational expenses of children

Graph 30: Difficulty in working outside
While most of these women expected that either they or their children would be rehabilitated with a job by the government, it happened only in the case of 19 per cent of the families surveyed. No members from rest of the families were provided any job in government departments, though many were promised.

E. RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT/NON-GOVERNMENT SECTOR

The state of Assam has been in the grip of insurgency for decades. Numerous insurgent groups and factions have emerged and operated in the state and have been involved in various kinds of violent incidents. The Government, both at the Centre and State, have been constantly trying to eradicate this menace and have taken various developmental and operational measures towards this issue. The government has also devised policies for the relief and rehabilitation of victims of insurgent violence and their families.

Under the ‘Central Scheme for Assistance to civilian Victims of Terrorist, Communal and Naxal violence’, financial assistance is given to the family members in the event of death or permanent incapacitation of the victim in terrorist (including insurgency), communal or naxal violence. In Assam, during the period 2008-2013, an amount of Rs. 4,02,00,000 (Rupees Four Crore Two Lakh only) has been disbursed among family members of the victims of insurgent violence under this Act. Apart from this, the state government also provides an ex-gratia amount to the family of the victims.

However during the survey it was found that 12 per cent of the women did not receive any kind of financial assistance from the central or state government. Most of these women resided in the rural areas and a few of them were not even aware that they are eligible to receive assistance from the government. Another 22 per cent of the women said that they received funds under the central scheme but did not receive funds that were announced by the state government.

Graph 31: Whether received financial assistance from the government

64 Obtained by CDPS through Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005. See Annexure VI.
The women were then asked, according to them, how much has the government done to support/help the women affected by insurgency. To this question, majority of the women replied either it has done nothing (44 per cent) or it has not done enough (43 per cent). Looking at the trauma these women have faced and their present family conditions, it is not surprising to get such reactions. These women said that apart from giving a one-time relief in the form of ex-gratia funds, the government has done nothing else for them. Some women did not even receive those funds. And, as mentioned earlier, only a very few women or their family members was rehabilitated with a job. Only a small percentage of the surveyed women (4 per cent) said that the government has done enough for the women affected by insurgency, while 9 per cent of the women said that the government did what it could do.

Graph 3.2: How much has the government done

During the field survey many women rued about inaction from the end of the government towards helping them. According to Mrs. Ramjyoti Devi of Tinsukia district, who lost her husband in the hands of ULFA militants on January 7, 2007, “After the death of my husband, many politicians, government officers and even the Prime Minister came to give sympathy and promised help. But none of the promises showed any result. A promise for providing government job to one of family member was also made but nothing has been done.”

Project Aashwas, an initiative by the Assam Police, supported by the National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH), is providing financial assistance to child victims of militancy, terrorism or ethnic/communal violence in Assam. Apart from financial incentives, the project counsels children and their mothers. Under this initiative, the officials at the different Police Stations of Assam identify and collect the details of eligible children from their records and help and guide the parents and guardians of these children to carry out the required procedures like filling and submission of the application forms and procuring the financial assistance. The

65 Interview with Mrs. Ramjyoti Devi, Longsowal, Doomdooma, Tinsukia district, on August 20, 2013
initiative also aims at collecting and collating data relating to children’s families affected by violence.

However, Project Aashwas also has its limitations. Procedural delays while procuring the financial assistance remains a big problem, with many children receiving the funds quite late. There is also the lack of officers from the Assam Police wholly dedicated to the project. Also, Project Aashwas could have been more successful if it had sought support from local NGOs to improve the reach of the programme.

The civil society and the non-government organizations can play a very important role in relief and rehabilitation of the families who have lost their main bread-earner in incidents of violence. They can provide counselling service to the family members, especially the women, they can provide some amount of financial assistance or job or training in skill development. But, during the survey, it was found that only 2 per cent of the women had received some assistance from the non-government sector. They had received sewing machines under that assistance. Also, majority of the women (88 per cent) said that they have not even heard or witnessed any kind of support provided by non-government organizations to women affected by violence. The rest of the women, who have heard about some kind of assistance by the non-government sector, said that some NGOs provide sewing machines, weaving tools and some NGOs provide a one-time financial assistance.

![Graph 33: Whether received assistance from the non-government sector](image)
G. RESPONSE TO PEACE TALKS

The government is at present engaged in peace talks with thirteen insurgent groups/factions. These are: ULFA pro-talk faction, NDFB-Progressive, led by Govinda Basumatary, NDFB-Ranjan Daimary faction, Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF), Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), United Kukigram Defence Army (UKDA), Hmar People's Convention (D) (HPC-D), Kuki Liberation Army (KLA), Adivasi Cobra Military of Assam (ACMA), Birsa Commando Force (BCF), Santhal Tiger Force (STF), All Adivasi National Liberation Army (AANLA) and Adivasi People's Army (APA).66

During the survey, the women were asked whether they were aware of the peace talks going on between the government and these outfits. Barring some women living in the rural areas, especially in the districts of Dima Hasao and Nalbari, majority of the women (67 per cent) were aware of the talks.

The women were then asked about their views on whether they want the government to continue this policy of conducting peace talks with every insurgent group and factions or should they stop doing that. The women were equally divided in their response here, with 44 per cent of the women saying that they want the government to continue with the peace talks, while 43 per cent were against this. The rest of the women said that they have no opinion in this regard as their views are never considered by the government.

Graph 35: Whether aware of the peace talks going on between the government and the insurgent groups

Graph 36: Whether peace talks should continue
Majority of the women (58 per cent) were also in support of continuing with the counter-insurgency operations by the security forces and not stop them just because the government wants to start peace negotiation with an insurgent group or faction.

Graph 37: Whether counter-insurgency operations by the security forces should continue

The women were then asked whether they think that the surrendered insurgents, who were earlier involved in violence and killing of innocents, be pardoned for the sake of peace talks by adopting a “forget and forgive” approach. Majority of the women (73 per cent) were against pardoning these insurgent cadres and leaders.

Graph 38: Whether surrendered insurgents should be pardoned for the sake of peace talks

They gave various reasons as to why they think that these men should not be pardoned, with majority of the women (49 per cent) saying that they should be punished according to the crimes they have committed. The women said that the cases against the former insurgents should not be
dropped and they should be put in jail and not released on bail just to let them sit in the peace talks.

Some women (23 per cent) said that the insurgents involved in killing of innocent persons cannot be forgiven just for the sake of continuing peace talks. A few women said that if these insurgents are pardoned there are chances that they may commit crimes again once they are free. A few others said that death sentence should be awarded to those insurgents involved in numerous murders. Some of the women said that it will be an injustice to the victims of insurgent violence and their families if the insurgent cadres involved in those incidents are pardoned.

However, 10 per cent of the surveyed women believed that the surrendered insurgents, who are presently engaged in peace talks, may be pardoned if this approach brings in peace in the state. A few women said that some insurgent cadres carried out work on the orders of their leaders and as such they cannot be blamed and should be pardoned.

H. SUGGESTIONS

The study tried to solicit suggestions from the women about how the government and the non-government sector can contribute towards the welfare of the women affected by insurgency in Assam. Being a victim of insurgency-related incidents themselves, these women offered various suggestions in this regard.

With regards to the steps that may be taken by the government, the suggestions that were provided are:

- **Provide employment opportunities** to a member of the family which had suffered from insurgency-related incident. The job may be provided according to the educational qualification and work experience of that particular family member. As mentioned earlier, the survey found that a family member of the victim has got a job only in case of 19 per cent of the affected families. The women, who are heading their respective households, and are without any proper job, therefore, expects that the government provide employment opportunities to women like them.

- Government may provide **greater financial assistance** to the families affected by insurgency. The women feel that providing a one-time financial assistance after the incident is not sufficient and the government may provide some more funds after another fixed period of time depending on the financial condition of the family.

- Provide **vocational training** to the women who do not have a job or do not have the necessary educational qualifications for getting a decent job. The training may be on tailoring, handloom, weaving, mobile phone repairing, information technology or such fields which can be handled by women.

- Government should take steps to **increase awareness about schemes** that may be availed by the women affected by insurgency related incidents. Many women, especially those living in the rural areas, don’t even know that the government provides financial
assistance to the family of the victims of insurgency. In this regard, the women suggested that government may conduct awareness programmes in the rural areas or spread awareness through television and radio ads.

- **Provide counselling** to the women affected by insurgency. In order to prevent the mental breakdown of the women, it is very much necessary that they are given some kind of psychological counselling. The women respondents feel that the government may take initiatives in this regard by providing psychological counselling to these women though trained psychologists, free of cost.

- **Conduct survey** of women affected by insurgency-related violence. There are numerous women in the state who have suffered due to the innumerable number of violent incidents in the state over the decades. Many of these women did not receive any kind of assistance from the government. As such, the surveyed women suggested that government may conduct a survey, either through one of its own department or through some reputed NGOs, to prepare a list of such women and provide support to the needy.

- Support and provide **assistance to NGOs** working for welfare of women. The surveyed women suggested that the government may provide assistance to those NGOs who are working for the welfare of the women who have been affected by the insurgency related incidents in the state. Government may provide them with funds for training women for self-employment or provide them with materials like sewing machines, etc. to be given to such women.

- **Provide loans** at subsidized rates to the women for starting something of their own. The women, who had to become the head of their respective households due to death of their sole bread-earner, may be able to earn their own living by starting some small business. The government may provide them with loans at subsidized rates so that there lesser burden on their already overloaded shoulders.

With regards to the steps that may be taken by NGOs/private sector, the suggestions that were provided are:

- The NGOs or the private sector may provide one-time **financial grant** to the women who have lost their bread-earner in insurgency-related violence. They can help the women living in those areas where they have their operations.

- Provide **vocational training** to the women on fields such as tailoring, handloom, weaving, mobile phone repairing, information technology and related fields.

- NGOs may take steps to **increase awareness about schemes** that may be availed by the women affected by insurgency. They can do this by organizing awareness camps or by printing and distributing pamphlets containing details about such schemes and how to avail them.
• NGOs can also help the affected women by organizing **fund-raising event** for the benefit of such women.

• **A platform** may be formed with the affected women by NGOs and this platform may be used to work for the benefit of the women who had to suffer from insurgency.

• NGOs may **help in availing the benefits** of various government schemes. It was found during the survey that some women found it quite difficult on their part to keep scurrying alone to get the benefits of certain government schemes. Help from NGO members, who are working on women issues, would be of immense assistance to these women.

• Sponsor or help women to find **sponsors for their children’s education**. After the death of the husband, it becomes difficult for many women to cover the educational expenses of their children. Private sector organizations can help these women by sponsoring the education of such children. NGOs may also play a role here by either themselves sponsoring the studies of the children or by helping in finding a sponsor.

• NGOs may **conduct survey** of women affected by insurgency. They can then prepare a list of such women and can provide support to them, as well as share the findings with the government, so that the government may come forward to help these women.

• NGOs may also take up a study do **document the effect of insurgency on women**. The findings of that study can be shared with the government.

• Take initiative to **get young widows remarried**. Insurgency-related violent incidents have left many women widows at a very young age, sometimes even without any children. NGOs may take initiative to get these young widows remarried, so that they can start their life afresh.

**I. OBSERVATIONS**

• The financial assistance provided to family members of victims of insurgency is not uniform. Some women received assistance from both the state and central government, while some received from either the state or the central government only, while some women did not receive it at all.

• The NGO/Private sector in Assam has done very little to help the women affected by insurgency.

• Low level of education among women has acted as a hindrance for many of them to get a government job after the loss of their bread-earning family member.

• The society in Assam has been responsive to the plight of these women in majority of the cases and has helped them with both mental and financial support.
FIELD SURVEY ANALYSIS: PSYCHOLOGICAL TEST FINDINGS

The study involved carrying out a test to determine the psychological conditions of the surveyed women. This was done in order to analyse what effect insurgency had caused to their psyche. The test was conducted to measure four aspects of the women respondents – Depression, Anxiety, Stress and Personality Disorder. For this purpose, a set of 25 questions were prepared (See Annexure I – Questionnaire 1 – Part II). Each questions had options and each option was assigned a rating point to quantify the response and to be used later for analysis.

A. FORMULAS USED

A.1. Depression Screening Test

A set of six questions were used to analyse the depression level among the surveyed women. The following table indicate the rating point assigned to each response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q4</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Q5</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Q6</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
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<td>a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>c</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questions were prepared in consultation with a leading psychiatrist of Assam, Dr. Jayanta Das.
The total rating points was calculated using the following formula:

Depression, \( D = \sum D_i = D_1 + D_2 + D_3 + D_4 + D_5 + D_6 \)

The level of depression was then determined according to the total rating points calculated and compared using the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Depression Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 10</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 20</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A.2. Anxiety Test

A set of six questions were used to analyse the anxiety level among the surveyed women. The following table indicate the rating point assigned to each response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q7</th>
<th>Q8</th>
<th>Q9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response (A_7)</td>
<td>Points</td>
<td>Response (A_8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q10</th>
<th>Q11</th>
<th>Q12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response (A_{10})</td>
<td>Points</td>
<td>Response (A_{11})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total rating points was calculated using the following formula:

Anxiety, \( A = \sum A_i = A_7 + A_8 + A_9 + A_{10} + A_{11} + A_{12} \)

The Anxiety level was then determined according to the total rating points calculated and compared using the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Anxiety Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A.3. Stress Test

A set of six questions were used to analyse the level of stress among the surveyed women. The following table indicate the rating point assigned to each response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q13</th>
<th>Q14</th>
<th>Q15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response (S13) Points</td>
<td>Response (S14) Points</td>
<td>Response (S15) Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total rating points was calculated using the following formula:

\[
\text{Stress, } S = \sum S_i = S_{13} + S_{14} + S_{15} + S_{16} + S_{17} + S_{18}
\]

The Stress level was then determined according to the total rating points calculated and compared using the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Stress Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A.4. Personality Disorder Test

A set of Seven questions were used to analyse the level of personality disorder among the surveyed women. The following table indicate the rating point assigned to each response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q19</th>
<th>Q20</th>
<th>Q21</th>
<th>Q22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response (P19) Points</td>
<td>Response (P20) Points</td>
<td>Response (P21) Points</td>
<td>Response (P22) Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total rating points was calculated using the following formula:

Personality Disorder, \( P = \sum P_i = P_{19} + P_{20} + P_{21} + P_{22} + P_{23} + P_{24} + P_{25} \)

The Personality Disorder level was then determined according to the total rating points calculated and compared using the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Personality Disorder Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-70</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B. RESULTS**

After calculating the total rating points according to the response given by each woman in all the four parameters, the following results came up. The table below indicates the level of Depression, Anxiety, Stress and Personality Disorder amongst the surveyed women. (For the complete individual test results see Annexure V)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Status 1</th>
<th>Status 2</th>
<th>Status 3</th>
<th>Status 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Purnima Saikia</td>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Suku Das</td>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Anjana Das</td>
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<td>82</td>
<td>Neera Khersa</td>
<td>Dima Hasao</td>
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<td>83</td>
<td>Bernika Hmar</td>
<td>Dima Hasao</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Dima Hasao</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
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<td>86</td>
<td>Rangjan Kemprai</td>
<td>Dima Hasao</td>
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<td>87</td>
<td>Nalini Haflongbar</td>
<td>Dima Hasao</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
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<td>88</td>
<td>Pranali Thausen</td>
<td>Dima Hasao</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>89</td>
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<td>Dima Hasao</td>
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<td>Maimondi</td>
<td>Dima Hasao</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>91</td>
<td>Janoki Langthasa</td>
<td>Dima Hasao</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Sima Sarkar</td>
<td>Dima Hasao</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>Sujata Kar</td>
<td>Dima Hasao</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following tables exhibit the number of women in each level of Depression, Anxiety, Stress and Personality Disorder. The tables also show the percentage of women in each level as percentage of total number of women surveyed.

### Depression Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depression Level</th>
<th>No. of Women</th>
<th>As Percentage of total no. of women surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

52
It can be seen that majority of the women suffer from mid to low levels of depression. However, a significant percent of women also have high levels of depression. These women do not like doing their day-to-day activities and have difficulty sleeping. They stay sad and feel unhappy and dejected. They also are not able to concentrate much.

**Anxiety Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety Level</th>
<th>No. of Women</th>
<th>As Percentage of total no. of women surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table exhibits that majority of the women have a mid-level anxiety level. A few women also exhibit high level of anxiety. These women have a fear in their mind and sometimes the fear is more when they or their children go out of the house. Many women with high level of anxiety have recurrent thoughts or images of terror in their minds. They also experience sensations of shortness of breaths, palpitations or shaking in some occasions. However, among many women, who had lost their family members many years ago, do not display this anxiety or even if it is there it is very less.

**Stress Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress Level</th>
<th>No. of Women</th>
<th>As Percentage of total no. of women surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stress levels are not high in majority of the women, which is a good sign. This implies that majority of the women are able to carry out their work efficiently and also find time for themselves. However, some women still exhibit high or medium levels of stress. This is because of insufficient rest and neglect of diet. These women also tend to get angry frequently and sometimes feel unable to cope with all the work they have to do.

**Personality Disorder Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Disorder Level</th>
<th>No. of Women</th>
<th>As Percentage of total no. of women surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are very few women who exhibit some kind of disorder in their personalities. The table shows that only 4 per cent of the women exhibit high level of personality disorder and 19 per cent show mid-level of personality disorder. These women feel that after the death of their bread-earner, people do not respect them or that people try to exploit or deceive them. They also tend to hold grudges against others and sometimes get envious towards other people, whom they consider more lucky and happier than them. However, the good thing is that, the test has exhibited that majority of the women show almost no or low levels of personality disorder.

Thus from the findings of the psychological test, it can be seen that a significant percentage of women are suffering from Depression and Anxiety. The death of their husband, fathers or sons have led to gloom and fear in their minds, which are yet to disappear. However, the stress level is not too much among the surveyed women and very few women have exhibited personality disorders.

The results of the tests was also influenced by the time elapsed since the death of their family members. Those women, who had lost their bread-earner many years ago, now exhibit lower levels of the traits examined in the test, whereas, those women, who have lost their husbands, sons or fathers recently exhibit a higher level of these traits. There are exceptions here also, because some women who had lost their close ones many years ago still displayed higher levels of Depression and Anxiety.

The results show that still there are many women who exhibit high levels of Depression, Anxiety, Stress and Personality Disorder. Lack of psychological counselling after the death of their close family members is the reason for this. Such traits may wither down as time passes but still it is necessary that the government or the civil society take initiatives to provide proper psychological counselling to these women.
Chapter 6

FIELD SURVEY ANALYSIS:
WOMEN LIVING IN
INSURGENCY AFFECTED AREAS

The vicious cycle of insurgency has had various direct and indirect effects on the lives of the people in Assam. Every household in the insurgency-affected areas of the state have been impacted by insurgency. The women living in these households were also impacted deeply from the various insurgency-related incidents. During the study, 200 women in households located in insurgency-affected areas were surveyed to assess the impact of insurgency on their lives and their families.

A. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

A.1. Residential status

Majority of the surveyed households (45 per cent) were located in the rural areas of Assam. As already mentioned earlier in the report, the rural areas of Assam witnessed greater scale of insurgency and counter-insurgency operations. Hence, the impact of insurgency was more felt across households in the rural areas. The urban areas also witnessed insurgency-related incidents, which included bomb blasts and targeted killings. The survey covered 39 per cent households in urban areas and 16 per cent in semi urban areas. Majority of the surveyed households (90 per cent) were nuclear families. Majority of the surveyed women (77 per cent) lived in their own homes, whereas the rest 23 per cent lived in rented accommodation.

Graph 39: Area of Residence of the surveyed households
A.2. Educational Qualification

The study revealed that the educational qualification of the women in the surveyed households is not very high. Only 27 per cent of the women in the surveyed households have completed their graduation and a meagre 9 per cent their post graduation. The percentage of women completing their higher secondary level education was 28 per cent, while 18 per cent studied till their matriculation. Women who studied till middle School level comprised 7 per cent of the surveyed women, while 9 per cent studied till primary level and the rest 2 per cent were illiterate. This implies that 64 per cent of the women in these surveyed households did not study beyond the higher secondary level, which is quite a disturbing figure. Insurgency can be said to be reason for this, as many parents hesitate to send their girl child away from their homes for higher studies.
A.3. Employment Status

Majority of the women in the surveyed households are not directly engaged in any job. Only 30 per cent of the women are currently employed. Amongst them, 44 per cent are working in state government departments, 3 per cent with the central government and the rest 53 per cent are engaged in private companies. Another 35 per cent of the women in the surveyed households are involved in self-employment generation activities like sewing, weaving, private tuitions, etc. The rest of the women (35 per cent) are currently unemployed.
B. SOCIAL IMPACT

The study assessed the impact of insurgency on the social life of the women in the surveyed households. These households, being situated in insurgency-prone areas, have experienced the wrath of the insurgents and the various counter-insurgency operations. Apart from being directly impacted by insurgency, like death of family members, attacks on self and family members, paying tax to the insurgents, these households have experienced indirect impact of insurgency like general shutdowns, closure of schools, shortage of medical staff at health centres, etc.

B.1. Impact on the Surveyed Households

The women in the surveyed households were asked about their experiences of residing in insurgency-affected areas. The women gave various accounts on how insurgency have affected their households, with 22 per cent of the women saying that they were forced to provide food and shelter to the insurgents. Majority of these were residents of rural areas in the surveyed districts and these households sometimes even had to face the brunt of police and army personnel.

Graph 44: Impact of Insurgency on the Surveyed Households

1 = Forced to pay tax to the Insurgents
2 = Forced to provide food and shelter to Insurgents
3 = Attacked by the Insurgents
4 = Close relatives attacked/ killed by Insurgents
5 = Forced to abandon home/village
6 = Other indirect impacts
Another 17 per cent of the women said that their households were forced to pay ‘tax’ to the insurgents. This reduced their household income. A few women said that due to demand of money from the insurgents, they could not go forward with expanding their business.

During the survey it was also found that women in 14 per cent of the surveyed households have faced direct attacks from insurgents. Women in another 15 per cent of the households said that their close relatives like husband, father or brothers have been attacked by insurgents. Some of these attacks were because of their non-payment of extortion money by the insurgents, while some were victims of random attacks by insurgent groups.

Women in 6 per cent of the surveyed households said that due to the activities of the insurgents and continued counter-insurgency operations, they had to abandon their homes and villages and move to other areas.

Another 46 per cent of the women said that as they live in areas which are affected by insurgency, they had to face numerous problems. There is restriction of their movement during night, the study of their children have been affected, there was shortage of trained medical staff at the health centres and for households who run business, the bandhs (shutdown) called by the insurgent groups cause negative effect on their income. The women in the rural areas also complained that because of the counter-insurgency operations, they are forced to stay indoors.

**B.2. Impact on Women in General**

After the women described the impact of insurgency on their households, they were asked to give their views on the general impact that insurgency has had on the lives of the women in Assam. The women gave numerous responses to this question, with majority of the women (46 per cent) saying that women in insurgency affected have to live in fear. This fear is mainly about their own safety as well as of their family and loved ones.

The women in the surveyed households (39 per cent) said that the long running insurgency has led to many women becoming widows and many women having to lose their children. This, according to them, has been a major blow to the lives of the women in the state. This loss of their husbands and children has led many women to become the sole bread earner for their families and head their households. This view was given by 24 per cent of the women in the surveyed households.

Insurgency also had a major impact on the mental condition of the women in the state. The surveyed women (31 per cent) said that insurgency has taken toll on the mental health of the womenfolk in the insurgency-affected areas of Assam and this is a major cause of concern according to them. Though insurgency is on the wane in the state and the situation is much improved now, still 12 per cent women in the surveyed households said that insurgency has restricted the movement of women and that women still cannot move freely after dark in the insurgency-affected areas. A sizeable percentage of women (23 per cent) said that insurgency has led many to leave their homes and settle elsewhere, especially those women who have lost their family members in insurgent violence.
The women in the surveyed households also talked about the impact of insurgency on the education of girls. According to 15 per cent of the women, parents in insurgency-affected areas do not want to send their girl child outside their area of residence. The fear of insurgency has thus affected the education of the girl child. Another impact of insurgency on women, as mentioned by 23 per cent of the respondents, was that education of children of women-headed households has suffered. Lowering of income of the household, relocation to a new area, change of school or discontinuation of studies to earn a livelihood were cited as major reasons why the education of children of women affected by insurgency suffered a setback.

**B.3. Impact on Health of Women**

The women in the surveyed households spoke about the impact on health of the women living in the insurgency-affected households. According to 40 per cent of the women, due to insurgency there is shortage of medical staff at the government hospitals in many areas. As such, the women in these areas are unable to get their health check up done regularly. This is truer for women in...
rural areas, where they cannot keep visiting the town for health check up and neither can they afford the fees of private hospitals.

Another 20 per cent of the women said that insurgency has instilled fear in the mind of the women in these areas and they do not travel even to the hospitals. This has lead to many cases of deteriorating health of women in insurgency-affected areas. Some women (24 per cent) also said that the women who have lost their loved ones in insurgency neglect their health and diet, leading to deteriorating health.

![Graph 46: Impact on Health of Women](image)

1 = Health deteriorates due to neglect of diet  
2 = Women fear to visit hospitals  
3 = Shortage of medical staff in insurgency affected areas

**Graph 46: Impact on Health of Women**

**B.4. Impact on Daily Life and Activities of Women**

The surveyed women narrated the impact of insurgency on the daily life and activities of the women living in the insurgency-affected areas. Majority of the women (56 per cent) said that the women in these areas are mentally depressed. This is mainly due to the fear and stress they have to face while living in an environment of insurgency. The women (52 per cent) also said that the women in insurgency-affected areas cannot move freely due to fear. Restriction on movement is also made by the family of these women and this contributes further towards their mental depression.
In case of the women who are heading their households, insurgency has greater impact on their daily lives. The surveyed women (15 per cent) said that such women live secluded lives without the support of their loved ones. Also, as these women have to earn a livelihood for their families and also do the household chores, 12 per cent of the surveyed women felt that this leads to them not getting enough rest and time to look after themselves.

**B.5. Impact on Livelihood/Career of Women**

The prevailing insurgency situation had an adverse impact on the livelihood and economy of the women in the households in the insurgency-affected areas. This was especially true in the case of the women-headed households. A significant percentage of the women in the surveyed households (44 per cent) said that it was difficult for women to do a job in the insurgency-affected areas and many of them had to leave their jobs, which affected their career prospects. Another 38 per cent of the women said that there are very few industries and business investments in insurgency-affected areas, which lead to lack of employment avenues for the women. As most of the households want their womenfolk to work in a nearby area, lack of access to employment avenues means that they are left with no jobs.
Insurgency also affects the economic equations of the households, especially those which are run by women, as many of them have to pay extortion money to the insurgent groups, feel 12 per cent of the women surveyed. Also it was felt by 18 per cent of the women that those women who run their households are unable to do justice to both their job and family and they are unable to focus much either in their job or to their family responsibilities.

B.6. Response from Society

The women were asked what they thought about the response given by the society to the women who are now heading their respective households, due to loss of their bread earner in insurgency-related incidents. Majority of the women (45 per cent) said that though the society was sympathetic to these women and display a positive attitude towards them, still they do not provide much help. Another 22 per cent said that society only provides moral support during the initial days of their mourning and not much help later on. Some women (14 per cent) said that society tries to help these women but such women themselves stay away from all kinds of social engagements. Society also holds an indifferent attitude towards such women, feel 26 per cent of the surveyed women.

**Graph 48: Impact on Livelihood/Career of Women**

1 = Difficulty to work in insurgency-affected areas
2 = No industry/Business set up in the area due to insurgency
3 = Have to pay extortion money to Insurgents, leading to loss of income
4 = Fail to do justice to both job and family
B.7. Feeling of Security

The women in the surveyed households were asked whether they feel secure now as the level of insurgency has gone down in the state. But, interestingly, 70 per cent of the women said that they still do not feel secure in their areas. The main reason cited by them was that there was still the presence of various insurgent groups and there are still numerous incidents of insurgent violence being reported in the state. As such they do not feel completely secure even in today’s environment.
C. RESPONSE OF GOVERNMENT

As mentioned in the earlier chapter, the Government, both at the Centre and State, have taken various developmental and operational measures towards helping the women affected by insurgent violence and has also devised policies for the relief and rehabilitation of victims of insurgent violence and their families. But the question here is how successful has been these programmes in helping the women who were adversely affected by insurgency.
The women in the surveyed households were asked according to them how much has the government done to support/help the women affected by insurgency. In reply, majority of the women (54 per cent) said that the government has not done enough to help such women, whereas 35 per cent women said that the government has done nothing. Only 1 per cent of the women said that government has done enough, while 10 per cent said that it has done what it could do. This proves that the common people in the state do not consider that the government has done anything positive for the women affected by insurgency.

D. RESPONSE TO PEACE TALKS

During the survey, the women were asked whether they were aware of the peace talks going on between the government and the insurgent outfits. Majority of the women (83 per cent) were aware of the talks. However, 28 per cent of the women said that the government should stop holding peace talks with these groups. Another 31 per cent of the women said that government should continue the use of security force operations against insurgents and do not stop these operations even if they express desire to come for talks. However, 35 per cent of the women wanted that the government sit for peace talks with the insurgent groups, in order to stop the cycle of insurgency.

Graph 52: Whether aware of the peace talks going on between the government and the insurgent groups
The women were also asked whether they think that the surrendered insurgents, who were earlier involved in violence and killing of innocents, be pardoned for the sake of peace talks by adopting a “forget and forgive” approach. To this question, majority of the women (84 per cent) said that these insurgents should not be pardoned.
On analyzing the responses given by the women in these surveyed households, it can be seen that these women, who have not often been directly under impact of insurgent violence, were still living in a shadow of fear just because they resided in an area which was still witnessing with insurgency-related incidents. They have felt the adverse impact of insurgency on their daily lives and activities and even now, when the insurgency situation has relatively improved, they do not feel completely secure.
A. IMPACT OF INSURGENCY ON WOMEN

The study solicited the views of experts/opinion-makers of the state regarding the condition and welfare of women affected by insurgency-related incidents. Views were taken from people working in diverse fields such as academicians, activists of NGOs working on women issues, student activists, government officials, panchayat members, security force personnel, among others.

The respondents were unanimous in expressing that insurgency has had a very negative impact on the lives of the women in Assam. They gave various views as to how the women of the state have suffered due to the continuing insurgency in the region. They cited the examples of numerous women, who had become widows, women who lost their children, women who lost their father, brother and other family members. They said that these women had to bear the pain of loss of these near and dear ones and this has caused mental and physical breakdown of many of these women.

The violence perpetrated during the insurgency movement has created numerous women-headed households in the state. With the loss of their bread-earning family member, the women had to take up the responsibility of running the household. According to the respondents, for many women, this added responsibility, became like a burden. Many women found it difficult to properly carry out their household responsibilities. Many such women started to stay away from their other family members and this led to breakdown of family relations.

The respondents also said that violent insurgency-related incidents have instilled a sense of fear among the womenfolk of the state. Many women, who had witnessed the death of their family members, had stayed panic stricken for many days and months and some even suffered a mental breakdown.

The insurgency movement has also had an affect on the movement of women in the state. According to the respondents, due to the activities of the insurgents, many families feared to let the women of the family move freely, especially after the dark. Education of girl child was also affected, as many families did not let their girl child travel far from their homes.
A.1. Impact on Health

Insurgency has had a very bad impact on the health condition of the women of the state, basically in the rural areas. The respondents gave various views as to how bad this impact has been. They said that during the peak of the insurgency movement, doctors didn’t travel to areas which were considered too much insurgency affected. As such proper treatment was not available to people of such areas. As the womenfolk of such areas rarely used to travel outside their areas, as such lack of proper medical attention led to degeneration of health conditions of many women in that region. Insurgency also led to the non-organization of health camps in rural areas. As many village people, especially the women, used to get free regular health check-ups at such camps, the lack of such camps led to many women being left unattended to their health conditions.

Respondents also pointed out that insurgency also led to shortage of trained medical staff at the various health centres around the state. The areas which were considered insurgency affected witnessed lack of medical staff, including doctors. Since health centres are the primary source where the rural people get their treatment, absence of staff meant that the health complications of the people were not properly addressed. The women of such areas suffered more as these centres were the primary place where they used to go for their treatment. Insurgency also led to fear, restricting the movement of women. Thus, many a times, it happened that women feared to travel to hospitals, especially if some medical complications came during the night, fearing some untoward incidents.

A major impact of insurgency has been on the mental health of the women, especially of those women who have lost their family members in violent incidents. The respondents recalled several instances of mental breakdown, trauma and fear that have been experienced by many women of the state.

A.2. Impact on Income, Livelihood & Career

The respondents accepted that the effect of insurgency has also been felt on the income and job scenario of the women. When the sole bread earner of a family dies or is maimed in an insurgency-related incident, the household income comes down drastically. With no one to earn for the family, the burden to run the family falls in the hands of the women. Many a times, such women cannot find a decent job or any other source of income and it becomes difficult to run the household. This was evident during the field survey, where many women explained their poor financial condition after the death of their bread-earning family members.

Another problem faced by women after they lose their bread-earning family member is that they are unable to get a decent job due to lack of higher education on their part. As mentioned in the earlier chapter, during the field survey for the study it was seen that only 17 per cent of the women, who are now running their households, have studied above the high school level. As such these women face a hard time getting a good job.

One other problem faced by women in insurgency-affected areas in Assam is that family members do not want women to work in areas away from their homes fearing for their safety.
Respondents also said that there were instances when women had to leave their job in areas where there were reports of insurgent activities.

**A.3. Impact on Daily Life and Activities**

Insurgency has adversely affected the daily life and activities of the women in the state. Respondents said that the most visible impact has been on the movement of women. Fear of insurgent violence has led to restriction of women to their homes. The counter-insurgency operations by the security forces also acted as a factor here.

For those women who had lost their husbands in insurgency-related incidents, the daily life changed completely. Respondents said that such women tended to become mentally depressed and the added burden of running their families increased their woes. The respondents also said that many women started avoiding the society and lived a solitary life. Also, the burden of running the family caused many women to have little time to rest or to look after themselves, leading to deterioration of their health conditions.

**A.4. Impact on Family Relations**

Respondents said that the family relations got weaker in many families after the death of the sole bread-earning male member. The women of such families got mentally depressed and in most cases started to stay away from social and family gatherings. Many women living in nuclear families slowly drifted away from their other family members. Respondents also said that in some families, the mother was unable to take proper care of their children, which led to fractured relations between the mother and their children.

**B. RESPONSE OF THE SOCIETY**

Respondents believed that the society has been providing its support to the women affected by insurgency in the state. They said that though some section of the society show indifferent attitude towards such women, major section of the society comes forward to help them. The respondents, however, accepted that the assistance is more in the form of mental support than in kind.

Respondents said that there were also instances when some women had to change their place of residence due to negative treatment from the society. The respondents also said that some people try to take advantage of such women due to their helplessness. It also happens sometimes that such women themselves stay away from the society.

**C. RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT**

The respondents were asked whether they think that the government has adequate rehabilitation plans in place for helping the women affected by insurgency. Majority of the respondents (67 per cent) replied in the negative, saying that the government is yet to take any concrete steps to rehabilitate such women.
The respondents were then asked to give their views on how much do they think the government has done to help the women affected by insurgency. In reply, majority of the respondents (42 per cent) said that the government has not done enough and another 16 per cent of the respondents said that the government has done nothing. Another 40 per cent of the respondents felt that government has done whatever it could do. Only a small percentage of respondents (2 per cent) said that the government has given proper assistance to the women affected by insurgency.

Graph 55: How much has the government done to help the women affected by insurgency

In order to provide better assistance to the women who have lost their bread-earners, the government needs to have a proper database of such women. For this there is the requirement for a proper baseline survey that would enumerate the socio-economic condition of such women and as well as lead to the creation of a database where all the details of such women may be stored. The study tried to find out whether any such initiative was taken by any government. As the respondents of the study comprised of people who worked in the government and people who worked on various women issues, they were asked whether they have any knowledge about such a survey being carried out. However, majority of the respondents (89 per cent) said that they have not witnessed any such survey. The rest of the respondents said that they have heard that the social welfare department of Assam government had earlier carried out such survey, but none of them could provide any specific information. Secondary source research made during the study also displayed lack of any baseline survey enumerating the conditions of women affected by insurgency violence in Assam.

D. SUGGESTIONS

The respondents were asked for their suggestions on the issue of welfare of the women affected by insurgency. Following were the suggestions provided:

Steps that may be taken by the government:

- Provide employment opportunities to the women whose sole bread-earning family member was killed or maimed in an insurgency-related incident
• Provide vocational training to the women
• Provide educational expenses of the children of the family
• Increase awareness about schemes that can be availed by the women affected by insurgency
• Proper implementation of the schemes meant for women
• Establish a helpline for women affected by insurgent violence where they can know or enquire about various schemes available for women like them
• Take initiative to improve education level among women in rural areas
• Provide security for working women
• Set up a separate commission or a rehabilitation department or cell to look after women affected by insurgency

**Steps that may be taken by NGOs/Private Sector:**

• Provide vocational training to women so that they can be self-sufficient
• Increase awareness about schemes that can be availed by the women affected by insurgency
• Raise funds for affected women through programmes and donations
• Take up advocacy on women issues with the government
• Conduct survey of women affected by violence
• Involve these women in activities of NGOs
RECOMMENDATIONS

The study had done extensive literature review on the subject and had gone through various measures that are being presently taken up by the government for the welfare of the women affected by insurgency. However, during the field survey it was found that many women are still in need of proper attention from the government as well as from NGOs working on women issues.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are being put forward so that steps may be taken for the welfare and development of those women who are now running their households after losing their sole bread-earner in insurgency-related incidents.

A. Suggestions for the Government

1) Separate Cell under State Home and Political Department

The state government may set up a separate cell for handling the issues related to the women affected by insurgency. This cell may do the needful to identify the women affected by violence and update the records besides ensuring hassle-free disbursement of the ex-gratia amount granted by the Government to the family members of victims of insurgency on time and see that the affected people do not face difficulties in getting their due. This cell may be set up under the State Home and Political department. The cell may also include officer(s) on deputation from the State Social Welfare Department. The cell can work independently and be helped by the concerned district administrations. The cell must have record of details of families affected by insurgency violence in Assam. The cell must have a dedicated helpline that can be contacted by the women in case of any grievances and for that, the cell need to develop a suitable grievance redressal mechanism.

2) Employment Opportunities:

The Government may provide employment opportunities to the women who have been forced to head the family due to death of the bread-earning family member in some violent insurgency related incident. According to the educational qualification and work experience, if any, these women may be absorbed in some government departments on a priority basis. In fact, the government would do well to reserve a portion of jobs for such women. The officials of the district administration may collect relevant documents from the women and fast track the process of recruitment of such women.

3) Skill Development

It is not possible for the government to provide employment to all the survivors of insurgent violence. It may be because of lack of vacancy of posts or may be due to low
educational qualification of the women concerned. So, for this type of women, government may initiate steps for their skill development in order to make them self-sufficient. They may be provided with vocational training on varied fields like tailoring, handloom, weaving, mobile phone repairing, information technology or such fields which can be handled by women. Government can do this through the various Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) operating in the state. Government may also provide a stipend to those women who want to pursue a course herself in some other institute.

4) Counselling

Counselling has to play a crucial role to raise the capacity of the survivor of violence to handle the situation, thereby empowering her to function effectively. It has been observed that the society here has not accepted counselling as a need for such people, as the conventional feeling persists that only those who lose mental balance need counselling. A woman’s mental health is generally neglected in such situations, and as a result, she remains deprived of the help of a mental health professional. This is primarily due to lack of awareness and social stigma associated with mental health issues.

This could be implemented through trained NGO workers and by Government’s own initiative. The Government can train up its already existent staff in the education and health sectors and pay them an additional stipend for the purpose. Training can be done for primary healthcare personnel and people from organizations working at the grassroots level on trauma counselling and crisis intervention.

A forum could also be created to coordinate between mental health professionals and the community needs. In this direction, training on counselling and therapy could be imparted to appropriate persons in grassroots level organizations. The trained groups can set the stage for intensive intervention at the professional level whenever necessary.

5) Awareness about Government Schemes

During the field survey it was found that many women, especially those living in the rural areas, didn’t even know that the government provides financial assistance to the family of the victims of insurgency. As such, government may take steps to increase awareness about schemes that may be availed by the women affected by insurgency related incidents. Awareness programmes may be conducted by government officials or through some local NGOs in the rural areas or awareness may be spread through television and radio ads in local language.

6) Uniform Compensation

The government needs to ensure that the family members of the victims of insurgency-related incidents get all financial assistances that are due to them. During the field survey for the study, it was found that some women received assistance from both the state and central government, while some received only from one of them, while some women do not receive it at all. This issue needs to be addressed and a uniform compensation policy
formulated. Providing a job to the next of kin of the victims must be made mandatory, depending on the educational qualification of the concerned member being considered for employment.

7) Scholarships for Children

Government may initiate a special scholarship scheme for the children of the victims of insurgent violence. At present there are a few such initiatives, including the Project Aashwas run by Assam Police, but there is need for a better scheme which can provide greater funds that can take care of the higher education of the children.

8) Sensitization

Government may take initiatives to sensitize legislators, policy makers, community leaders, women groups, school teachers, NGOs, law enforcement personnel on psychosocial effects of disaster and violence. This will help in better response from this section of people towards the survivors of insurgent violence.

9) Survey of Women Affected by Insurgency-Related Violence

Government may sponsor a detailed baseline survey of women affected by insurgency-related violence. There are numerous women in the state who have suffered due to the innumerable number of violent incidents over the decades. Many of these women did not receive any kind of assistance from the government. The survey will help prepare a list of such women and it will be easy on the part of the government to provide support to the needful among them.

10) Assist NGOs working on women issues

Government may provide support and assistance to NGOs working for welfare of women. Government may provide them with funds for training women for self-employment or provide them with materials like sewing machines, etc. as means of self-employment. Government may also use the NGOs to spread awareness about various schemes available for the women.

11) Loans at Subsidized Rates

During the survey, many women suggested that government may provide loans at subsidized rates to the women for starting something of their own, especially to those women who do not have much of an educational qualification and find it difficult to secure a decent job. Using this loan, these women may be able to earn their own living by starting some small business.
B. Suggestions for NGOs/Private Sector

1) Financial Grant

The NGOs or the private sector may provide one-time financial grant to the women who have lost their bread-earner in insurgency-related violence. They can help the women living in those areas where they have their operations.

2) Skill Development

NGOs may provide vocational training to the women in fields such as tailoring, handloom, weaving, mobile phone repairing, information technology and more such related fields. These NGOs may take assistance from the government for carrying out this initiative.

3) Awareness about Government Schemes

NGOs may organize awareness camps to make the people, particularly women, aware about the various schemes of the government. They can also print, publish and distribute pamphlets containing details about such schemes and how to avail them.

4) Sponsoring Children’s Education

Private Sector organizations may ease some financial burden of the affected women by sponsoring the education of their children. One organization can take up the educational expenses of a few children. NGOs may also play a role here by either themselves sponsoring the studies of the children or by helping in finding a sponsor.

5) Survey of Women Affected by Insurgency-Related Violence

NGOs may conduct survey of women affected by insurgency. They can then prepare a list of such women and can provide support to them, as well as share the findings with the government, so that the government may come forward to help these women. Through the study, NGOs can document the effect of insurgency on women. The findings of that study can be shared with the government.

6) Fund Raising

NGOs may organize programmes for raising funds for the welfare of the women affected by insurgency. The funds may be raised for specific purposes like providing scholarships for higher education of the children of the victims of insurgent violence.

7) Forming a Platform of Women Affected By Insurgency

Some NGOs may come forward to form a platform of women affected by insurgency. NGOs from various districts can organize these women into a common platform and this
platform can work on issues concerning their welfare as well as work towards bringing an end to the insurgent violence in the state.

8) **Help in Availing Benefits of Government Schemes**

NGOs may help the women in availing the benefits of various government schemes. The study had observed that many women found it difficult to go through the official process for availing benefits under government schemes. The NGO members can assist these women in this purpose.
Case Study 1: Mrs. Dipali Das, Guwahati

The Family

The family is headed by Mrs. Dipali Das. She lost her husband, Mr. Dinesh Das, on October 30, 2008 in a bomb blast at Ganeshguri in Guwahati. She has one son, aged 27, and two daughters, aged 25 and 18.

Present Status

Mrs. Dipali Das presently works as a cook under Mid-Day Meal Scheme of the government in a primary school located near her house in Kachari Basti in Ganeshguri, Guwahati. Her son is running a fruit shop in Ganeshguri market. The shop was earlier run by his father, who died during the bomb blast near the shop. He had to discontinue his graduation studies in order to run the shop and provide for his family. The elder daughter has completed her graduation and the younger girl has appeared for her Higher Secondary examination this year.

The Incident

October 30, 2008, is a black day in the history of Assam. On that day, nine coordinated blasts occurred in four towns of Assam – Guwahati, Barpeta, Bongaigaon and Kokrajhar. The blasts led to the death of around 100 persons and wounded more than 300 people. The blasts were the
handiwork of the NDFB-Ranjan Daimary faction. Mr. Dinesh Das, husband of Mrs. Dipali Das, was one of the victims of those blasts. He ran a fruit shop in the daily market at Ganeshguri. On that day, too, he was busy interacting with his customers, when the blast took place. He was taken to the hospital by the paramedics, where after a few hours he was declared dead.

In the words of Mrs. Dipali Das, “I was in my home when I heard the blast. I immediately run towards the blast site, fearing something might have happened to my husband. There I was unable to find my husband as the injured were being moved to hospital. My elder brother also came and informed me that my husband has been shifted to the hospital. We went to the hospital, where I saw him lying in the bed injured. But after some hours he succumbed to his injuries.”

**Response of Government Authorities**

Mrs. Dipali Das received Rs. 5,00,000 under the ‘Central Scheme for Assistance to civilian Victims of Terrorist, Communal and Naxal violence’ and another Rs. 3,00,000 from the state government. With that money she was able to buy a small plot of land and build a small house for her family. Her younger daughter is receiving scholarship under Project Aashwas, run by the Assam Police.

She said that although the financial assistance from the government helped her family a lot, still, it was not a permanent solution to improve the condition of her family. She said that after the incident she had petitioned the government many times for a job for her son. But, no action was taken, though it was promised after the incident.

**Response of Relatives/Neighbours**

The relatives and neighbours gave her mental support after the incident. She did not receive any financial support from them, however. One of her relatives arranged for her job at the school she is presently engaged in.

**Against Release of Insurgent Leaders for Peace Talks**

Mrs. Das questioned the government’s decision to free Ranjan Daimary, the chief of this faction of the NDFB and the alleged mastermind of the October 30 serial blasts. She said that she cried a lot on the day when she saw on the news that Ranjan Daimary was released from jail. She said that such insurgent leaders need to be given life sentences in prison so that they suffer as much as the family of the victims of incidents that they have caused. Releasing the insurgent leaders for the sake of peace talks was an injustice to all the victims of insurgent violence, she told.

**Aversion towards Beggars**

After the death of her husband, Mrs. Dipali Das developed a kind of aversion towards beggars. In her own words,“Whenever I see a beggar, I kind of feel a rage and hatred towards them. I feel that a fit, health and hard-working person like my husband has died an untimely death and the beggars who just sit, beg and do nothing are still alive. I am unable to erase this thing from my mind and I get upset whenever I see a beggar.”
Case Study 2: Mrs. Dipali Baruah, Guwahati

The Family

The family is headed by Mrs. Dipali Baruah. She lost her husband, Mr. Nikunj Baruah, on August 16, 2002 in an insurgency-related incident in Rangiya in Kamrup district, a place 52 kms from Guwahati. She has one son, aged 20 and two daughters, aged 24 and 21.

Present Status

Mrs. Dipali Baruah presently does a small job at a private firm in Guwahati. Her elder daughter has completed her graduation and is assisting her mother in running the household by earning some money through tuitions. Her other daughter and son are presently doing their graduation. They stay at their own home in Rupnagar area of Guwahati.

The Incident

Mr. Nikunj Baruah was a businessman and contractor doing small government contract works. On August 16, 2002, he, along with one of his friend, was going to Nalbari in his friend’s car. Their car was stopped at Rangiya by suspected Bodo militants and they took their car along with both of them. Their bullet-riddled bodies were found the next day. No one was apprehended for these killings as the culprits were never identified.

Response of Government Authorities

Mrs. Dipali Baruah got worried when she did not hear from her husband after he left for Nalbari. The next day she received a call from the police informing that her husband has been killed in
Rangiya. She asked the policemen to arrange for the body to be sent to their home in Guwahati but she was asked to arrange that herself. She then went to the office of the Superintendent of Police (SP) in Guwahati and the SP made the arrangements for the body to be brought to her home. Citing the incidents of that day, Mrs. Choudhury said that the policemen were not at all supporting her initially and were not listening to her pleas. Only after the SP intervened, action was taken.

The government provided her with an ex-gratia amount of Rs. 1,00,000. Her children are receiving scholarships for their education under Project Aashwas, run by the Assam Police. She, however, said that there are lots of official formalities in order to get the scholarship money every year and sometimes she is unable to get the money in time for admissions of her children. She suggested that the process of getting the scholarship may be simplified.

**Response of Relatives/Neighbours**

The relatives and neighbours helped her throughout the initial days of her tragedy. Some of them provided with money and some helped her in availing the scholarship for her daughters. She said that their help and support helped in keeping herself strong in those tragic days.

**Case Study 3: Mrs. Kamala Choudhury, Guwahati**

**The Family**

The family is headed by Mrs. Kamala Choudhury. She lost her husband, Mr. Rajesh Choudhury, on October 30, 2008 in a bomb blast at Ganeshguri in Guwahati. She has two sons, both aged 15, and one daughter, aged 22. They stay at their own house in Hengerabari in Guwahati.

**Present Status**

Mrs. Kamala Choudhury presently works as a sweeper under the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. She expressed grief that when her husband was alive her life was not that bad but now she sometimes feels ashamed of her own job but has to do that in order to feed her family. All her children are presently studying, her sons in class IX and the daughter doing her graduation.

**The Incident**

Mr. Rajesh Choudhury was an auto-rickshaw driver. On October 30, 2008, he was at the Ganeshguri market doing shopping for his home, when the blast occurred. He was one among the hundred killed in the bomb blast that shook Guwahati, along with three other towns of the state. He died on the spot.

**Response of Government Authorities**

Mrs. Kamala Choudhury received Rs. 5,00,000 under the ‘Central Scheme for Assistance to civilian Victims of Terrorist, Communal and Naxal violence’ and another Rs. 3,00,000 from the
state government. With that money she rebuilt her house and erected boundary walls around her property. Her sons are receiving scholarship under Project Aashwas, run by the Assam Police.

![Picture 3: Mrs. Kamala Choudhury]

**Response of Relatives/Neighbours**

Mrs. Choudhury said that her neighbours helped her a lot after the incident, but she did not receive much support from her relatives, especially those from her husband’s side. She said, “My husband’s relatives did not come forward for helping me, neither financially or with mental support. They even were jealous when I received the ex-gratia amount from the government. I do not keep touch with those relatives now.”

**Case Study 4: Mrs. Durgawati Devi, Tinsukia**

**The Family**

The family is headed by Mrs. Durgawati Devi. She lost her eldest son, Rajesh Thakur, in a bomb blast in Sonaripatty area in Doomdooma town of Tinsukia district on June 30, 2007. He was the only bread-earner of the family. Mrs. Durgawati Devi has one more son, aged 24 and a daughter aged 18.

**Present Status**

Mrs. Durgawati Devi currently lives in a rented house in Doomdooma town with her son and daughter. She is currently working as a potter to support her family. Her son, Rajesh Thakur, died at a young age of 26 years. He was the sole bread-earner of the family and was managing the educational expenses of his brother and sister. After his death, they had to leave their studies due to financial problems. They are now assisting their mother in her work.
The Incident

Rajesh Thakur, eldest son of Mrs. Durgawati Devi, worked as a salesman in a hardware store in the Sonaripatty area in Doomdooma town. On June 30, 2007, around 6:30 pm in the evening, a bomb blast took place in the area, just in front of the shop where Rajesh worked. Along with several other persons, Rajesh was seriously injured in the blast and was rushed to a hospital. But he succumbed to his injuries in the hospital after some time.

Response of Government Authorities

Mrs. Durgawati Devi received an amount of Rs. 3,00,000 as ex-gratia from the state government. However, she says that even for that she had to wait for more than one year. After the incident, various government officials went to the area and promised enhancement of security of the area. But Mrs. Durgawati Devi says that they still do not feel secure and live in fear of similar incidents occurring again.

Response of Relatives/Neighbours

After the incident, her neighbours helped her a lot. They provided her with some money when she needed and were always supportive to her family. However, she said that her relatives were not much helpful. She says that she don’t support government pardoning insurgent leaders for the sake of peace talks but would rather want them punished for the crimes they have committed.
Case Study 5: Mrs. Ramjyoti Devi, Tinsukia

The Family

The family is headed by Mrs. Ramjyoti Devi. Her husband, Mr. Bigan Prasad, was killed on January 7, 2007, when ULFA militants fired indiscriminately on a crowd, comprised mostly of non-Assamese people, in Longsowal area in Doomdooma in Tinsukia district. She now lives in her own house in Doomdooma, along with her three daughters, aged, 28, 21 and 18 years and one son, aged 24.

Present Status

Mrs. Ramjyoti Devi’s husband ran a small shop. The shop is now being run by her and her son. Her eldest daughter stays at home and the other two daughters are doing their graduation.

The Incident

On January 7, 2007, ULFA militants fired indiscriminately among the people in Longsowal market area in Doomdooma. The target was mainly non-Assamese people. Mr. Bigan Prasad, husband of Mrs. Ramjyoti Devi, was in his shop at that time. Their son, who was at home that time, also went out of the house to see what was happening. Both of them were hit by the bullets. They were taken immediately to the hospital, where Mr. Bigan Prasad was declared dead. Their son was hit by two bullets in his right leg and was referred to Assam Medical College, where surgery was immediately carried out on his leg. He recovered from his injury.
Response of Government Authorities

After that incident, many political leaders and government officials came to visit them. Even Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, came and met the family members of the victims and promised help. Mrs. Ramjyoti Devi received an amount of Rs 3, 00,000 as ex-gratia from the state government. But she said that in order to get that amount she had to run from one office to another. She also complained that a promise for providing government job to any one member of the family was also made but nothing has been done till date.

Mrs. Ramjyoti Devi further said that, “After the incident, authorities promised to establish an Army outpost near Borhapjan, and they even did so. But after one year the outpost was shifted to somewhere else. From that day, two-to-three police constables come once in a week and sometime once in a month, spend some time and leave. So till date, no adequate security has been provided in Langsowal area. Even now the people of Langsowal area do not feeling secure due to lack of security.”

Response of Relatives/Neighbours

Her relatives and neighbours helped her during the days of her grief. Relatives helped her financially too. She says, “I was overwhelmed with the support given to me and my family by my neighbours and relatives. They have helped me whenever I asked for some help. Their mental support keeps me going. However, I still hope that government keeps its promise and gives a job to my son.”

Case Study 6: Mrs. Sona Devi, Tinsukia

The Family

The family is headed by Mrs. Sona Devi. Her husband, Mr. Harindra Prasad Sharma, was critically injured in a bomb blast that occurred in the Lalbunlaow area of Tinsukia town on September 30, 2007. He suffered serious injuries in both of his legs due to which he is presently bed-ridden and unable to work. They have one son, aged 12 years.

Present Status

Mrs. Sona Devi’s husband had a job as a skilled worker in a small furniture shop. But after the incident, he could not continue the job because of his injured legs. She now supports her family by running a small pan shop near Devipukhuri area in Tinsukia town. Their son is presently studying in Class VII in a local school.

The Incident

On September 30, 2007, Mrs. Sona Devi, along with her husband and son, had gone to a meat shop in the Lalbunlaow area of Tinsukia town. As they were buying meat, a blast occurred near the meat shop, at a place where some cycles were kept. Her husband’s legs were seriously injured as he was nearer to the cycles and became unconscious. Mrs. Sona Devi suffered injuries
in her right hand and her son got minor injury in his legs. The three of them were admitted to the local civil hospital. She and her son were released the next day but the hospital authority referred her husband to Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh. He had to undergo surgery as his leg injuries were critical. The blast left him bed-ridden and unable to walk without support.

![Picture of Mrs. Sona Devi with CDPS Field Investigator](image)

**Response of Government Authorities**

The state government provided Rs.1,00,000 to her family. Apart from that, government paid the medical bills for the treatment, including the surgery, of her husband.

**Response of Relatives/Neighbours**

The treatment of her husband had to be continued even after his discharge from the hospital. As such she was in need of money. Her relatives, family friends and neighbours came forward and gave her money for continuing the treatment of her husband. She wished that government would continue to provide the medical expenses of his husband, as she does not earn much and she also has to manage the family’s day to day expenses along with her son’s educational expenses.

**Case Study 7: Mrs. Tribeni Baruah, Nalbari**

**The Family**

The family is headed by Mrs. Tribeni Baruah. She lost her husband, Mr. Pranabesh Baruah, on February 27, 2000 in a bomb blast in Nalbari. She has one son and two daughters.

**Present Status**

Mrs. Tribeni Baruah runs the Honsons English School in Nalbari. The school was set up by her husband near their home in 2004. Her son is settled abroad, while her elder daughter has already got married. She currently stays at her own house in Nalbari town along with her younger
daughter and her mother-in-law. Her younger daughter has completed her post-graduation and helps her run the school.

The Incident

On February 27, 2000, ULFA militants bombed the motorcade of Mr. Nagen Sharma, who was then the State Forest and Public Works Minister and one of the top leaders of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), a regional party that was in power at that time. Mr. Pranabesh Baruah, husband of Mrs. Tribeni Baruah, was in the same car with Mr. Nagen Sharma and died in that blast.

Response of Government Authorities

After the incident, the then Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, came to her home to console her. She later went to see him in his office and presented him a memorandum requesting some assistance for her school. Even though the Chief Minister promised to consider, no action was taken on that. She later decided not to seek assistance from the government. The only assistance she received for her school was Rs. 50,000 from AGP leader Rekharani Das Boro.

Response of Relatives/Neighbours

Local youths from Nalbari visited Mrs. Tribeni Baruah and tried to give her solace. She said, “I don’t know if any ULFA boys were among those who visited me, but, what touched me was that they profusely apologized for my husband’s death.” Her relatives and neighbours also stood by her after the incident and she said that it encouraged her to run her school in a more better and focussed manner.
Case Study 8: Mrs. Mira Medhi Das, Nalbari

The Family

The family is headed by Mrs. Mira Medhi Das. She lost her husband, Mr. Keshav Das, on November 22, 2009 in a bomb blast in Nalbari. She has one son, aged 20, and one daughter aged 23.

Present Status

Mrs. Mira Medhi Das currently works for the state government. Her son is doing his graduation and her daughter is doing her post-graduation. They live at their own house in Nalbari town.

The Incident

On November 22, 2009, a bomb blast shook the town of Nalbari. Carried out by suspected ULFA militants, the blast led to the death of eight persons, including Mr. Keshav Das, husband of Mrs. Mira Medhi Das. That day, being a Sunday, Mr. Das had gone out of the house to do some shopping for the home. But the blast that occurred in front of the Nalbari police station took away his life.

Response of Government Authorities

Mrs. Mira Medhi Das received Rs. 5,00,000 under the ‘Central Scheme for Assistance to civilian Victims of Terrorist, Communal and Naxal violence’ and another Rs. 3,00,000 from the state government.
Response of Relatives/Neighbours

Mr. Keshav Das was quite a well-known man in his area and a person associated with many social initiatives. His death was a shock for many people in Nalbari. Various social organizations of Nalbari offered their condolences to Mrs. Mira Medhi Das after the incident and promised their support in case she needed their help. Her relatives were also quite supporting. Mrs. Das is one of the few women who have been able to run her household efficiently after the death of her husband. She believes that, even though her husband is no longer with her, she could always feel his presence by her side, which encourages her to keep working hard and take proper care of her children.

Case Study 9: Mrs. Amita Bodo, Dima Hasao

The Family

The family is headed by Mrs. Amita Bodo. Her husband, Mr. Ajit Bodo, was abducted on June 4, 2007, from Kalachand area in Maibong in Dima Hasao district (the erstwhile N.C.Hills district) and killed by DHD militants. Mrs. Bodo has two sons, aged 31 and 28, and one daughter, aged 24. They live at their own house in Maibong.

Present Status

Mrs. Amita Bodo works at the Public Works Department (PWD) in Dima Hasao district. Her husband was also her co-worker in the same department. Her eldest son is currently doing business, while her younger son is working at a private company. Her daughter has just completed her post-graduation.

The Incident

Mr. Ajit Bodo had resigned from his work in the PWD department and had joined the Indian National Congress party in 1986. Later, in 2001, he was elected as a Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) from the Kalachand constituency in the N.C.Hills Autonomous Council elections. On June 4, 2007, he was abducted by armed DHD militants from Kalachand area in Maibong while he was coming back from the party office. He was killed the same day by the militants. On that day, when his funeral pyre was still burning, someone from the DHD called Mrs. Amita Bodo and said that they want to apologize for their deed, as Mr. Ajit Bodo was killed.
because of some lapses of communication. They also offered compensation to her but she vehemently refused to take any money from them.

Response of Government Authorities

Mrs. Ajanta Das received an amount of Rs. 3,00,000 as ex-gratia from the state government. The state government also promised to bring the culprits to book but this has not happened till now and Mrs. Bodo is still awaiting justice.

Response of Relatives/Neighbours

According to Mrs. Bodo, her husband was an extremely popular man in their area. He was helpful and always soft-spoken and without any enemies. He had many well-wishers, who continued to help and support her and her family after the death of her husband. However, she still hopes that the people responsible for the murder of her husband is caught and is given an exemplary punishment.

Case Study 10: Mrs. Ajanta Das, Dima Hasao

The Family

The family is headed by Mrs. Ajanta Das. Her husband, Mr. Nandu Das, was kidnapped on October 6, 2008 from Maibong in Dima Hasao district (the erstwhile N.C.Hills district). There was no trace of him for three years and then in 2011, his skeleton was found in a jungle in Maibong. Mrs. Ajanta Das has one daughter aged 14.

Present Status

Mrs. Ajanta Das currently runs the shop that was earlier run by her husband. Her daughter is studying in class VIII in a local school.

The Incident

Mr. Nandu Das, husband of Mrs. Ajanta Das, ran a small shop in Maibong bazaar. On October 6, 2008, he was abducted by unknown miscreants from the bazaar. Senior police officers and officials from the district administration came to meet her and promised to find her husband. But there were no results. Mrs. Das herself tried to find her husband without taking anyone else’s help. She met local political leaders, former insurgent cadres and a few active insurgent cadres as well. But nobody was able to provide any information about her husband’s whereabouts. Later, after three years, in 2011, her husband’s skeleton was recovered by police with the help of the village headmen of Dyphoi village in Maibong. His body was found inside a jungle in Maibong and was recognized from the wrist watch, finger ring and PAN card found on the body.
Mrs. Ajanta Das received an amount of Rs. 3,00,000 as ex-gratia from the state government after the discovery of the body of her husband. She also appreciated the support given by the district administration during the search for her husband, especially the Additional Deputy Commissioner for encouraging her to continue running her husband’s shop.

During the three years of the search for her missing husband, she carried a lot of pain, agony and loneliness and the situation continues till today. Though she has received the support from her relatives and the local people, she still is unable to keep her loss behind her. She says that she is still waiting for justice and wishes that the government bring the culprits into light and punish them, so that at least she can get peace in her mind.