

1.1 Introduction:

Informal sector is being recognized as an important segment of the labour market across the world. With growing urbanization, this sector has assumed prominence in several developed and developing economies. The process of Urbanisation is a social change which involves a number of factors such as rapid growth of industries, development of trade and commerce, transportation, communication, development of health and education sectors, advancements in science and technology, demographics etc. Urbanisation plays a very important role on the informal sector and vice-versa Papola, (1981). Informal sector attracts a large number of job seekers. These comprise of rural migrants to towns as well as urban educated unemployed who fail to get any job in the organized/formal sector. The limited employment opportunities in the formal sector leads to growing labour force in urban areas, resulting in increased absorption of labour in micro-entrepreneurship ventures in the informal sector, Mazumder, (1975).

In India, almost 92 percent of workers are employed in the informal sector Banerjee & De, (2018). Informal sector plays a vital role in generation of employment, aggregate output and income in developing countries like India (Sharma, 2001). Unfortunately, in spite of the sector's contribution to the Indian economy, the socio-economic condition of the workers engaged in India's informal sector remain very poor. These workers are economically backward, illiterate and deprived of basic amenities like health and nutrition. Moreover, this section of the workforce has remained out of focus in most of the policy programmes and schemes of the government. Research efforts in informal sector employment has also been less when compared with studies on formal employment Srija, A & Shirke, (2012)

1.2 Statement of the problem:-

The problem of urban informal employment of the Dhemaji district is more or less similar to other towns of the country. The informal workers are deprived of basic nutrition and suffer from inadequate supply of drinking water, unhygienic shelter, lack of education. Their economic backwardness gets translated to shortage of capital funds for running any business. Most of the informal workers are deprived of any kind of financial help from banks and other types of financial intermediaries and resort to high-interest loans from money lenders. Due to low amount of earnings and investment, their lives have become very difficult and they are unable to meet

their day-to-day expenditures. There is lack of adequate and definite policy attention towards employment promotion in the informal sector of both urban and rural areas, owing to the complex and informal structure of the sector's activities. In this context, the socio-economic problem of the informal workers of Dhemaji city requires in-depth study so that adequate measures can be prompted for improving the status of these workers and it is this problem that this present study attempts to address.

1.3 Justification of the Study;

The Dhemaji district, which is the area of present study, is one of the severe flood affected districts of Assam. In terms of socioeconomic development index, this district is one of the poor performing districts of the state. According to Human Development Index (HDI), the Dhemaji district ranks poorly at 21. The HDI value for the district is 0.507 against the overall state value of 0.557. Moreover, Dhemaji district has neither any big industry nor any small industries till date.

According to Assam Flood Hazard Atlas (2011), flood hazard area constitutes 46.50% of the total land areas of the district. As per the report collected from the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), 2011-17, the percentage of total cropped area of Dhemaji district affected by flood is higher than any other districts of Assam. Table 1.1 depicts the year-wise comparison of total cropped area affected by flood in Dhemaji district.

Table 1.1 Comparison of Total Cropped Area Affected by Flood in Dhemaji District

Year	Total crop area affected (in Hector)	Percentage of total crop area affected
2011	56,412	42.17
2014	65,818	50.66
2015	95,455	73.47
2016	30,691	23.62
2017	61,184	47.09

Source: ASDMA,

The table 1.1 clearly describes that a large proportion of agricultural land has been affected by flood continuously for last few years. There is no scope with the agricultural worker other than to

leave the village, move towards the urban areas in search of better livelihood and consequently get engaged in some kind of venture in the informal sector of these urban centres.

According to the report of the District administrative 2016, almost 40 percent of the urban population as well as 56 percent of rural residence of Dhemaji District are mainly engaged in small informal sector enterprises. So the majority of the rural people get engaged in urban informal sector of Dhemaji district. Therefore, the present study tries to understand the socio-economic condition and living standard of the workers engaged in the informal sector of urban centers of the Dhemaji district.

1.4 Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine the size and composition of informal workers of Assam.
2. To analyse the socio-economic status of the urban informal sector workers in the Dhemaji District.
3. To identify the problem faced by the workers in urban informal sectors in the Dhemaji District.

1.5 Research methodology and data sources:

1.5.1 Data Source:

Both secondary and primary data have been used for the present study. Secondary data have been collected both at the state and national level. The main sources of secondary data are Labour Ministry, Census of India, National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGE&T), Assam State Disaster Management Authority, Directorate of Economics and Statistics (Assam), various journal, magazines, Seminar Papers, Some published / unpublished research papers (Ph.D. theses), articles, etc.

The primary data have been collected during the period of September- December, 2018 with the help of a structured schedule distributed among a few sample self-employed workers. The questions in the schedules have been framed keeping in mind the objectives to be fulfilled by the study. The schedule contained items like respondent's age, education, marital status, size of the family, income, wage payments, working hours, nature of job, behaviour of the employer, social

awareness, habits of the workers, assistance of the family members, attitude of spouse, and number of children of the respondent.

1.5.2 Sampling design:

For selecting the sample, a purposive sampling technique has been used. For this, out of the five development blocks in Dhemaji district of Assam, two blocks, Dhemaji Sadar and Sisiborgaon, are purposively selected on the basis of highest concentration of informal sector workers in these two blocks (District Administrative Report, 2016). From the block of Dhemaji Sadar, the Dhemaji town is selected and from the Sisiborgaon block, Silapathar town is selected. From these two towns a total of 307 samples are randomly collected. The samples are divided between the two urban areas on the basis of proportion of total population.

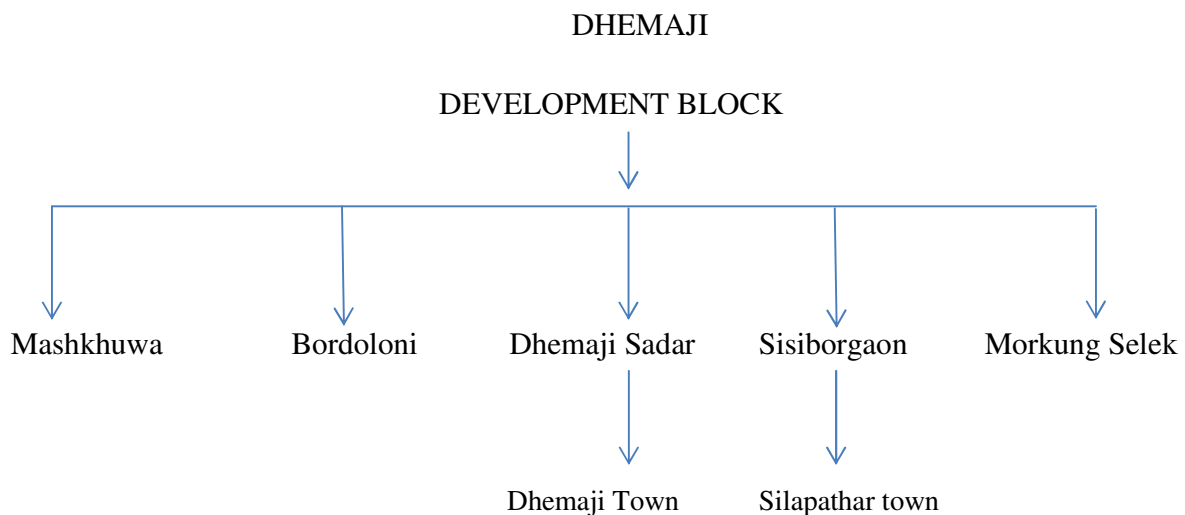


Table 1.2 Total Population and Sample size of Dhemaji District.

Town	Total Population	Sample Size
1. Dhemaji	12816	107
2. Silapathar	25,500	200

Source: Census, 2011

Table 1.3: LINE OF ANALYSIS

Objectives	Line of Analysis
1. To examine the size and composition of informal workers of Assam	Secondary Data
2. To analyse the socio-economic status of the urban informal sector workers in the Dhemaji District.	Primary Data, Field Survey, Percentage
3. To identify the problem faced by the workers in urban informal sectors in the	Primary Data, Field Survey

1.6 Limitation of the Study:

In spite of efforts to minimize limitations that might have cropped in course of the research, there are certain constraints with the study.

- 1) The research is based on secondary as well as primary data. The secondary data required for the first objective has been collected from the NSSO various rounds such as 55th, 66th and 68th round. The last NSSO Round was in the year 2011-12 and the data haven't been updated since. The lack of current data poses a problem in the study.
- 2) The primary data required for the second and third objectives were collected from the samples based in Dhemaji district. As such, sampling and non-response errors can't be ruled out.