

**HANDLOOM CLUSTER MAPPING & BASE LINE SURVEY REPORT OF
KOKRAJHAR, BODOLAND TERRITORIAL COUNCIL, ASSAM**



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TITLE OF THE STUDY

BASELINE SURVEY FOR CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT OF HANDLOOM AT KOKRAJHAR DISTRICT, BTC, ASSAM

Executive Summary

Introduction:

The Bodoland Territorial Council (B.T.C.) is to go a long way in ushering a sea change in its socio-economic & political affairs. The Bodoland Territorial Council (B.T.C) is emerging as a progressive council and fast making its presence felt in development initiatives.

• Profile of Kokrajhar districts BTC:

Kokrajhar district is the western most district of Assam, it falls in between 90° E to 91° E longitude and 26° 28' N to 26° 50' N latitude. It was one of the sub-division of Goalpara district and it was given the status of full-fledged district in 1983. Kokrajhar district is bounded by the international boundary between Bhutan and India in the north. Goalpara and Dhubri on the south, Chirang district on the east and Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal is situated on the west of the district. The geographical area of the district covers 3195.21 sq. Kms. The Kokrajhar district is a homogenous geographical unit and a part of Brahmaputra valley except the foothill region of Bhutan (Himalaya). The people of different communities, religion and languages inhabit in this region like Boros, Assamese, Bengali, Rajbongshi, Santhal, Muslim, Napalese etc. The Boro is the second largest community in the North-East Region of India with centuries old social, political, cultural history and rich heritages. It is the mother tongue in the vast Bodo dominated areas and associated official state language of Assam. B.T.C has been divided into four districts namely Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri.

• Population Pattern of BTAD:

DISTRICTS	ST	SC	GENERAL	TOTAL
1. Kokrajhar	5,28,774	32,609	3,37,608	8,98,991
2. Chirang	1,69,811	30,035	1,43,780	3,43,626
3. Baksa	3,38,630	45,967	3,33,045	7,17,642
4. Udalguri	3,17,412	28,933	3,24,685	6,71,030
Total	13,54,627	1,37,544	11,39,118	26,31,289

• Emergence of Spinning and Weaving:

The rearing of eri and muga is another tradition of economic activity of the Boros. The Boros produced muga and eri cloths for their own use as well as for business purpose. But now-a days they have almost given up rearing muga or silk worms, as it is more laborious than the market place. At present they only produce eri cloths, which can be reared indoor. Spinning and weaving is women activity among the Boros. The Boro women are expert

weavers. The Boro women weaves on the frame loom and produce their own requirement of fabrics in their spare time. These hand woven fabrics are used by women, men and children in religious occasion or festivals and can also be used as a bed-sheet, furnished cover etc. They can depict different floral and geometrical design on the fabrics. The Boro women still wear the hand woven traditional Dokhana and sadri of different colour and design. Nowadays the governments have various schemes to provide free grants, loans to tribal weaver in cash or kinds, to open weaving center or industry, through, the Tribal Development Corporation, District Rural Development Agency, Bank etc. Taking such assistance from the government some Boro women have opened weaving industry in various places of the district and supply their product to the markets. Thus quite a few Boro women have become economically independent in the present Boro society.

• **Bodo Weaving and Its Cultural Involvement:**

Bodos are known as one of the finest weavers in entire North East region. Some of the most commonly known women weave nature in their lives are Doare Mekhrup (Spot a peacock winking) Khasao Bikha (watch a turtle sunbathing on the banks of the Aie River and Dhinkiya designs (taste the leafy fern). Weaving nature on her traditional loom comes naturally to any Bodo women. This traditional art of weaving of Bodo women have been isolated as traditionally followed custom amongst the Bodo women for many centuries.

The rich tradition of weaving where social, cultural and religion involved in designing the fabric for weaving could be modified as per the need of the national and international market demand. The IT could be used in developing diverse and better quality designs of locally made handloom products in much sophisticated ways.

• **Existing Handloom Unit Registered under different Institutions at Kokrajhar:**

1. Registered under Small Scale Industry/District Industry & Commercial Centre	23 Nos
2. Registered under Directorate of Handloom, BTC	114 Nos.
3. Registered under District Rural Development Agency	131 Nos.
4. Registered under the Titaguri Block Handloom Unit	79 Nos.
5. Registered under the Dotma Block Handloom Unit	81 Nos.
6. Registered under the Kachugaon Block Handloom Unit	69 Nos.
7. Registered under the Hatidura Block Handloom Unit	69 Nos.
8. Registered under the Co-operative Society Handloom Unit	23 Nos.
9. Non-Register Individual Weaving Unit Kokrajhar	55 Nos.
Total	644 Nos.

✚ **Baseline Survey Analysis:**

The Study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

- To establish the feasibility of developing a handloom cluster in Kokrajhar District.
- To suggest the various feasible measure of interventions through cluster development.
- To identify the possible future interventions.
- To study the impact of already existing chain approach in weaving sectors.

- To emphasize the connections between women weavers and market access.
- To highlight the need of creating IT in designing and capacity of production.

✚ Methodology of Study:

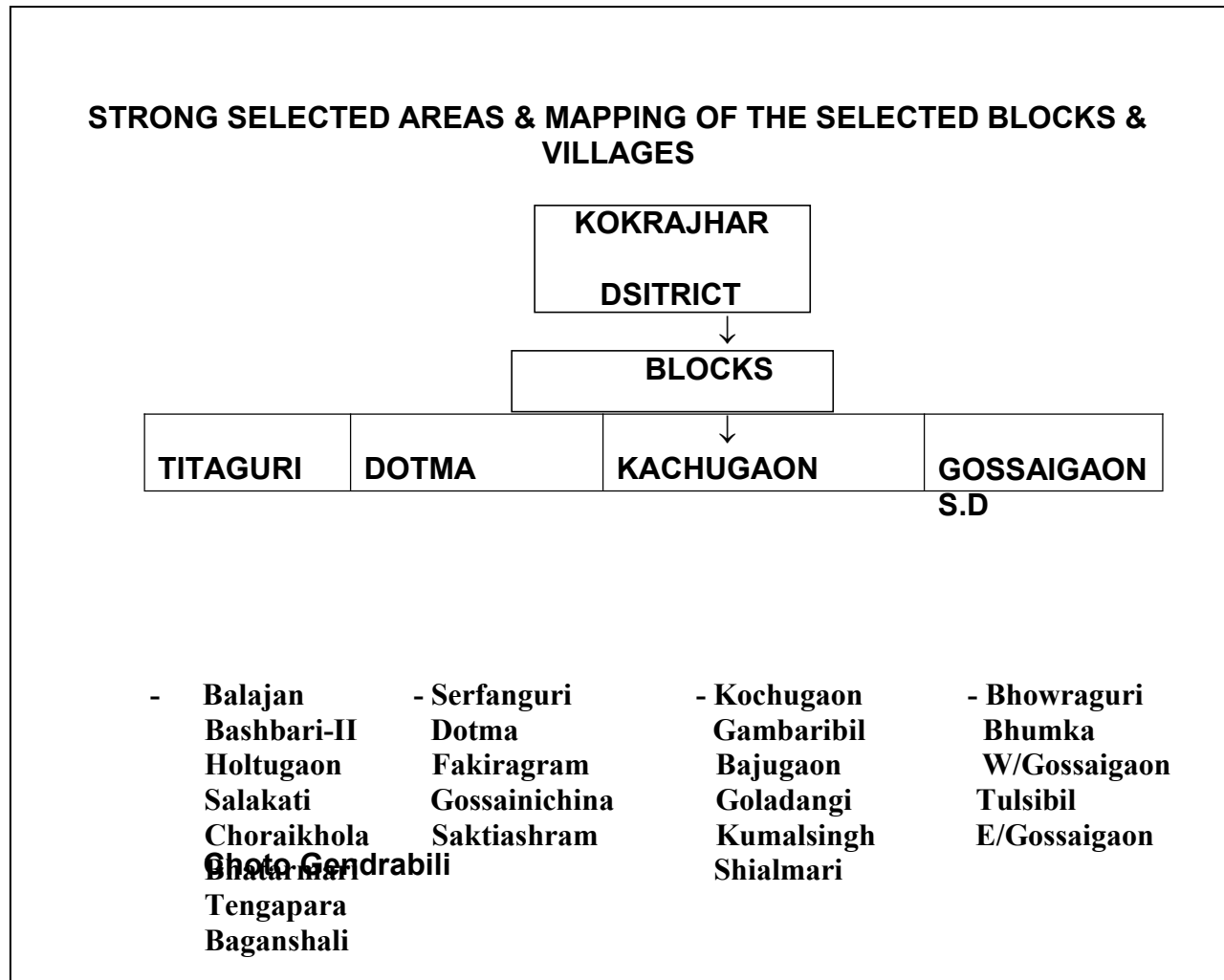
The methodology applied for the study was semi structures questionnaire, personal interview and focus group discussion both qualitative and quantitative finding. The below mentioned points were the main focus while carrying out the interviews amongst the weavers.

- Access of raw materials in the areas.
- Production capacity of looms and its marketing arrangement.
- Identifying strong handloom based NGOs/SHGs in the area.
- The operation system of already existing cluster and their level of skill.
- Number of weavers and their status of existing.
- Training need of the weavers existing in the districts.

✚ Study Area:

The areas, which we have selected for the Handloom and Cluster Development study in Kokrajhar District are within the four Blocks i.e. Titaguri, Dotma, Kachugaon, Gossaigaon Sub- Division.

Mapping of the selected Villages:



 **KOKRAJHAR EXISTING HANDLOOM MAPPING/SURVEY:**

Name of the Place	Number of Looms
TITAGURI BLOCK	
Balajan	95
Bashbari-II	112
Holtugaon	93
Salakati	123
Choraikhola	124
Bhatarmari	128
Tengapara	102
Baganshali	119
Choto Gendrabili	105
DOTMA BLOCK	
Serfanguri	76
Dotma	84
Fakiragram	59
Gossainichina	33
Shaktiashram	41
KOCHUGAON BLOCK	
Kochugaon	03
Gambaribil	02
Bajugaon	06
Goladangi	05
Kumalsingh	03
Shialmari	05
GOSSAIGAON S.D BLOCK	
Bhowraguri	36
Bhumka	41
W/Gossaigaon	38
Tulsibil	39
E/Gossaigaon	35
TOTAL	1507

CRITERIA/PARAMETERS FOR SELECTING 1507 LOOMS

- = Concentration of weavers
- = Product type
- = Presence of stakeholders
- = Presence of support organization
- = Wage structure of weavers

Based on above parameters, 1157 Looms have been selected & interviewed

Name of Blocks & Villages	Number of Looms
TITAGURI BLOCK	
Balajan	68
Bashbari-II	95
Holtugaon	62
Salakati	95
Choraikhola	76
Bhatarmari	110
Tengapara	98
Baganshali	69
Choto Gendrabili	78
DOTMA BLOCK	
Serfanguri	32
Dotma	49
Fakiragram	46
Gossainichina	66
Shaktiashram	65
KOCHUGAON BLOCK	
Kochugaon	03
Gambaribil	02
Bajugaon	06
Goladangi	05
Kumalsingh	03
Shialmari	05
GOSSAIGAON S.D. BLOCK	
Bhowraguri	23
Bhumka	26
W/Gossaigaon	23
Tulsibil	24
E/Gossaigaon	28
TOTAL	1157

The above-mentioned villages were selected and out of 1507 looms identified total 1157, looms were interviewed through questionnaire schedule and focus group discussion.

ANALYSIS OF THE BASE LINE SURVEY/ MAPPING:

PART – I : SOCIAL CONDITION OF THE WEAVERS

- Average age of the weaver - 42 years
- Cast/religion – Bodo /Hinduism/ Christianity
- Average family size - 4 to 5 members in one family
- Years of engagement - 1 to 7 years
- Involvement of family - 03 members

PART – II

○ PROCESS FLOW CHART FOR INDIVIDUAL WEAVER

- Dyed yarn from market/master weaver
- Preparatory process (in house) – weaving – finishing – finished goods to master weavers for marketing

PROCESS FLOW CHART FOR HOME BASED WEAVERS

- Dyed yarn from shops – Preparatory process (in house) – Weaving – Finishing - Finished product through agents.

WEAKNESS OF THE EXISTING SYSTEM

- Due to absence of good dye house inside the cluster, there is no control over cost of dyeing & quality of dyed yarn (poor quality of dyes are used generally by the outside dyers and improper technique is adopted)

+ VALUE CHAIN ANALYSIS

Fly shuttle frame looms are generally used. Jacquard is attached with loom for designing to Dokhona. The home-based traditional looms are primarily used. Semi automatic looms are also used by some section of the community but in few numbers.

- Fly shuttle looms are used largely for weaving.
 - Type of raw material - dyed (Cotton & Phakua) yarn + Polyester yarn.
 - Cost of per Dokhona- Rs. 500.00 Cotton & Rs. 120- 350 Polyester Dokhona.
 - Earnings for per Dokhona- Approx. Rs. 80.00 with design
 - Product demand – Below Medium
 - Nature of design – Upto the present trend
 - Source of design – by local designer 85%
- by W.S.C./Professional -15%
- Rejection - % negligible because of skilled weavers.

PART – III

○ PRESENT PRODUCTION

- Product- Mainly traditional dress 80%
Exportable items – 6% (Silk)
Others – 14%
- Nature of involvement: Job work basis – 68%
At weavers Own yarn basis- 32%
- Designs – Concept of modern designing is poor

- Development of new designs: response is good in case of some leading NGOs & Master weavers.
- Need of product diversification: 70% weavers are interested because of future market because trend for demand of dokhona is declining.
- Product demand: Medium in local market through out the year.

o MARKET FACILITY & MARKET CHANNEL OF ERI.

- Mode of working- 60% of total production supply in the local market & 32% in the other state, 8% in export market in indirect way mainly in Italy, Japan, Spain, USA
- Level of demand – Medium for handloom through out the year.
- Future of weaving – Response to move to other occupation – 30% as per individual weaver.

PART-IV

o ECONOMIC CONDITION OF WEAVERS

- Family and asset base: Own house/ workshed – 45%
- Women weavers earning per month: Rs. 1500/- 62%, upto 2400/- for 38%, Shuttle looms
- Male weavers earning per month Rs. 3000-5000, Jacquard looms
- Average no. of working : 22-24 days in a month
- Difference in income: In job work & trading – 800/- per month (approx)

PART- V

- Govt. Assistance & awareness about diff. State/Central Scheme-42%
- Involvement co-operative fold – 47% at total weavers as members of SHGs -53% total weavers as members of SHG/Master weavers/traders etc.

✚ PRESENT PROBLEMS IN THE HANDLOOM UNITS & WEAVERS

- Absence of direct platform for marketing, Poor wages, poor credit facility by the bank, ignorance of present market trend and its way, poor quality of dyed yarn, no training facility for design development, poor concept about diversifications of product.
- Level of motivation of the weavers: Medium – 40% in case of age limit upto 45 year, Good – 52% upto age limit of 30 years.

The study extends to “natural clusters” formed by units set up to take advantage of locally available skills, raw materials, proximity to market etc. and to “induced clusters” set up by the government or other agencies through the creation of infrastructure accompanied by a range of technical services designed to cater to a group of units in a local area at B.T.C.

✚ The areas in which weavers expressed the need for training are as follows:

- Upgradation of technology
- Obtaining finance
- Dealing with market
- Energy conservation
- Basic arrangements of handloom

✚ The areas in which need for training for handloom owners/ groups are perceived are as follows:

- Administration
- Production
- Labour management
- Market trends
- Finance and marketing
- Technological upgradation
- Quality and cost control
- Designs in line with changing tastes and market requirements

✚ The areas in which training needs are perceived for masters/ skilled workers are:

- Safe and efficient operation of machines
- Knowledge of upgradation of technology
- Increasing productivity – maximizing output
- Harmonious employer-employee relations

✚ **Other areas in which entrepreneurs need assistance are:**

- Inform entrepreneurs, especially small ones, about facilities made available by the government and financing institutions.
- Inform about subsidies & soft loan available.

✚ **Dissemination of such information to clusters through newsletter etc. should be formalized.**

- Simplify and liberalize procedures for sanction of loans on single window concept and in a time bound manner
- Improve communications
- Assist handloom units with market information
- Assist handloom in selection of proper technology for upgradation with better production

The efforts of the government need to be supplemented by the banks, financing institutions and other development agencies.

✚ ROLE OF VILLAGE COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (VCDC)/ PANCHAYATS:

Panchayati Raj Institutions at village and block level can play an active role in rural cluster development. Local Panchayats are the key to the locality /region where the clusters are likely to be developed. Panchayats / VCDC could provide ground level guidance to the government officials/ agencies in developing infrastructure like roads, water and power. They could help the entrepreneurs in conceptualizing viable projects using local resources of raw materials and skills and could stand guarantor / surety to the entrepreneurs for the financial assistance from banks / financial institutions. Panchayats / VCDC could even provide some financial help to small enterprises. Panchayats could help the entrepreneurs in getting suitable manpower. Panchayats / VCDC could also play an important role in developing better relations between labour and owners. Panchayats could also help the entrepreneurs in building construction, acquiring land and also provide godowns for storage of products if necessary. In this way the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions is important in the development of rural clusters.

✚ General awareness of advantages of cluster formation on Handloom

It is recognized that clusterisation of handloom units benefits the owners/entrepreneurs in various ways. Some of the benefits are assistance in formulation of financially viable project, assistance in availability of finance in setting up the project, assistance in obtaining government sanctions and subsidy, awareness of risks and ways to get over them, assistance in obtaining raw materials, assistance in obtaining better and more economical transport, assistance in technology upgradation and assistance in obtaining marketing facilities. Most of the units surveyed reported the advantage of assistance in obtaining raw materials followed by economical transportation, creating awareness of risk and ways to get over them and assistance in obtaining government subsidy.

The survey has revealed the perceptions of entrepreneurs and weavers actually owning and operating the handloom units, the problems they are facing and the assistance they expect from different agencies. In particular, their responses indicate their awareness of the benefits of clusterisation and the measures to be taken to make clusterisation more effective. These perceptions and measures are elaborated in subsequent chapters of this report.

The collective strength of clusters enables its members to get assistance in availability of raw materials on better terms, availability of finances for setting up projects, obtaining government subsidies, updating technology of production, identification of markets, transportation, storage and marketing. Mutual discussion, increased awareness and competition within the cluster are also beneficial to the national economy through more efficient use of raw material, increase in productivity leading to increase in workers income, a more congenial labour owner relationship, evolution of local leadership and promotion of innovation and creativity. These hypotheses have been tested through responses of the survey.

Problems in Handloom Units

While there are significant benefits in being a constituent of handloom units, there are some problems also. These were identified as follows by the entrepreneurs:

- Rivalry and competition amongst the members
- Poaching of trained workers
- Preferential access to raw materials by the leaders of the handloom units
- Aggravation of labour problems due to urbanization in small area.
- Increase in wage levels due to limited availability of skilled workers and technicians

Power Supply

For the surveyed units, it appears that about 63 per cent of the responding units have not enough power supply. Rest of the respondents, however, want further improvement in the quality of power supply, its continuity and further concessions in tariffs.

Transport

Lack of proper transportation is one of the obvious disadvantages of the formation of handloom cluster. Such disadvantage has been reported by more than 65 per cent of the handloom units in Kokrajhar districts.

Role of financing institutions and private enterprises

The Government of India considers the cluster approach as important for the development of handlooms and cluster units.

Development of micro-finance institutions should be encouraged. For rural clusters, simply sanctioning credit is not enough but a whole range of credit services is needed. This includes insurance for the units or the cluster as a whole as also re-insurance coverage for the micro-credit institution. These institutions should also assist in product development and market search including export possibilities.

NGOs having necessary resources could also consider “adopting” some rural clusters and help them with technical and management advice in every part of the B.T.C areas.

Feasibility of cluster formation in surveyed areas:

The respondents of the survey are fully aware of the advantages of acting as parts of clusters, formal or informal. As such, they have valuable ideas regarding the industrial activities, which are most suitable for their areas/districts and which could be operated as clusters. The respondents, therefore, were asked to give their views as to the nature of clusters that they considered viable in their districts.

The above suggestions are based on the personal knowledge and experience of entrepreneurs and weavers and stakeholders working in the small industries set up. They could be helpful in identifying new projects that could be taken up in the area. A decision to take up a project will, obviously depend upon a thorough study of its technical and financial viability.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Socio – economic condition: Condition of work shed at 4 blocks of Kokrajhar district is very poor. In this regard necessary support for tiny individual weavers is highly required. A condition of individual weavers due to non-availability of credit facility through bank for their working capital is deplorable. Focus can be thrown in this area for their support.
- In preparatory process (pre-loom) proper training is required mainly for women members of the weaver's family for up grading their skill and saving of time.
- Improper dyeing technique and quality of dyestuffs are the main cause of poor/ patchy dyeing and colour fastness. Cost of dyed yarn is also very high due to non-functioning of any good quality of dyeing unit in the district. Proper intervention can be made in this area.
- Local designers are skilled enough but they require proper training for new design development through expert in this field, which may help value addition in the existing product.
- Product diversification in some areas like Shaktiashram under Dotma Block, Goladangi and Shialmari under Kochugaon Block, Bhumka under Gossaigaon Block are highly required as per the present market trend.
- For direct marketing support frequent buyer-seller meet for entry of big /bulk purchaser, exhibition cum sale, formation of marketing consortium, proper advertising through different media is highly essential.
- For tiny individual weavers different govt. schemes for the benefits of the weavers like health insurance, Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojona, can be extended.
- Since, there is no other alternative but to stick in the traditional profession, due to absence of occupation alternatives for the weavers in this area, larger community can be motivated by imparting proper support through Govt. schemes as well as strengthening infrastructure facilities in side the cluster towards proper development & better livelihood of the weaving community.