

**Impact of Orunodoi Scheme on Women Empowerment of Assam: A case study of Topatoli village under Sonapur Block of Kamrup (M) District of Assam**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The Orunodoi Scheme in Assam targets specific categories of people based on socio-economic criteria to ensure it reaches those most in need of financial support. The Scheme primarily aims to benefit female heads of households who are economically vulnerable. Under this scheme, eligible women receive a monthly financial assistance of Rs. 1000, which is intended to help them manage household expenses and reduce economic burdens. This direct benefit transfer empowers women by enhancing their financial independence and providing a steady source of income. This paper tries to study the economic empowerment of rural women due to the scheme and to identify various challenges faced by rural woman in accessing, utilizing scheme benefits of the study area. For these purpose data have been collected from both secondary and primary sources and analysed with different statistical techniques.*

**Key Words:** Orunodai Scheme, Socio-economic criteria, economically vulnerable, financial independence, economic empowerment,

**INTRODUCTION**

The Assam Orunodoi Scheme was officially launched by Assam's Health Minister, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma on 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2020. The Scheme's implementation begun on 17<sup>th</sup> August, 2020. The main aim of this scheme is to improve the socio-economic conditions of women in rural areas. Under this scheme, eligible women receive a monthly financial assistance of Rs 1000, which is intended to help them manage household expenses and reduce economic burdens. This direct benefit transfer empowers women by enhancing their financial independence and providing a steady source of income.

The Orunodoi Scheme in Assam targets specific categories of people based on socio-economic criteria to ensure it reaches those most in need of financial support. The Scheme primarily aims to benefit female heads of households who are economically vulnerable. This includes widows, divorced or abandoned women, unmarried women, and differently-abled women who are the primarily breadwinners in their families. Additionally, families with no male members between the ages of 18 to 60, families with no adult male member, or families with female head between the ages of 18 to 60 years are also eligible under the scheme. People know about Orunodoi scheme through various media channels such as T.V. radio, newspapers, and social media platforms, community leaders, NGO's, and self-helf groups play pivotal role in spreading awareness about the schemes at the grassroots level. They act as intermediaries, helping eligible women.

According to Census 2011 information the location code or village code of Topatoli Gaon village is 303570. Topatoli Gaon village is located in Sonapur sub-division of Kamrup (Metropolitan) district in Assam, India. It is situated 49 k.m away from district headquarter Sonapur. Sonapur is the sub-district headquarter of Topatoli Gaon village. As per 2009 stats, Topatoli is the gram panchayat of Topatoli Gaon village.

The total geographical area of village is 269.72 hectares. Topatoli Gaon has a total population of 3,505 peoples, out of which male population is 1,767 while female population is 1,738. Literacy rate of Topatoli gaon village is 69.04% out of which 73.74% males and 64.27% females are literate. There are about 730 houses in Topatoli gaon village. Sonapur is nearest town to Topatoli gaon village for all major economic activities.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To assess the economic empowerment of rural women due to the scheme.
2. To identify various challenges faced by rural woman in accessing, utilizing scheme benefits.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The secondary data has been collected from various sources viz. Census of India, Department of Rural Area, published and unpublished reports, books, journals etc for these study. To fulfillment of objectives, it has been designed a questionnaire consisting of 40 questions consisting of both open-ended and close-ended questions and collected from 88 households. During fields household survey done using stratified random sampling method. The collected data tabulated with the help of statistical method. The data were analysed appropriate statistical and quantitative techniques and presented with the help of appropriate statistical techniques.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

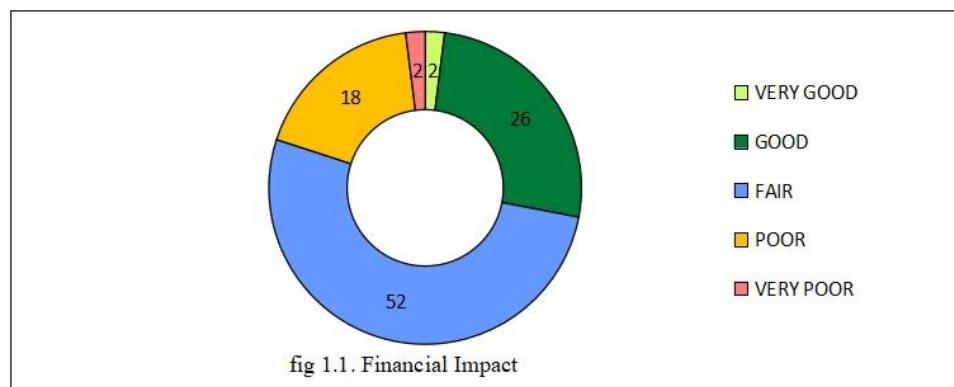
### Objective 1: TO ASSESS THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN

Economic empowerment of rural women refers to the process of enhancing women's ability to participate actively in economic activities, gain control over resources, and improve their economic status and well-being within rural communities. It involves providing women with the necessary skills, knowledge, opportunities, and access to resources such as land, credit, technology, and markets. Assessing the economic empowerment of rural women is vital as it allows policymakers, development agencies, and community leaders to understand the economic status and contributions of women within rural communities. By evaluating factors such as income levels, access to resources, employment opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes, assessments provide a clear picture of women's economic empowerment progress. This data-driven approach not only guides the development of targeted policies and programs but also ensures that resources are allocated effectively to address barriers and enhance opportunities for rural women. Ultimately, assessing economic empowerment fosters gender equality, promotes sustainable community development, and empowers women to contribute meaningfully to their households and local economies.

#### 1.1 ASSESSMENT OF FINANCIAL IMPACT OF THE ORUNODOI SCHEME

It indicates a focused inquiry into how the Orunodoi Scheme has affected the financial circumstances of residents in Topatoli village. It seeks to gather responses that categorize the perceived impact into categories ranging from "Very good" to "Very poor." This assessment aims to capture qualitative feedback on how the scheme has influenced individuals' economic conditions, providing insights into its effectiveness in improving livelihoods and addressing financial needs within the community of Topatoli village.

Fig. 1.1

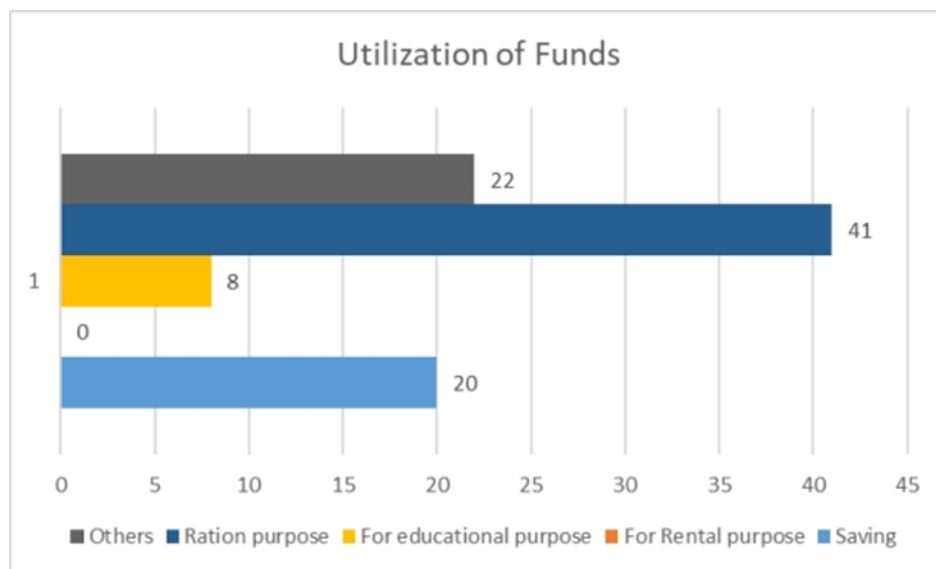


As shown in fig.1.1 In Topatoli village, the data on the financial impact of the Orunodoi Scheme among women reveals a varied spectrum of perceived outcomes. While 2 women reported positive impacts—1 as "Very Good" and 26 as "Good"—indicating notable improvements in their financial situations, a larger group of 52 women described their experience as "Fair," suggesting moderate changes. However, 2 women expressed concerns with negative impacts, with 18 rating it as "Poor" and 2 as "Very Poor," highlighting significant challenges despite the scheme's initiatives. This diversity of responses underscores the scheme's mixed effectiveness in addressing economic disparities among women in Topatoli, emphasizing the importance of targeted support and adjustments to ensure more equitable outcomes for all beneficiaries.

### 1.2 UTILIZATION OF FUNDS RECEIVED FROM THE ORUNODOI SCHEME

"Utilization of Funds Received from the Orunodoi Scheme" serves as a heading to inquire how beneficiaries are employing the financial assistance provided by the scheme. This heading suggests a survey or analysis aimed at understanding the specific purposes for which the funds are utilized by recipients. It aims to capture responses categorized into areas such as savings, rental expenses, education, ration procurement, and other miscellaneous uses. This information is crucial for assessing the scheme's impact on improving financial stability, supporting education, enhancing living conditions, and addressing diverse needs within the community.

Fig. 1.2



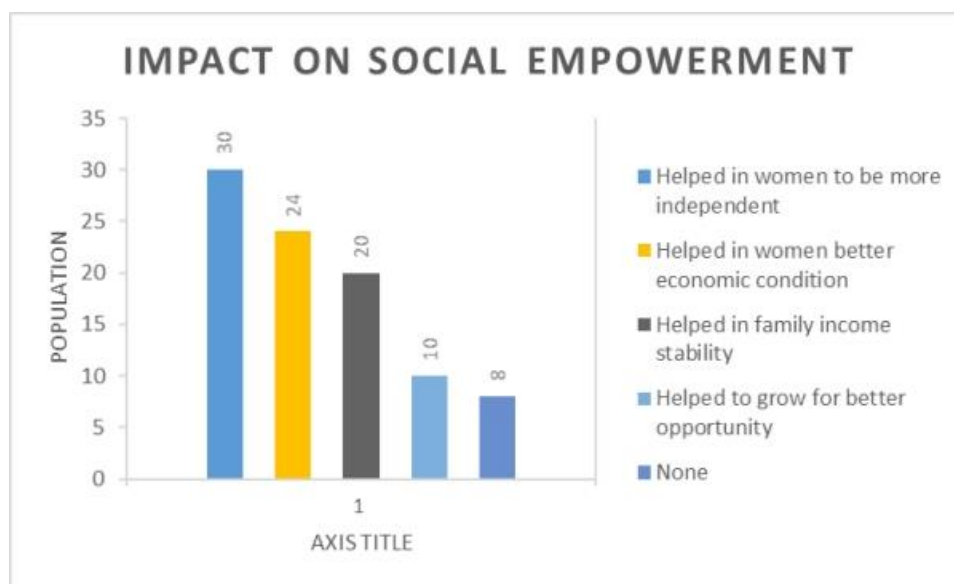
In fig.1.2. The data on the utilization of funds received from the Orunodoi Scheme in Topatoli village reflects diverse priorities and needs among beneficiaries. A significant portion of the funds, as reported by 41 individuals, is allocated towards ration purposes, emphasizing the

critical role of the scheme in meeting immediate household essentials. Additionally, 20 individuals prioritize saving, indicating a focus on financial security and future planning. 8 individuals are using the funds for educational purposes, underscoring investments in knowledge and skill development. Meanwhile, 22 individuals have varied needs categorized under "Others," suggesting additional expenses or specific needs not captured in the predefined categories. Notably, none of the respondents reported using funds for rental purposes, which may indicate stable housing situations or alternative means of covering housing costs in the community. This analysis highlights the scheme's impact in addressing both immediate and long-term financial needs, while also revealing areas where further support or targeted interventions could enhance its effectiveness in supporting beneficiaries' livelihoods in Topatoli village. Other than this, there are two people who are using the aid for saving, educational purposes and ration purposes altogether.

### 1.3. IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE ORUNODOI SCHEME ON SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

It evaluates the scheme's influence on various aspects of societal advancement, particularly for women. It focuses on determining the scheme's contribution to enhancing independence, improving economic conditions, stabilizing family incomes, fostering growth opportunities, or assessing if there has been no discernible impact. This heading suggests a structured evaluation aimed at understanding how the Orunodoi Scheme has positively affected social dynamics and empowerment within the community, particularly among women beneficiaries.

Fig-1.3

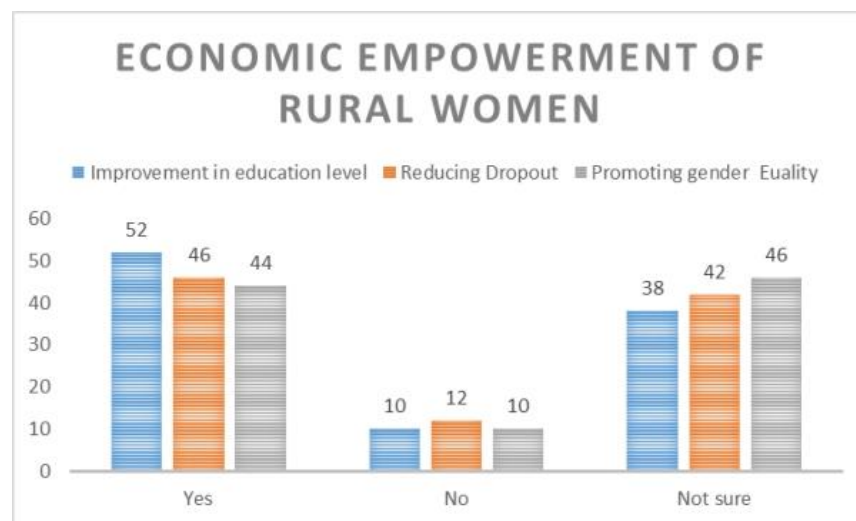


The data from fig.1.3 highlights the Orunodoi Scheme's impactful role in social empowerment within Topatoli village. Specifically, 30 individuals noted increased independence among women, while 24 reported better economic conditions. Additionally, 20 respondents indicated improved stability in family incomes. However, only 10 individuals felt the scheme contributed to better growth opportunities, and 8 stated no discernible impact. This suggests significant strides in fostering autonomy and economic stability, yet underscores the need for targeted efforts to broaden opportunities and ensure equitable impact across the community, addressing those who have not yet experienced tangible benefits from the scheme.

### 1.4. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN

Understanding perceptions on the impact of the Orunodoi Scheme on girls' education, dropout rates, and gender equality is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it provides insights into the effectiveness of the scheme in addressing key socio-economic challenges faced by women and girls in Assam, particularly in rural areas like Topatoli. Positive responses indicating improvements in education levels can highlight the scheme's role in enhancing access to education and educational outcomes for girls. Likewise, perceptions on reduced dropout rates can indicate if the scheme is effectively supporting girls' retention in schools, crucial for their long-term development and empowerment. Additionally, opinions on gender equality initiatives assess if the scheme is fostering equitable opportunities and empowerment for women, thereby shaping future policy and program adjustments to better meet community needs and aspirations. Overall, understanding these perceptions helps in assessing the scheme's impact, refining strategies, and ensuring its alignment with broader developmental goals.

**Fig-1.4**



The data depicted in fig.1.4. Provides insights into the perceived empowerment of women in Topatoli village through the Orunodoi Scheme. It reveals that a significant number of women acknowledge improvements in educational levels and support efforts towards gender equality, indicating positive strides in these areas. However, there remains a notable segment unsure about the scheme's impact on these facets, suggesting the need for clearer communication or more visible outcomes. The skepticism towards reducing dropout rates underscores challenges in fully addressing educational continuity. Addressing these uncertainties could further enhance the scheme's effectiveness in promoting holistic empowerment among women in Topatoli village, ensuring sustainable progress and inclusive development.

## 2. CHALLENGES FACED WITH ORUNODOI SCHEME IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing the Orunodoi Scheme faces several challenges in communities like Topatoli Village. These include low awareness among potential beneficiaries, bureaucratic hurdles delaying fund distribution, and difficulties with documentation requirements. Issues of equitable benefit distribution and infrastructure limitations further complicate access to scheme benefits. Addressing these challenges requires improved outreach, streamlined processes, transparency enhancements, and robust monitoring to ensure effective implementation and maximum impact in rural areas.

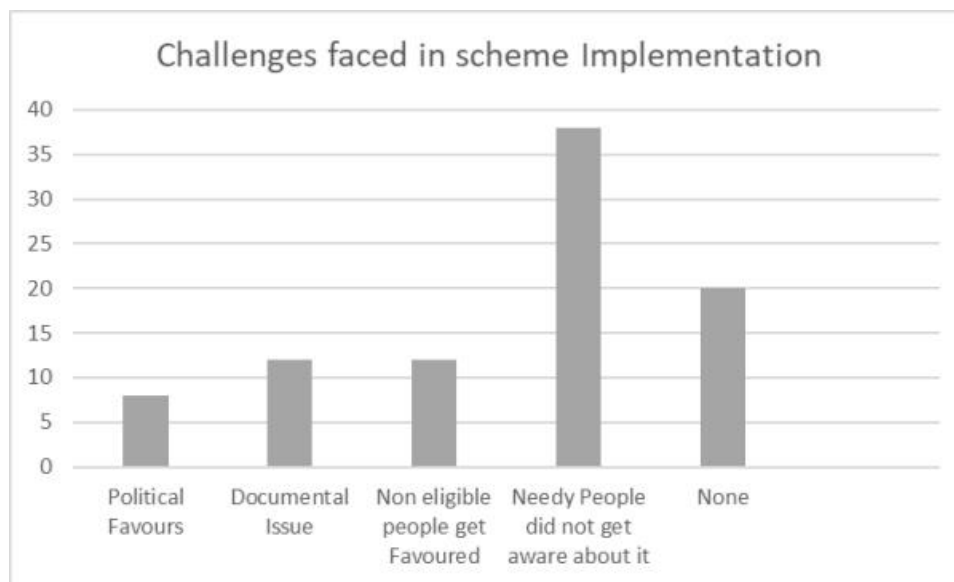


Table 2. Outlines various challenges encountered in implementing the Orunodoi Scheme, reflecting insights from respondents. Among the identified challenges, 38 individuals expressed concerns that needy people were unaware of the scheme, indicating significant gaps in outreach and communication efforts. Additionally, 12 respondents each noted issues related to political



favoritism and ineligible individuals benefiting from the scheme, pointing to potential fairness issues in distribution. Another 12 respondents cited documentation issues as a barrier, highlighting complexities in proving eligibility. Notably, 20 respondents indicated experiencing no challenges, suggesting a varied perception of the scheme's implementation. There are 10 people who faced some and all of these challenges altogether. Addressing these challenges requires targeted strategies to enhance awareness, streamline documentation processes, ensure equitable distribution, and improve overall transparency in scheme operations. By addressing these issues, policymakers can strengthen the Orunodoi Scheme's effectiveness in supporting vulnerable populations like those in Topatoli Village, ensuring that it reaches those most in need.

## **CONCLUSION**

Topatoli village presents a demographic landscape where women constitute a significant majority, with approximately 173.33 females per 100 males, influencing community dynamics and resource allocation. The population is predominantly adults aged 18 to 40 years, indicating a working-age demographic, with fewer children and elderly individuals. Socio-economically, the village is characterized by a predominant presence of Scheduled Tribes (92%) and Hinduism (100%), underscoring a homogeneous ethnic and religious composition. The Orunodoi Scheme, a flagship government initiative, enjoys high awareness among women, with 80% of households benefiting from financial aid.

The Orunodoi Scheme, aimed at providing financial assistance, has shown varied impacts among beneficiaries. While many report positive changes in their financial situation and access to essential commodities, challenges such as inadequate coverage, delays in fund distribution, and varying levels of satisfaction underscore areas for improvement. Addressing these issues is crucial to maximize the scheme's effectiveness in alleviating poverty and promoting economic stability among vulnerable households. Infrastructure and basic services like electricity and water supply also present opportunities for enhancement. While some households benefit from reliable services, others face significant challenges, indicating the need for investments in infrastructure development and service delivery to ensure equitable access and improve overall quality of life. In conclusion, Topatoli village stands at a crossroads of opportunity and challenge, where targeted interventions in education, socio-economic support programs, and infrastructure development can foster inclusive growth and enhance the well-being of its residents. By addressing these multifaceted issues through collaborative efforts between government, community stakeholders, and development partners, Topatoli can achieve sustainable progress and empower its residents to lead fulfilling lives in a supportive and thriving community.



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