



Women Empowerment And Sustainable Livelihood Through Weaving: A Study Of Weavers Of Chizami Weaves Under Phek District

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Abstract:

Women have been taking the whole charge in weaving, as men are taboo to weave in Naga society. The weaving monopoly by Naga women has been holding and carrying the Naga identity through weaving. The present study focuses on the role women involved in Chizami Weaves in the socio-economic empowerment of rural women in Phek district of Nagaland. Chizami Weaves was initiated by North East Network in 2008 and has emerged as an important platform for preserving traditional textile practices while generating sustainable livelihood opportunities for women weavers. The study examines the socio-economic condition of women engaged in the project, the benefits derived from their participation, and the challenges faced by them in their working environment. Chizami Weaves as an organization has played a significant role in enhancing women's economic independence, improving their standard of living and increasing their participation in social and economic activities. The project has also contributed towards the preservation of traditional weaving skills and the promotion of rural employment. However, issues such as financial limitations, marketing difficulties and infrastructural constrained continue to effect the women weavers. This study tries to analyze and understand how Chizami Weaves has emerged as an important instrument for women's empowerment, sustainable livelihood, and rural development in Nagaland.

Keywords: Gender, Empowerment, Sustainable Livelihood, Economy, Weaving, etc

Introduction:

Empowerment is understood where the upliftment in socio-economic condition of women and better decision making takes place in a society. The government has provided various schemes in order to minimize the gender inequalities in spite of gender difference which exist in almost all country of the world. Women must be made a par with men in all respect such as education, employment, etc. To bring up all this in development, empowerment has become an effective strategy. Government is trying its best to provide incentives and helps women in order to compete with men as most of the society is dominated by men. Women empowerment can be viewed as a continuum of several interrelated components (Marilee, Karl, 1995).

- a) Awareness building about women situation, discrimination and rights towards gender equality.
- b) Capacity building and skill development.
- c) Participation and decision making.

There is a need of collective involvement with the notion of both individual and general when it comes to Empowerment as the people must begin to develop their awareness and ability to organize and bring about change. There is a need to uplift women capability in leadership roles for greater participation, formative action for their empowerment. National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) emphasized on the wholesome empowerment of women in order to attain gender equality as enshrined in the constitution of India. The policy on empowerment of women is to bring about advancement, development and women folk for all round development. The constitution empowers the state to adopt its own measure of positive discrimination's in favor of women.

Origin and history of Chizami Weaves:

Chizami Weaves was undertaken by the North-East Network (NEN), Chizami. It is a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) which is located at Chizami village of Phek district, Nagaland. It is a project dedicated to promote and preserves the unique textile tradition of Nagaland while ensuring sustainable livelihood for economically marginalized rural women.

Chizami Weaves was started in 2008 with a capital of Rs. 5 lakhs. In the starting time there were only 7 weavers who engaged in weaving but today they are engaged more than 500 weavers till date belonging to the Chakhesang tribe in Phek district of Nagaland. Chizami Weaves covered 3 Blocks i.e. Chizami Circle, Pfutsero Circle and Meluri Circle covering 14 villages in Phek and Meluri district of Nagaland and recently started a new centre in Kohima district as well. In the 2016 Northeast Centre for Technology Application and Research had provided a Soft Loan of Rs. 24 lakhs without any interest payment in order to enlarge their project. Today they are providing employment to the rural women.

They are not only providing employment but also generating revenue to run over the project. It was estimated that Chizami Weaves generate an income of Rs.30 lakhs in the year 2016-17 and was expected to gain Rs. 50 lakhs in current year 2026. The products of Chizami Weaves were highly demanded within the country and also indirectly exported to the foreign countries through Handloom and Handicraft Export council.

Role of Chizami Weaves in Empowerment of Women:

Women in Chakhesang community have been involved in weaving since the traditional times. With the introduction of Chizami Weaves, it has played an important role in enhancing the knowledge, skills and good attitude of their members who avails it. It is realized all over the world that poverty can be removed and improvement of living is through social mobilization of poor. Chizami Weaves emerged a vital role and strategy for empowering women and removing poverty. Since the starting of 2008, many new innovating schemes and programme have been implementing for the socio-economic and cultural upliftment of women in the state.

The traditional Chakhesang society witness women weaving for their family and society but with modernity the weaving culture seem to change a lot as women started to venture into education and offices. Chizami Weaves mobilised that the weaver who earlier had woven for her own family, today they weaves for the global market. She can now significantly contribute in keeping alive though traditional skills, making hand-woven products for conscious consumer while sustaining her family and community. The project engaged more than 300 weavers and ensured employment to rural women through daily wages, contract, etc. Yesterday those rural women who could not earn money now they can earn huge amount of money through their skills of weaving. It promotes women ability and making their products available for consumers while sustaining her family and community in general.

Chizami Village:

Chizami village is located in Chizami circle of Phek district of Nagaland with a total of 586 families residing and having a population of 2,592 of which 1,289 are males and 1,303 are females as per census 2011. Average sex ratio of Chizami village is 1011 which is higher than Nagaland state average sex ratio of 931. Child sex ratio was 904 as per 2011 census lower than Nagaland state of 943. The literacy rate of Chizami village was 75.22% comparing to 79.55% of Nagaland.

The village is administered by head of village which is elected by members of the village. The people of village were mostly engaged in agriculture. The village had two primary school, one middle school, 3 high school, and one higher secondary school, Bank and Hospital are important sector which are availing by the peoples of Chizami and its neighboring village.

About the loom:

Chizami Weaves promote and developed textile through oldest loom adopted by the human, the Loin-Loom or the Back-Strap Loom that is traditionally used by the Chakhesang Nagas. The portable loom gets its name from strap pulled around the weaver's back that holds the whole structure of the loom with required tension that enables a study weaves pattern. Weaving in Nagaland is exclusively dominated by women of all age group and tribes. Due to the nature of the loom, the width of a fabric is normally woven at one time and do not exceed more than 18-20 inches. Larger the pieces of fabrics are made by stitching number of strip together.

Objective:

- a) To study the socio-economic condition of women employed in Chizami Weaves.
- b) To find out the benefits derived by the women weavers from Chizami Weaves.
- c) To critical understand the problems faced by the weavers or the employees.

Methodology:

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. For collecting primary data, purposive sampling has been used. A total of 80 respondents have been selected. The respondents are the females residing within Chizami village and neighbouring villages in Phek district of Nagaland. Personal interview was conducted in the month of March 2026 with interview schedule to the females who engaged in Chizami Weaves who resides within the said jurisdiction. Most of the weavers were from financially poor background. The secondary data were also collected through journals, newspaper, dissertations, etc. Simple statistical calculation has also been done for analyzing the data provided by the respondent.

Limitation:

The study of women empowerment was limited to women who engaged in Chizami Weaves due to time and financial constraint, the study was reduced to the size of only 80 respondents from the said jurisdiction.

Analysis and interpretation of Data:**1.1 Introduction:**

Analysis has been done by inspecting and modeling of data with the aim of finding useful information and supporting decision making.

1.2 Demographic attributes:

Age: Age played an important role in undertaking any programme which is found in socio-economic activities. The following tables are shown below in details.

Table 1.2.1 Distribution of respondents on the basis of age groups.

Age group	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 20	10	12.5
21-30	30	37.5
31 -40	25	31
Above 40	15	19
total	80	100

Source: Data taken from the field in March 2026.

The above table has been shown that out 80 respondents 12.5% are under the age category of below 20 years of age, 37.5% are under 21-30 years of age group, 31 % belong to the group of 31-40 and 19% are above 40 Years of age. The age group category shows that, middle age group was overpowered the younger and older age group. There is need to encourage the young women in the area to be involved as they are more energetic in the process of economic development.

Table1.2.2 Occupation of the respondent engaged in Chizami Weaves

Occupation	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Agri. workers	45	56
Daily wages worker	15	19
Small traders	15	19
others	5	6
total	80	100

Occupation of the respondents played an important role in the upliftment of women. As Agriculture is the main source of livelihood and their occupation in rural areas. Majority of the respondents were engaged in agriculture which constitute 56% which is more than the half of the total given occupation, Daily wages worker and Small traders constitute 19% each and 6% were engaged in other fields other than the three occupation.

Table 1.2.3 Distribution of the respondents on the basis type of family.

Type of Family	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Nuclear Family	70	87.5
Joint Family	10	12.5
Total	80	100

Source: Data taken from the field survey in March 2026

In the table, out of 80 respondents 87.5% of the respondents have nuclear family and only 12.5% were in joint family. It has recorded that in Naga traditional condition particularly in Chakhesang region Nuclear Family was practice right after their marriage and also it is seen that joint family was replaced by nuclear family due to changing of socio-economic condition.

2.1 Economic attributes of the family engaged in Chizami weaves.

Economic attributes of the family engaged in Chizami Weaves involves in different sector apart from weaving and also includes all their income and expenditures.

Table 2.1.1 Source of income of the household (monthly).

Source of Income	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Agriculture	40	50
Daily wages	30	37.5
Small trade	10	12.5
Total	80	100

Source: Data taken from field survey in March 2026

The main aim of any programme of women empowerment is to provide opportunity for women to engaged them in income generating and get empowered. Besides involving in Chizami Weaves, these women were getting other source of income like Agriculture. Therefore out of 80 respondents, 50% of the respondents get income from agriculture, 37.5% of respondents earned from daily wages and 12.5% engaged in small trade.

Table 2.1.2 Income after joining Chizami Weaves (monthly)

Income after joining Programme (Rs)	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 4000	10	12.5
4000-5000	25	31
5000-6000	20	25
6000-7000	15	19
7000 & Above	10	12.5
Total	80	100

Source: Data taken from the field survey in March 2026.

The table shows the different range of income. Out of 80 respondents 10 respondents were earning below 4000 from weaving, 25 respondents earned Rs 4000-5000, 20 respondents earned Rs 5000-6000 in a month, 15 respondents earned Rs 5000-6000 and 10 respondents earned Rs 7000 and above in a month. As it is shown in the table that majority of the respondents are earning the margin range of Rs 4000-5000 in a month.

Table 2.1.3 Source of expenditure.

Source of expenditure	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Consumption	20	25
Children education	35	44
Production	5	6
Health	15	19
Emergency	5	6
Total	80	100

Source: Data taken from the field survey in March 2026

The table show the expenditure of the respondents where out of 80 respondents, 25% spend their income on consumption, 44% on Children education, 6% spends their income on production, 19% on Health and 6% spends their income on emergency. It is clearly shown that majority of the respondents spends their their income on children education and they did not spend much on emergency and production.

Table2.1.4 Expenditure of the household after engaged in Chizami Weaves (Monthly)

Expenditure after Joining Programme (Rs)	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 3000	8	10
3000-4000	20	25
4000-5000	25	31
5000-6000	15	19
Above 6000	12	15
Total	80	100

Source: Data taken from the field in March 2026

The table clearly show the monthly expenditure of the respondents after joining Chizami Weaves where 10% of the respondents spends their income below Rs 3000, 25% spends between 3000-4000, 31% spends between 4000-5000, 19 % spends between 5000-6000 and 15% spends their income above Rs 6000.

Table 2.1.5 Source of saving of the household.

Source of saving	No. Respondents	Percentage (%)
Bank	50	62.5
Post-office	5	6.25
others	25	31.25
Total	100	100

Source: Data taken from the field survey in March 2026

The data shown in the table are the source of saving. Out of 80 respondents, 62.5% respondents saves their income in banks, 31.25% in other sources and only 6.25% of the total respondents save in post-office saving bank. The data shows that majority of the respondents were aware of the banking system and were actively participated in the services.

3.1 Benefit from Chizami Weaves:

A study has been done to study the benefit derived in joining the programme.

Table 3.1.1 Benefits derived Chizami Weaves.

Benefits	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Improved Skills	35	44
Increase Income	25	31
Better Decision Making	15	19
Others	5	6
Total	100	100

Source: Data taken from the field survey in March 2026

The above table shows the benefits derived by the respondents by participating in the programme where 44% of the total respondents benefited in improving skills, 31% in increasing their income, 19% in better decision making and 6% of the total respondents benefit from other sources.

4.1 Reason for Joining Chizami Weaves.

Reason for joining Chizami Weaves	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
For Children Education	40	50
For Farming	5	6.5
For Family support	20	25
For Trading	5	6.5
Others	10	12
Total	100	100

Source: Data taken from the field survey in March 2026

The Chizami Weaves has motivated the women to come forward and generate income and fulfilled their desired in employment. Another study has also been carried out and analyze the reason why they join these programme. The reasons which were given by the respondents are shown in the table where different respondent have joined the programme for different purpose. Out of 80 respondents 40 respondents joined the programme for children education followed by 20 respondents for family support, 10 respondents for others and only 5 respondents each on farming and trading.

5.1 Impact of Chizami Weaves on women empowerment.

The role of women empowerment played by Chizami Weaves have been greatly influence the women in participation, decision making, improvement of socio-economic condition of women in all sphere of life. The following table had shown the impact of Chizami Weaves in empowering women in rural areas.

Table5.1.1 Impact of Chizami Weaves on Women Empowerment

Impact	Yes	Percentage (%)	No	Percentage (%)	Total	Total Percentage (%)
Improved in activities	50	62.5	30	37.5	80	100
Increase confidence	35	44	45	56	80	100
Better living	60	75	20	25	80	100

Source: Data taken from the field survey in March 2026

The data shows that almost all the women (respondents) have improved their loving through this programme in participating in social activities, self-confidence, better decision making and also their income. The study has record that Chizami Weaves has played an important role in empowering women in rural areas especially in Phek district of Nagaland.

6.1 Problem Face by the employees:

Though so many respondents got benefitted from the programme yet there are some factors which the employees (respondents) were facing some problems. Some of the major problems faced by the employees are shown in table 4:7. Out of the 80 Respondents

Table 6.1.1: Problem face by the employees.

Problems	Yes	Percentage (%)	No	Percentage (%)	Total	Total Percentage (%)
Work not regular	15	19	65	81	80	100
Wages not receives on time	0	0	80	100	80	100
Improper training facility	18	22.5	62	77.5	80	100
Low Profit	40	50	40	50	80	100

Source: Data taken from the field survey in March 2026

7.1 Conclusion:

To sum up, the respondents have attained empowerment to a considerable extent in participating in the programme. They have acquired empowerment in awareness on various Socio-economic issues and financial packaged in earning their income which improves their living condition. They are also facing some problem such as insufficient work, improper training facilities but it is clearly point out that the programme have greatly contributes women to attain empowerment in all sphere of life.

The role of women in the development of the nation is as important as en. Chizami weaves is emerged as powerful instrument in the economics era. They have not only improved the living condition of the members but also helped them change in their outlook and attitudes. Since all the members were women we can considered that weaving is helpful to earn their living.

The study clearly shows that Chizami Weaves has contributed to the empowerment, development and growth of women well beings. After joining the programme, women have become economically and socially stable. It provides confidence and decision making power to women. They gain self motivation, more recognition in a society and more involvement not only in family matter but also contribution greatly in a society. Chizami Weaves had greatly transformed the women in rural areas and a social change in a society.

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