

Inequalities in Education For All (EFA) Achievements: The state of Primary Education in selected Community Development Blocks of Assam

Harekrishna Haloi, Jnanashree Borah and Lakshyahira Datta. Guwahati, Assam

Abstract

The Education For All (EFA) is a worldwide novel mission of UNESCO which is centered around six goals. While each of the six EFA goals is individually important, it is also useful to have a means of indicating progress towards EFA as a whole. The EFA Development Index (EDI), a composite of relevant indicators, provides one way of doing so at least for the four most easily quantifiable EFA goals. The present study is an attempt to examine three components of Education For All Development Index namely Universal Primary Education (UPE), Quality of Education and Gender Parity and Equality and finally to assess Primary Education EDI of four Community Development Blocks of Assam identified to represent four socio-economically backward communities namely Tea Garden Labour community, Char community, Scheduled Tribe community and Scheduled Caste community respectively. The study is based on secondary data which have been analyzed and discussed with necessary statistical techniques and inferences are drawn based on them. The EDI of the selected blocks are far below the countries average which may be related to literacy status. The situation demands a systematic approach for attaining the goal of Universal Primary Education by the socio-economically backward communities of Assam.

Key Words: Education for All, Quality of education, Gender Parity and equality, C.D. Blocks, survival rates

Introduction:

Primary education is the foundation on which the development of every citizen and the nation as a whole builds on. Widespread education not only helps growth through productivity effects, but also crucial to distribution of the gains from growth. Growth in a society in which most people have a basic education is most likely more pro-poor than growth in a society in which the educated are the elite few (Becker and Tomes, 1986). So, education is a powerful tool for reducing poverty, unemployment,

and inequality, improving health and nutrition and promoting sustained human development led growth (World Bank-2004)

One of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed in September, 2000 at a UN Summit of world leaders held at Dakar is the achievement of universal primary school attendance for boys and girls; this of course, implies a complete closing of gender gap. It also requires a hundred per cent primary school completion rate, that is, that all students entering grade I are retained until grade

5. The movement was launched in 1990 at the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtein, Thailand. From this conference, the World Declaration on Education for All was adopted, which stressed that education is a fundamental human right and pushed countries to strengthened their efforts to improve education. The MDG couched in these terms reflects recognition of the importance of basic (primary) education (Bhalotra and Zamora, 2006).

Education For all Development goals:

The Education for all (EFA) is a worldwide novel mission of UNESCO which is centered around six goals as mentioned below:

1. Expand early childhood care, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. Provide free and compulsory primary education for all.
3. Ensuring learning and life-skills for young people and adults.
4. Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, specially for women.
5. Achieving gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015.
6. Improve the quality of education.

While each of the six EFA goals is individually important, it is also useful to have a means of indicating progress towards EFA as a whole. The EFA Development Index (EDI), a composite of relevant indicator, provides one way of doing so, at least for the four most easily quantifiable EFA goals e.g. Universal Primary Education

is meant for goal 2, Adult Literacy for goal 4, Gender Parity and equality for goal 5 and Quality of Education (EFA Global Monitoring Report,2010). Out of these four indicators, the Adult Literacy Rate which is used as a proxy to measure progress towards first part of goal 4 has to be avoided because of its limitations. First, the adult Literacy Indicator being a statement about the stock of human capital is slow to change, and thus it could be argued that it is not a good leading indicator of year by year progress. Second, the existing data on adult literacy are not entirely satisfactory

In order to evaluate each country's progress with regards to the EFA goals set in the Dakar Framework for action, UNESCO has developed the Education For All Development Index (EFA-DI). The EDI measures four of the six EFA goals, selected on the basis of data availability. Each of four goals is evaluated using a specific indicator, and each component is then assigned an equal weight in the overall index. The EDI value for a given country is thus the arithmetic mean of the four indicators. Since they are all expressed as percentages, the EDI value can vary from 0 to 100% or, when expressed as a ratio, from 0 to 1. The higher the EDI value, the closure the country is to achieving Education For All (EFA) as a whole.

In India primary education has historically been neglected by the State, with educational expenditure being concentrated on the tertiary sector (Dreze & Sen. 1995). Successive policy statements have pledged to initiate special measures to rectify the historically inherited inequalities in

education that have hindered the progress of some social groups such as scheduled Castes, scheduled Tribes and minority communities. As a result, there are vast inequalities in educational attainment in India, a remarkable degree of illiteracy coexisting with frontier research in science and technology. It calls for serious self-reflection not only by the State but also by professional groups and civil society organizations.

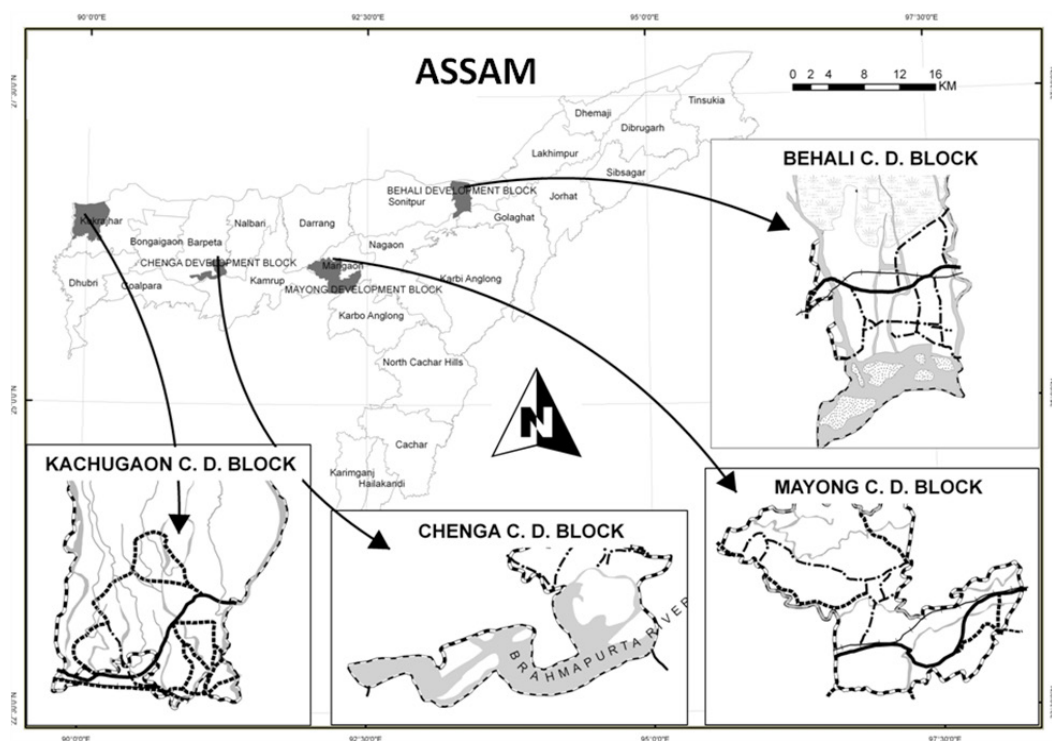
It is a constitutional obligation of the 'State' to ensure free and compulsory primary education for all in India. The constitution of free India that came into force in 1950, proposed to achieve the target of universalization within a period of ten years. The goal, which was expected to be achieved by 1960, has remained elusive even now. Several programmes have been initiated for universalisation of primary education such as Non Formal Education (NFE), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), Mid-day Meal Scheme and Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) to name a few.

Assam, the most populous state of the North East India is showing her literacy rate at 64.28 per cent, a little below the national average of 65.38 per cent with a male-female gap of 15.90 per cent in 2001. It has increased to 73.18% in 2011 which is also at a slight below of national level literacy rate 74.04%. The male being the 78.81% and female 67.27 % with a gender gap of 11.54% (Census 2011). The improvement in both the literacy and gender gap in a decade is not at satisfactory level.

The Present Study: Keeping these perspectives in view, the present study attempts to examine the inequalities in EFA along the specific problem groups in Assam viz. Tea labour community, Char community, Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste. The rationale behind delimiting the study among specific social groups mentioned above is due to the fact that a good number of studies have already identified the aforesaid social groups as problem areas which have special implications with regard to enrollment and dropout in primary education (Borah, 2002). **Tea-garden labourers** are those who work in tea gardens, the large revenue generating industry in Assam. **Char community** are those habitant in few districts of Lower Assam live particularly in riverine sandbars and mostly includes immigrants from nearby countries. **Scheduled Tribe** means the tribes which are recognized in the Indian Constitution living both in hills and plains. **Scheduled Caste** is socio-economically backward community recognized in the Indian Constitution living scattered in Assam.

Objectives:

The prime objectives of the study are to examine three components of Education For All Development Index namely Universal Primary Education, Quality of Education and Gender parity and equality and finally to assess the EDI of the selected CD blocks



Study Area:

The study area comprises of four Community Development Blocks of Assam. These are Behali, Chenga, Kachugaon and Mayong which have been selected to represent four socio-economically backward communities namely Tea Garden Labourer, Char community, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste respectively.

The Behali C.D.Block is situated in the eastern part of the Sonitpur district of Assam. Total population of the block is 79,890 inhabiting in 109 villages with a density of 360 person per sq. km and 40.96% literacy rate (Census 2001). The area is mostly covered by tea gardens and hence, it is primarily dominated by the Tea Garden labour community. Despite the fact

that the Tea Labour community is socio-economically backward, they are not yet included in scheduled social group in the state. (Kar, 2007)

The Chenga C.D. block is situated in the South eastern corner of Barpeta district of Assam. The total population of the block is 76,079, inhabiting in 56 villages having a density of 461 persons per sq. km and 35.62% literacy rate (Census 2001). The area has a dominance of minority Muslim community. The Char community is regarded as non-scheduled social group (Kar, 2007) in Assam though they are socio-economically very backward.

The Kachugaon C.D.Block is situated in the western most part of Kokrajhar district of Assam. The total population of the block

is 2, 16,622 inhabiting in 237 villages with a density of 435 person per sq. km and literacy rate of mere 32.23% (Census 2001). The area is predominantly inhabited by the Scheduled Tribe People. The Scheduled Tribe people comprises of 32.08 per cent of the total population in the block which is far above the state average of 12.41%.

Mayong C.D. block is situated in the western part of Morigaon district of middle Assam. The total population of the block is 2, 42,147 (Census 2001) inhabiting in 244 villages having a density of 435 persons per sq. km and 46.46 % literacy rate. Among the social groups Scheduled Caste is the most prominent group in the block comprising of 23.08 per cent of the total population which exceeds the average scheduled caste population of the state with 6.85%.

Methodology

The study is based on secondary data. The Census of India 2001, Population Census Village Directory 2001, and Educational Management and Information System (EMIS) 2007 of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), Assam have been used.

Selection of four Community Development Blocks, one from each district of Sonitpur, Barpeta, Kokrajhar and Morigaon is done that are based on the highest concentration of the respective social groups, calculated on the basis of Census report 2001. Data have been analysed and discussed with necessary statistical techniques and inferences are drawn based on them.

Discussion:

The analysis of the data and information are discussed below:

Universal Primary Education: The UPE goal implies both universal access to and universal completion of Primary Education. The indicator selected to measure Universal Primary Education achievement in the EDI is the total primary Net Enrolment Ratio (NER).

Net Enrollment Ratio: Net Enrollment Ratio is the ratio of the number of children of official school age who are enrolled in primary school to the total population of children of official school age. This reflects the percentage of primary school age children who are enrolled in primary school and each value varies from 0 to 100% or ratio of 0 to 1.

In order to calculate Net Enrollment Ratio (NER), population from age group 5-9 years have been taken from Population Census 2001. Although the relevant age group of primary school from class I to IV coincides with the age group of 6-10 years the non availability of data compels investigator to confine to age group of 5-9 years. Again based on the percentage share of 5-9 age group of the total population of the concerned district the Block wise population in the age group is calculated (Table 1). Data on enrolment have been collected from the Education Management and Information System (EMIS) of SSA, Assam. As the enrolment data refers to 2007, the village level population data have to be estimated for 2007 by employing the decadal population growth rate. In order to maintain balance between the selected age group and standard of primary education the enrolment of class I to class III have been considered. The NER thus found is expressed in ratio.

Table 1: Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) in different C.D.Blocks.

Block	Population (2001)	Population 2007 (Estimated)	Population 2007(estimated) 5-9 yrs age group	Enrollment (2007) Class I-III	NER	
					(in P.C)	(in Ratio)
Behali	79890	93415	12330 *13.2	7625	61.9	0.62
Chenga	76079	88959	13272 *14.92	9026	68.0	0.68
Kachugaon	216622	253296	37589 *14.84	22469	59.77	0.59
Mayong	242147	283142	42358 *14.96	28965	68.38	0.68

Data Source: Census of India 2001, EMIS-2007 SSA, Assam

*District Percentage of population of 5-9 yrs age group.

It reveals that (Table-1) the 5-9 years age group constitutes 13.2%, 14.92%, 14.84% and 14.96% of total population of Behali, Chenga, Kachugaon and Mayong Block respectively. Based on the aforesaid percentage shares populations in the age group of 5-9 years for the year of 2007 have been found out. The enrollment from class I to class III have been recorded and NER has been calculated in terms of ratio. The NER

in Chenga and Mayong Blocks are found to be the highest with the value of 0.68 each followed by Behali and Kachugaon with 0.62 and 0.59 respectively. An observation at a glance gave an understanding that enrollment is linked to literacy level. With highest literacy level (Table 2) Mayong shows highest NER. Kachugaon with poor literacy level shows the lowest NER.

Table 2 : Literacy level in the different C.D. Blocks.

C.D.Block	No. of village	Level of Literacy				
		Low Below 15%	Below Average 15% - 30%	Average 30% - 45%	Above Average 45% - 60%	High Above 60%
Behali	109	8	29	35	23	14
		7.34%	26.61%	32.11%	21.10%	12.84%
Chenga	56	7	17	11	15	3
		12.5%	30.36%	19.64%	26.79%	5.36%
Kachugaon	237	5	33	85	69	29
		1.11%	13.92	35.86%	29.11%	12.24%
Mayong	244	6	40	66	57	63
		2.46%	16.39%	27.05%	23.36%	25.82%

Data source: Census Report of India, 2001.

Quite interestingly Chenga C.D. Block seems to displays an opposite situation. Despite the poor literacy level the area shows a high NER. It may be due to implementation of Govt. special programmes for Char area development in addition to normal developmental programmes.

Gender Parity and Equality: Measuring and monitoring the broader aspects of gender parity and equality in education is difficult (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2007). No such measures are available on an internationally comparable basis. Gender, the fourth EDI component is measured by a composite index, the gender specific EFA index (GEI). Ideally, the GEI should reflect the whole Gender related EFA goal, which calls for eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in primary education of good quality. There

C.D. Blocks.

C.D. Block	Enrollment		Literacy
	Primary GPI	Transformed GPI	GPI
Behali	0.69 *103	0.66 *6	0.62 *109
Chenga	0.70 *53	0.64 *3	0.54 *56
Kachugaon	0.64 *229	0.49 *8	0.60 *237
Mayong	0.72 *232	0.68 *12	0.66 *244

Source: EMIS 2007, SSA, Assam. Census of India, 2001. *No. of villages

The Gender Parity Index based on enrollment and literacy has been worked out for the villages in the respective Blocks as follows:

are thus two sub goals namely gender parity (achieving equal participation of girls and boys in primary and secondary education) and gender equality (ensuring that educational equality exists between boys and girls). The Gender Parity Index (GPI), when expressed as the ratio of females to males in enrolment ratio or the literacy rate, can exceed unity when more girl/women are enrolled or are literate than boys/men. For the purposes of the index, the F/M formula is inverted to M/F (transformed) in cases where the GPI is higher than 1. To find out GEI, the primary GPI and transformed GPI are calculated by using the aforesaid model. In the present study the GPI for enrollment in class I-IV has been calculated using EMIS data 2007, SSA, Assam. The literacy GPI has been worked out from population Census, 2001(Table 3).

Thus, $GEI = 1/3 (\text{primary GPI}) + 1/3 (\text{transformed GPI}) + 1/3 (\text{literacy GPI})$

Table 3: Gender specific Index (GEI) in different

GEI of Behali:

$$1/3(0.69) + 1/3(0.66) + 1/3(0.62) = 0.65$$

GEI of Chenga:

$$1/3(0.70) + 1/3(0.64) + 1/3(0.54) = 0.62$$

GEI of Kachugaon:

$$1/3(0.64)+1/3(0.49)+1/3(0.60)= 0.57$$

GEI of Mayong:

$$1/3(0.72)+1/3(0.68)+1/3(0.66)= 0.68$$

As seen in table 3, the GPI in enrollment stands at highest in Mayong C.D.Block followed by Behali, Chenga and Kachugaon with the ratio of 0.68, 0.65, 0.62 and 0.57 respectively. It is clearly indicated in the table that although GPI in literacy is the lowest in the Chenga C.D Block the GPI in enrollment shows a good picture next to the Mayong. In case of Mayong the higher literacy may influence the higher GPI. But the situation in Chenga signifies that literacy is not playing significant role in the relatively better status of GPI in enrollment (Table 2). Here also, implementation of Government special programmes for Char area development seems to play a positive role.

Quality of Education: Among the feasible proxy indicators available for a large number of countries, the survival rate to grade 5 was selected as being the best available for the quality of education component of the EDI (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2010).

Survival Rate: The grade specific enrollment over a period of five years are considered in estimating the retention or survival rate at the primary level and it gives a fairly good information about retaining capacity of the education system. In this study Apparent Survival Rate (ASR) has been used. The Apparent Survival Rate worked out here presents the share of enrolment in Class-II and subsequent Classes in relation to the enrolment in Class-I in a year. The rate is considered crude as it is based upon the enrolment data of only one

year. It, however, reveals interesting and useful information about retaining capacity of the system (DISE, 2007).

In the context of the present study, a variation is seen with regard to class and gender among the selected Blocks. It is revealed (Table 4) that the mean enrolment decreases with the increase of class level; but the rate of decrease is more pronounced in case of girls. As shown in the table-4 the survival rate from class-I to class III stands at 0.68, 0.55, 0.61 and 0.75 for Behali, Chenga, Kachugaon and Mayong C.D. Block respectively. With a ratio of 0.75 Mayong shows the highest survival rate among the selected blocks followed by Behali with a value of 0.68 in class III.. In case of girls enrollment both Mayong and Behali displayed a satisfactory level of survival rate compared to the other blocks. Chenga C.D.Block representing the Char community shows the worst survival rate being the 0.55 in both girls and boys enrollment. Kachugaon C.D.Block with 0.61 shows a little high of survival rate than the Chenga. While calculating the Class IV enrolment with that of Class I it is found that the former occupies 61.01%, 53.11%, 57.96% and 71.12% of the later for Behali, Chenga, Kachugao, Mayong blocks respectively. The picture with regard to Chenga C.D.Block is in fact a grey one where Class-IV occupies relatively a lesser percentage share of Class I i.e. 53.11%.

The enrolment stands at a mean of 17.51 in class I of Behali Block, decreases to a mean of 14.38, 12.16, and 10.7 at class II, III, & IV respectively. In case of Chenga Block the enrolment stands at a mean of

33.17 in class I and Culminates at 17.61 in class IV. Likewise the mean enrolment of class I of Kachugaon and Mayong Blocks starts at 19.96 and 23.76 and ends in class IV at 11.58 and 16.9. The rate of decrease is more pronounced in Chenga followed by Behali. The situation of Kachugaon and Mayong are also very disappointing. It is apprehended that the decreasing record of enrolment by increase of class level, which led to a low retention of students at the end of the primary schooling may incorporate the dropout. However, further study in this area covering wider dimension is of paramount importance. Table 4 also shows the percentage of the class IV enrolment compared to the enrolment of class I. Accordingly the rates are 61.11% for Behali, 53.09% for Chenga, 58.02% for Kachugaon and 74.12% for Mayong.

Education For All Development

Index: By summing up the three components of EDI namely Net Enrollment Rate, Gender Specific index and Survival Rate in terms of ratio the EDI for the selected C.D. Blocks have been found out as follows:

$$\text{EDI} = \frac{1}{3}(\text{total Primary NER}) + \frac{1}{3}(\text{GEI}) + \frac{1}{3}(\text{Survival rate to grade III})$$

$$\text{EDI Behali} = \frac{1}{3}(0.62) + \frac{1}{3}(0.65) + \frac{1}{3}(0.68) = 0.65$$

$$\text{EDI Chenga:} = \frac{1}{3}(0.68) + \frac{1}{3}(0.62) + \frac{1}{3}(0.55) = 0.62$$

$$\text{EDI Kachugaon:} = \frac{1}{3}(0.59) + \frac{1}{3}(0.57) + \frac{1}{3}(0.61) = 0.59$$

$$\text{EDI Mayong:} = \frac{1}{3}(0.68) + \frac{1}{3}(0.68) + \frac{1}{3}(0.75) = 0.70$$

Table 5: EDI in the sampled blocks

C.D. Block	Total Primary NER	Gender specific EFA Index (GEI)	Survival Rate to grade III	EDI
Behali	0.62	0.65	0.68	0.65
Chenga	0.68	0.62	0.55	0.62
Kachugaon	0.59	0.57	0.61	0.59
Mayong	0.68	0.68	0.78	0.70

Data sources: Census of India 2001, EMIS 2007, SSA (Assam)

It is revealed (table-5) that the EDI is found to be the highest in Mayong CD block with a value of 0.70 representing Scheduled Caste Population where all the three components of EDI namely Net Enrollment Rate (NER), Gender specific index (GEI) and survival rate are found to be highest compared to the other C.D.Blocks.

Behali shows somehow a good EDI due to its Improved GEI and Survival rate. The Scheduled Tribes dominated Kachugaon CD Block shows the poorest level of EDI with an index of 0.59 followed by Char community dominated block Chenga with 0.62. Here if we look in to the literacy scene (Table 2), the Mayong block has claimed

comparatively satisfactory level in literacy. On the contrary the Kachugaon and Chenga blocks displayed a dismal picture with large number of villages fall in the range of 30%-45% and 15%-30% literacy rates respectively. In case of Chenga due to the poorest survival rate the EDI remains only at 0.62. While comparing the present findings at the national context it is seen that all these four C.D. blocks are placed far behind the country's EDI which stands at 0.77 (in 2007)

as calculated by UNESCO (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2010). As stated in the Report, India lags far behind in the global context occupying 105th rank in EDI among 125 countries in the world which falls under the category of Low EDI country. However, as against four parameters adopted in the UNESCO's report, the present exercise could consider only three of the selected parameters which stands as a limitation of the study.

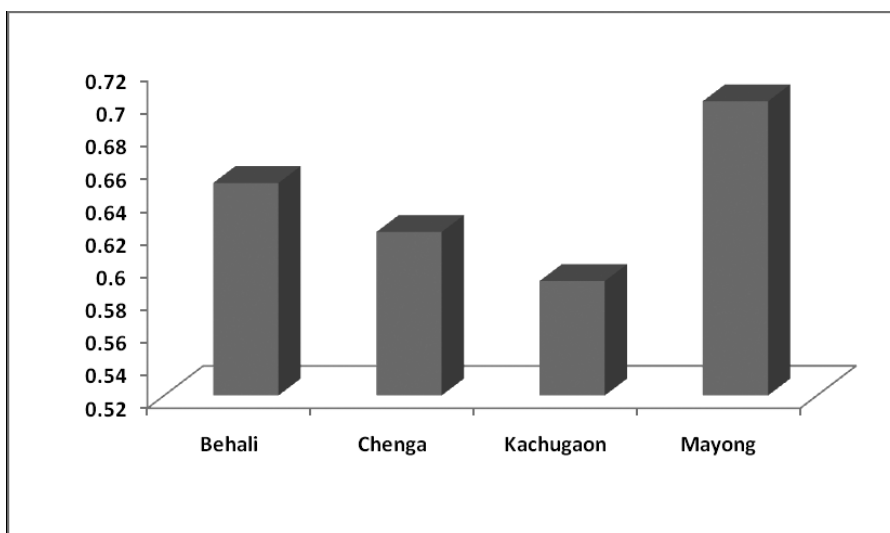


Fig 2: Education For All Development Index in different C.D. blocks.

Conclusion

From the above analysis inferences can be drawn that literacy have a positive role in achieving Education For All. However, in the Char areas represented by Chenga C.D.Block, shows a different picture where literacy is not the determining factor for EDI. Implementation of special developmental programmes for Char areas development may be cited as determining factor for relatively improved NER scenario. Quite

interestingly, the EDI stands at a relatively better state with 0.62 in Chenga due to the high NER and GEI. But the survival rate which is the another important criteria for assessing the achievement of Universal Primary Education is far below than that of the other C.D.Blocks. That is why the positive impact of developmental programmes is acutely challenged by the poor survival rate and literacy.

Keeping aside the special situation of the Char area, the literacy rate being the governing factor for achieving Universal Primary Education goal must be improved irrespective of any social groups. In such a situation it is imperative that the identified social groups need a systematic approach to attain the goal of Universal Primary Education.

Bibliography

- Annual Report of DPEP 1999-2000, District Primary Education Programme, Guwahati, Assam, pp.10-21
- Assam at a glance, 2001 Published by Directorate of Census Operations, Assam.
- Bhalotra.S. and Z.Bernarda (2006)., Primary Education in India, Research Paper No.2006/80, UNO-WIDER.pp 1-11
- Borah. J., (2002): A Comparative Study Level of Students of Different Communities using same tools for all and to identify the major causes of difference in Achievement, irrespective of Different Communities, A DPEP Project Report.
- Census of India, 2001.
- Dreze.J and .Sen.(1995) India: Development and participation, Oxford University Press, Delhi
- Education For All Global Monitoring Report, (2007) UNESCO pp 244 – 251
- Education For All Global Monitoring Report, (2010) UNESCO pp 278 – 291
- Educational Management and Information Systems (EMIS) 2007, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Assam, Guwahat and EMIS data from District Mission Co ordinators of Morigaon, Sonitpur, Barpeta and Kokrajhar districts of Assam.
- Enrollment-Based Indicators Part IV, Elementary Education in India: Analytical Report, Part V, DISE 2007.pp 119-131
- Elementary Education in India: Progress towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics;2006-2007
- Educational Development Index, Elementary Education in India: Analytical Report- Part V (2006-07) pp 170. DISE
- Gohain. M and Borah. J. (2004) Girl Child, Primary Education and Women Empowerment: A Case Study on Tea Garden Community. Education for the Survival of Human Race, Vol. 2 ed.Bhagabati.N. and Talesra.H.: Authors Press, Laxmi Nagar, Delhi-110092. pp 543-572.
- G.Becker and N.Tomes (1986), Human Capital and the rise and fall of families, Journal of Labor Economics, 4, S1-S39.
- J.C.Aggarwal, (2008) Educational Reforms in India (for the 21st Century), Third Revised Edition, 2008, Published by Shipra Publications, Dehli. pp 10-16.
- Jayashree Nanda, (2007) Education for All, A. P. H. Publishing Corporation, New Dehli. pp 113-123
- Kar.B.K.(2007), Population ,Geography of Assam, Rajesh Publications. New Delhi. pp 115-154.
- Lynden. Biloris., and De. Utpal Kumar, ed., (2004). Education in North East India-Challenge and Experience, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.

- Statistical Hand Book of Assam 2011, Published by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam.
- World Bank (2004), Attaining the Millenium Development Goals in India: Role of Public Policy and Service Delivery: Human Development Unit, South Asia Region, June.

Harekrishna Haloi

Associate Professor,
Department of Geography,
Pub Kamrup College,
Baihata Chariali, Kamrup (Assam).
Email: hhaloi@yahoo.com

Dr. Jnanashree Borah

Associate Professor,
Department of Geography,
Arya Vidyapeeth College, Guwahati-16
Email: jnanashree@rediffmail.com

Dr. Lakshyahira Datta

Professor (Retd.)
Department of Geography, Gauhati
University, Guwahati-781 014.