

Editorial

Human Development and Education – missing links in North Eastern Region

North Eastern states are among the highest literate states in our country. If we take a glance at the literacy rates of these states, it becomes a self satisfying impression for ourselves without any tangible and appreciable effect on our lives and more particularly if we consider the standard of our human developments. Mizoram, one of the states of our region has literacy rate of 91.58 (2011) much higher than the national average of 74.04. Except for Arunachal Pradesh (66.95) and Assam (73.18) all other states of the north eastern region viz., Manipur (79.85), Meghalaya (75.48), Nagaland (80.11), Sikkim (82.20) and Tripura(87.75) have higher literacy rates than the national rate. On the other hand, except Assam (0.336) the Human development index of the other north eastern states (0.473,1999-2000) are also higher than the national average (0.436), and is ranked 4th i.e., medium in status and Assam holds the 16th rank among the other states of India.

Considering such background on literacy and human development, some of the findings confuse us, such as - high percentage of school dropouts rate at elementary level is found in 6 out of 8 states of north east, high variation of total literacy rate within states, for example the Mokokchung district of Nagaland has the highest literacy rate of 92.68, whereas its Mon district has literacy as low as 56.60, a gap of 36.08 percentage points. In the areas of human health, despite high abundance in vegetables and fruits production, the states of Assam, Tripura and Sikkim have high anaemic women; consistently higher maternal mortality ratio in Assam compared to the national averages, defy the notions of human development. Such notions of development are also challenged by the number of unemployed youths (Assam itself with approximately 13.5 lakhs) and the number of insurgent groups (approx. 40) at large in the region.

Exploring the missing links between literacy – human development syndromes on one hand and unemployed youths and unending growth of insurgency outfits on the other- it is high time to see the policy gaps in implementations. Deeper understanding of the problems of north eastern states and more focused remedial actions and targeted interventions are the demand of the time. For this, what is felt required is more serious introspections on the part of civil society, educational planners, political leaders and more particularly by researchers of the region, which will pave the way for a balanced growth of the region, thereby creating a stable social environment which will become the fulcrum of development.

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