



Executive Summary

Baseline Survey of Minority Concentrated Districts

North Cachar Hills District Assam



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North Cachar Hills District, Assam

The purpose of the Baseline Survey of the Minority Concentration Districts (MDCS) was to assess the development deficits in the district and identification of priority areas for policy interventions to be structured in the line of the Prime Minister's 15- Point Programme, which will be in the form of a Multi-sector Development Programme (MsDP) for the entire district. In order to do this, ten indicators - eight of which were identified and applied by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India for identifying the Minority Concentrated Districts across the country along with two additional indicators for assessing health status have been used. Since the basic purpose of the Baseline was specified as a pre-requisite for preparation of Multi-sector District Development Plan (MsDP) for the Minority Concentrated Districts (MCDs) characterised by relative backwardness and to bring those districts at least to the national level, most recent national level official estimates were taken for finding the development deficits in terms of the ten selected indicators. Taking deficits so derived as weights, the indicators representing specific sectors are ranked on a ten point score-scale. The exercise results in following relative ranking for the N C Hills district, Assam. The national estimates of the selected indicators are estimated on the basis of NSS 2004 -2005 rounds and NFHS - 3 with due approval from the Ministry.

SI No	Indicators	Survey Results	India	Deficit	Priority assigned
<i>Socio-economic indicators</i>					
1	Rate of literacy	86.4	67.30	19.1	8
2	Rate of female literacy	84.6	57.10	27.5	10
3	Work participation rate	47.9	38.00	9.9	6
4	Female work participation rate	32.7	21.50	11.2	7
<i>Basic amenities indicators</i>					
5	Percentage of pucca houses	6.6	59.40	-52.8	1
6	Percentage of households with access to safe drinking water	56.3	87.90	-31.6	3
7	Percentage of households with sanitary toilets	0.6	39.20	-38.6	2
8	Percentage of electrified households	46.9	67.90	-21.0	4
<i>Health indicators</i>					
9	Percentage of fully vaccinated children	66.0	43.50	22.5	9
10	Percentage of institutional delivery	21.3	38.70	-17.4	5



Based on analysis of various facets of development it can not be said that the thinly populated district of North Cachar Hills is a performer in development process of the state. One could however see better immunization coverage of children and attainment of literacy, but in other development sectors the district has performed badly. The success of immunization coverage of children and literacy could be explained by the programme based approaches on immunization drives and total literacy campaigns. Access to work in this thinly populated district is not constrained, but working in the primary sector, where two third of its working population are engaged is not remunerative. Agriculture in this district is yet to see the faces of modernization and productivity remains at lower level. The baseline survey also indicates underemployment of a significant section of main workers, where sustainability of the job sector is affected by conflict and state of insecurity. On the other hand a relatively high level income revealed from household survey fails to explain the poor provisioning of other basic services in the district. The baseline survey points out some areas of development deficits requiring effective attention. There is however, no religion wise difference in terms of development parameters indicating better situation for a particular religion.

- There is need for institutional reforms in certain sectors of the district to usher in the development process. The district is plagued by poor infrastructure facilities- particularly of power and road communication, which comes in the way of any sustainable self employment initiatives. There is need to stress more on self-employment initiatives in households as well as on non-households industries. The baseline survey indicates involvement of people in traditional skill based handloom and handicrafts and the rich resource based horticulture sector of the district. There is enormous possibility of development of this sector with local entrepreneurial initiatives and basic provisions of real services of the state leading to a synergy of government and the workers. However the baseline survey reveals numerous constraints in the self-employment initiatives.
- Agriculture in this district is still in rudimentary state like many areas of north eastern region and requires effective land use plan. Initiatives needed are in the areas of high value crops and modernization. There is also scope for effectively raising the district's livestock resources considering its unutilized pastures.
- Drinking water and sanitation facilities are in bad state in the villages of the district. There is need of making more provisioning of basic infrastructure, water and sanitation services through state interventions in the villages.
- Decent housing for the poor is another important aspect needing attention. Pucca houses are in very few proportions in the sample villages. Moreover, poor percentage of households having electricity connections reveals poor purchasing power even when the electricity supply is available in the villages.
- The survey reveals missing access to government health facilities in a large section of the sample households. Poor presence and infrequent visits of health personnel in the villages costs the villagers dearly.



- Reproductive health requires serious attention in the villages of the district. In most of the cases child delivery takes place at home attended by untrained personnel.
- Literacy though shows a reasonably good rate in the district, the cause of concern is the very low level of educational attainment in both the religious communities. Information also reveals that the basic infrastructure and provisioning in the schools- teachers, other physical and sanitary facilities are limited and constrained. Economic reason is the major cause of school dropout of students in the district.
- Insecurity feeling among the communities in this conflict ridden district is widely prevalent. This could have an effect on accessing livelihood and ensuring overall decent living of the people.
- In terms of relative deprivation, common perceptions of people capture road communications, educational and skill attainment, health care provisioning and power supply as important facilities lacking in the villages of the district.