Minority Concentration District Project

Cooch Behar, West Bengal

Executive Summary

Sponsored by the Ministry of Minority Affairs

Government of India

Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta

The MCD project aims to provide a baseline survey on the state of minorities in the districts identified by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India. The minorities are defined on the basis of National Commission of Minorites Act, 1992 and includes Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists and Zorastrians (Parsis). Cooch Behar is classified as 'A' category district for this project for which religion specific socio-economic and basic amenities indicators are 40.2 and 10.49. Muslims with a share of 23.34% (as per Census 2001) in total population constitute the minority population of the district.

The purpose of this sample survey is to help the district administration draw action plan for socio-economic and infrastructure development of the district for improving the quality of life of the people and reducing the imbalances during the 11 th. Five Year Plan. However, it may be noted that the benefits will accrue to all sections of people in the district where intervention is executed and not only the minorities.

The survey was conducted in 30 villages in Cooch Behar spread across 10 Blocks during July, 2008. Findings of the survey are categorized under the broad headings of **Basic Amenities; Education; Health; Infrastructure; Occupational conditions; Existence and Efficacy of Government Schemes and any other issue.** We have provided two sets of tables, one for the data across villages to capture the locational variation followed by the district averages computed over all the households surveyed in all the sample villages chosen in the district. In general the findings clearly show that the district performs quite poor in terms of the performance indicators. However, it is not necessarily the case that the Muslims fall behind the non-Muslim population. The findings for the district as a whole can be summarized in the table below. The table also provides deviation of the major indicators from their national averages. This gives an idea of the area which needs intervention on a priority basis. In addition to the indicators on the basis of which the MCD districts were chosen, we have also listed some of the indicators, which in our opinion are extremely important for the development of the district. Detailed and disaggregated analysis can be found in the main report. Some of these are more disaggregated estimates for a particular indicator. For example, we have gone into a detailed account of status of education, at different levels as we thought that only literacy is inadequate. We also provided the status of training in vocational trades

and the demand for such training. This is important, in our opinion, as we tried to relate the same with job market situation for the general populace.

Since the approach of the Multi-sector Development Plan funded by the Ministry of Minority Affairs is supplementary in nature and does not intend to change the very nature of the plan process, it is suggested that the district administration may start working on priority basis with the additional fund in the areas where the deficit can very easily be identified at the district level or at the village or in the pockets of the district. Hence we provide the deficit of the district for the religion specific socio-economic indicators and the basic amenities indicators where the deficit has been calculated as the deviation of the survey estimate from the national average based on the estimates provided by the NSSO 2005 and NHFS-3 in Table 34 below. In addition to these indicators we have also discussed about some of the indicators, which in our opinion are extremely important for the development of the district.

Table 34: Priority Ranking of Facilities Based on Deficits of District Averages and National Averages

Sl. No.	Indicator	District Average	National Average	Deficit	Priority Rank
I. Socio-economic Indicators					
1	Literacy (%)	64.7	67.3	2.6	3
2	Female Literacy (%)	62.29	57.1	-5.19	6
3	Work Participation (%)	48.14	38.0	-10.14	7
4	Female Work Participation (%)	41.06	21.5	-19.56	8
II. Basic Amenities Indicators					
5	Houses with Pucca Walls (%)	12.88	59.4	46.52	2
6	Safe Drinking Water (%)	91.07	87.9	-3.17	5
7	Electricity in Houses (%)	11.65	67.9	56.25	1
8	W/C Toilet (%)	39.33	39.2	-0.13	4
III. Health Indicators					
9	Full Vaccination of Children (%)	44.9	43.5	-	-
10	Institutional Delivery (%)	47.35	38.7	-	-

Note: District averages are estimated on the basis of sample data on rural areas only, and national averages for Sl. No. (5) to (8) are based on NFHS-3 and the rest are based on NSSO, 2005.

It is clear from the table that the district averages perform worst for electrified houses, followed by houses with *pucca* walls, literacy and W/C toilet. In all other cases district averages are higher than the corresponding national averages. Accordingly the district administration is expected to draw up their development plan funded by the Ministry of Minority Affairs based on the priority ranking of the facilities as listed above. However, one should be careful to interpret the results with caution. For example, work participation or female work participation is higher than the respective national averages. But a careful examination of work participation will reveal the nature of work engagements of which landless labourers is the most important category. Hence it is recommended that the district administration should pay adequate attention towards the provision of training facilities in vocational education as well as creation of employment opportunities. Of course the fund from Ministry of Minority Affairs is not enough for the latter, but part of a larger planning process. However, coverage of IAY for BPL families being only 5.63%, the district authority should pay adequate attention in the provision of *pucca* houses for the BPL families. However, it may also be noted that the district averages and the deficits are not uniform across the district, there are large variations across the villages. A comparison may be made consulting the relevant tables for the village level averages. In this way one can find out the priority ranking for the villages separately. Given the representative nature of the sample one can treat those villages or the blocks where they are situated as the pockets of relative backwardness in terms of the above indicators. We draw the attention of the district administration to be cautious when drawing plan for the district.

In addition to the above priority ranking of facilities we also like to point out that there are some findings that the study team of the CSSSC thinks very important from the standpoint of the development of the district. This is specially so where district averages are higher than the corresponding national averages. In such cases it makes better sense to concentrate the efforts of the district administration areas other than the above ten indicators as suggested by the Ministry. These are given below.

- Though *pucca* walled house receives a rank of 3, percentage of BPL families covered under IAY is extremely poor, 5.63 %. So we think it is an important area where the district administration should top up.

- The average number of primary schools per village is 2.07 which sounds reasonably good. But the district average of the number of primary teachers per school (2.52 per school) is in fact lower than the national average (2.84 per school based on Census 2001), but the national average itself is very poor. It means that on an average all the four classes in a primary school cannot be held. So though the district average is better than the national average, the district administration should pay attention to this.

- So far secondary schools are concerned, the performance of the district is very poor – 0.17 secondary and higher secondary schools per village. This also needs intervention.

- Apparently the district performs very poor in terms of health related infrastructure. So looking at only vaccination or institutional delivery is inadequate. A mere 5% of villages have government hospitals in its vicinity, 44.44 % of villages have primary health centres or sub-centres situated within the village, average distance of primary health centre or sub-centres is 1.43 Km., average distance of government hospital is 7.77 Km., average distance of private hospital or nursing home is 5.57 Km. A large percentage of families – 4.84% Muslims and 9.86% non-Muslims go to quacks for treatment though some of them also go to government hospitals or private practitioners. For taking pregnant women to hospitals for delivery the major means is rented cars, there is hardly any ambulance available for this purpose in the villages. This is an important area where the policy makers should think of providing at least one ambulance per village.

- For the ICDS centres only 57% are housed in government building while 30 % have good quality building and average number of visits of ICDS employees is only 17.23 days in a year.

These are by no means can be considered good whether they exceed national average or not, though in most of the cases they are lower than national average.