

Gender Inequality in North East India

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ABSTRACT: *Gender equality is understood at that stage of human development at which the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals are not to be determined by the fact of being born as male or female. Although over the last decades women have struggled to become equal with men in all aspects of life i.e. education, health, employment etc., but still there exist inequality in these sectors. This paper discusses the issue of gender inequality in Northeast part of India consisting of eight different states. The Northeast region is one of the backward regions of India characterized by low per-capita income, low capital formation, in-adequate infrastructural facilities, geographical isolation and communication bottleneck, inadequate exploitation of natural resources etc. Near about 50 percent population of Northeast region are women. In this study an attempt has been made to analyze gender differences in education, health and employment in Northeast India. Data has been collected from various official websites of Govt. of India such as Census of India, National Family Health Survey, and National Sample Survey Office etc. Gender differences in Northeast region is examined on the basis of different indicators, namely Literacy Rate, Gross Enrolment Ratio, Infant Mortality Rate, Labour Force Participation Rate, Worker Population Ratio etc. It was found that four states had GDI above national level and the remaining four states had GDI values marginally below than that of India implying that women of the region enjoyed less disparity in terms of longevity, educational attainment and thus control over resources.*

KEYWORDS: *gender inequality, backward region, GDI values, disparity*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Women are dominated by patriarchal kinship system that results in social and economic dependence of women on men and stipulate their relative lower status compared to men. Although over the last decades women have struggled to become equal with men in all aspects of life i.e. education, health, employment etc., but still there exist inequality in these sectors. Gender inequality has emerged as the major stumbling hurdle in achieving the development targets. The concept of gender equality has been gaining importance as the subordinate status of women in relation to men has been seen in almost every facets of life. Gender equality is understood at that stage of human development at which the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals are not to be determined by the fact of being born as male or female. Realizing the extent of gender inequality throughout the world, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was established as a separate fund within the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 1984.

The disadvantages facing women and girls are a major source of inequality. Very often, women and girls are discriminated against health, education and in labor markets- with negative repercussions for their freedoms. In 2010 report, UNDP further introduced a third measure of inequality known as Gender Inequality Index (GII) built on the same framework as the HDI and the Inequality adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) in order to better expose differences in the distribution of achievements between women and men. The GII is unique in including educational attainment, economic and political participation and female-specific health issues and in accounting for overlapping inequalities at the national level. Thus, it become an important advancement on existing global measures of gender equity.

Northeast India refers to the eastern most region of India consisting of 8(eight) different states such as Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. The North-East Region is one of the back-ward regions of India characterized by low per-capita income, low capital formation, in-adequate infrastructure facilities, geographical isolation and communication bottleneck, inadequate exploitation of natural resources like mineral resources, hydro power potential, forests etc. Apart from Assam and Tripura numerically dominant inhabitants of other six states are tribal population. There are people of different communities in the region having their distinct culture. In such diverse community, the study about status of women is very much complicated. In the developing countries, women's lower status is reflected not only in their work being underpaid and un-recognized, but also in their limited access to productive resources and support services such as health and education. Generally, it is thought that the status of women is comparatively better in tribal society. Near about 50 percent population of North-East region are

women. In this study an attempt has been made to analyze gender differences in education, health and employment in North- East India.

Gender Gap at Global Level

According to the reports of the WEF(2005-2011) , the large populous nations such as India, Pakistan, Turkey and Egypt held some of the lowest ranks in respect of gender gap. The study put Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland on the top of the list. These countries were characterized by strong liberal society, with an impressive record of openness and transparency in government and comprehensive safety net which provided security to vulnerable group to the population. As a result women of those parts of the world enjoyed greater access to education, work opportunity and a higher standard of living. In 2009, 25 countries fully closed the gap on educational attainment as compared to 24 countries in 2008 and 15 countries in 2007. On the health and survival sub index, 39 countries fully closed the gap, compared to 36 in 2008 and 32 in 2007. However, no countries in the world have been able to eliminate gender inequality. The 2010 report threw a valuable snapshot of the performance of 134 countries. On an average, over 96 percent of the gap on health outcomes, 93 percent on educational attainment, 60 percent on economic participation and 17 percent on political empowerment had been closed.

The 2011 Report aggregated last six years of data and provided a snapshot of the situation as well as the changes over time, revealing a positive trend as the majority of countries continued to make progress on closing the gender gap. It also provided unique information on the policy frameworks that supported women's economic participation. The report showed that the 135 countries covered in the report, representing over 90 percent of the world's population, had closed almost 96 percent of the gap in health outcomes between women and men and almost 93 percent of the gap in educational attainment. The four Nordic countries had consistently held the highest positions in the previous reports of the GGI continued to hold those privileged positions, with Iceland still holding the top spot, closely followed by Norway, Finland and Sweden. While many developed economies had succeeded in closing the gender gap in education, few had succeeded in maximizing the returns from the investment, India with 113th position, the Islamic Republic of Iran with 125th , Nepal with 126th and Pakistan with 133rd position occupied the last places in the regional rankings.

II. METHODOGY

The study is based on secondary data collected from various official websites of Govt. of India such as Census of India, National Family Health Survey, and National Sample Survey Office etc. Gender differences in North Eastern Region is examined on the basis of different indicators, namely Literacy Rate, Gross Enrolment Ratio, Infant Mortality Rate, Labour Force Participation Rate, Worker Population Ratio etc.

III. RESULT ANALYSIS

Northeast India refers to the easternmost region of India consisting of 8 (eight) different states such as Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. As per Census 2011, near about 50 percent of population of all the states of North East India are women. Among the North-Eastern states sex ratio is highest in Meghalaya and lowest in Sikkim. However, except Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Nagaland in all other states sex ratio is higher in rural area compare to urban area.

Gender inequality in education

In this section we have presented literacy rates of males females separately of the North-Eastern states as well as their gender gap in literacy rates. Below given Table -1 represents gender gap in literacy rate in the North- Eastern states. There exists gender gap in literacy rates in all the states, being highest in Arunachal Pradesh and lowest in Meghalaya.

Table- 1 State-wise Literacy Rates

States	2011		Total	Gender Gap
	Female	Male		
Arunachal Pradesh	57.7	72.6	65.4	14.9
Assam	66.3	77.8	72.2	11.6
Manipur	72.4	86.1	79.2	13.7
Meghalaya	72.9	76.0	74.4	3.1
Mizoram	89.3	93.3	91.3	4.1
Nagaland	76.1	82.8	79.6	6.6
Sikkim	75.6	86.6	81.4	10.9
Tripura	82.7	91.5	87.2	8.8

Source : Economic Survey 2017-18

A gender wise analysis of Gross Enrolment Ratio up to class VIII in the North-Eastern states is presented in Table- 2. Gender differences are striking in states like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Mizoram where enrolment ratio of girls is lower compared to boys. However at the primary level Assam, Meghalaya witnessed somewhat higher enrolment ratio of girls as compared to boys.

Table -2 Gross Enrollment Ratio

States	Classes I-V (6-10 Years)			Classes VI-VIII (11-13yrs)			Classes I-VIII (6-13yrs)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	181.5	176.9	180.8	108.5	102.6	105.5	155.7	148.2	152.0
Assam	93.1	95.6	94.3	67.2	68.7	67.9	83.0	85.1	84.0
Manipur	195.7	188.4	192.1	108.4	100.8	104.6	158.7	151.1	155.0
Meghalaya	193.7	196.4	195.0	85.9	96.2	91.0	150.8	156.3	153.6
Mizoram	191.7	180.0	186.0	108.2	101.3	104.8	155.6	145.8	150.7
Nagaland	103.7	102.8	103.3	59.4	60.7	60.0	85.4	85.4	85.4
Sikkim	164.4	158.7	161.6	71.2	86.6	78.8	121.7	126.0	123.8
Tripura	134.9	133.3	134.1	92.2	91.5	91.9	116.0	114.7	115.4

Source : Economic Survey 2017-18

Gender inequality in health :

BMI is the most established anthropometric indicator used not only for assessment of adult nutritional status but also the socio-economic situation of a population in a developing country like India. The difference of child mortality between male and female is shown in Table 3 below, where female child mortality is higher than that of their male counterparts in most of the North-Eastern states. The difference of child mortality between male and female is highest in Nagaland.

Table -3 Infant Mortality Rates by Sex in India

States	Total	Male	Female
Arunachal Pradesh	32	33	31
Assam	55	55	56
Manipur	11	8	15
Meghalaya	52	52	52
Mizoram	34	31	37
Nagaland	21	15	26
Sikkim	26	23	30
Tripura	29	29	29

Source: Economic Survey 2017-18

Gender inequality in employment :

There also exists a massive gender inequality as far as employment status is concerned. Table 4 represents low labour force participation rates of women compared to men in North-East India. It shows a sharp unequal distribution of employment between men and women, women experiencing low labour force participation rate. This gender inequality in labour force participation rate is more pronounced in urban areas than in rural areas.

Table -4 State-wise Labour Force Participation Rate (2017-18)

State	Rural			Urban		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	28.2	49.2	38.9	13.9	47.5	31.8
Assam	12.9	56.4	35.9	9.7	57.3	34.8
Manipur	27.0	52.3	40.0	20.4	48.3	34.7
Meghalaya	39.2	52.9	46.1	21.0	51.5	35.0
Mizoram	40.5	59.9	50.5	26.7	50.7	36.1
Nagaland	37.1	59.0	48.3	22.4	50.9	37.6
Sikkim	49.2	58.6	53.9	27.4	62.8	46.3
Tripura	28.7	59.9	44.9	26.0	59.4	42.7

Source : National Sample Survey Office, 72nd Round, July 2017- June 2018

Table 5 represents state-wise worker population ratio of male and female in both rural and urban areas. It witnessed very poor worker population ratio of women compare to men. This inequality in worker population ratio is more reflective in the state of Assam compared to rest of the states of North-East India.

Table –5 State-wise Worker Population Ratio (2017-18)

State	Rural		Urban	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Arunachal Pradesh	27.8	48.3	12.7	45.7
Assam	12.2	54.0	9.0	54.2
Manipur	26.2	51.0	18.2	45.6
Meghalaya	39.1	52.7	20.2	50.3
Mizoram	39.4	59.1	24.9	48.7
Nagaland	31.2	50.4	14.4	41.2
Sikkim	48.7	58.0	27.3	60.9
Tripura	22.8	56.2	11.3	52.5

Source : National Sample Survey Office, 72nd Round, July 2017- June 2018

The above table shows unemployment rates of both male and female in North-Eastern states of India. From the table it can be stated that unemployment rates of the states are higher for female compared to male. This gender inequality in unemployment rates is more pronounced in urban areas. Among the North- Eastern states unemployment rate of female is highest in Tripura.

IV. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

In the above analysis an endeavor was made to study the extent of gender inequality in North-Eastern states of India in three different areas viz. education, employment and health. The gender related development indices of the eight states were compared with the corresponding national figure. It was found that four states had GDI above national level and the remaining four states had GDI values marginally below than that of India implying that women of the region enjoyed less disparity in terms of longevity, educational attainment and thus control over resources. There exists gender gaps in literacy rates in all the states of North-East India. Gender differences in literacy status are striking in states like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Mizoram where enrollment ratio of girls is lower compared to boys. However gender disparity is high in higher education. There also exist gender differences in health indicators. Men are found to have better nutritional status in compared to women in most of the North-Eastern states. The study also witnessed gender inequality in employment status of North- Eastern states. Women are experiencing low labor force participation rate. Unemployment rates of the states are found to be higher for female compared to male. This gender inequality in unemployment rates is pronounced in urban areas. Finally, the study found gender differences in per day wage of both and rural and urban areas of North- East India. Therefore it can be commented that a revolutionary change in the social and cultural values and behavioral pattern is necessary to foster the process of achieving gender equality. As soon as women feel that they have the capability to operate the society at the same term as men then achieving gender equality would not remain as a distant dream.

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