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## **Gender Inequality in Education, Health and Employment in North-East India**

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### **Abstract**

*Societies that discriminate on the basis of gender pay a significant price in terms of higher poverty, lower quality of life, slower economic growth, and weaker governance (Elizabeth King, 2001). 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 (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 present paper aims to analyze gender inequality in education, health and employment in North-East India. This paper is based on the secondary data. The analysis of the data shows that eight sister states of North-East India practices substantial inequalities in education, employment, and health based on gender. School enrolment in the region has been showing steady increase since the last decade, however still majority of the poor children mainly girls in rural areas are deprived of the basic education. There still exists a considerable gender gap in enrollment, which is notably high in case of higher education. Enrollment of women in higher education is poor compared to men. Analysis of macro level data on employment and unemployment shows that wide divergence exists between male and female participation in economic activities. There also exist gender wage gap in the region. Data also witnessed gender inequalities regarding various health indicators in the region. The study concluded that women have limited scope to access education, health and employment resources. Position of women on the basis of above indicators is far beyond compare to the men in North-East India.*

***Key Words: Inequalities, Gender, Education, Health, Employment, North-East.***

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**Introduction:** Long-term sustainable economic growth that benefits all can only be gathered with the best use of all available resources. Leaving women behind not only leads to the neglect of women's contribution towards the economy but also wastage of investment in education for girls and young women. The term "gender equality" does not mean that men and women are necessarily exactly the same or that differences don't exist, but that they have equal rights, opportunities, responsibilities and access to resources as well as the enjoyment of them (Wall, 2014).

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 (education, health, employment etc.), but still there exist inequality in these sectors. Gender gap exists in socio-economic and demographic matters including literacy, work status, health etc. Gender inequality has emerged as one of the stumbling hurdle in achieving the development targets.

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. The region accounts for 7.9% of the total land space of the country. The North-East Region is one of the back-ward regions of India characterized by low per-capita income, low capital formation, inadequate 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 status of women is very much complicated. In the developing countries, women's lower status is reflected not only in their work being underpaid, un-recognized, but also in their limited access to productive resources and support services such as health and education (Das, 2013). Generally, it is thought that the status of women is comparatively better in tribal society (Burman, 2012).

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.

**Review of Literature:** According to Mohiuddin (1995), women's lower status is manifested in women's low wage rates than men in all occupational fields and industries, in their limited upward mobility, and in their greater family responsibilities due to divorce, abandonment, etc.

The results of study by Ferdaush and Rahman (2011) indicated not only the degree of gender inequality in different sectors (education, health and employment) in Bangladesh but also its pattern, which should be considered in formulating effective policies. The study reveals that the progress in reducing gender inequality is occurring at a slower rate than the previous years.

Das (2013) made an attempt to examine the status of women in the North Eastern Region in comparison with all India average. It is found from the analysis that the status of women in the region is comparatively better than the rest of the country only in some selected indicators. They farther stated that women have a very low degree of freedom of movement and low level of control over themselves in North Eastern Region.

Evertsson et al. (2009) stated that with few exceptions, gender inequality in labor force participation, work hours, occupational segregation, and housework are less severe as education goes up in all three countries (Netherlands, Sweden, and the United States), with the root cause being the high employment levels of well-educated women.

India is one of the few countries in the world where males and females have nearly the same life expectancy at birth (Mandal et al., 2011). The distinctive female advantage in life expectancy is not observed in India which advocates that there are organized problems with women's health. The health of Indian female is basically linked to their status in society as most of the Indian communities follow patrilineal social structure which bears strong influence on gender differences. Gender differences in eating behavior strengthen from early to late adolescence and explained by gender specific energetic demands and culture typical principles (Askovic and Kirchengast, 2012).

### **Objectives:**

The main objectives of the study are:-

- to analyze gender inequality in education in North-East India
- to analyze gender inequality in health in North-East India
- to analyze gender inequality in employment in North-East India

**Methodology:** The study is based on secondary data collected from various official websites of Govt. of India like Census of India, National Family Health Survey, and National Sample Survey Office etc. percentages, frequency and simple tables are used to analyze the data. Gender differences in North Eastern Region is examined on the basis of different indicators, namely Literacy Rate, Gross Enrolment Ratio, Workforce Participation Rate (WPR), Worker Population Ratio, Unemployment Rate, Wage Earning, Sex Ratio, Female Infant Mortality, Nutritional Status etc.

**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.

Percentages share of female population by residence and sex ratio in the North-Eastern States are given in Table-1. 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 the 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.

States	% share of women			Sex Ratio		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	48.80	47.10	48.41	953	890	938
Assam	48.97	48.61	48.92	960	946	958
Manipur	49.21	50.64	49.63	969	1026	985
Meghalaya	49.64	50.03	49.72	986	1001	989
Mizoram	48.78	49.94	49.39	952	998	976
Nagaland	48.46	47.60	48.21	940	908	931
Sikkim	46.87	47.73	47.09	882	913	890
Tripura	48.86	49.33	48.98	955	973	960

Economic Survey 2012-13

**Gender inequality in education:** In this section we have presented literacy rates of males and females separately of the North-Eastern states as well as their gender gap in literacy rates.

Table-2 represents gender gap in literacy rate in the North-Eastern states. There exist gender gaps in literacy rates in all the states, being highest in Arunachal Pradesh and lowest in Meghalaya.

States	2011			
	Female	Male	Total	Gender Gap
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

Economic Survey 2012-13

A gender wise analysis of Gross Enrollment Ratio upto class VIII in the North-Eastern states is presented in table-3. Gender differences are striking in states like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Mizoram where enrollment ratio of girls is lower compared to boys. However at the primary level Assam, Meghalaya witnessed somewhat higher enrolment ratio of girls compared to boys.

States	Classes I-V (6-10 years)			Classes VI-VIII (11-13 yrs)			Classes I-VIII (6-13 yrs)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	184.5	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	108.5	100.8	104.6	158.7	151.1	155.0
Meghalaya	193.7	196.3	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

Economic Survey 2012-13

Table-4 shows gender wise enrolment in Ph. D and M. Phil in the North-Eastern states. There exist disparities in terms of enrollment between men and women. Gender disparity is high in higher education. In the recent time, the rate at which the female enrollment in the primary level is increasing, the enrollment in higher education is not increasing at the same pace.

State:	2008-09	2009-10	2008-09	2009-10	2008-09	2009-10
	MEN		WOMEN		TOTAL	
Arunachal Pradesh	22	18	16	15	38	33
Assam	440	603	339	447	779	1050
Manipur	480	478	470	411	950	889
Meghalaya	331	308	308	317	639	625
Mizoram	118	185	126	164	244	349
Nagaland	97	97	78	78	175	175
Sikkim	4	4	-	..	4	4
Tripura	16	13	9	6	25	19

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development.

**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 (Khongsdier, 2002; Tungdim and Kapoor, 2001). Table 5 represents nutritional status of men and women in North-East India. Men are found to have better nutritional status in compare to women in most of the North-Eastern states.

States	Women whose Body Mass Index is below normal (%)	Men whose Body Mass Index is below normal (%)
Arunachal Pradesh	16.4	15.2
Assam	36.5	35.6
Manipur	14.8	16.3
Meghalaya	14.6	14.1
Mizoram	14.4	9.2
Nagaland	17.4	14.2
Sikkim	11.2	12.2
Tripura	36.9	41.7

Source: National Family Health Survey-III (2005-06), MOHFW, GOI.

The difference of child mortality between male and female is shown in Table 6 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 the highest in Nagaland.

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 2012-13.

**Gender inequality in employment:** There also exists a massive gender inequality as far as employment status is concerned. Table 7 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.

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	
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, 68th Round, July 2011 - June 2012.

Table 8 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 Assam compared to rest of the states of North-East India.

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, 68th Round, July 2011 - June 2012.

Gender inequality also exists in employment status by residence. It is observed that both in rural and urban areas, female participation in employment sector are very low in North-East region.

State	Rural			Urban		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	1.7	1.9	1.8	9.2	3.6	4.9
Assam	9.2	4.4	5.0	7.5	5.4	5.7
Manipur	5.0	3.5	3.9	12.9	5.8	7.6
Meghalaya	0.4	0.5	0.5	3.7	2.4	2.8
Mizoram	3.7	1.9	2.6	6.8	4.0	
Nagaland	34.2	20.7	24.7	46.3	21.9	27.5
Sikkim	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.0	3.2	2.3
Tripura	32.7	6.6	12.3	57.9	11.5	25.4

Source: National Sample Survey Office, 68th Round (July 2011-June 2012).

The figures represent size of unemployment as percentage of labour force. Table 8 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.

<b>Table-9: State-wise average Wage/Salary (in Rs.) received per day by Regular Wage/Salaried Employees of Age</b>				
State	Rural		Urban	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Arunachal Pradesh	474.94	672.73	629.15	705.38
Assam	179.71	343.97	561.63	615.23
Manipur	522.57	591.97	646.92	666.55
Meghalaya	358.51	446.29	444.08	527.21
Mizoram	602.98	662.86	610.51	850.29
Nagaland	490.26	544.70	417.63	596.60
Sikkim	547.98	573.97	418.87	541.06
Tripura	218.73	319.64	301.52	409.66

Source: National Sample Survey Office, 68th Round, July 2011 - June 2012.

Table 9 shows gender differences in per day wage of both rural and urban areas in North-East India. On the basis of the above table it can be stated that wage differences exists between male and female workers of the region. Per day wage of women of all the state are much lower than men.

**Conclusion:** There exist 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 compare 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 labour force participation rate. This gender inequality in labour force participation rate is more pronounced in urban areas than in rural areas. Unemployment rates of the states are found to be higher for female compared to male. This gender inequality in unemployment rates is more pronounced in urban areas. Finally the study found gender differences in per day wage of both rural and urban areas in North-East India. Per day wage of women of all the state are much lower than men.

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