

Level of Development in Border Districts in North-East India

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Abstract: Socio-culturally and politically, North-east India has a unique identity in India. This region, consisting eight states, is sensitive and has very complex socio-cultural setup with complex socio-political problems. Along with these, this part of the country is also facing disputes on border at some places. All these factors together play a vital role in the process of development in the area. Development of border areas has been a matter of concern for the country. Level of development brings satisfaction among the local community and it further leads to strong belongingness to the nation. In this backdrop present study tries to assess level of development in border districts in North-east India and also tries to understand the regional variation in it.

Study has included forty four border districts of eight North-east Indian states. It is based on secondary data, collected from census of India 2011. Two indicators have been used to measure the level of development in the study area. Female literacy rate has been used for social development while level of urbanization has been used to understand the economic transformation. Data reveals that all border districts as a unit has nearly sixty nine percent literate females while it is nearly seventeen percent urbanized. Compared with the national average, it is observed that in terms of female literacy this region is performing better but in terms of level of urbanization this region is lagging behind.

Key words: North-east India, border, border area, development, female literacy, urbanization.

I. INTRODUCTION

North-east India is strategically very important. It has natural frontiers on three sides and a political boundary on the fourth. It has common frontiers with four political communities- China in the North, Bhutan in the West, Bangladesh in the East and Burma in the South. No other part of India occupies such a strategic position as the North-east (Rao 1975). Studies (Nongkynrih 2009, Singh 2006, Datta 1992) have been done by taking North-east India or region as seven states namely Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya. Study (Rao 1975) has also been done by including the district of Darjeeling of the state of West Bengal but, present paper has taken North-east India comprising of eight Indian states namely Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya.

North-east India is full of hills, streams and rivers. The rugged physiographic condition of this region renders the tribes to live in splendid isolation. The composition of population in this area is also a big challenge for the country. There are no places in the world where composition of population is so diverse, as in this region (Rao 1975). This region includes diverse ethno-linguistic groups, customs, beliefs and practices (Nongkynrih 2009).

Geographically the North-east India is almost isolated from the country and is connected with the main land through West Bengal and Bihar. Interestingly, the tribal areas are located along international boundary (Datta 1992). Any dissatisfaction from the government can give rise to the secessionist powers in the area. Development of border areas has been a matter of concern for the country (Planning Commission 2007). That is why a separate area development programme named as Border Area Development Programme (BADP) was introduced in country during the seventh five year plan. The BADP was initiated in border areas of western region (Planning Commission

2007) but revamped in eighth five year plan and extended to border areas adjoining the international border with Bangladesh and it was further extended during ninth five year plan to border areas adjoining Myanmar, China, Bhutan and Nepal (Planning Commission 2008). It means the execution of BADP in the study area has been started during ninth five year plan. In recent years, the development of border areas has become a priority of the central government (Planning Commission 2007).

The BADP aims at making special efforts for socio-economic development of border areas and to promote a sense of security among the people living in these areas (Planning Commission 2008). But the studies reflect that this area is still lagging behind in the process of development. The region has been considered economically less developed (Nongkynrih 2009). A study on infrastructural development in border districts of India reveals that most of border districts in the North-east India are lagging behind when compared with the national average (Kumar and Mohan 2015). In this background a comprehensive study for measuring levels of development in border districts in the North-east India has become very important as this region is not only strategically very important but also witnessing secessionist movements since independence.

II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The study aims to measure levels of development in the study area and it also makes an honest effort to understand and analyze spatial patterns of development in the area. The study is based on secondary data, collected from primary census abstract census of India 2011. Data collected on selected indicators has been processed in multiple ways to get the objectives. To represent the spatial patterns of development in border districts of North-east India, cartographic maps have been prepared with the help of advanced cartographic techniques.

Development is a very complex word. It is a multidimensional process which improves the quality of life (Narain, Sharma, Rai and Bhatia 2005). Development implies definite social change and subsumes the discernible shifts that occur in the economic, political, and cultural life of a community (Chapman 1969). In case of India, social, economic and rural parameters of development are the crucial ones (Krishan 1989). Due to some limitations, present study has taken two indicators – female literacy rate and degree of urbanization to assess the levels of development in study area. Social development has been inferred from female literacy rate and economic development from degree of urbanization.

III. STUDY AREA

Present study has included all districts of eight North-east Indian states which are situated along international land border of the country. India has 15106.7 kilometers (Ministry of Home Affairs Government of India 2013) long international land boundary, out of which nearly thirty six percent falls in North-east India. The region shares its international boundary with five neighbouring countries namely Nepal, Bhutan, China, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Among these neighbouring countries, North-east India shares maximum boundary (1880 kilometers) with Bangladesh followed by Myanmar (1643 kilometers), China (1300.35 kilometers), Bhutan (516 kilometers) and minimum 97.80 kilometers with the Nepal (Table 1). It is observed that the state of Arunachal Pradesh has longest international boundary in the region while the state of Sikkim has smallest boundary.

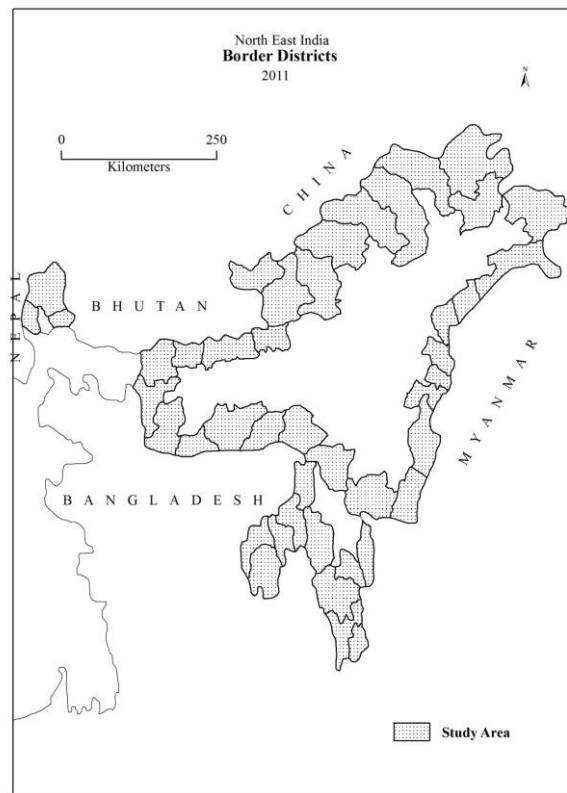
Table 1

State wise Length (in kilometers) of International Border in North-East India

State	Bordering Countries					Total
	Nepal	Bhutan	China	Bangladesh	Myanmar	
Sikkim	97.80	32.00	220.35	0.00	0.00	350.15
Assam	0.00	267.00	0.00	263.00	0.00	530.00
Arunachal Pradesh	0.00	217.00	1080.00	0.00	520.00	1817.00
Nagaland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	215.00	215.00
Manipur	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	398.00	398.00
Mizoram	0.00	0.00	0.00	318.00	510.00	828.00
Tripura	0.00	0.00	0.00	856.00	0.00	856.00
Meghalaya	0.00	0.00	0.00	443.00	0.00	443.00
Total	97.80	516.00	1300.35	1880.00	1643.00	5437.15

Source: Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, Government of India.

Among the total 86 districts in the states of North-east India, 44 districts are located on international land border which have been named as border districts. The study has included these 44 border districts of all eight states in North-east India (Fig. 1). All these border districts together has an area of 155655 square kilometers (Census of India 2011) which is almost 59 percent of total area of North-east India region and almost five percent of total geographical area of India. It serves a total population of 17372111 (Census of India 2011) which is nearly 38 percent of total population of North-east India and less than two percent of total population of the country.

Figure 1

Out of 44 border districts included in the study, maximum twelve districts are from the state of Arunachal Pradesh; followed by seven districts from Assam, six districts from Mizoram, five districts from Meghalaya, four districts each from the states of Nagaland and Tripura, and three districts each from the states of Sikkim and Manipur. Considering proportion of border districts, it is observed that the state of Tripura has all districts (4 out of 4 districts) located on international border; followed by the states of Arunachal Pradesh (12 out of 16 districts), Mizoram (6 out of 8 districts) and Sikkim (3 out of 4 districts) have three fourth districts located on international border. The state of

Meghalaya has five out of seven districts located on international border which comes slightly more than seventy one percent. Nagaland (4 out of 11 districts) and Manipur (3 out of 9 districts) have almost one third districts located on international border while minimum one fourth districts of Assam (7 out of 27 districts) are located on the international border. The study area is highly diverse in terms of physiography as well as socio-cultural setup. The similarity among these border districts is that all these districts are situated along international border of the country.

IV. DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

The study has taken two dimensions of development under consideration. To start with social development which has been studied by taking female literacy rate, it is observed that at country level, there are nearly 65 percent literate female in India. While it comes to the states in North-east India, all together it has nearly 69 percent literate female and all border districts in North-east India as a unit has also almost 69 percent literate female but this figure is slightly higher than the average figure of all states in North-east India. Precisely, the study area – the border districts in North-east India, is performing better than the national average as well as the average of states in North-east India in terms of female literacy rate.

At state level, among the states of North-east India, female literacy rate ranges between minimum almost 58 percent in Arunachal Pradesh and maximum almost 89 percent in Mizoram (Table 2). There are four states (Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland and Sikkim) in North-east India where female literacy rate is more than 75 percent. Compared with the national average of female literacy rate, it was observed that out of eight states only Arunachal Pradesh has female literacy rate less than the national average.

Table 2
Level of Development in North-East Indian States

State	Female Literacy Rate (in percentage)	Urbanization (in percentage)
Sikkim	75.61	25.15
Assam	66.27	14.10
Arunachal Pradesh	57.70	22.94
Nagaland	76.11	28.86
Manipur	72.37	32.45
Mizoram	89.27	52.11
Tripura	82.73	26.17
Meghalaya	72.89	20.07
INDIA	64.64	31.15

Source: Primary Census Abstract Census of India 2011.

At district level, among the border districts in North-east India, female literacy rate ranges from minimum almost 42 percent in Tirap (Arunachal Pradesh) to maximum almost 98 percent in Serchhip of Mizoram (Table 3). Top four border districts in the list are from Mizoram. On the other hand bottom six border districts are from Arunachal Pradesh. In all, there are fourteen border districts which have female literacy rate more than 75 percent. Out of which maximum five districts are from Mizoram, followed by four districts from Tripura, two districts each from Manipur and Meghalaya and one district is from Sikkim (Fig. 2). It is observed that border districts having higher rate of female literacy are mainly located in southern part of the study area. There are 25 border districts in North-east India where female literacy rate is in between 50 to 75 percent. Rest five border districts (Tirap, Kurung Kumey, Anjaw, Tawang, Changlang – all from Arunachal Pradesh) have female literacy rate less than 50 percent. Among the border districts recorded female literacy rate between 50 percent to 75 percent, maximum seven districts each are from Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, followed by four districts from Nagaland, three districts from Meghalaya, two districts are from Sikkim while one district each from Manipur and Mizoram. These districts are mainly located in northern part of the study area (Fig. 2).

Compared to the national average of female literacy rate it was observed that in all there are 22 border districts where female literacy rate was above the national average. In other words it can be said that half of border districts in North-east India are performing better than the national average in terms of female literacy rate. Such districts are mainly from Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya and Sikkim.

Table 3
Level of Development in Border Districts in North-East India

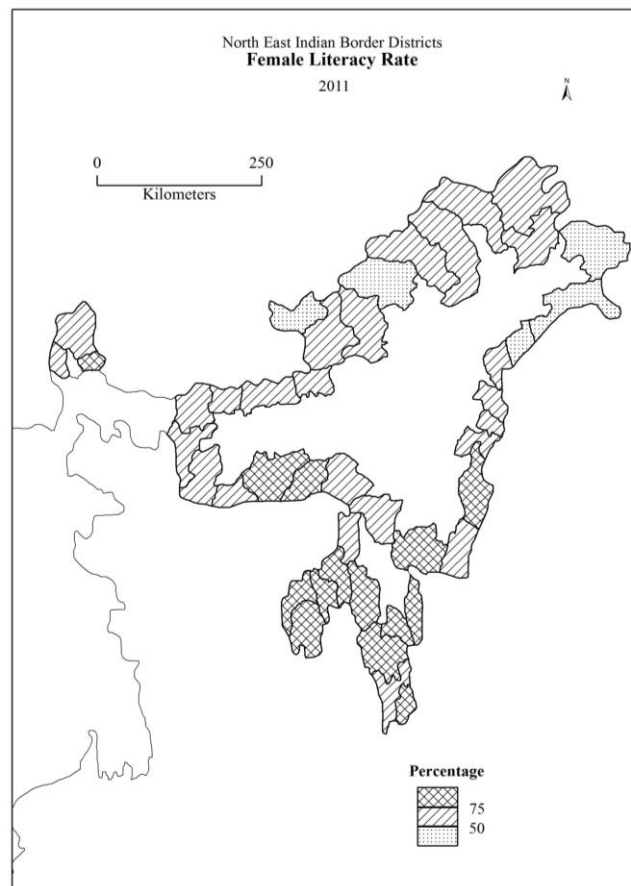
Border District	Female Literacy Rate (in percentage)	Urbanization (in percentage)
SIKKIM		
West District	70.86	3.85
North District	70.97	10.62
East District	78.50	43.19
ASSAM		
Dhubri	53.33	10.45
Kokrajhar	58.27	6.19
Chirang	56.65	7.33
Baksa	61.27	1.29
Udalguri	58.05	4.52
Cachar	73.68	18.17
Karimganj	72.09	8.93
ARUNACHAL PRADESH		
Tawang	46.53	22.41
West Kameng	59.05	18.98
East Kameng	51.69	23.32
Kurung Kumey	42.64	2.55
Upper Subansiri	57.59	16.06
West Siang	59.63	22.24
Upper Siang	52.63	18.52
Dibang Valley	59.16	29.79
Lower Dibang Valley	62.19	21.06
Anjaw	43.71	4.64
Changlang	49.84	12.97
Tirap	41.89	18.58
NAGALAND		
Mon	52.58	13.76
Tuensang	69.59	18.71
Kiphire	63.96	22.28
Phek	72.21	15.04
MANIPUR		
Ukhrul	76.95	14.78
Chandel	63.96	11.68
Churachandpur	78.50	6.70
MIZORAM		
Champhai	94.59	38.59
Serchhip	97.53	49.31
Lunglei	85.49	42.59
Lawngtlai	57.12	17.67

Saiha	87.34	44.38
Mamit	80.35	17.25
TRIPURA		
South Tripura	79.09	14.04
West Tripura	84.75	39.27
Dhalai	79.79	10.71
North Tripura	83.75	17.33
MEGHALAYA		
West Garo Hills	62.70	11.64
South Garo Hills	66.90	9.23
West Khasi Hills	77.19	11.24
East Khasi Hills	83.81	44.37
Jaintia Hills	65.06	7.20

Source: Primary Census Abstract Census of India 2011.

There are nearly 31 percent people in India living in urban areas. Taking all states of North-east India as a unit it is observed that there are almost eighteen percent people living in urban areas while on the other hand, all border districts in North-east India as a region has nearly seventeen percent people living in urban areas. So it is clear that degree of urbanization in North-east Indian states is less than the national average and degree of urbanization in border districts of North-east India is less than the national average as well as the regional average of North-east India. Degree of urbanization among the states of North-east India ranges from minimum almost fourteen percent in Assam to maximum almost 52 percent in Mizoram. Comparing with the national average of urbanization it is observed that there are only two states (Mizoram and Manipur) in North-east India which have urbanization level above the national average. Rest six states have urbanization level below the national average (Table 2).

At district level, degree of urbanization ranges from minimum only nearly one percent in Baksa (Assam) to maximum nearly 49 percent in the Serchhip of Mizoram (Table 3). In all, there are only seven border districts in North-east India where level of urbanization is more than 35 percent. These border districts are Serchhip, Saiha, Lunglei and Champhai from Mizoram; East Khasi Hills from Meghalaya, East District from Sikkim and West Tripura from Tripura (Fig. 3). Out of these seven districts maximum four districts are from Mizoram. Six border districts have urbanization level in between 20 and 35 percent. Out of six border districts five districts (Dibang Valley, East Kameng, Tawang, West Siang and Lower Dibang Valley) are from Arunachal Pradesh and Kiphire is from Nagaland. Rest 33 border districts in North-east India have level of urbanization less than twenty percent. Such border districts are mainly from Assam (seven districts), Arunachal Pradesh (seven districts), Meghalaya (four districts), three districts each from Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura, two districts each from Sikkim and Mizoram.

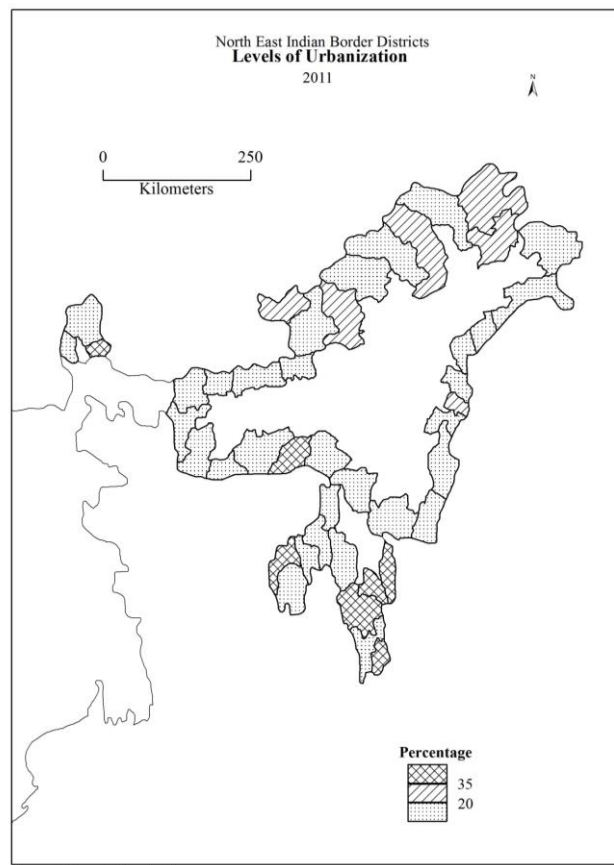
Figure 2

Compared to the national average of urbanization, out of 44 border districts in North-east India there were only seven border districts (four districts from Mizoram, one district each from Sikkim, Tripura and Meghalaya) where level of urbanization was above the national average. These are the same districts as mentioned earlier as the districts having level of urbanization more than 35 percent.

V. CONCLUSIONS

North-east India is full of diversity – physical as well as socio-cultural. It is reflected from the above discussions that in terms of female literacy there were 22 border districts in North-east India which are performing better than the national average; while in terms of degree of urbanization seven border districts are performing better than the national average. It reflects that in case of urbanization the study area is lagging far behind while in case of female literacy rate it can be considered satisfactory as almost half of border districts in the North-east India is performing well in this regard.

From the maps (Fig. 2 and 3) it is clear that most of the developed border districts in North-east India are located in southern and eastern part of the study area while most of comparatively backward border districts are located in northern and western part. But the spatial patterns of different development parameters are not the same. While in case of female literacy rate, the states of Tripura, Meghalaya and Manipur were performing well; but in case of urbanization the border districts of these states were comparatively lagging behind. So it can be said that there is no uniformity in levels of development in the area.

Figure 3

To conclude it can be said that the border districts in the North-east India are performing good at some parameters, especially in social development. But in case of economic development which has been measured in terms of degree of urbanization the study area is lagging behind. Border districts of Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Manipur can be considered as developed districts and border districts of Nagaland and Assam can be classified as medium developed while most of the border districts of Arunachal Pradesh are lagging behind in the process of development in North-east India.

The study area requires more attention towards economic development, though the physiography of area can create obstacle in the way of development but at the same time natural resources can provide red carpet to accelerate the pace of development in the area. The area has shown good results in the field of social development which was measured in terms of female literacy rate, which can be used as development accelerator and can provide strong base for development in the area. It is well known that education is the key to any development in the society. Therefore it can be said that this area has good potential for development, the governments – central as well as concerned state governments, need to give proper attention in this direction.

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