

***Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University***

***organises***

***National Conference***

***on***

***Social Sector Development and Governance Issues in the North-East***

***28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.***

***Patgaon, Rani Gate***

***Guwahati: Assam.***

**Brief Introduction:**

Social scientists would often confront perplexity while dealing with the issue of socio-economic development in the north eastern region of India. The region, though endowed with ample natural resources, rich bio-diversity and a multi-ethnic culture, has not yet been able to achieve the level of socio-economic development compared to many other states in the country.

With regard to human and social development, no one can deny the fact that the level of per capita income remains debatable as a proper outcome indicator of the overall economic activities in the state/region. Sole dependence on the level of per capita income undermines the need to evaluate the state's achievements or failures in terms of a range of equally important alternative socio economic indicators from the social sectors like education, health, housing, water and sanitation and social security measures, etc.

In the recent years, the entire North Eastern region has been experiencing human development but poor economic growth. However, there remain wide-spread variations in its attainment across the rural-urban dichotomy and across the different ethnic, social groups and gender. Social scientists seem to argue that such disparities might have led to increased disputes among the social groups and tribal populations.

Human development is positively associated with the quality of governance. With higher levels of human development, demands for greater transparency, accountability, participation and stringent rules and laws would often arise. However, against such parameters of higher development, the quality of governance is not satisfactory in the region. Local democratic institutions in the region, for example, the Autonomous District Councils need to be strengthened and their functionalities need to be made more effective.

With this background, the Conference invites critical, thought provoking research papers on the following sub-themes (not exclusive).

- 1) Issues in Health and Wellbeing.
- 2) Education and Capacity Building.
- 3) Social Security and Inclusive Development.
- 4) Environmental and Sustainable Development Issues.
- 5) Issues in the Informal Sector.
- 6) Service Delivery and Governance.

Each sub-theme will have a key-note address to be delivered by a renowned personality in the field.

1) *Issues in Health and Wellbeing:* Health is wealth. Improvement in health is highly correlated with wellbeing. Studies indicate that children with better health are likely to be more attentive in their studies and hence perform better during their course of education. Similarly, an adult with good health is less prone to illness and hence is economically more productive. Thus, good health helps an individual in every stages of his/her life. On the macro front the condition of health of the population affects the entire economy. A healthy population is economically more productive, efficient and hence positively contribute to its economic growth. In fact, health is one of the principal determinants of human development.

Among the different components of health, reproductive and child healthcare (RCH) services are the pivot components of human development. Without improvement

in RCH services, improvement in human development and hence overall wellbeing in the society would remain unfulfilled. The situation of RCH indicators in some of the states of the NE region is worse than many other in the country.

There is no denying the fact that public expenditure in the improvement of the social sectors is a must, especially in a developing country like India. In the recent years, a number of mission-based approaches have been adopted for the improvement in the delivery of health, education, etc. What has been the success of these mission-based approaches, especially in the North Eastern region of India?

This Conference calls for thought-provoking, in-depth research and analyses in the issues of health and wellbeing in the region.

2) *Education and Capacity Building:* The education sector is crucial both on micro- and macro perspectives. From the micro perspective, it can be argued that education plays a major role in the life of every human being. Education helps an individual to achieve self actualisation and it is only the proper education that makes one better equipped in raising his/her capability to contribute towards self and the overall social and national development. Education also helps people to remain better informed, knowledgeable and play active role in the society. On the macro front, the importance of education can be traced from the fact that it constitutes one of the major components of human development.

The role of education in capacity building is enormous. Through proper education and training the skills, access to information, knowledge of the people can be improved which in turn would lead to better efficiency, productivity and performance. The issue of capacity building is of particular importance in the North Eastern region as the traditional fields of education are still receiving the primary considerations. Why the vocational stream of education is still lagging behind and how to promote it remain an issue of much deliberation.

3) *Social Security and Inclusive Development:* The real prosperity of a country can be assessed by the extent and quality of social security provided to its citizens in terms of employment strategies and job creation, health care, contributory pension, alleviate poverty and raise living standards. The emergence of different forms of formal social protection mechanisms, ranging from voluntary group-based social protection mechanisms to mandatory public social security schemes throughout the world indicates the universal human need for social security. However, while only an

estimated 20 percent of the world's population has adequate social security coverage, more than half lacks any kind of social security protection at all. In this context, rapid globalization of markets and workforces and the consequent paradigm of development throws open a host of questions regarding the allocation of public resources and the pattern of public spending vis-à-vis extending adequate benefits to all across the board. Social security in terms of having a social safety net is a key policy tool to reducing poverty and inequality while stimulating inclusive development by boosting the health and capacity of vulnerable segments of society covering both the organised and unorganised sectors. Thus, social security aims at composite and inclusive development underscores the nation's commitment to equity, social justice and composite development of the nation at large. The Conference calls for exploratory research on such issues, especially with reference to the North Eastern region.

4) *Environmental Issues and Sustainable Development:* Human efforts to control nature have led to the destruction and loss of equilibrium of the environment resulting in massive environmental problems. In this context, the issue of sustainable development in the sense of "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" is of paramount significance. Sustainable development tries to respond to five requirements: (a) Integration of conservation and development (b) Satisfaction of basic human needs (c) Achievement of equity and social justice (d) development at the level of local communities (e) Maintenance of ecological integrity.

The aim of sustainable development is to maximise human well-being or quality of life without jeopardizing the life-support system. In its broadest sense, the strategy for sustainable development aims to promote harmony among human beings and between humanity and nature. Accordingly, it is pertinent to look into certain areas of intervention including social activism, environmental education, government initiatives at various levels ensuring monitoring and accountability and devising innovative and non-conventional environment-friendly strategies for development both at micro and macro levels with particular emphasis on the North Eastern region of India.

5) *Issues in the Informal Sector:* In a wider consensus, the informal sector may be viewed as comprising the unregulated small scale activities primarily relying on labour intensive technologies. Thus, the household and small non-household units characterised by high labour intensity, lack of adequate capital, less than minimum

wage, low profit level, low bargaining power in the product exchange market (both in case of buying and selling commodities and services), often prone to exploitation by external agents, with limited access to institutional and infrastructural facilities not officially registered and not receiving due government attention are its constituents. A large number of households in the region engaged in traditional craft based and other activities are facing survival questions in an unregulated, liberalised market environment. The bread earners of most of the families engaged in the small petty trades are also not covered under any social safety net. A similar situation is also faced by most of the labours in the region who have to earn their living in the unregulated, market regime. This Conference invites in-depth, critical deliberations on this front.

6) *Service Delivery and Governance Issues:* While the actions of the legislative branch of the government mandates the availability of certain goods and services to the citizens, the onus of ensuring effective implementation public policies so as to reach out to designated target groups rests fundamentally with the executive branch of the government covering both the political executive and the non-political executive or the bureaucracy. This is where the issue of governance assumes significance as the success of any democracy is determined by the effectiveness of its delivery mechanisms. In this context issues such as greater accountability of public officials, including politicians and civil servants, transparency and free flow of information in governmental procedures and processes including rationalization of the governmental decision making process in the light of equitable development and social justice, effective auditing of governmental transactions and reduction of bureaucratic red tape, elimination of unwanted administrative controls, decentralization and improving the quality of citizen participation, etc., constitute some quintessential enablers linking governance with effective service delivery. As already mentioned, the level of human development in the entire region has not correlated with improvement in quality of governance. What factors may be held responsible? Do we need to follow alternative mechanism to better the quality of governance? This Conference seeks thought-provoking deliberations on this issue.

***Important Dates:***

***Submission of abstract:*** Detailed abstract of approximately 1000 words stating objectives, brief idea, methodology and possible policy implications of the paper is

invited. Abstracts may be submitted to [kkhsouconference2015@gmail.com](mailto:kkhsouconference2015@gmail.com) or [bhaskar\\_sarmah@yahoo.com](mailto:bhaskar_sarmah@yahoo.com).

*Alternatively, abstracts may be sent by post (with a soft copy on a CD) to:*

*Bhaskar Sarmah, Convenor, SSDGINE, Dept of Economics, Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, Housefed Complex, , Dispur, Guwahati – 781006, Assam, INDIA.*

**The last date of submission of abstract is 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2015**

**Confirmation of acceptance:** 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2015

**Submission of full paper:** 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2015.

**Date of registration:** On or before 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.

**Fee for registration:** Rs. 600/- (Rs. 400/- for students) to be paid by Bank Draft in the name of *KKHSOU National Conference 2015*, and payable at SBI, Guwahati.

**Dates of Conference:** 28- 29 November, 2015.

**Venue:** Guwahati.

*The Organising Committee of the Conference will provide free accommodation and hospitality. However, only a limited number of travel grants may be made available depending on availability of funds for selected papers.*

*For further information, please contact Dr. Abhijit Bhuyan, at 9864421517 and Dr. Prasenjit Das, at 9435146596*

\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*