HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN ASSAM- A DISTRICT LEVEL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Human development is a well-being concept with its core being the capability approach. The Human Development Index is used as a way of measuring actual progress in human development. In Assam, although there are some studies relating to human development which focuses at district level but there is hardly any study which focuses as well on agro-climatic zone wise human development status. The present study is modest attempt in this regard. The study also focuses on the pattern of human development in Assam during 2001-2014 at district level. From the analysis it is clear that out of all the districts Kamrup Metro is the best performing district driven by good levels of attainment in the fields of health and education. And Dhubri district is the worst performing district among all the districts. From the analysis of agro climatic zone wise levels of human development we found that Upper Brahmaputra valley has been successful in attaining moderate levels of human development and the rest of the five zones performed poorly. The study finally believes that it is the area of social sector on which emphasis should be laid for augmenting human development in Assam. An increased level of investment on health and education both from private and public is essential for improving levels of human development in the state.

KEYWORDS: Human Development, Agro-climatic Zone,

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Human development has emerged as a very important branch of study since its formal inception in 1990 by United Nations Development Programme. It is a well-being concept and involves studies of the human condition with its core being the capability approach. Since the term human development is a subjective concept so it was felt by the researchers that there should be some sort of measuring rod for identifying the level of human development. The Human Development Index emerged as a composite measure of economic progress and human development. In Assam, although there are some studies relating to human development which focuses at district level but there is hardly any study which focuses as well on agro-climatic zone wise human development status. The present study is a modest attempt in this regard. The study also focuses on the pattern of human development in Assam during 2001-2014 at district level.

The study is divided into seven sections. Section-I introduces the topic. Next section provides the objectives of the study. A brief description of the state of Assam is provided in next section. The next two sections are namely Methodology and Data Source. The sixth section is on Results and Discussion. The paper finally wraps with the concluding section.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the pattern of human development across districts and agro-climatic zones in Assam.
2. To examine whether regional disparities on human development have increased or decreased over time across districts in Assam.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Human development is defined as a process of enlarging peoples choices in three basic dimensions-health, education and standard of living overshadowing other dimensions like political (Governance), natural (Atmosphere, Bio-diversity), demographic, etc. We have taken one sub-indicator each for the health and education dimensions and three sub-indicators for standard of living dimension. The values of each sub-indicator is normalized between 0 and 1 using UNDP's Max-Min Approach. After that we have taken simple arithmetic mean of all the three dimensions to arrive at the composite district level human development index. A brief description of the three dimensions is outlined in Flowchart 1.

4.0 DATA SOURCE

The study is basically based on secondary data. The data on infant survival rate and Percentage of literate population are compiled from the Assam Economic Survey, 2012-13 and Assam Statistical Handbook, 2012, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam. The data related to all other variables viz., Percentage of population living in permanent houses, Percentage of villages having access to postal or banking services and Percentage of villages having access to safe drinking water are related to Census of India, 2011 and are collected from the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Government of India.

5.0 THE STATE OF ASSAM

Assam is a state of India in the north-eastern region located south of the eastern Himalayas. Assam comprises the Brahmaputra Valley and the Barak river valleys along with the Karbi Anglong and the Dima Hasao with an area of 30,285 square miles (78,438 km²) which account for about 2.39 percent of the total land

area of the country giving shelter to 2.58 percent of the total population of the country. Economy of Assam today represents a unique juxtaposition of backwardness amidst plenty. Growth rate of Assam's income has not kept pace with that of India's during the Post-British Era. Differences increased rapidly since the 1970s.

6.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Human development is defined as a process of enlarging people's choices in three basic dimensions- health, education and standard of living, so following the above mentioned methodology The District Level Human Development Index is presented in Table 1. From the table, out of all the districts Kamrup Metro is the best performing district driven by good levels of attainment in the fields of health and education. Dhubri district is the worst performing district among all the districts because of its negligible levels of attainment in health and standard of living dimensions. In the Barak valley, Cachar district emerged as best performing district and Dima Hasao in the Hilly region. Following the criteria of HDR 2004, no district falls in the category of high human development group. Ten districts such as Kamrup Metro, Barpeta ,Nalbari, Bongaigaon, Kamrup Rural, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Golaghat, Jorhat , Dibrugarh and Tinsukia. Rest of the sixteen districts fall under the category of low human development group. For getting a closer idea of human development status in the state we have analysed the agro climatic zone wise levels of human development. The agro climatic zone wise levels of human development are presented in Table 2. The districts in the lower Brahmaputra valley zone have performed poorly in the human development index. This is largely because of the social disturbances arising in that part of the state and also some of the districts have been newly constructed.

Although this zone has one of the best performing districts namely Kamrup Metro. But its good performance has been overshadowed by the other low performing districts. Likewise the districts of Central Brahmaputra Valley have also experienced lower levels of human development although they are better off from their counterpart of lower Brahmaputra valley zone. Similar is the case with the North-Bank Plain zone which is also in the lower human development group. But the Upper Brahmaputra valley has been successful in attaining moderate levels of human development. The other two zones viz. Barak Valley and Hilly regions have lower levels of human development.

Further to assess the pattern of human development over time we have compared the respective district level human development values with that of the human development index, 2001 in Table 3. From the table it is reflected that Bongaigaon district has shown the highest growth in terms of human development over a period of 2001-2014. Other districts which shows notable improvements in this respect includes Dhubri, Nalbari, Darrang, Goalpara, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Nagaon, Tinsukia etc. while, there are some districts which show negative growth because of various socio-economic disturbances occurring in those areas. These include Jorhat, Morigaon etc. The average HDI values over the periods 2001-2014 has increased from 0.39 to 0.47. This also reveals the good performance of districts in achieving the fruits of human development. The standard deviation value of HDI for the districts is also decreasing. This implies regional disparities on human development attainment are decreasing across districts over time. Speaking differently, level of human development of districts for 2001 is much dispersed from mean value than that of 2014.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Thus, Human development is a well-being concept which involves human condition with its core being the capability approach. The Human Development Index is used as a way of measuring actual progress in human development. From the analysis it is clear that out of all the districts Kamrup Metro is the best performing district driven by good levels of attainment in the fields of health and education. Dhubri district is the worst performing district among all the districts because of its negligible levels of attainment in health and standard of living dimensions. From the analysis of agro climatic zone wise levels of human development we found that Upper Brahmaputra valley has been successful in attaining moderate levels of human development and the rest of the five zones performed poorly. Further, the Bongaigaon district has shown the highest growth in terms of human development over a period of 2001-2014. Moreover, the regional disparities on human development attainment are decreasing across districts over time. The study finally believes that it is the area of social sector on which emphasis should be laid for augmenting human development in Assam. An increased level of expenditure on health and education is essential for improving levels of human development.

FIGURES AND TABLES

Flowchart 1: The Human Development Index Framework
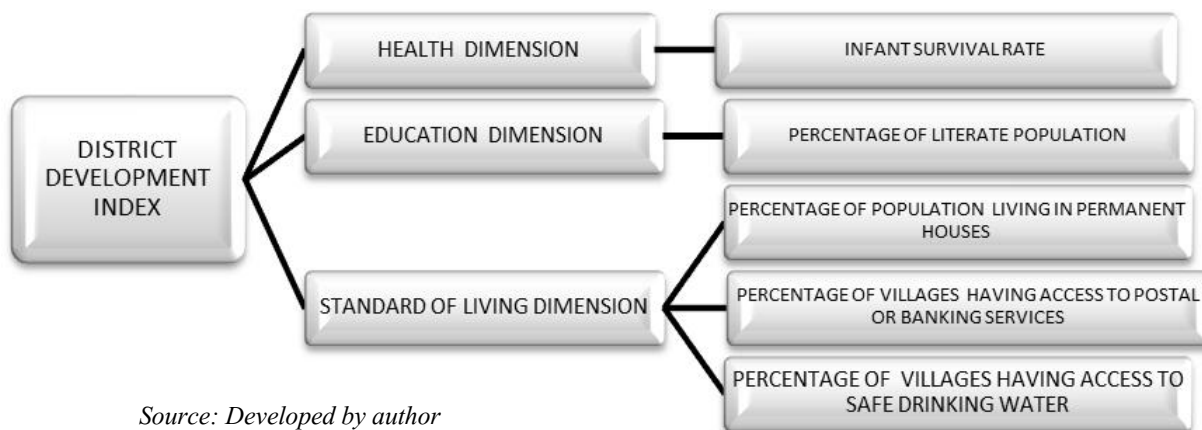
Source: Developed by author

Table-1: The District Level Human Development Index

Valley	District	Health Index	Education Index	Standard of Living Index	Development Index	Rank
Brahmaputra Valley	Dhubri	0.10	0.59	0.36	0.35	27
	Kokrajhar	0.05	0.67	0.42	0.38	24
	Chirang	0.05	0.65	0.41	0.37	26
	Barpeta	0.40	0.65	0.41	0.49	11
	Nalbari	0.20	0.80	0.54	0.51	8
	Bongaigaon	0.34	0.70	0.53	0.52	6
	Kamrup(R)	0.44	0.74	0.46	0.55	2
	Kamrup(M)	0.43	0.83	0.74	0.69	1
	Darrang	0.14	0.65	0.41	0.40	22
	Goalpara	0.30	0.69	0.41	0.467	15
	Baksa	0.05	0.71	0.39	0.387	23
	Sibsagar	0.28	0.80	0.46	0.517	7
	Sonitpur	0.15	0.70	0.43	0.43	19
	Lakhimpur	0.30	0.78	0.44	0.507	9
	Dhemaji	0.30	0.69	0.39	0.46	16
	Morigaon	0.10	0.69	0.46	0.42	20
	Nagaon	0.19	0.74	0.44	0.457	17
	Golaghat	0.23	0.78	0.48	0.50	10
	Jorhat	0.29	0.83	0.46	0.53	4
	Dibrugarh	0.31	0.76	0.55	0.54	3
	Udalguri	0.05	0.67	0.40	0.373	25
	Tinsukia	0.31	0.74	0.53	0.527	5
Hill Region	Karbi Anglong	0.26	0.74	0.36	0.45	18
	Dima Hasao	0.29	0.79	0.36	0.48	12
Barak Valley	Karimganj	0.14	0.79	0.28	0.403	21
	Hailakandi	0.31	0.75	0.35	0.47	14
	Cachar	0.29	0.80	0.33	0.473	13

Source: Compiled by author from Economic Survey, 2012-13 and Assam Statistical Handbook, 2012

Table- 2 : The agro climatic zone wise levels of human development

Agro climatic zones	Levels of Human Development
Lower Brahmaputra Valley	0.46
Upper Brahmaputra Valley	0.52
Central Brahmaputra Valley	0.44
North Bank Plain	0.45
Barak Valley	0.45
Hilly Regions	0.47

Source: Computed by author from Table 1

Table-3: Pattern of Human Development in Assam

District	Human Development Index,2001	Human Development Index,2014	Difference
Dhubri	0.21	0.35	+0.14
Kokrajhar	0.35	0.38	+0.03
Chirang	-----	0.37	-----
Barpeta	0.396	0.49	+0.09
Nalbari	0.34	0.51	+0.17
Bongaigaon	0.263	0.52	+0.26
Kamrup(R)	0.574	0.55	-----
Kamrup(M)		0.69	-----
Darrang	0.26	0.40	+0.14
Goalpara	0.31	0.467	+0.16
Baksa	-----	0.387	-----
Sibsagar	0.469	0.517	+0.05
Sonitpur	0.357	0.43	+0.07
Lakhimpur	0.34	0.507	+0.17
Dhemaji	0.277	0.46	+0.18
Morigaon	0.494	0.42	-0.07
Nagaon	0.356	0.457	+0.10
Golaghat	0.54	0.50	-0.04
Jorhat	0.65	0.53	-0.12
Dibrugarh	0.48	0.54	+0.06
Udalguri	------	0.373	-----
Tinsukia	0.377	0.527	+0.15
Karbi Anglong	0.494	0.45	-0.04
Dima Hasao	0.363	0.48	+0.12
Karimganj	0.301	0.403	+0.10
Hailakandi	0.363	0.47	+0.11
Cachar	0.402	0.473	+0.07

Source: Compiled by author from Table 1 and Assam Human Development Index,2001, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam.

Note: due to creation of new districts the values relating to those districts are not available for 2001and hence the difference is not calculated for those districts.

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