The Indian Constitution has a framework within which ample provisions exist for the protection, development and welfare of children. There are a wide range of laws that guarantee children their rights and entitlements as provided in the Constitution. In 1974, the Government of India adopted a National Policy for Children, declaring the nation's children as 'supremely important assets'. This policy lays down recommendations for a comprehensive health programme, supplementary nutrition for mothers and children, nutrition education for mothers, free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14, non-formal preschool education, promotion of physical education and recreational activities, special consideration for the children of weaker sections of the population like the scheduled castes and the schedule tribes, prevention of exploitation of children and special facilities for children with handicaps.


By ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government is obligated "to review National and State legislation and bring it in line with provisions of the Convention". The Convention revalidates the rights guaranteed to children by the Constitution of India, and is, therefore, a powerful weapon to combat forces that deny these rights. Children contribute forty percent of the World’s population but still their But their condition is still a cause of great concern for our country. They being more vulnerable as they are dependent on others for their nourishment, protection and development, we as a nation and its citizens should take utmost care so that they can have a safe and memorable childhood.

Media’s impact on our society is immeasurable and its potential to spread awareness among the masses is unquestionable. Media especially print media’s reach throughout our country is so vast that if this potential is utilized properly in spreading awareness
about child rights, it can bring about a sea change in the lives of millions of children in our country. It is true that the newspapers have great prospective to bring a social change in a country. The honour lies in the hands of those who are directly or indirectly involved. The scenario regarding portrayal of the status of children in the four dailies could be very well observed in the previous chapter.

The present study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To know the frequency of child rights issues published in the print media.
2. To find out the “priority given issues on children” by each newspaper.
3. To identify overlooked children issues that should be advocated.
4. To ascertain the role of print media in educating the mass people on child rights.

Considering the objectives of the study a content analysis method was adopted for the research. For this purpose four daily newspapers (two English and two Assamese) were selected. Various news, features, analysis, articles based on child rights issues which were published during the period 01/01/2012 to 31/12/2012 were collected and analysed. The newspapers were selected on the basis of their popularity and circulation.

As the present study also aims at ascertaining the role of print media in educating the mass people on child rights, a survey was also conducted in Kamrup (Metropolitan) district to collect data from the literate men and women and among the experts of print media. The data collected was subjected to suitable statistical analysis like frequency and percentage.

A. Background information of the respondents:

- Findings of the investigation as regard to Personal characters showed that majority of the male and female respondents were falling in the age group 31-35 years.
- Regarding the educational level of the respondents 34.25 percent of the female respondents were class XII passed and 35 percent of the male respondents were graduates.
Data on economic characteristics of the respondents showed that majority of the male and female respondents were engaged in services. While, 28.46 percent of the female respondents were housewives, 58.33 percent of the male respondents earned monthly income 27001 and above. Whereas, monthly income 44.23 percent of the female respondents had ranged between Rs15001 to Rs21000.

While enquiring about media ownership, it was found that every respondents owned newspapers and television.

Regarding social characteristics of the respondents, the data revealed that most of the respondents were members of one or more organisation.

B. Awareness among the respondents regarding child rights

The knowledge of the respondents on child rights was found to be least satisfactory. It was found that majority of the respondents were partially aware of child rights. Statistics showed that more than ninety percent of the respondents were not fully aware of the various rights of children. However it was observed that thirty two percent of the respondents were found to be fully aware of the child’s right to have protection against any type of abuse, exploitation and neglect followed by rights to name and nationality (31.07%), right to have good health (19.10%) and right to nutrition (11.96%).

Regarding the factors associated with creation of awareness on child rights, it was found that 96.07 percent of the respondents were aware of the existence of legal protection for children but only least of them had filed any complain in favour of child right protection. A little more than half of the respondents were aware of the existence organisation working for children but few of them were member of any such organisation. Further it was revealed that a great majority of them do not subscribe any journal on children, while only thirty percent read any news letter/ journals on children.
Television/radio/internet were the main source for majority of the respondents through which the acquired child right education followed by newspapers/magazines and Government agencies. Very few of them acquired child right education through NGOs.

While, querying about the views points of the respondents about the role of newspapers, was found to be satisfactory. Majority of the respondents felt newspapers encourage children towards science and technology and agreed that newspapers educate the people about the dangers of child work. While 76.07 percent and 83.03 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that newspapers provides clean environment for children and urge for non-discrimination against class. Regarding, urge to provide facilities to children, the responses were neutral.

The viewpoints of the respondents regarding the total space provided by the newspapers to children news/views were found to be unsatisfactory.

Majority of the respondents (75%) were not at all satisfied on the amount of coverage on children news through news report. Similarly, majority was not satisfied with the amount of coverage through articles (61%), features (53.4%), editorial (77%) and letter to the editor (78%) as well.

Whereas, the language approach in children news/views was somewhat satisfactory. More than the fifty percent of the respondents (54%) were moderately satisfied with the maintenance of sensitivity. 22 percent of the respondents said that they are highly satisfied but 22.8 percent were found to be unsatisfied.

Respondents were unsatisfied with the content of children news/views as they lacked depth analysis.
Response towards the publication of photos on children was found to be mixed. 66.2 percent were moderately satisfied and 24.8 percent were unsatisfied. Only 9 percent of the respondents were found to be highly satisfied.

Similar response was found for captions as well. Most of the respondents (47.8%) were highly satisfied followed by 39 percent with moderate satisfaction and 13.2 percent were unsatisfied.

Regarding the role played by the newspapers in educating the readers about the educational rights of children, 78.9 percents of the respondents responded positively. Similarly, in terms of health, children in conflict zone, juvenile justice, organisational activities, child rights protection and violation of child rights, they supported the role of newspapers with huge majority.

After interviewing the experts, it was found that the frequency of news/views on child rights is very less and the space provided to child related issues was very scanty. Placement or coverage of news depends on the importance of news and should be relevant. The news reports are mostly incidental and apposite. In order to boost up the circulation of the newspaper, they mostly concentrate on those issues that will generate some debate and hold the interest of the readers. Since, the news/views on children have failed to generate the same interest among its readers, therefore they are kept aside. Further, the children’s issues did not make any worthy news, they occupied the inside pages. Regarding language approach they are sensitive towards child rights issues and always use respectful language. They maintain the privacy of the children.

C. Coverage of Print Media on Child Right Issues

Overall, results of the study revealed inherent diversity of the Indian print media. A broad pattern is reflected in the focus and approach of the four local
daily newspaper’s coverage of news/views on child rights. There were great variations among the newspapers about the topics covered.

- The total space given to the news/views in the four newspapers was 81 percent in terms of sq.cm, whereas, the space given to child related issues was merely 3.8 percent and even the total space including pictures was 4.6 percent only.

- Maximum space coverage of children issues was given by *The Assam Tribune* and the least coverage was given by *Asamiya Pratidin*.

- While analysing the space provided by the four dailies to children pictures, it was found in overall that children advertisements were received with maximum space followed by children pictures and cartoons.

- At a close glance on children photos in particular, children general photos received maximum coverage in overall followed by photos on violation of child rights, achievement and children in conflict zone. Space provided to photos of girl child was found to be very less (9.68%).

- The frequency of Child Rights news/views was far from encouraging. The total number of news/views in the four dailies was 31,916, out of which only 1006 (3.15 %) news/views covered were pertaining to children. Among the four dailies *The Assam Tribune* gave 3.74 percent of coverage whereas, *Asamiya Pratidin* contributed least coverage on child rights with only 2.76 percentages.

- Further, the child related issues based on its sources was found that majority of news reports in The *Sentinel* was contributed by the staff reporter. Whereas, special correspondents contributed 44.9 percent of news and 28.7 percent of news/views on children in Amar Asom and
Asamiya Pratidin respectively. While in case of The Assam Tribune, source of maximum coverage of news/views was not mentioned. Thus, it is perceived that writers and other agencies have less contribution towards the coverage of news/views on children.

- The news/views on children were mostly found to be scattered in the inside pages. News reports on children in the first page were mediocre. The statistical data on child labour or trafficking or malnutrition and other sensational news on children were found on the first page to attract the attention of its readers. It was very disappointing to find very less coverage of articles on the editorial page.

- While analysing the newspapers individually, on frequency distribution of child related new/views on the basis of their coverage The Assam Tribune had the highest coverage in almost all the categories except the feature category, which The Sentinel had the majority of 62 (25.6%). Regarding the letter to the editor on child rights, a huge difference was seen between The Assam Tribune and other newspapers. It was found that The Assam Tribune had 15 letters to the editor during the period whereas, The Sentinel and Asamiya Pratidin had only one letter each and Amar Asom tragically had no letter on children issues.

- Among all the parameters on child rights issues, The Sentinel and The Assam Tribune gave more importance to child rights protection and least importance was given to children in conflict zone. Juvenile justice received highest coverage on Asamiya Pratidin whereas Amar Asom paid least importance to news/views on juvenile justice.

- During the study period, Assam severely suffered from communal violence in different places. Children in these conflict zones were adversely affected physically as well as psychologically. But the newspapers gave very less emphasis to the impact of such activities on
The study shows that all the newspapers had published the issue of organisational activities in a large scale. However, the news seemed mostly to be descriptive of activities such as trainings, workshops and seminars. If the follow up report of such programs and its impact on the target group were reflected then the coverage on this issue would have been called a real one in true sense. Even minor activities of established organizations are presented as news. Reporting seems to be done the way these organizations want them to be. The right to information seems to be thus limited to only what is shown rather what is hidden behind. The civic society would have benefited a lot with information plus in-depth analysis based on studies and researches.

It was found that news/views on violation of child rights under various parameters received almost equal importance as to the child rights issues. Incidences on violation of child rights were more sensationalised in order to boost up the circulation.

During the period news/views on violation of right to education was on discussion in all the newspapers. It was the most prioritized issue. This has helped the readers to know about the law and child rights related to education.

There were very less reporting on corporal punishment and female foeticide and infanticides issues with an average coverage on child labour and trafficking. These are the burning issues of present day and should be reported sufficiently.

While looking into the treatment given by the four newspapers, it was found that the majority of the news/views were for general awareness.
followed by sensitised issues. Least importance was given for the upliftment of the children. Print media has a huge potential to work for the upliftment of the children, but it was very disappointing to find that newspapers were not fully exploited for educating the mass people on child rights but rather they give more importance for its sale value.

- The constitution of India caters to the well being and upliftment of children by passing various laws from time to time. In order to make the mass people aware of them, newspaper is the best medium, but unfortunately the issues on child rights got very less coverage.

- The language used by the reporters was found to be very respectful and many times they are found to be sensitive to the issues related to the child rights. But there have been numerous occasions when the incidents have just been reported, without in depth analysis and going to the root of the problems. Catchy, forceful and appealing tag lines were used to attract attention of its readers. Root cause is not identified in most of the coverage. In case of sensitive news/views having continuity caught up a storm with the people. News/views were not reported which were in reference to child rights.

- It was revealed that issues like drug abuse; birth registration, children creativity and issue of disability were overlooked issue of all the four newspapers. The issues of International news on children were also overlooked. Contradictorily, issues on Health, child malnutrition, IMR and children in conflict zone are also found as overlooked issues on The Sentinel and The Assam Tribune. Again, issues like child right protection and sexual offence on children was overlooked by Asamiya Pratidin. The study found that the coverage of issues like corporal punishment, malnutrition, IMR, female foeticide, infanticide and abandoned children was very scanty in Amar Asom.