Chapter 8
SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter gives a summary of the study. It discusses findings of the study on the community participation in monitoring of children’s schooling, teaching-learning activities, in resource generation, monitoring of development plans and impact of community participation on elementary education. It gives suggestions and recommendations for bringing up more community participation in the light of elementary education and finally it concludes it.

I. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The study titled Community Participation in Elementary Education: Intervention of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in Cachar district is an attempt to analyse the community participation under SSA in Cachar district. During the first 25 years of Indian republic it was realized that the involvement of community had remained more on paper, mainly due to high rate of illiteracy, especially among the Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and women, lack of any policy and programmes to empower community in respect of development and administration, non-effectiveness of the devolution of power etc. After education was made a subject under the Concurrent List of the Indian Constitution in 1976 there was noticed a significant change in taking responsibilities of administration and delivery of elementary education, along with widening scope of development of the country. Continuing with the policy of community involvement and universalization of education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched in 2001 to provide useful and relevant elementary education to all children in the age group of 6-14 by 2010, with a goal to universalize elementary education and improve its quality through decentralized and context-specific planning (community participation) and a process-based, time-bound implementation strategy. SSA has involved community through various committees and local bodies; viz., Goan Panchayat Education Committee (GPEC), Village Education Committee (VEC), Tea Garden Education Committee (TGEC), Ward Education Committee (WEC), School Management Committee (SMC) and Mothers Group
To improve the quality of education, it stressed on improving the student-teacher ratio, teachers’ training, academic support, facilitating development of teaching-learning material and providing textbooks to children from special focus area. The community is expected to play a key role in micro-planning, especially in the development of village/habitation level plan and school improvement plans. Community based monitoring, especially in enrolment and retention of children, education of girl child and other disadvantaged groups, utilization of various grants and construction, is important to ensure attainment of the programme objectives. Cachar district, located in Barak Valley- one of Assam’s backward regions - makes a case for the probing into the SSA intervention.

The studies on elementary education, community participation and SSA in India may be broadly discussed under three categories:


A question arises: what patterns of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) intervention are perceived in elementary education in Assam, especially in its Cachar district? The study addresses the following specific research questions to attempt the problem: 1) Is community participating in development of village/habitation level plans for elementary education in the schools of Cachar district?, 2) Is community participating in improvement plans of elementary schools in Cachar district?, 3) Is community monitoring enrolment and retention of children in elementary schools of Cachar district?,4) Is community monitoring education of girls, SCs, STs and minority children in elementary schools of Cachar district?,5) Is community monitoring utilization of various grants and construction and maintenance of infrastructure in elementary schools of Cachar district?,6) Is community facilitating teaching-learning in elementary schools of Cachar district? and 7) Is community participating in resource generation for elementary schools in Cachar district?. The present study focuses on various aspects of community participation in the elementary education after Sarva
Shiksha Abhiyan was launched in Cachar district and fills the gap in the area of the research.

The objectives of the study are: (a) to understand structural patterns of community participation in elementary education in schools under SSA, (b) to examine the nature of community’s participation in monitoring and supervision of enrolment, dropout rate, attendance, retention and learning enhancement of children, implementation of improvement plans and generation of resources in schools under SSA and (c) to assess impact of community participation on elementary education in schools under SSA. SSA is Government of India’s flagship programme for achievement of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time-bound manner, as mandated by 86th amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory education to the children of 6-14 years’ age group, a fundamental right. The programme seeks to open new schools in those habitations which do not have schooling facilities and strengthen existing school infrastructure through provision of additional class rooms, toilets, drinking water, maintenance grant and school improvement grants. Existing schools with inadequate teacher strength are provided with additional teachers, while the capacity of existing teachers is being strengthened by extensive training, grants for developing teaching – learning materials and strengthening of the academic support structure at cluster, block and district levels. SSA seeks to provide quality elementary education including life skills. SSA has a special focus on girls’ education and children with special needs. SSA also seeks to provide computer education to bridge the digital divide. The SSA is an effort to recognize the need for improving the performance of the school system and to provide community owned quality elementary education in mission mode. It also envisages bridging of gender and social gaps. It is also an opportunity for states to develop their own vision of elementary education. The community participation in the light of Universalisation of Elementary Education itself is not a goal in educational delivery nor a panacea to solve complicated issues contributing to poor educational quality in both developing and developed countries. It is a process that facilitates the realization of improving educational quality and the promotion of democracy within society. The study has analyzed
the social profile of the respondents, the nature of community participation in monitoring of children’s schooling and teaching-learning activities, working of community participation in resource-generation, monitoring of development plans in schools under SSA and has assessed the impact of community participation on elementary education in schools under SSA.

The study divides into eight chapters. The first chapter includes the problem, review of the literature, objectives and methodology of the study. The second chapter introduces the elementary education and community participation in India and deals with historical evolution of community participation in elementary education, culminating into the SSA strategies. The third chapter highlights the historical development of elementary education and community participation in Cachar District. This chapter introduces the Cachar district in its socio-historical and geographical contexts and gives an account of historical development of elementary education and community participation in it from colonial times up till the implementation of the SSA. The fourth chapter is the socio-economic background of the respondents, revealing structural patterns of community participation in elementary education in schools under SSA, by presenting social background of the respondents with the variables like respondents’ position in the School Managing Committee (SMC), gender, level of education of respondents, level of education of respondents’ father and mother, occupation, religion, caste, mother tongue, patterns of house, types of house, annual income, household items, marital status, respondents children age group, respondents children attended school and type of school attended by respondents children. The fifth chapter deals with community participation in monitoring of children’s schooling and teaching-learning activities, examining a number of SMC meetings conducted, percentage of members who attended the SMC meeting, agenda of the SMC meetings, major problems of schools, SMC involvement in the improvement of the school environment and SMC monitoring in school functioning. The sixth chapter is about community participation in resource generation and monitoring of development plans. The chapter discuss the working of community participation in implementation of improvement plans and generation of resources in schools under SSA in terms of SMC members’
mobilization of local resources for development of elementary education, community contribution for development of elementary education, types of contributions of the interested members, SMC members performing in school development activities, SMC members’ participation in monitoring the children’s schooling activity, SMC members’ participation in monitoring the children’s teaching learning activities, preparation in monitoring of school development plan by SMC members and necessity of community participation for development of education as a whole. The seventh chapter on the impact of community participation on elementary education deals with the nature and impact of community’s participation, analyzing the dropout scenario in schools, steps taken by SMCs to bring the dropout children to schools, special drive conducted by SMC for retention of children at school, measures taken by SMCs and types of measures for improvement of the enrolment of children in schools, contribution of community people for quality education of their children, participation of SMC in bringing the out-of-school children within the purview of education, community participation in bridging the gender gap, promoting girls’ education and bridging the social gap (SC/ST/OBC/Minority and differently able child), utilization, implementation, supervision and monitoring of the annual school grants and other grants by the SMC provided by SSA, participation of the SMC in the children’s teaching-learning process, usefulness of education for community members livelihood and major obstacles faced by the people’s committees in universalization of elementary education. The eighth chapter is the concluding chapter which summarises the findings of the study and concludes it.

II. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study takes empirical account of the working of various committees like Goan Panchayat Education Committee (GPEC), Village Education Committee (VEC), Tea Garden Education Committee (TGEC), Ward Education Committee (WEC), School Management Committee (SMC) and Mothers Group (MG) involving people in school management, monitoring of teaching-learning and school development under the SSA and also the working of community participation prior to introduction of SSA (as on 31 March 2002), derived from
official records, secondary sources and experiences of school and other officials as well as people. Thus, the sources of data for the study were of two types; namely, (a) the field sources and (b) the documentary sources. The field source of the data consists of members of educational committees. Besides, these data are supplemented by those collected from special focus groups like STs, SCs, minority, tea garden areas and education officers at block and district levels. The documentary data were collected from official records such as SSA circulars, schools records, SSA annual progress reports, SSA news letters and all other relevant circulars on UEE and the documents collected from DISE reports, school reports and officials’ records during the visit to District Elementary Education Office, District Mission Office from January to June 2012. The units of the study were the members of Goan Panchayat, village, tea garden and ward education level committees, School Management Committee and Mothers Group, selected by applying multi-stage sampling method; (a) At the first stage, composition of all the existing education committees of SSA; viz., Goan Panchayat Education Committee (GPEC), Village Education Committee (VEC), Tea Garden Education Committee (TGEC), Ward Education Committee (WEC), School Management Committee (SMC) and Mothers Group (MG) were taken into account and found that School Management Committee (SMC) at school level consisted of the representatives from all the other committees. So, the School Management Committee was taken for the purpose of understanding community participation. (b) At the second stage, all the schools having predominantly students from special focus groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, tea garden communities and minorities as well as non-focus groups (General Castes) were selected by purposive sampling method. Total 25 schools were selected from 2378 SMCs under Cachar district, covering 1% of the total SMCs each from focus and non-focus groups. The school managing committees under each categories are Abhaya Charan B. Pathsala LP School and Practising Govt SBS (2 SMCs under general category), Binnakandi Sorboday Toposil ME School, Iswar Chandra ME School, Lakshmi Charan High School, 15 No Joy Kumar Balika Vidyalaya LP School and 563 No Brojogobinda LP School (5 SMCs under SC category); Hmarakhawlien Hmar MV School and
Lallong Cherra LP School (2 SMCs under ST category); 108 No Konjeng Leikai LP School, 994 No Awangleikai LP School, Jogai Mathura ME School, Jibon Memorial ME School, S.L. Higher Secondary School and 1367 No Kumari Singha LP School (6 SMCs under OBC category); 1244 No. Dalu Bagan Pathsala LP School and Coomergram ME School (2 SMCs under Tea Tribe category); 19 No Lathimara LP School, Hazi M. Ali Laskar High School, National ME School, 17 Haritikar LP School LP School, 1010 Santipur LP School, Hazi Hamid Raja Memorial ME School, 219 Dakshin Krishnapur LP School and 182 No Sonai Model LP School (8 SMCs under minority (Muslim) category). (c) At the third stage, School Managing Committee (SMC) of each selected school was included as unit of a sample, constituting a sample of School Managing Committees. Out of total 2378 SMCs in Cachar district covering 230 SMCs under general category, 452 SMCs under SCs category, 151 SMCs under STs category, 177 SMCs under tea tribes category and 807 SMCs under minority (Muslim) category, calculating 1% from each social categories it comes 2 SMCs under general category, 5 SMCs under SC category, 2 SMCs under ST category, 6 SMCs under OBC category, 2 SMCs under Tea Tribe category and 8 SMCs under minority (Muslim) category through lottery technique of random sampling. (d) At the fourth stage, the members out of the sampled School Managing Committees were selected out on the basis of the common position in the SMC body, as the SMCs consist of one senior citizen of the village or a parent of the students as President, one Head Teacher of the School as Member Secretary, five parents, three non-parent members, one village headman, one donor-member, one President of Village Education Committee as member and one President of Mothers Group as member in all 14 members in one School Managing Committee. (e) At the fifth stage, out of the five parent-members, four parent-members (two each males and females) were selected and out of three non-parent-members, two non-parent members were selected. That is, out of 14 members in SMC, 12 members were each selected from the sampled SMCs as respondents. (f) At the sixth stage, the SMC members from stage IV, that is, one President, one Member Secretary, four Parents Members, two Non-Parent Members, one Village Headman/Gaonburrah, one Donor Member, one President
of VEC/TGEC/WEC and one President of Mothers Group were selected. That is 1% of the total SMC members were selected from each position as respondents and (g) finally, all the selected members of the School Managing Committee at the stage V, a total of twelve members per SMC were interviewed, that is, 1% of each social category- that is 24 members from 2 SMCs of general category, 60 members from 5 SMCs of SCs category, 24 members from 2 SMC of STs category, 72 members from 6 SMCs of OBCs category, 24 members from 2 SMCs of tea tribes and 96 members from 8 SMCs of Muslim (minority) category, total 300 members were taken as the respondents for the study from 25 SMCs. An interview schedule was constructed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data related to community linkages, socio-economic status, awareness, and participation etc of the committee members. The validation of the schedule was done with the help of the experience of education experts under SSA. Besides, informal interviews of focus groups and education officers under SSA were conducted to develop understanding of different stakeholders’ perceptions on community participation. The data were collected from the respondents during the period from January 2012 to June 2012.

III. SOCIO- ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

The following are the structural patterns of community participation in elementary education in schools under SSA. These constitute socio-economic background of the respondents in terms of the respondents’ position in SMC, gender, educational level of respondents’ father and mother, occupation, religion, caste, mother tongue, patterns of house, type of house, annual income, household assets, marital status, respondents’ children’s age group, respondents’ children’s school and type of school attended by respondents’ children. The socio-economic characteristics of the respondents are as follows:

- The parent members constitute one third (33.3 percent) of all the members and it draws members from all stakeholders with important position followed by one tenth (16.7 percent) non-parents members up to village level. The composition of SMC is inclusive in nature. In the school managing committee the parent members are more in number
and their participation is also very important for any decision related to educational development of a school.

- The School Managing Committees are male-dominated bodies. Over three fourths of the respondents (71.3 percent) are male and the rest (one fourth- 28.7 percent) are females. But women’s participation in educational matter is of utmost importance, particularly to understand the child psychology. As a woman can understand the feeling and needs of a child because of their motherly attitude and have experiences to deals with their own children. This is also pointed out by the education officers of Cachar district during the focused group discussion.

- Over 66 % of the total respondents are either under-matriculates or matriculates, only 33% are above higher secondary level of education and till 0.7 % are illiterate. If such a trend continues any dynamism or positive achievement of SMC is unlikely. As H.S.L.C (matriculate) is the educational qualification only for the president of the SMC and class VII pass to become the non-parents member of the SMC, so the higher education level is less among the members of SMC. Educational qualification for the SMC members is very much necessary for proper implementation of government activities through the School Managing Committees. That can be possible by putting educational bar minimum matriculate for others and higher secondary for the President of the SMC.

- Significant portions of the respondents’ father’s are illiterate and among the literate educated most of them are under matriculate. As a result their fathers are not aware of their role and responsibilities in the education development of their children and not able to do best in children guidance. Over three quarters (72.7 percent) of the respondents’ father’s level of education is under matriculate followed by those whose fathers attained education upto matriculate level is 12.0 percent and 10.7 percent of the fathers are illiterate while only 3.0 percent and 1.0
percent respondents’ father’s level of education is higher secondary and graduate level.

- More than half of the respondents’ mothers have under matriculate education and over 40% mothers are illiterate which reflects a shocking indicator in women participation in decision making. Because education of a mother is not only important for herself but for overall development of her children in day-to-day life.

- Most of the respondents are engaged in business or other earning sources and only 17.7 percent are doing government services that are mostly the head teacher or head master who act as member secretary of the SMCs. This also reflects a less community contribution by the members of the SMC for school developmental activities. As the most of the head teachers or head master are not from local area and are not willing to contribute for the school. They are attending schools only for the shake of duty. By occupation 22.3 percent of the respondents are engaged in their own business and 17.7 percent are in government service. Few respondents (14.7 percent) are housewives/unemployed and 13.3 percent respondents are working as farmer/horticulturist. 12.0 percent are engaged in politics/social service activities and 10.3 percent respondents are engaged as wage earners. Only 9.7 percent of the respondents are employed in private sector. So the community participation is less as only few members are well established and working in private sectors can provide their contribution for education development.

- Most of the respondents are Hindu, followed by Muslim, as these are two major religions segments found in the population of the region. Majorities, (61.7 percent) of the respondents are Hindu and 30.3 percent are Muslim. Few respondents (7.7 percent) are the followers of Christianity and only 0.3 percent of Buddhism.
Mostly, 30 percent of the respondents are minority and in the state of Assam minority in educational purpose is mainly considered for the Muslims, followed by 28.0 percent from the Other Backward Castes (OBCs). The respondents under general (other than Muslim) caste group are 13.0 percent and Scheduled Castes (SCs) respondents are 12.3 percent. Only 8.3 percent and 7.7 percent respondents belong to tea tribe community and Scheduled Tribes (STs) respectively.

The respondents mainly come from Bengali, Manipuri and Bagani population in the district. The mother tongue of the most of the respondents is Bengali (65.7 percent). Besides, 18.7 percent respondents are Manipuri-speaking and 10.6 percent are speaking Shadri and Santhali. Only 5.0 percent of the respondents are Hindi-speaking people.

Their housing pattern is undergoing a process of change determined by the level of their economic development. 93.0 percent of the respondents were staying in their own houses and only 7.0 percent were staying in the rented houses and most of the respondents have Semi-pacca houses.

Most of the respondents are having their own houses. Mostly the houses are constructed by themselves and also under the Indira Awas Yojana from Goan panchayat.

Over one fourth (27.3 percent) of the respondents are under the BPL category as per Government of India in its ninth five year plan (1997-2002) that is annual income below Rs 20,000/- and considering the Supreme Court upward revision of the poverty line than (67 percent) respondents are under the BPL category those who’s annual income below Rs 49,284/-. Only 33 percent are APL that is Above Poverty Line. So most of the SMC members are not able to contribute for school because of financial constrain even they are interested in participation.
Most of the respondents have telephone or mobile sets, followed by colour or black and white television which shows the trend of modernity among the respondents and have minimum living standard. 59 percent of the respondents have the household items like telephone or mobile sets, over two fifths (48.6 percent) of the respondents have colour or black and white television sets. Below one fifth of the respondents have the items like scooter, motorcycle/moped and fridge.

Most (94.7 percent) of the respondents are married, 3.3 percent are widowed and only 2 percent are unmarried. The unmarried and widowed members of the SMCs are from donor member, non-parent member, village headman and from member secretary of the SMC. It means most of the SMC members are married and their children are studying at the school.

About three fourths (73.4 percent) of the respondents are having children between the age group of 6 to 14 years. And those respondents are in the SMC as parent members and the rest are the non-parent members of the committee.

Most of the respondents’ children are schools going and they are very much aware about their children’s education. 80.7 percent of the children attended school and the rest (19.3 percent) do not.

Most of the respondents’ children are studying in SSA supported schools run by government, provincilised and recognized schools. Over four fifths (86.8 percent) of the respondents’ children are studying in SSA supported schools that is schools run by government, provincilised, recognized schools, one tenth (10.3 percent) of the respondents’ children are going to private schools, that is, the schools that are fully run by public, no fund is provided from SSA and a few of the respondents (2.4 percent) are providing education to their children from central government schools not under SSA, like Kendriya Vidyalaya or Novodaya Vidyalaya.
IV. THE FINDINGS

The findings of the study regarding the community participation for the development of elementary education after implementation of SSA are presented in terms of the monitoring of children’s schooling and teaching-learning activities, community participation in resource generation and monitoring of development plans in schools under SSA and the assessment of the impact of community participation on elementary education in Cachar district of Assam. These are as follows:

(A) Community Participation in Monitoring of Children’s Schooling and Teaching-Learning Activities

- Majority, (60 percent) of the respondents are members of School Managing Committee for last 4 years which show that most of the members are experienced in monitoring of children’s schooling and teaching-learning activities. About two fifths (38.7 percent) of the respondents are members of School Managing Committee for 2 to 4 years, followed by one third (33.7 percent) for 1 to 2 years, over one fourth (27.9 percent) respondents in the committee for 5 years and more, who are the Head Teachers or Head Masters who act as Member Secretary of the SMCs and there are few members who were again selected by local people.

- The picture reflects that Member Secretary call the SMC meeting only when any fund is received by the SMCs Over 60 % of the respondents attended only 6 to 10 meetings during the last one year and only few 17 % SMC members met at least once every month as per guideline which shows negligence in the duty of the Member Secretary that is the Head Teacher or the Head Master of the school to call the SMC meeting at least once in a month..

- Over two thirds (66.7 percent) of the respondents attended over 50% of the SMC meetings, less than one fourth (24 percent) respondents attended 50% of meetings, whereas 9.3 percent of the respondents attended less than 50% meetings. Thus, more than 66% of the SMC members are more active and attended the meeting regularly, but one third of them are still inactive in their
role and have less participation in the School Managing Committee meetings. The inactive SMC members push back other members also with the negative modes of non-participation in any developmental activities.

- Over 40% of the respondents pointed out that their main agenda items of the meeting were about the quality of education, about one third (31.0 percent) respondents had the items of school attendance, whereas one fourth (25.0 percent) discussed the items like fund generation. Only 7.0 percent respondents’ agenda items were teachers’ accountability and 0.7 percent respondents discussed corruption or misappropriation of fund. Thus, over 40% of the members of the School Managing Committee were aware about their children’s quality of education.

- The SMC members realized the major problems of Government schools. Over two-fifths (41.0 percent) respondents pointed out lack of school infrastructure like bad buildings, insufficient classrooms, no separate room for head teachers, having only unusable and unhealthy toilets in poor condition, no facilities of playgrounds and no boundary walls as some of the major problems in the schools. Some of the schools have less number of desks and benches for the students in classrooms. The drinking water facilities are also unhealthy and inferior in quality. It was also observed that the mid-day-meals were prepared in unhealthy conditions. Only few schools have good kitchens and most of the school kitchens are unhealthy and unhygienic with broken doors and windows. Few Government schools were also found not providing the Cooked Mid-Day Meals (CMDM) due to lack of fund or due to non-availability of rice supplied by the government store sometimes.

- About one third (32.7 percent) respondents pointed out some other major problems like lack of trained teachers and administrators, without which quality education to the learners is uncertain. It is observed that the Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) is not maintained properly in schools. There are one or two teachers in a Lower Primary School for 150 students. Five classes (Class
I -Class V) are to be taken care of at a time by a single teacher or two teachers only. So, in such cases, where the imparting of education is problem, how can we expect the quality education?

➢ Over 21 percent of the respondents perceived a lack of sufficient funds and the available resources provided by the Government. The SMC members viewed that SSA is providing funds for the infrastructure and maintenance grants every year, but the fund is very limited and it is very difficult to manage all developmental works within that fund. Further, they also pointed out that the fund is restricted and this has to be used as per guidelines. So, innovative works in schools such as using of available local resources for preparation of handicraft and clay materials for vocational courses is not possible in the school due to lack of fund. As some SMC members have the mentality to get something form the government money. If there is any misappropriation of Government fund there is no accountability for the SMC members who are utilizing the funds as only the President and the Member Secretary have the signatory power. So both of them are liable for any mishandling of fund and rest of the members should not be held responsible as per law.

➢ Most of the SMCs members 46.4 percent are of the view that for improvement of the school environment the members are involved in helping the teachers. Over 20 %, each, of the SMC members are involved in providing special incentives to parents who ensure complete attendance of their wards throughout the year and by felicitating the meritorious students for provision of award respectively. To improvement of school environment the SMC of the all Govt. / Prov. Upper Primary Schools and selected Lower Primary Schools in Cachar districts have started with the Saturday Club and Parayavaran Mitra activities at school.

➢ The Saturday Club and Parayavaran Mitra programme was initiated with Centre for Environmental Education (CEE), Guwahati to aware the children about the environmental how to protect them and become their friends. The
programme was conducted in all school on every Saturday after having two classes to create proper learning environment through community, enhance student attendance, to increase involvement of Mothers group in school level activities, involvement of community in school level activities, to utilize of local resources in teaching learning process and to build linkage with concerning stakeholders where some competition was conducted are award were give to the meritorious students at school level. The members of the SMCs engaged themselves mostly in the non-academic activities rather than academic activities that reflect their less interest for quality education in the school.

➢ Most of the SMC members (82%) were engaged in monitoring of purchase of equipments and materials for construction and academic purposes and helping teachers during construction or other Govt. activities or time to time programme at school level. SMC are helping during procurement of constructional materials for building, toilets and purchasing of materials related to science and charts for TLM. And also helping the teachers and participate in any Govt. activities or programme conducted at school level time to time by attending the meetings and helping in performing the co-curricular activities. Over 40 % of the respondents are participating in monitoring the children’s schooling activities like conducting parents’ meetings for retention of children which shows a good sign of community involvement towards education, where the parents were informed about the new activities and programme which are coming for their children, one fourth (25.0 percent) respondents participated in monitoring the children’s schooling activities such as checking the attendance register and prepared the list of absentee students and informed the parents accordingly.

➢ Over one fifth (23.6 percent) using Mother Group and Meena Club members for checking the dropout children and in Saturday Club it become a regularly activities of the mothers groups and target the dropout, a little less than one tenth (8.7 percent) of the respondents participated in listing the dropout children and did house to house survey which were distributed among the
members with different habitation wise responsibility. Only 2.0 percent of the SMCs awarded the highest attended student to inspire the learners for more attentive in future, few school provided this award during the school level Rangmela, Children Day or any other activity conducted at school level, which is very important but given less preference by the people committee.

- Though, after conducting the meeting for TLM the head teacher and the other teachers utilized the fund by procuring different lesson based and content based TLM. But actually it is fact that the teachers are not habituated in using the TLM during the classroom transaction due to which the learners are not really benefited of any quality education. More than half (59%) SMC members participated in helping the head teacher for conducting meetings for proper use of teaching learning material fund provided from SSA which reflects a good sign as it is a mandatory for the SMC members to follow up the fund utilization as per Government guideline. The SMC members and the teachers jointly discusses regarding the proper fund utilization of TLM in the meetings.

(B) Community Participation in Resource Generation and Monitoring of Development Plans

- The SMC is responsible for development and quality improvement in the school through grants provided from the government as well as mobilization of its own resources. Over 50% of the SMC members viewed that resource mobilization can be done through schemes such as ‘earn while you learn’ in schools (special training on better utilization of local resources like poultry, horticulture, fisheries, piggery). The utilization of local resources available will be more benefited by the common people of the area which can help in promoting the self-employment among the new generation and more than 30% SMC members pointed out that by ‘skill based education system’ such as carpentry, electrician, typing and computers the local resources can be mobilized for promoting the development of elementary education at local level.
➢ Of the SMC members 46% percent pointed out that SMC supported schools through proper educational facilities and by providing scholarships for students at local level particularly for the poor learners where as over 30% of them viewed that SMCs members supported schools by overall development and proper use of the fund that are provided from SSA to the SMC like annual school grants, additional classroom funds, new school building grants, toilet construction fund uniform grants as all grants comes directly to SMC bank account through bank transfer.

➢ The data indicate that of 67.0 percent of the total respondents have contributed their community contributions for the development of elementary education, three fifths (60.0 percent) of the respondents have contributed in kind, whereas 5 percent of the respondents have contributed both in cash and in kind. Only 2 percent of the respondents have contributed in cash. 

➢ Mostly 60% of the respondents contributed in kind and only 7% have contributed in cash because of their poor economic conditions. The cash contributors contributed from Rs 100/- to 1000/- as per one’s capacity. But it shows a good response and willingness of the SMC members to contribute for the development of elementary education. Among the non-interested contributors, over half (51.5 percent) of the respondents depend on the Government, believing that as these are Government schools it is only the duty of Government to do all sorts of developmental works for elementary education, followed by over one third (34.3 percent) respondents who are not willing to contribute because of their less income.

➢ It is praiseworthy that even though members have financial constraints, their small community contributions are highly beneficial for the learners, which is also given more weightage by the Sarva Shikhja Abhiyan Mission. Of the interested SMC members 59% contribute free labour and bamboo to the development of the schools which are easily available at the village level. The members also pointed out that they were willing to contribute more but due to
their socio-economic condition they were not able to donate costly items to schools.

- Majority (90%) of the respondents are helping the teachers and helping their SMC members respectively in doing the school development activities, the SMC members helping the head teacher during purchasing the school building materials, during procurement of school uniform and TLM. It seems a good tendency of the members of School Managing Committee for the betterment of the school and education scenario of the area as a whole.

- Over half (50.7 percent) of the respondents are involved in the management activities like discussion with teaching and non-teaching staff regarding problems arisen at the school level as such when ever the problem of drop out, less enrolment, constructional problem, shortage of teachers and educational level of the school arises then the SMC discusses with teaching and non teaching staff and over one third (35.7 percent) are helping during the school building and other construction activities during the time of additional class room, new school building or toilet if any matter arises and also helping while purchasing of various material whereas one tenth (10.3 percent) of the respondents participate in discussing and solving the school developmental matters with the block and district level officials regarding enquiry of guidelines and correction of SMC account number. Only 3.3 percent take part to inform all kinds of problems of schools to the Goan Panchayat.

- Over 66% of the respondents actively participate in meetings with all members of SMC for preparation and monitoring of School Development Plan (SDP) which is really a good sense of community participation in school development activities as the SMC members can directly involve themselves in school budget preparation as per their desire without any financial limitations. It is mandatory for all SMC to conduct all members meeting before the preparation of SDP at school level and to sort the priority of demands and requirements which is to be listed at SMC level to place at SDP.
Only 18% of the SMCs were involved in providing additional fund from school management committee for development of schools. To involve the community participation at SDP it needs to make a plan about the public donation and others donators for school, so that community contribution will be more and people will participate whole heartedly. But few SMC are empowering only to some SMC members for preparation of SDP but if it happens few members will be reluctant from monitoring of the development plans and SMC main motto for overall development of education in a school level will fail.

The community involves in various ways and levels in elementary education of children. Majority over (60%) of the SMC members actively participated for development of education by providing constructive suggestions during SMC meetings and by using the available local resource for quality education by involving parents, families and communities for increasing the enrolment and attendance and improve the academic performance in their schools.

(C) Impact of Community Participation on Elementary Education

Over four fifths (86.7 percent) of the respondents were of the view that there are no dropouts in their schools while the rest (13.3 percent) pointed that there are still few dropouts in their respective schools.

Most of the dropout-prone schools organize meetings with and motivate the parents of dropout children in Cachar district. Community participation is playing a great role in this regard to bring back the dropouts to schools. Over half of the respondents (52.5 percent) conduct meeting and motivate the parents of dropout children whereas one fourth (25.0 percent) respondents carry out urgent SMC meeting on dropout issue.

More than 80% of the respondents attended meeting of school managing committee with all guardians and actively involved during the Utsav Vidyarambha to increase enrolment of children in school. During Utsav Vidyarambha each elementary schools of the Cachar district carry out three
day programme from 1\textsuperscript{st} January to 3\textsuperscript{rd} January every year with SMC members, students Government and mothers’ group of all schools and performed different various for increasing of enrolment.

- Over half (57.3 \%) of the respondents participated and conducted co-curricular activities and various competitive functions respectively towards schools to make children more attractive and attentive in schools which will fulfill the retention policy through co-scholastic activities at school levels whereas 42\% of the respondents attended SMC meetings with teachers and guardians for retention of children at school.

- Many activities were designed to prevent the drop out rate in targetted blocks and areas as well as to reduce the same. Encourage contextual planning, special sub-plans and projects for disadvantaged pockets and groups. Even though the SSA intervention heads seem to suggest a uniform, norm-based approach, there is actually inadequate scope for implementation of sub-projects for specific areas and groups. These would include geographically difficult and remote areas, migrant groups, minority committees, flood or drought-prone areas and urban deprived children. These plans have been proposed under innovative activities. The mass mobilization drive will be designed for promoting the retention like street play, street drama and one act play on the basis of local area specific language and needs with the join collaboration of non-Government organization and SSA.

- Over 70\% of the SMC members participated in special SMC meetings conducted with teachers and guardians for improvement of the enrolment of children in school, which reflects that SMC members are more conscious about their children’s enrolment.

- The respondents are vigilant about their children’s quality education and are regularly taking feedback from their children about the classroom teaching done by the teachers. Over two fifths (42.7 percent) of the respondents are taking feedback from their children about the classroom teaching, over one fourth (26.3 percent) take oral and written tests of the children at home. One
fifth (17.7 percent) and over one tenth (13.3 percent) of the respondents are tallying the course taught with syllabus and checking the notebooks of the children respectively.

- Nearly 50% of the respondents participated in various motivational and awareness programme at SMC level for bringing the out-of-school children within the purview of education, which were executed as per the SSA guidelines like rally at habitation/village level, special campaign at highly out-of-school-prone area and mass mobilization campaign through street plays in collaboration with NGOs specially in tea-gardens, SC, ST and minority dominated area.

- Nearly 40% of the SMC members specially the mother groups were attending meetings at school level for bringing the girl child to school and also in bridging the gender gap and uplifting the girls’ education in the society. A few schools also involved Meena Club members (a women body constitutes of 10 to 20 members) for checking the girls’ dropout children and promoting the girls’ education, which is a new concept of SSA to motivate and increase girls’ education in special focused area.

- For bridging the social gap, 33% are participating and conducting SC/ST and minority intervention programmes of SSA which are particularly designed for the SC/ST and minority. As Cachar district is dominated by minority and tea tribe communities and having a little population of SCs and STs, so it is targeted like every year with some special interventions under SSA annual work plan and budget. Some activities are also designed like Utsav Vidyarambha, co-scholastic camp for children of Meena Clubs, mass mobilization campaign through street plays in collaboration with NGOs, miking and learning exposure visit from special focused area SC, ST, minority and tea garden area and also conducting training to the SMC members for bridging the social gap.
More than 65% of the respondents utilized the annual school grants as per government guidelines by conducting the SMC meeting and adopt the resolutions before utilizing the grants. But still nearly 35% of the respondents violating the Government guidelines regarding utilization of annual school grants and do as desired by the SMC body.

Only 33% of the respondents are aware about their duties and responsibilities as a member of SMC to monitor the school grants and grants provided by SSA and the rest are not. It is also found that the responsibility is confined to some extent in the hand of the President and the Member Secretary of the SMC as they have only the signatory power for utilization of any Government grants, so rest of members are not been informed.

Mostly (40%) of the respondents were helping the teachers during the co-curricular activities conducted at school level like reading ability development, scouts and guide, observation of important dates (like National Education Day on 11th November, Sishu Diwash on 14th November, Meena Day on 24th September World Disabled Day on 3rd December), School Health Camp, Meena Campaign in special focused area schools, exposure visit of children to important places, self defense training to the upper primary girls and school level organization of games & sports & cultural programme on Rangmela, Kishori Mela, Shishu Samaroh and through Saturday Clubs programme etc.

About the usefulness of education in community members’ livelihood, mostly 50% of the respondents commented that education is useful in day to day activities of life which not only brings changes in one’s livelihood but also affects the social status of the SMC members in the society. The SMC members also pointed out that by education they can do their best for the development of education.

Over 40% of the respondents found that the major obstacles in Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) is less educated SMC
members as most of them are under matriculate and matriculate level of education. So, proper suggestions and solutions are difficult to execute at school level. A few respondents opined that there should be an educational bar to become a member of SMC at least matriculate or above so that a member can understand better the educational programmes and activities of the Government.

- Nearly 40% respondents found that lack of trainings to all the members of the SMC is a problem as SSA conducted trainings only to the few members of the SMC particularly to the President, the Member Secretary and one parent or non-parent member once in a year which it is not at all sufficient to train up the SMC members in all aspects and also hampers in Universalization of Elementary Education.

V. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Due to less educational qualification among the SMC members it is difficult to execute the programme at school level. This study emphasize that at least matriculates or higher qualification bar is required to become a member of SMC for proper implementation of the Government programme. Presently, even illiterate parents are members of SMC, who cannot understand educational matters.

- People’s participation in any social or developmental initiatives could be sustainable if there is system of bottom up planning and execution in true sense and spirit. In the present situation, peoples committees are lacking. When PCs are expected to perform a range of activities and decision making they are not having most needed 3Fs (Fund, Functions and Functionaries). This is always a head teacher who is only the functionary for a peoples committee. He facilitates formation of peoples committee, identifies the committee members, calls meetings, keeps records of the decisions and executes the decisions. It is expected, at the same time that the peoples committee will monitor him too. The chance of having high degree of conflict of interest of a head teacher towards the peoples’
committee is perceptible. So, it is suggested that education department must entrust other two members of the SMC particularly the President and one Parent-Member accountable and responsible.

✓ The head teachers seem to be over burdened for the efficacy of the peoples committees. All the constructional works, others grant utilization, procurement of uniform and mid-day-meal are looked after by the head teacher alone. So, it suggested that few of the responsibilities can be decentralized like responsibilities of mid-day meal can be given to the Mothers’ Group and the responsibility of the civil works can be given to the Local Authorities members of Goan Panchayats.

✓ The SSA must insist on holding of an annual public meeting of SMC members with students, their guardians and local people. Details of financial grants received by school authorities, its utilization and measures taken by them to uplift the school environment must be made open before public. So, it suggested that Social Audit can be conducted every year by the SMC, where audit is to be done by community people other than the SMC members. The SMC can select the retired teachers or Govt officials, NGO members and local people to act as auditor for Social Audit of the SMC.

✓ One of the strategies to contribute to successful community participation in education is to conduct mass mobilization campaign through (street play and drama, miking and community talk through Radio and Doordarshan and local channels), in order to promote community involvement in children’s education. Such campaigns designed to target parents and community members can help them increase their understanding on the benefits of their collaboration with teachers and schools. Though SSA is doing this type of activity with the help of NGOs. However, it would be helpful if community members can directly involved in such campaigns with the local need based theme the drama or street play should be communicate through local language which will be more understandable.
Training to the SMC members is very important which are usually provided by the SSA. The three members per SMC members were trained once in a year during the months of January to March. So, training once in a year only to three members of the SMC is not sufficient, the members may be given training quarterly or half yearly that will be more fruitful and phase wise to all members not only during the month of January to March when people are busy with cultivation.

The importance of the role of NGOs in community empowerment is universally recognised. So, it is suggested that SSA in collaboration with NGOs can initiate special training programmes like vocational training on tailoring, handicraft, waste material products for the members of the SMC, especially to the women members which will contribute to enhancement of family earnings. According the women members will be empowered. As such the local people too must encourage its residents, who send their wards to SSA supported schools, to undergo such income generating training programmes.

The SDP will prepare with active community participation in implementation of planned activities. It is based on the school’s analysis of current levels of performance, its assessment of how current trends and future factors may impact on the school and set out priorities and targets for improvement for the period ahead. It should be a living document which every member of SMC and staff can and does use, routinely, as a reference point in how they develop, improve and carry out their works. So, it is suggested that the active participation in SMC meetings with all members for preparation and monitoring of School Development Plan is required which will reflect a good sense of community participation in school development activities. So, Government of Assam as well as SSA, Cachar should look into this matter more seriously and closely monitor for proper designing of SDP at school level.
VI. CONCLUSION

In sum, the attempts of formation of peoples’ committees at different levels involving general citizens of the rural and urban Assam for Universalization of Elementary Education are quite significant. Now, those people who had no active role for generations to promote education have got crucial responsibility and authority to strengthen the sector. Certainly it is an unprecedented paradigm shift in the education system and governance of it in the State. In order to exercise any kind of community participation there is need to understand about all stakeholders and all people who are going to be benefited. Reasons and benefits of community participation have to be clearly addressed and understood by the people. In addition, a continuing dialogue between schools and community is essential because it usually takes a long period of time to yield any benefit. Also, all the stakeholders need to share the understanding that responsibility to educate children cannot be taken by single group of people. The high Government officials and the planning boards of different Government and non-Government projects believe that the participation of local communities in public services is instrumental in achieving better development outcomes at the local level. This has sparked the creation of new (or revival of existing) local agencies around the developing world. Yet, more often than not, these new institutions are constrained – they have no real authority to hire and fire public providers, no real resources to use at their discretion, and no real responsibility for service delivery outcomes. Nevertheless, there is a sense amongst policy-makers and practitioners that what these institutions might do is to provide a “voice” to the people, a forum for “collective action”, and facilitate “bottom-up” or “demand driven” initiatives that make a difference. The hope is that local agencies will strengthen people’s participation in improving the functioning of basic services, and thereby lead to better delivery and outcomes. Community participation is a crucial component in SSA programme that aims to reach out to one and all. Only if the parents are motivated and have a sense of ownership towards the schools would they send their children to school. A motivated community would be genuinely involved in the functioning of the school and would also contribute through various means such as funds, materials and labour.
Such an aware and highly motivated community would help in the monitoring of the school functioning and ensure enrolment and regular attendance of their children. It is also recognised that community participation needs to be institutionalized through people’s elected bodies in order to have a genuine impact. Reforms are needed to ensure the growth and development of schools. The schools need to develop a child-friendly environment in order to attract and retain children. The teachers need to be empowered and supported. Culturally appropriate and visual teaching learning material has to be developed. The school infrastructure needs to be developed and strengthened. Further improvements can be brought about through regular monitoring, and evaluation.

The success of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan will depend on the quality of the community based planning process. While SSA is formulated on the premise that the community can plan, it also accepts the tremendous requirement for developing capacities in communities to do so. The heterogeneity of local communities in many regions often poses problems of unanimity on proposed planning criteria. It is important to recognize a habitation, rather than a village as a unit of planning as most habitations have a higher degree of community solidarity. Similarly, in urban areas, a cluster of households in the same slum settlement has to be a unit of planning. Parents and community members need to be sensitized on how to support children with disabilities. Under inclusive education resource teachers at cluster level may assist in mobilizing community volunteers for spreading awareness. These volunteers can be perceived as ‘inclusion enablers’ and would work as local agents for change. In SSA Cachar, the peoples committees are more or less involved now a day in the education sector in comparison of the initial periods of SSA, which has emerged during the study. The people’s committee members’ attendance including women has increased in the community trainings conducted by SSA. The women involved themselves in the different educational activities like the enrolment drive rally and school level programmes to reduce the dropout rates etc. Percentage is still very negligence as there was less women members in the educational committee bodies under SSA. But as per the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, Under Section 21(1) the SMC will be a permanent
body of which the President and Members will have a 3 years term. A minimum 50% of the SMC members shall be women. Further, both President and Vice President of the SMC shall be selected or elected from the parents or guardian members and one of them must be a women. So it is hopeful that the women participation will be more and the people will directly involve themselves more in educational development of their local area as the RTE Act is already implemented now in Assam.

Lastly, it can be said that without community participation and community contribution the cent percent development in any sector can not be expected. From this study it is understood that more or less the community participation in Cachar has increased since the inception of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Mission, which can also justify that as the name of component which deals with community related work since 2003 changed from Community Mobilization to Community Participation component. As the mobilization of the community is already complete and now the community participation is the need of the hour that is very much necessary at school level for development by preparation of School Development Plan by the concerned School Managing Committee through which the SMC can execute their roles and responsibilities to fulfil their dreams of children’s quality education through Universalization of Elementary Education.

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