

7. Wastelands Development

The Wastelands Development Division of Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development is implementing a wide range scheme for checking and degradation, increasing bio-mass availability, specially fuel wood and fodder and putting such wastelands into sustainable use.

8. Project Golden Thread

The Project Golden Thread is conceived as a rural development project through sericulture activity. This special project aims to increase livelihood of the poor through improvement of traditional sericulture activity in the North-Eastern India. The project involves development of non-mulberry silk, namely Eri (Endi) and Muga. These silks are found only in the North-East India. The project is implemented by Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Assam in collaboration with Central Silk Board and Department of Handloom Sericulture, Assam. The project is under the special SGSY of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

The Project Golden Thread is a holistic project covering all aspects from plantation to spinning with modern machines and market linkage. It is now going on in the eight districts of Assam, namely Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Karbianglong, Goalpara, Dhubri, Golaghat, Kamrup and Kokrajhar.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF VILLAGES

This State paper is based on the socio-economic village study assignments of IAS Officer Trainees. Reference from some books, Internet material and secondary data sources are used in between to make the State paper significant and relevant. The study attempts to bring out the trends and current status in the socio-economic scenario in the rural Assam, covering the last 8 years of study (1994-2002) solely depending on the micro-level socio-economic surveys conducted by the officer trainees.

The broad areas covered are:

- Rural Infrastructure,

- Health and Family welfare,
- Education,
- Agrarian Relations,
- Social Structure,
- Economic activities,
- Anti-poverty and other Rural Development Programmes, and
- Panchayati Raj System.

List of IAS officer trainees (1994-2002) whose assignments were available and used for socio-economic State paper of Assam is given in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Assignments of I.A.S. Trainees

Sl. No.	Name of the Officer Trainees	Village	District	Year
1.	Avinash Joshi	Niz Lahoal	Dibrugarh	1994
2.	Rajeev Chandra Joshi	Mohbandha Gaon	Jorhat	1994
3.	Sanjay Lohiya	Nargaon	Kamrup	1994
4.	L.S. Changsan	Naharani Grant	Sonitpur	1996
5.	Anurag Goel	Senchowa	Nagaon	1996
6.	Caralyn Khongwar	Kalitakuchi	Kamrup	1996
7.	Krishna Kumar Dwivedi	Pachim Matia	Goalpara	1996
8.	J. Syamala Rao	Hatkhula Gaon	Dibrugarh	1997
9.	Shakil Ahammed	Binoigutia	Dibrugarh	1997
10.	Mukesh Chandra Sahu	Hatkhula Gaon	Dibrugarh	1998
11.	P. Sampath Kumar	Reng Beng	Nagaon	1999
12.	Ashutosh Agnihotri	Deodhar	Nagaon	1999
13.	Gyanendra Dev Tripathi	Saptagram	Cachar	2000
14.	Frederick Roy	Bengenamatti	Nagaon	2000
15.	Milind S. Torawane	Kuwamara Handique	Sivasagar	2000
16.	Vijayalakshmi Bidari	Ghoramari	Sonitpur	2001
17.	Mebanshailang R. Synrem	Dighaligaon	Sonitpur	2002
18.	M. Angamuthu	Namani Borpomua	Jhorhat	2002

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE, HEALTH, EDUCATION

Rural Infrastructure

The infrastructure development in the State has been slow. It has been lagging behind almost every State of the country except that of Orissa, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu &

Kashmir and other North-Eastern States. Power generation and distribution is not adequate to support the growth of industry in the State. The conditions of roads and bridges are not at all conducive for promoting any worthwhile economic activity like tourism. These deficiencies in infrastructure have to be attended on priority if economic activities and services are to be supported and encouraged. The power and energy and the following linkages should be provided on the existing infrastructure in the State.

1. Improve rural roads and bridges vital for the marketing of agriculture products and transport of agriculture inputs.
2. Develop urban roads/State highways and National highways for the development of tourism, trade and commerce.
3. Increase power generation to sustain industrial and agricultural growth.
4. Maintenance and repairs of embankments to protect agricultural lands from the damaging effects of flood.
5. Develop facilities and amenities relating to railways, airlines, telephones and post and telegraph services in specified areas for the benefit of people.
6. Develop Inland Water Transport as an alternative means of transport of heavy cargo and as tourist attraction.

Roads in the rural areas, which cater to the needs of transportation of agriculture inputs, and the agriculture produce need to be developed to facilitate growth of agriculture. To improve communication between the district and sub-divisional headquarters and to the tourist destinations, other State roads need to be developed.

Mohbandha Gaon (Rajeev Chandra Joshi—1994) village is situated nearly 1 km inside of N.H. 37. It is more than 20 km away from the district headquarters and the Circle office. The Block office is at a distance of 18 km from this village. The village is connected to the national highway by a PWD road (Pamua Bhakat Road). This road divides the village into two parts. The national highway No. 37 passes near the village (1.5 km) and it is the most preferred route to the village. On this highway there are continuously running private or ASTC buses. A bus from Golaghat to Jorhat town passes twice

through the village (once either way). The Mohbandha railway station is at a distance of 6-7 km from the village. Villagers also use it for movement outside. However, the buses are preferred. There is one post office (Satria) in the village that caters to the postal need of the people. The village was settled way back. In fact the last survey and settlement was done in the 1958-59. The village boasts of a small library constructed in 1945.

Niz Lahoal (Avinash Joshi—1994) village is situated in the Lahoal development Block of Dibrugarh district. This village is situated on the east direction of the district headquarters, 10 km away from the town. This is an old village and the total geographical area is 273.63 hectares out of which 198.70 hectares is cultivable land, which is totally unirrigated. Cultivable wasteland including grazing land *gauchers* and groves is 36.83 hectares and 37.10 hectares of area is not available for cultivation. Total number of holdings *Dags* is 653.

Nargaon (Sanjay Lohiya—1994) village is situated at a distance of 30 km from Guwahati. It is a small village of mixed tribal (Rabha) and non-tribal population. There are no scheduled castes or Muslims in the village. Recently a *pucca* road has been built with funds from North-Eastern Council connecting the village to National highway No. 37. But the road network within the village is *kutchha*. The village is 3 km from Rani Block office. It is about 20 km from circle office at Mirza. But the village has not benefited much from government development schemes. It is small village with hardly any political clout in the Gram Panchayat.

Naharani Grant (L.S. Changsan—1996) Village is situated 2 km north of Rangapara town, on the Balipara Tarajuli Road. It is 35 km away from Tezpur, the district headquarters and 20 km away from Ghoramari, the Block headquarters. It borders the foothills of Arunachal Pradesh. The village is a tea village. Naharani Grant land belonged to the Naharani Tea Estate. This portion was netted under the Assam Ceiling Surplus Act, 1951 and the ceiling surplus land was allotted to 46 beneficiaries. Each beneficiary was allotted 6.5 bighas, i.e. 2.15 acres of land. The nearest market is Rangapara, 2 km away. Rangapara town is an old settlement with a mixed population comprising Nepalis, Bengalis, Nishis and a minority of the indigenous Assamese population. It is well connected by a metre gauge railway line, which runs from Rangia in Kamrup district of Assam, to

Murgaonselek in Dhemaji district. A PWD road (kutchra) runs through the village. The village has two lower primary schools, the upper Kacharigaon L.P. School, and the Naharani L.P. School. There is one playground, actually a village grazing reserve (VGR). The gaon panchayat office is located near the VGR. There is a health sub-centre too in the village.

Senchowa (Anurag Goel—1996) village is quite near the town of Nagaon. The Block office is at a distance of 3 km from the village. The post office, the bank and the bus stop are within 2 km of this village while the railway station and the district headquarters is within 7 km of this village. The infrastructural facilities like bank, post office and the telephone are easily accessible. Most of the basic amenities like electricity, all-weather approach road, bus stop, primary and middle schools, PDS shop, veterinary dispensary, safe drinking water, etc. are there in the village.

Kalitakuchi (Caralyn Khongwar—1996) village lies about 35 km to the west of Guwahati, and lies on the banks of the river Brahmaputra. One of the main arterial roads connecting the Nalbari, Barpeta districts of Lower Assam with the Capital (which is also a State Highway) runs through the village. The main centre of the village is the crossroads at which the State highway crosses another road leading to other villages. The Block headquarters, which is Hajo, is just 3 km away. At the crossroads, there are many shops established by the village people, most of them catering to the bus passengers. Since the Block headquarters is only 3 km away, all the infrastructural facilities, i.e. PHC, Post Office, Bank, Grain Storage facility, Chemists, etc. The nearest Police Station is also located at the Block headquarters. The village is totally electrified with only a few houses not having electricity connection.

The village **Pachim Matia** (Krishna Kumar Dwivedi—1996) situated on the bank or river Dudhnoi in Matia development Block, about 23 km away from district headquarters, populated by 3,218 people of Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities which speak Assamese, Garo and Hazong languages and settled in 5 hamlets, namely Shantipur, Islampur, Garopara, Damani and Matia. Basic mode of transport is bus since nearest railway station is 140 km away from the village. Post office, PHC Bank and small market are next to the village.

Hatkhula Gaon (J. Syamala Rao—1997/Mukesh Chandra Sahu—1998) village consists of four numbers of hamlets, namely

Duttachuk, Chaporichuk, Koibortochuk and Moderkhatsatra. The Duttachuk is the biggest of all hamlets and accommodates almost 50 per cent of the whole population. The village is almost 15 km away from the district headquarters in Dibrugarh. It is almost 7 km away from the Block headquarters of Lahowal. From one side of the village passes a reasonably good road that connects it to the Block and district headquarters. Although there is no bus stop as such, but the buses stops on the road if asked to by the passengers. The rail line connecting Guwahati and Tinsukia passes very close to the village and there is a railway station also very near to the village. The name of the station is Lahowal town and is almost 5 km from the village. However, villagers have hardly ever used this railway station for catching any train. Only small passenger trains stop here and people here prefer bus as a mode of transport for nearby areas.

Reng Beng (P. Sampath Kumar—1999) is a village located in the Revenue Circle of Kampur and the Block of Kathiatoli of Nagaon district of Assam. It is about 23 km southwards from the district headquarters, Nagaon. The national highway No. 36 is passing near the village. The Block headquarters is at a distance of 1.5 km from the village. The services of bank, market, PHC, police station, post office and bus stop are available at Kathiatoli, which is situated at about 2.5 km from the village. There are no streetlights in the village. Though there are electric poles passing through the village, no one in the village is accessing the electricity facility. The village is connected with the National highway with an earthen road, which is constructed under JRY programme.

Deodhar (Ashutosh Agnihotri—1999) is just 6 km from the Nagaon town, the district headquarters. The Block headquarters is just one km away from the village. Located along the metalled road, the means of communication in this village are fairly good, and the village is well connected with the town. It is located along the metalled road. The nearest bus stop is hardly one km far from the village and the nearest railway station, Haiborgaon is 6 km far. Auto rickshaws ply between the village and the town, and people feel that they enjoy a reasonably good existence because of these advantages and facilities. Railway line is available with Nagaon, Phulaguri and Bebejia as the railway station.

Saptagram (Gyanendra Dev Tripathi—2000) village is connected by all-weather approach road and is electrified. There is