

Practicability of Right to Education in Respect to IDP with Special Reference to Assam

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Abstract: Education is one of the main indicators of social and scientific development of a country. It helps in the acceptance of modernity, scientific development and so on. Keeping in view such increasing importance of education, the whole world is giving utmost priority to fundamental education of every child. In such a scenario, India is also not lagging behind and has adopted several remarkable steps in bringing this into action. But the ground reality is that a section of the population is unable to access education till the date. On the one hand government policies are trying to provide at least minimum education facilities to all the children. But in reality, it is a distance dream only for many sections of people. In the light of such reality, the present paper is mainly trying to highlight the conditions of the internally displaced persons, simply known as IDPs in getting educational opportunities in Assam.

Keywords: Education, IDP, Problems, Assam.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential part of life. Human life cannot gain its momentum without proper education. It is one of the basic elements which provide dignity to a human being in order to develop himself as well as to contribute to the development of the country. In other words, education stands as a milestone in the way of social and scientific development of a country.

Indian Reference in Ensuring Right To Education:

The framers of the constitution of India, realizing the importance of education, had imposed a duty on the State under Article-45 as one of the Directive Principles of State Policy to provide free and compulsory education to all children until they complete the age of 14 years within 10 years from the commencement of the constitution. But the elected government of the country did not take any concrete steps for more than last 60 years. It is only in the year 2002 that the Parliament by Constitutional Amendment Act (86th Amendment) has added a new Article-21A after Article 21 and has made education for all children of the age of 6-14 years a fundamental right. The Article makes it obligatory for the government to enact a central legislation to give effect to the constitutional amendment and ultimately in the year 2009, "THE RIGHT OF CHILDREN TO FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION ACT" has been passed. It provides among other things the responsibility of the Central and State government, teachers, parents and community members in ensuring free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 6-14 years to achieve a really good education in the country and to maintain sustainability with international community.

Education is one of the main indicators of social development. It helps in acceptance of modernity, scientific development and so on. But, till the date a section of the people are unable to access education. On the one hand, government policies are trying to provide at least minimum education facilities to all the children. But in reality, it is only a distance dream for many sections of people. In the light of such reality, the present paper is mainly trying to highlight the conditions of the internally displaced persons, simply known as IDP's in getting proper educational facilities in Assam.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

There is not a single objective, but a number of objectives behind the study, such as –

- To analyze the right to education from the practical perspective.
- To draw the attention of the people towards the educational facts related with the IDP children in Assam.
- To point out the various problems faced by the IDP children in getting equal educational opportunity.
- To make understand about the role of the government as well as media in this regard.

III. THE ISSUE AND ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION

In the Indian democracy, the IDPs have been recognized as the citizens of the country. But in the real sense their conditions are same as those of refugees. Even in some cases, the plight of the IDPs is worse than the refugees. In order to know about the educational condition of the IDPs in Assam, at first it is very much necessary to analyze their social conditions in Assam.

A number of IDP's are living in the state sponsored relief camps for decades together without proper relief, care and protection. Their life in the camps has been very difficult. Medical and sanitation facilities are almost non-existent in the camps. As a result, children in large number are died of simple diseases, malnutrition and starvation. They use the water from ponds and streams as a result of which water born disease spread out very easily. Some parents sell their children due to poverty and vulnerability. Similarly, young girls from these families have been forced to accept prostitution out of starvation which opens up huge possibilities for the spread of HIV/AIDS. The food provided for them from the State Government is inadequate and the monthly ration hardly meets for a week. Accordingly the IDP populations in the relief camps are living in dehumanized conditions over the years leading to serious human rights violation.

While the IDPs are suffering from the basic human requirements in the camps, then how can we expect that they have the mentality of getting education? Even though they have the will power, how can we guarant that they can get equal educational opportunity from the government?

Not surprisingly, education becomes a matter of serious concern in the post displacement era. Children of these camps are deprived of formal education. They cannot pursue or complete their studies due to the indifference shown by the government. Many others loss precious years of their studies before the government make alternative educational arrangements. Even at a later stage, the displaced students have been denied admission to mainstream educational institutions. They have to continue their studies in the camp schools. These educational arrangements have not only been discriminatory, but also far from satisfactory in terms of facilities and infrastructure. Quality education is a matter of day dream only. The displaced students are also suffering from delays in the conducting of examinations and the declaration of results. All these not only affect the academic performance of the displaced students, but also remind them of their marginalization. Along with all these, the denial of employment avenues to the displaced people has been posing a great question mark towards the very survival of the IDPs.

The problems faced by the IDPs of Assam in getting proper education can be summarized through the following points –

- Educational service in the IDP camps is very much worse. Proper infrastructure facility is a matter of day dream only. Educational facilities in the IDP camps are marked by various limitations such as overcrowded, under resourced, limited to primary education etc.
- The IDPs, in many times may loss their identity as well as other educational documents during the time of displacement, which may hamper them in the process of further education.
- The IDPs may not have the necessary knowledge about the medium of instruction of that area to which they have been displaced. It very much results in the lower level of school attendance.
- In the present context, the government has made education free and compulsory at least in the primary level. But the IDP students have not been able to get education freely till the date. It is a matter of serious concern whether these families will eat or send their children to schools.

- The IDP children have to provide a helping hand to their parents in generalizing income for earning their livelihood. In many cases, the girl children have to remain as maid-servant. It very much contributes towards drop out of education among them.
- While educational facilities in the IDP camps are very much poor, the nearest school may be located at considerable distance. Moreover, communication facilities may not be developed. In such a situation, the IDP children, particularly the girls may suffer from safety crisis.
- In many cases, it is seen that residential certificate becomes necessary for taking admission in the educational institutions. But the IDPs do not have residential certificate of that area to which they have been displaced. It can prevent them in further education.
- Although the parents admit their children in the educational institutions amongst various hindrances, but they cannot forget their past experiences during the displacement era. It creates a kind of mental disturbance in the IDP students.
- Last, but not the least, the IDP students have to face lots of discrimination in comparison with other students in various aspects of education. It creates depression and isolation among the IDP students.

Role of the Media:

The role of the media in addressing the IDP issue in Assam is very much critical. Our media normally do not miss to report on displacement caused by conflictual factor because our media is very much attached with the political news. On the other hand, if not all, a significant number of media personnel accept the events of human displacement caused by environmental degradation and development projects as “natural events”. Even though the main issue is covered, but the media hardly present the picture of the life of the displacees in the camps in the post displacement era. Moreover, although the media have, by and large, shown their sensitivity towards the issue of human rights, but preferred to almost completely ignore the issue of gender. The media have hardly made any significant attempt to address the overall condition of women in the relief camps. However, we cannot ignore the constraints the local media have to confront with in this regard.

Government Response:

The government in this regard is not so much appreciable. The Indian government has no national policy, legislation or other mechanisms to respond to the IDP situation. The responsibility for protecting and assisting the IDPs has frequently been delegated to state governments and district authorities. The lack of a national policy has allowed the representatives of certain states to claim that they are powerless to make decisions to protect and assist the IDPs. While there is certainly a need for a national policy, its absence does not absolve the state government from their responsibilities towards IDPs.

Here it can be mentioned that Principle 23 of the United Nations Guiding Principles speaks about right to education of the IDP children and states that special efforts should be made to ensure full and equal participation of women and girls in educational programmes. But it is very unfortunate that this principle is not implemented in India in general and in Assam in particular. The question arises why Assam can't afford to adopt the UN Guiding Principle to deal with the educational issue of IDP? Is it out of context to demand a separate law to protect the IDPs from the inhuman atrocities and to uphold their human dignity?

Although the IDPs have been remained as backward, surprisingly the Assam government has made no reservation provision for them. Even the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has not been extended to these camps.

Here I would like to draw the attention towards the Bodo issue in Assam. Even after the formation of their own government, still the number of IDPs is quite large. The leadership of the Bodoland movement is now leading the Bodoland Autonomous Council. It seems that the Assam government has given utmost priority to the rehabilitation of the ex-insurgents. But, resettlement and rehabilitation of the IDPs is still a low priority issue in political agenda of the state government as well as the Bodoland Autonomous Council.

IV. SUGGESTION

To ensure that the IDPs have access to education in a formal manner like the other children, the following steps should be adopted by the government, the civil society organizations as well as the common people –

- A national policy should be introduced and its proper implementation has to be made in all the states. States should also adopt certain innovative measures.
- Temporary documentation should be provided to those IDPs who have lost their documentation so that they can continue their education.
- Residential requirements should be abolished so that the IDP children can receive education in that area to which they have been displaced without any hindrances.
- It should be ensured that the IDPs can get the opportunity to access education in a language that they understand.
- Special teachers should be appointed to teach in the IDP camps. Especially female teachers should be appointed as they can handle children in a better way.
- Education for the IDP children should be made completely free.
- Feeding programmes should be launched for the IDP students so that they can be encouraged to come to school.
- Special measures should be adopted to ensure security for the IDP girls.
- Vocational classes should be arranged for the IDP children so that along with formal education, they can also help their parents in generating income to ensure their families' economic survival.
- Special scholarship should be provided to the IDP children.
- Last, but not the least, the local people should co-operate with the IDPs and treat them as their brother and sister so that the IDP children can overcome from their difficult experiences and can concentrate on their education.

V. CONCLUSION

Education for the IDP children has emerged as a burning problem in the present day Assam. Therefore implementation of the UN Guiding Principle is the need of the hour to improve the conditions of the IDPs. Everywhere government is announcing that it is trying to ensure education for all through various policies. No doubt, we appreciate the government policies. But the problem is why a section of the people is unable to get education till the date? How can we expect quality education or human resource from these IDP populations? How can we say that India is going through the true spirit of democracy? The answer is without the development of this section of population, we can't expect a highly developed country. Hence, the authorities must address the issue with urgency – not as a mere problem in relief and compensation, but as a lasting solution for the development of the region in the coming decades.

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