



*Scheme of Project Assist to Children Affected by  
Communal, Caste, Ethnic & Terrorist  
Violence / Riots : **An Evaluation***



**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF  
PUBLIC COOPERATION & CHILD DEVELOPMENT**  
Regional Centre, Guwahati



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## CONTENTS

List of Tables	...	...	i
List of Figures	...	...	iii
Executive Summary	...	...	1

### Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1	National Foundation for Communal Harmony	...	...	22
1.2	Project Assist	...	...	22
1.3	Project Assist in Assam	...	...	23
1.4	Study on Project Assist	...	...	24
1.5	The Present Study	...	...	25
	1.5.1 Objectives	...	...	25
	1.5.2 Methodology	...	...	26
	1.5.2.1 Coverage and Selection of respondents	...	...	27
	1.5.2.2 Selection of Beneficiary and Non Beneficiary Children and Guardians	...	...	27
	1.5.2.3 Tools of Data Collection	...	...	29

### Chapter 2 BACKGROUNDS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

2.1	A Profile of Parents/Guardians and Families	...	...	30
	2.1.1 Religious Affiliations and Languages Spoken	...	...	32
	2.1.2 Occupation	...	...	33
	2.1.3 Income of the families	...	...	34
	2.1.4 The Type and Size of the Families	...	...	36
	2.1.5 Age Groups of Parents/Guardians	...	...	37
	2.1.6 Sex Composition of Parents/Guardians	...	...	38
	2.1.7 Educational Qualifications of Parents/Guardians	...	...	39
	2.1.8 Type of Houses and Ownership of Houses of the Families	...	...	41
2.2	A Profile of Affected Children	...	...	43
	2.2.1 Beneficiary Children	...	...	43
	2.2.2 Non-Beneficiary Children	...	...	46

### Chapter 3 VIEWS OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND CHILDREN

3.1	Awareness about the Scheme	...	...	49
3.2	Usefulness of the Scheme of Assistance	...	...	53
	3.2.1 Adequacy of the Assistance	...	...	56
3.3	Other Compensations/ Financial Support	...	...	64

### Chapter 4 MECHANISMS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT ASSIST IN ASSAM

4.1	Aspects of Mechanisms of Implementation	...	...	66
	4.1.1 Problems in Application Process	...	...	67
	4.1.2 Views for Effective Implementation	...	...	71

4.2	The District Committee and its Views	...	...	74
-----	--------------------------------------	-----	-----	----

## **Chapter 5 PROJECT ASSIST: SOME OTHER IMPORTANT FACETS**

5.1	Project AASHWAS of Assam Police	...	...	77
	5.1.1 AASHWAS and Project Assist	...	...	79
	5.1.2 Follow-up of Beneficiaries of Project Assist	...	...	79
	5.1.2.1 Some Good Practices of AASHWAS	...	...	81
5.2	Academic Performance and Aspirations	...	...	85
5.3	Views on Communal/Ethnic and Armed Conflicts in Assam	...	...	88
5.4	Some Cases of Beneficiary and Non-Beneficiary Children	...	...	90

## **Chapter 6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

6.1	Profile of Parents/Guardians and Families	...	...	98
6.2	Profile of Affected Children	...	...	99
6.3	Awareness about the Scheme	...	...	100
6.4	Usefulness of the Scheme	...	...	101
6.5	Aspects of Mechanisms of Implementation of Project Assist	...	...	102
6.6	Views for Effective Implementation	...	...	104
6.7	Project Assist and AASHWAS	...	...	105
6.8	Follow up of Beneficiaries of Project Assist	...	...	105
6.9	Academic Performance and Aspirations	...	...	107
6.10	Views on Communal/Ethnic and Armed Conflicts in Assam	...	...	108
6.11	Suggestions and Recommendations	...	...	108

<b>Bibliography</b>	...	...	114
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## List of Tables

		Page No.
Table 2.1	Tribe/Caste wise Distribution of Respondent Guardians	31
Table 2.2	Religious Affiliations of the Guardians	32
Table 2.3	Occupation of the Parents/Guardians	33
Table 2.4	Average Monthly Income of the Family	35
Table 2.5	Type of the Families of Children	36
Table 2.6	Size of Families of Children	37
Table 2.7	Distribution of Parents/Guardians according to Age Groups	37
Table 2.8	Sex Composition of Parents/Guardians	38
Table 2.9	Educational Qualifications of Parents/Guardians	40
Table 2.10	House Types of the Families	41
Table 2.11	Nature of Ownership of House of the Families	42
Table 2.12	Age wise distribution of the Beneficiary Children	44
Table 2.13	Educational Status of the Beneficiary Children	45
Table: 2.14	Age wise distribution of the Non- Beneficiary Children	46
Table: 2.15	Educational Status of the Non-Beneficiary Children	47
Table 3.1	Views of Parents/ Guardians about Source of Financial Assistance	50
Table 3.2	Source of Information about the Scheme of Assistance (Multiple Choice)	52
Table 3.3	Views of Beneficiary Children on Usefulness of the Financial Assistance	53

Table 3.4	Supports received due to Financial Assistance- Views of Beneficiary Children (Multiple Choice)	54
Table 3.5	Supports received due to Financial Assistance- Views of Non- Beneficiary Children (Multiple Choice)	55
Table 3.6	Adequacy of the amount of Financial Assistance - Views of Parents/Guardians	56
Table 3.7	Adequacy of the amount of Financial Assistance - Views of Beneficiary and Non-Beneficiary Children	57
Table 3.8	Coverage of Expenses of Education with the Assistance	58
Table 3.9	Views of Parents/ Guardians on Optimum Amount of Assistance	59
Table 3.10	Views of beneficiary children on Optimum Amount of Assistance	60
Table 3.11	Views of Non- Beneficiary children on Optimum Amount of Assistance	61
Table 3.12	Reason for Enhancement of the assistance -Views of Parents/ Guardians (Multiple Choice)	62
Table 3.13	Utilization of Financial Compensation (Multiple Choice)	64
Table 4.1	Difficulties faced by Parents/ Guardians while assistance applying for (Multiple Choice)	68
Table 4.2	Difficulties faced by Parents/ Guardians while Obtaining Necessary Documents (Multiple Choice)	70
Table 4.3	Suggestions of Parents/ Guardians for making the Scheme Effective (Multiple Choice)	72
Table 5.1	Performance of the Beneficiary Children in their Studies	86
Table 5.2	Aspirations of the Beneficiary children	88

## List of Figures

	Page No.	
Fig. 2.1	Tribe/Caste wise Distribution of Respondent Guardians	31
Fig. 2.2	Religious affiliations of the guardians	32
Fig.2.3	Occupation of the parents/guardians	34
Fig 2.4	Average monthly income of the family	35
Fig 2.5	Type of the families of Children	36
Fig 2.6	Distribution of Parents/Guardians according to Age Groups	38
Fig 2.7	Sex Composition of Parents/Guardians	39
Fig 2.8	Educational Qualifications of Parents/Guardians	40
Fig 2.9	House Types of the Families	42
Fig 2.10	Age wise distribution of the Beneficiary Children	44
Fig 2.11	Educational Status of the Beneficiary Children	45
Fig: 2.12	Age wise distribution of the Non - Beneficiary Children	47
Fig: 2.13	Educational Status of the Non-Beneficiary Children	48
Fig 3.1	Views of Parents/ Guardians about Source of Financial Assistance	50
Fig 3.2	Source of Information about the Scheme of Assistance	52
Fig 3.3	Views of Beneficiary Children on Usefulness of the Financial Assistance	54
Fig 3.4	Supports received due to Financial Assistance - Views of Beneficiary Children	55
Fig 3.5	Supports received due to Financial Assistance - Views of Non- Beneficiary Children	56
Fig 3.6	Adequacy of the amount of Financial Assistance - Views of Parents/Guardians	57
Fig 3.7	Coverage of Expenses of Education with the Assistance	58
Fig 3.8	Views of Parents/ Guardians on Optimum Amount of Assistance	60

Fig 3.9	Views of beneficiary children on Optimum Amount of Assistance	61
Fig 3.10	Views of Non- Beneficiary children on Optimum Amount of Assistance	62
Fig 3.11	Reason for Enhancement of the assistance - Views of Parents/ Guardians	63
Fig 3.12	Utilization of Financial Compensation	65
Fig 4.1	Difficulties faced by Parents/ Guardians while Assistance applying for	68
Fig 4.2	Difficulties faced by Parents/ Guardians while Obtaining Necessary Documents	70
Fig 4.3	Suggestions of Parents/ Guardians for making the Scheme Effective	73
Fig 5.1	Performance of the Beneficiary Children in their Studies	87

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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

India is one of the few countries of the world where numerous ethnic, religious and cultural groups have been living from time immemorial. 'Unity in Diversity' amongst these diverse communities had been the hall mark of Indian society and its history. Indian society has unparalleled spiritual heritage and has been blessed by great sages from time immemorial. Modern India had the fortune of having Mahatma Gandhi who professed the philosophy of non-violence and tolerance to the world. However, sadly enough, it must be acknowledged that, with the progress of time the age old values and traditions of Indian society have eroded to some extent. One of the serious challenges faced by India today is the operation of divisive forces that have threatened the country's unity and integrity. For a host of social, religious, political, economic and other reasons at present India is seriously affected by occasional and sporadic incidences of communal/ethnic violence and a continuous spate of organized violence unleashed by different militant/extremist/insurgent/terrorist groups. Violence thus unleashed leads to bloodshed and had left behind horrible saga of human sufferings, death, destruction, displacement and destitution. While all sections of society are affected by acts of violence, it is always the women and children who have to bear the most severe brunt.

Fortunately, all out efforts are being taken by both Government as well as civil society organizations to prevent/curb such violence and also ameliorate the sufferings of the victims of violence particularly, women and children. One such initiative is setting up of the National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH) by the Government of India for promoting communal harmony and national integration. One of the prime objects of NFCH is to provide assistance for the physical and psychological rehabilitation of the child victims of communal, caste, ethnic or terrorist violence, with special reference to their care, education and training. With this object in view, NFCH had launched its flagship programme- Project Assist soon in 1992. Project Assist extends financial assistance to the children of those parents who had been killed or permanently incapacitated during communal, caste, ethnic and terrorist violence. The assistance is offered for the care, education and training of those children who are rendered orphan due to such violence. In Assam Project Assist has been in operation since 2002 and benefited more than one-thousand children whose either or both parents had been killed during many episodes of ethnic, extremist/terrorist violence in the state in last one or two decades. In Assam the scheme is being implemented in active association of AASHWAS, an Assam Police Project. After about a decade of implementation of Project Assist in Assam, NFCH felt the need for carrying out an evaluation of Project Assist in the state and requested the Institute in this regard. Accordingly, NIPCCD Regional Centre Guwahati carried out the present Study titled: Scheme of Project Assist to Children affected by Communal, Caste, Ethnic and Terrorist Violence/Riots – An Evaluation.

### Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

- to elicit views of the destitute/orphan children, community and administrators on the Scheme;
- to evaluate the extent to which the Project Assist has provided the physical and psychological rehabilitation of children victims of violence with special reference to their care, education and training and also to understand the impeding factors in rehabilitation of children;
- to examine the modalities of the implementation of the Scheme;
- to suggest corrective measures;

- to identify various socio-economic and cultural factors affecting national integration and communal harmony; and
- to find out the inhibiting factors of national integration and communal harmony

Keeping in view the objectives, the study focused on the following:

- socio-economic background of the families of the beneficiary children;
- profile of the affected children;
- views of children, parents/guardians;
- community and administrators on the scheme;
- extent of support provided by the scheme to meet educational and other essential needs for rehabilitation of children victims of violence;
- efficacy and efficiency of the present mechanism for implementation of this scheme;
- problems and constraints faced by the implementing agencies in administration of the scheme;
- difficulties encountered by the target beneficiaries while availing the benefits of the scheme ; and also
- views and opinions of the guardians of beneficiary children and selected community leaders on prevention of communal and and terrorist violence and fostering of communal harmony.

## **Methodology**

Keeping in view various factors it was decided to carry out the study in Kokrajhar, Kamrup Rural and Kamrup Metro Districts of Assam out of the 25 districts where Project Assist was being implemented. Kokrajhar District was selected taking into consideration the fact that it has the highest number of beneficiaries under Project Assist since the implementation of the scheme in Assam. Kamrup Rural and Metro Districts were selected taking into consideration that in these Districts Project Assist was initially implemented and covers a sizable number of beneficiaries from urban areas (Guwahati City). Some logistics factors were also taken into account for selection of the districts.

Data for the study were collected from mainly the following five categories of respondents –

- Parents/guardians of beneficiary/ non-beneficiary children
- Beneficiary children
- Non-beneficiary children (those children who dropped out for exceeding age limit and those who stopped receiving the assistance for discontinuation of studies/for not fulfilling the conditions)
- District authorities identified under the scheme for implementation of the scheme in the two districts including officials of Project ASHWASH of Assam Police.
- Community leaders comprising Village Headman, PRI Members, Teachers, etc.

Since 2002 a total of 234 children victims of violence have received the assistance under the scheme in Kokrajhar District. Likewise, in undivided Kamrup districts comprising of Kamrup Rural and Kamrup Metro, 69 children have received the assistance till 2010. Out of the total 303 children in the three districts 229 children were actually receiving the assistance at the time of data collection. For the purpose of the present study they were considered as 'beneficiary'. Then there were a number of children who had dropped out of the scheme for

various reasons during the course of time and also a few children who, although eligible, never received the assistance for some reasons or other and they constituted the 'non-beneficiary' category of children for the study. These 303 affected children and their surviving parents/guardians constituted the universe for the study. Initially it was planned to randomly select 50% of these children and their guardians as respondents for the study. However, in order to have an optimum size of respondents from each category more than 50% of the population of the study was actually interviewed. Thus, district wise the following respondents were interviewed:

Sl. No.	Target Respondents	Numbers of respondents			Total
		Kokrajhar	Kamrup Metro	Kamrup Rural	
1	Guardians of beneficiary/ non-beneficiary children	72	18	15	105
2	Beneficiary Children	88	24	12	124
3	Non-Beneficiary Children	48	05	10	63

It may be mentioned here that, often more than one beneficiary/non-beneficiary was interviewed from the same family since in a number of cases a single family had several beneficiaries/non beneficiaries. While selecting the children efforts were made to interview only children of higher age groups to ensure that the respondents were able to logically respond to the queries. Besides, data were also collected from selected community leaders and district officials including officials of ASHWASH from the three districts as detailed below:

<u>Respondents</u>	<u>Numbers</u>
1. Community leaders	23
2. District Officials and functionaries of ASHWASH	06

Secondary data for the study had been collected from the records of Project ASHWAS, and also District authorities.

### **Tools of Data Collection**

Data for the study were mainly collected by interviewing the respondents. For collection of data from the beneficiary and non-beneficiary children and their guardians, Interview schedules were used. These schedules were pre-coded for facilitating computerization of data. Altogether three kinds of interview schedules were developed as detailed below:

- Interview schedule for parent/guardians of beneficiary children
- Interview schedule for beneficiary children
- Interview schedule for Non-beneficiary children

On the other hand, for interviewing the community leaders and officials, simple interview guides with mostly open-ended queries were used.

### **Findings of the Study**

#### **Profile of Parents/Guardians and Families**

Altogether 105 families of beneficiary/non-beneficiary children were covered through the study. In most of the cases the mothers of the children were acting as the guardians (91%) and were, therefore, interviewed. The largest section of the respondent families belonged to general category (41%), followed by scheduled tribes (36%) and Other Backward Classes (21%) and there were only a few families of scheduled castes (2%). Religious affiliation wise majority of these respondent families were Hindus (67%) and there were smaller factions of Muslims (20%) and Christians (13%). A large chunk of the families of the victims were Assamese speaking (48%), followed by Bodo speaking families (31%). The rest included families speaking Bengali, Santali, Bhojpuri, Rabha etc in small numbers. It has been found that cultivation, engagement in low paying jobs, petty businesses, wage labour, etc were the main occupations of the parents/guardians of the children. Again, a large number of the parent/guardians (34%) were housewives only since they were not engaged in any job or self employment activities. This is because in most cases the fathers who were the main bread earners for the family were killed during violence and later on their widows could not find any employment opportunity. Thus, the study revealed that the income level of the families of the respondents came down drastically and almost all the families were found to have gone below poverty line. The condition of housing, its ownership, etc often indicate the living condition of a group of people. The findings of the present study showed that the majority of the families of children (60%) were living in *kutcha* (semi-permanent) houses. More than one-fourth of the families was living in *pucca* (permanent) houses. A small section (12%) was living in huts. The large majority of the families (80%), however, owned their dwelling houses. Rest others were either living in their relative's houses or in rented accommodation. The families of the children were mostly nuclear type (76%) with upto three members and less than one-fourth of the families were either joint or extended with four or more members.

Majority of the existing parents and guardians (61%) of the children were in the age group of 36-50 years and about one-third of the parents/guardians were quite young (18-35 years). Since in most cases the fathers or male members were killed, in nearly 94 per cent of the cases the surviving mothers or other female members were acting as guardians of the children. In terms of educational qualification, it was found that, a large section (34%) of the parents/guardians was illiterate. The educational qualification of about 53 per cent of the parents/guardians ranged from primary level to matriculation and for about 12 per cent it was upto higher secondary/graduation level.

### **Profile of Affected Children**

As has been mentioned above, for the present study, 124 beneficiary out of 229 and 63 non-beneficiary children out of 73 were selected for interviewing. Amongst 124 respondent beneficiary children there were equal number of boys and girls (62 each). Age wise, a little more than half of these children (51%) were in the age group of 11-15 years. A sizable number (32%) of the children were in the age range of 16 – 18 years. Rests of the children (17%) were between six to ten years of age. These children were studying in various classes of high school (40%), M.E. schools (30%), primary schools (15%) and the rest 15 per cent of these children were studying in intermediate classes or above. Among the 63 non-beneficiary children who were interviewed, 51 per cent were boys and 49 per cent were girls. However, unlike among the beneficiary children, the bulk of the non-beneficiary respondents (92%) had attained the age of 18 years or more. Only eight per cent of the children were found to be between 16 – 18 years of age. In terms of education, majority of the non-beneficiary children (54%) were continuing their studies, but a large section of the non-beneficiaries (44%) had dropped out of their studies. A small number of the non-beneficiary (2%) reported to have completed their studies. It needs to be mentioned here

that, under Project Assist, a beneficiary ceases to receive the financial assistance if he/she discontinues his/her studies prior to attaining the age of 18 years. Again, after 18 years of age a beneficiary shall not receive the assistance unless they continue their studies in professional courses. Therefore, we have larger number of respondents above 18 years of age in the non-beneficiary category. For similar reasons there were a large number of dropped out students (44%) who stopped receiving the assistance for discontinuing their studies.

### **Awareness about the Scheme**

Awareness of the target community about the programme, its objectives, contents/services etc. decide to a large extent, successful implementation of a welfare/developmental programme. Present study attempted to understand the perception of the parents/guardians and beneficiary children on Project Assist. It was found that only little more than 12 per cent of the parents and guardians were aware that the financial assistance for their wards was actually extended by NFCH. Large majority of the respondents (78%) thought that the assistance was being given by AASHWAS of Assam police. This was perhaps because of the fact that AASHWAS has been coordinating and facilitating between the beneficiaries and NFCH. Few parents/guardians even thought the assistance came from state government or other sources. A mere two per cent only had prior information about the Project Assist of NFCH. Like parents/guardians, 96 per cent beneficiary and 94 per cent non-beneficiary children also did not know that they were receiving the financial assistance from NFCH. Only four and six per cent beneficiary and non-beneficiary children respectively, knew that the assistance was provided by NFCH. However, almost all the parents and guardians (98%) and the children (95%) were aware that, the financial assistance was given mainly to enable them to meet expenses related to their education, training and other essential needs. The parents and guardians had come to know about the financial assistance from the Police as well as functionaries of Project AASHWAS, the NGO in Kokrajhar district and Deputy Commissioner's office. after the incidences of killing of their husbands/ fathers. However, they were not clear about the source of such financial assistance.

### **Usefulness of the Scheme**

Almost all the parents and guardians (99%) agreed that the assistance had been very useful, particularly for the education of their children. More than 82 per cent of the beneficiary children too found the assistance to be useful. A small number of the beneficiaries (11%) opined that the assistance was partially useful. While three per cent of the beneficiaries could not comment, another few (5%) had to say that the assistance was not useful.

Although most of the respondent parents/guardians and children stated that the financial assistance received by them was useful and particularly enabled the children to continue with their education, yet, almost all the parents/guardians (97%) and the large majority of beneficiary (87%) and non-beneficiary (84%) children found the amount of assistance to be insufficient to meet the educational as well as other essential expenditures of the child. Nearly all the parents and guardians informed that they utilized the amount of assistance for education of the child but also asserted that the assistance helped in meeting the educational expenses only partially.

The bulk of the parents/guardians (97%), and beneficiary (91.0%) and non-beneficiary children (90.5%) desired enhancement of the present amount of assistance. About 44 per cent of the parents/guardians wanted the present amount to be enhanced to Rs.1500/- per month per child. On the other hand, nearly one-third of the respondent parents/guardians desired Rs.2000/- per month per child. About 17 per cent of the

respondent opted for Rs.1000/- per month per child and a few (6%) even asked for more than Rs.2000/- per month per child. Like the parents/guardians both beneficiary and non-beneficiary children also asked for hikes in the present amount of assistance in a range of Rs.1000/- to Rs.2000/- per month per child. Increased cost of education and other day to day essential needs of the child were some of the major reasons cited by the parents/guardians that warrant a suitable enhancement of the assistance amount. In this context the present study also attempted to find out the average financial requirement by the families for each child to meet his/her essential needs like food, clothing, education and some miscellaneous needs. From the details provided by the families an average minimum expenditure per month for each child was calculated. It was found that, for each child on an average Rs.1436/- is required to meet the minimum expenses for education, food, clothing and some other miscellaneous needs. Out of this an approximate amount of Rs.400/- per month per child on an average for education purposes alone. It also needs to be mentioned here that, the expenses for education increases if the student(s) pursue professional courses.

More than 80 per cent of the beneficiary families of Project Assist had also received one-time monetary compensation paid by the government(s) to the next of the kin of those killed in communal/terrorist violence. It could be learnt that the beneficiary families had utilized this amount in different manners like saving in fixed-deposits as future security, construction/repairing of house, purchasing of land, starting some small business, repaying their debts and other familial and household needs.

### **Aspects of Mechanisms of Implementation of Project Assist**

As per the modalities of implementation of the scheme, in each district a District Committee under the District Magistrate/Collector or Deputy Commissioner with Superintendent of Police, District Social Welfare Officer, District Education Officer, etc as members is responsible for identifying the beneficiaries, receive applications from the parents/guardians of the eligible children and forward the applications to NFCH. On receiving the approval and fund from NFCH, the DM's office disburses the cheques to the beneficiaries. However, in Assam, AASHWAS, a project under Assam Police takes the lead role in identifying the eligible children to receive the financial assistance. Usually, at the initiative of AASHWAS, the officials at the different Police Stations identify and collect the details of eligible children from their records and help and guide the parents and guardians of these children to carry out the required procedures like filling and submission of the application forms. It also assists the parents/guardians to procure the necessary certificates and documents. The filled-in application forms are then submitted by functionaries of AASHWAS or the applicants themselves at the Deputy Commissioner's Office. In Kokrajhar District an NGO named Society to Save Victims of Violence and Terrorism, had also been mobilized by AASHWAS for supporting and helping the guardians/ parents of the target beneficiaries. This NGO liaises with Project AASHWAS and the District Authorities helps the parents/guardians of eligible children to submit their applications for financial assistance, and also follows-up the cases. After the applications are received, the Office of the Deputy Commissioner sends these to the NFCH. The NFCH on receiving the applications scrutinizes them and sanctions the assistance and sends the amounts of assistance to the office of the concerned Deputy Commissioner who, in turn, issues the cheque to the beneficiaries. Often the officials of Deputy Commissioner's Office, Officials of Police Stations/AASHWAS and functionary of NGO inform the beneficiaries when the cheques are ready for disbursement.

Since one of the objects of the present study was to examine the effectiveness of the modalities of the implementation of the scheme, the parents/guardians were particularly

asked whether they had faced any problem while applying for the assistance. Most of the respondents (92%) opined that they had no difficulties in doing so except in procuring some necessary supporting documents particularly, the Income Certificate. A large number of the parents and guardians (42%) pointed out that they had difficulties in obtaining the Income Certificate from the concerned authorities. On the other hand, a small number of parents/guardians also reportedly faced some other problems in one or other step of the process of application like filling-up the prescribed form, lack of adequate cooperation from some of the district officials and the police officials, non-cooperation of community leaders, etc. According to majority applicants, unlike the income certificate they did not face much difficulties in procuring the other documents like study certificate, birth certificate, copy of FIR, copy of death cum post-mortem report, etc.

Ideally, the financial assistance is to be paid in advance annually in the first quarter of the academic year as per the norms of Project Assist so that the parents/guardians can meet the expenditures of the child's education for the current year. However, in most cases the disbursement of the assistance is usually delayed by about six months or so. It could be learnt after interaction with functionaries of Project AASHWAS and the District authorities that the delay occurs due to some procedural reasons.

### **Views for Effective Implementation**

The present study generated suggestions from various quarters including the parents and guardians and also the beneficiary and non-beneficiary children for making the scheme more effective. Two major suggestions that came from the parents/guardians was enhancement of the amount of assistance (99%) and timely disbursement of the assistance amount (90%). There were also suggestions for checking red-tapism and procedural complications, increasing the upper age limit of eligibility, continuation of assistance for students upto post-graduate level, better disbursement procedure, employment opportunities for beneficiary children, etc. The beneficiary and non-beneficiary children too suggested for enhancement of assistance amount, increasing upper age limit for availing financial assistance, providing vocational trainings and employment opportunities, timely disbursement of assistance, exemption from payment of yearly admission fee, if any, in the institutions, checking mal practices indulged in by some functionaries etc. The officials and functionaries of AASHWAS including members of NGO involved with implementation of Project AASHWAS also made a few suggestions. The large majority of these officials (67%) advocated for increasing the upper age limit from 18 to 22-25 years and favored continuation of the assistance as long as the beneficiary is pursuing his/her education. Nearly 83 per cent of these officials suggested enhancement of the amount to about Rs.1000/- to Rs.3000/- per month per child.

### **Project Assist and AASHWAS**

Implementation of Project Assist in Assam has been facilitated greatly by AASHWAS, which is a project of Assam Police. AASHWAS was born as an Assam Police initiative to sensitize and mobilize people against violence and to alleviate the sufferings of the victims, particularly the children victims of ethnic/ communal/ terrorist violence. A host of activities have been initiated under Project AASHWAS by Assam Police in the state. One of the major land marks of AASHWAS had been linking the orphan children whose parent(s) were killed during communal, ethnic or terrorist violence with Project Assist of NFCH to enable these children to avail financial assistance. AASHWAS identified such children all over the state and helped their existing parents/guardians to do the necessary formalities for availing the financial assistance under Project Assist. AASHWAS has also mobilized the support of an NGO in Kokrajhar district to supplement its effort to reach out to the eligible beneficiaries of Project Assist.

### **Follow up of Beneficiaries of Project Assist**

Follow up the beneficiaries of Project Assist from time to time is important to keep a check on utilization of the assistance and to arrange for other necessary interventions to accelerate the process of their rehabilitation of the children. Although under Project Assist there are no such built-in mechanisms for follow up of beneficiary children, AASHWAS has initiated some steps to follow up the children. Ordinarily police officials from different police stations across the state had been instructed to do the follow up. However, it soon turned out that due to other heavy pre-occupations of these police officials they were always not in a position to regularly follow up the beneficiary children. Faced with this situation AASHWAS adopted some innovative measures to follow up the children beneficiaries of Project Assist.

Project AASHWAS has associated an NGO named Society to Save Victims of Violence and Terrorism in Kokrajhar district of Assam to provide support to parents and guardians of eligible beneficiaries to avail the financial assistance under Project Assist. This organization regularly keeps in touch with the families of and liaises between the functionaries of AASHWAS and the district officials. This NGO also follows-up the beneficiary children and their families and apprise the concerned officers of AASHWAS in case of any development. Many beneficiary parents/ guardians gratefully appreciated the support extended by the functionary of the NGO. However, the activities of the NGO in this regard were sometimes hampered since Project Assist does not have any provision of financial support either to AASHWAS or this NGO for meeting some unavoidable essential expenditure like travel cost to interior areas. However, AASHWAS has been making efforts to compensate such expenses through different sources.

A very unique approach adopted by AASHWAS to follow up the beneficiary children of Project Assist was organization of *Sishu Shanti Samaroh* (Children's Peace Conclaves) in different places of Assam. A variety of activities for children and parents and guardians were under taken during the three days *Samaroh*. One such activity was the stock taking sessions in which some resource persons engage in one- to -one interaction with each child and his/her parent/guardian for making an assessment of general well-being of the child and the family, progress of education of the child, record grievances and suggestions etc. for further interventions. Another important activity of the Peace Conclave was an interactive psycho-social counselling of the beneficiary children conducted by professionals like psychiatrists, psychologists, etc. Based on the findings of these initial counselling sessions those children who required further psychiatric and psychological evaluation and interventions were referred to relevant professionals/agencies. AASHWAS also made efforts that, as far as possible, these children receive free services from the professionals/agencies. Besides, medical and health check-up for the children and their parents/guardians was also organized during the three days. *Sishu Shanti Samaroh* included a variety of recreational sessions of games, exercises, music, drawing and painting, essay writing, trips to children's park, amusement parks, etc. for the children and their parents. As a part of the *Samaroh*, torch light processions by people from different walks of life were also taken out to campaign for peace and harmony. These kinds of gatherings not only enabled to follow-up the beneficiary children and their families but also helped the children to overcome the trauma, develop a positive attitude and shun violence in their lives. These Conclaves also helped in generating public opinion against violence.

Of late, AASHWAS mobilized some eminent and noted social activists, journalists, dramatists, actors and industrialists, etc, and motivated them to follow-up beneficiary children in different parts of districts. They were requested to visit the homes and schools of the beneficiaries at least once and preferably twice a year in a systematic manner. AASHWAS allotted the districts to these civil society members according to their

preferences. Usually one/two volunteer(s) were asked to follow-up children of one district. To facilitate systematic feedback the volunteers were supplied with a proforma for collecting the necessary details and forward these to AASHWAS for further necessary action. The process of this follow-up activity has already started and AASHWAS has been in constant touch with these volunteers for their feedback and hopes this community based approach shall pay rich dividends. Such initiatives of Assam Police through AASHWAS have also been applauded in various forums and have won accolades. Recently International Sarvodaya Peace Summit held at Coimbatore specially appreciated Project AASHWAS for its special focus on children victims of communal, ethnic and terrorist violence.

### **Academic Performance and Aspirations of Children**

It was revealed during the present study that, the bulk of the beneficiary children of Project Assist have done fairly well in their studies. Analysis of the average marks scored by these children in the last two qualifying examinations placed 44 per cent children in category 'good' (scoring 50-69% marks), five per cent in 'very good' (70-89% marks) and two per cent in 'excellent' category (90-100% marks). However, a large 48 per cent could be categorized in 'average' category only who scored between 30 to 49 per cent marks. These children also expressed their aspirations with regard to their studies. Nearly 53 per cent of these children expressed their desire to continue their studies till graduation while 18 per cent wanted to go upto post-graduation and beyond. More that 11 per cent aspire to pursue professional courses like engineering, medical science etc. Thus, it can be assumed that, in spite of the severe set back, these children were progressing well in their academics and some credit for this has to be awarded to Project Assist.

### **Views on Communal/Ethnic and Armed Conflicts in Assam**

The present study generated views of parents/guardians of the children and selected community leaders on various aspects of communal/ethnic/terrorist violence in Assam and the ways and means to prevent recurrence of such violent incidences. According to them these extremist groups used the socio-economically backward communities as soft targets and indulge in violence to spread terror and to pressurize governments and others to give in to their demands. The community leaders and the parents/guardians stated that there are a number of factors that contributed to the occurrence of violence. Some of the prime reasons are lack of access to quality education and employment opportunities, poverty, lure of easy money, conflict of interests among communities, political rivalry, etc. Both parents/guardians and community leaders had a common opinion that strong administrative and police action, spread of education, awareness generation among the community and economic security particularly among the youth, mutual respect and tolerance among communities, etc. can bring down the incidences of violence to a large extent.

### **Suggestions and Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study as presented in the fore going chapters the following suggestions and recommendations are made:

1. The present study brought to light that awareness among the masses about Project Assist or NFCH is rather low. Even the beneficiary children and their parents/guardians were not adequately aware of the source of assistance, modalities of implementation etc. There is a need for undertaking planned awareness generation activities about Project Assist and its package of assistance among the community particularly in violence ravaged areas. It will enable the victim families to take their own initiatives in availing the benefits of assistance under Project Assist. This would not only lead to optimum utilization of the assistance scheme but would

also reduce the work load of AASHWAS, the implementing partner and would result in better coverage.

2. While the necessity of supporting documents along with the application for assistance for verifying the authenticity of the claim can never be denied, efforts need to be made for avoiding unnecessary hassle for the parents/guardians of children. It has been found that the parents often had to face a lot of difficulties in obtaining the Income Certificate which has to be submitted once in every three years. In view of the fact that, most of the applicant families belong to low income category and in most cases, their main bread earner of the family had already expired, there is very little likelihood of drastic improvement in the income level of the families thereafter. Therefore, concerned authorities may consider doing away with the practice of asking for Income Certificates every three years and may insist on the Income Certificate during initial application.
3. NFCH requires that some documents from the Police authorities like the copy of FIR etc. be translated to English while submitting along with the application. This results in extra paper work for the other wise busy police men at the Police Stations and at times become de-motivating. Therefore, the translation may be avoided to reduce the work load of the officials at the Thana level.
4. Often the distribution of the cheque from the District Magistrates' office takes a long time for which the beneficiaries have to face problem. Some times the *Mandal* (a functionary from SDC's/Circle office) who have to identify the child before the District authorities also demands money as transportation charge etc. to go to DM's office. Besides, though very few, there were cases when the beneficiary parents could not en-cash the cheque and its validity expired and the family was deprived of the benefits. Keeping this in view NFCH may consider transferring the assistance amount in the respective bank accounts of the beneficiaries directly through bank to bank transfer with intimation to the district authorities and AASHWAS for record and follow-up. This will facilitate fast and hassle free delivery of the assistance amount.
5. Financial assistance is extended under Project Assist till the age of 18 years of beneficiary child, by which time a child continuing his/her studies, usually completes 10+2 level. When the assistance is stopped at this stage the students face acute financial hardship and often have to dropout. Hence, the matter of increasing the age limit from 18 years to about 22/23 years should be considered so that the beneficiary children can go for higher education/complete their education. The issue of enhancing the upper age limit can be linked to continuation of education of the beneficiary after 18 years of age which should also include vocational education/training after 10+2 level.
6. It appears that there is a need for waiving the BPL criteria for the families for availing the financial assistance. For all practical purposes for a scheme like Project Assist BPL criteria should not be very strictly adhered to. Even if a family's income is above the poverty line, the family may not be able to meet the educational and other essential expenditures of the children. It is more likely to happen in a family which had lost the main bread earner. It may also be mentioned that, the assistance does not only mean financial help but is also an expression of concern of the government towards the victims of communal/ethnic or terrorist violence and their families. Therefore, the assistance needs to be extended to as many genuine victims of such violence as possible.
7. Keeping in view the rising cost of education and livelihood there is a need for enhancing the present amount of assistance. In case of children upto 18 years of age

the amount may be raised from present Rs.750/- per child per month to Rs. 1000/-. For those who are pursuing professional courses after 18 years the amount may be increased to about Rs.1500/- per month.

8. It has come to light that in a number of cases the beneficiary parents/guardians were not aware whom to approach when they face a problem relating to their application, or to clarify a doubt or when need some assistance, etc. until and unless they could meet someone from Project AASHWAS. Therefore, it may be considered to set up a Helpline or an Information Centre at the DM's/SP's office with a designated official/functionary to attend to the beneficiary parents/guardians.
9. A mechanism for monitoring and evaluation the implementation of Project Assist and follow-up of the beneficiary children and their families. This will help in ensuring that the assistance amount is received and utilized properly by the beneficiary families. It can also keep a track of the progress of the beneficiary children in their education and support them in need. The mechanisms/modalities for follow-up and the indicators for monitoring and evaluation can be developed in consultation with partners like AASHWAS in Assam.
10. AASHWAS of Assam Police has very successfully and effectively partnered with an NGO in implementation of Project Assist in Kokrajhar district of Assam. Like wise, NFCH may consider engaging of some credible NGOs/VOs under supervision of AASHWAS in other districts of Assam for assistance, follow up and monitoring of the beneficiaries of Project Assist. AASHWAS can identify such NGOs/VOs, orient them to the task and also guide and supervise them so that the NGOs can play the desired role in implementation of the scheme. Appropriate association of community based organizations would also enable NFCH to ensure better coverage and broaden its reach among communities.
11. There is a need for making provision for some funds by NFCH to meet some essential administrative cost. In case of Assam the fund may be put at the disposal of AASHWAS with guidelines for its use. This fund may be utilized for follow up and monitoring of the beneficiary children.
12. Essentially the financial assistance under Project Assist is meant for children of victims of ethnic/communal/ terrorist violence who had been killed or permanently incapacitated by mobs/extremists/terrorists etc. There is no denying that extremist/terrorist elements deserve punishment as per the laws of the land. However, many a times these perpetrators of violence themselves are killed during the actions of security forces. In such a situation the innocent children of these anti-social elements have to suffer in many ways after the death of their parents. NFCH may consider enlarging the scope of Project Assist to include even the children of the perpetrators as they too become the innocent victims of the circumstance.
13. Continuation of studies in schools/institutions is a basic eligibility condition for receiving the financial assistance under the scheme. However, sometimes an otherwise deserving child with special needs (physically/mentally challenged) have to discontinue/dropout from the main stream schools/institutions. When the child is from a remote rural area he/she usually does not have access to special schools and the child has to languish without proper interventions. There were instances when the assistance was discontinued in case of such children for the simple reason that the Study Certificate could not be produced for renewal. On the other hand, such children from poor families require the assistance more than the others. Therefore, special provisions should be made in Project Assist to cater to the eligible children with special needs.

14. Mobilizing the common people and their voices against all forms of violence particularly, violence perpetuated by organized groups can go a long way in preventing communal/ethnic/terrorist violence in society. Organizing awareness generation campaigns on importance of peace and communal harmony particularly targeting youths is important in this regard. Therefore, such activities should be rigorously undertaken particularly among violence affected communities involving all sections of people. The community mobilization programmes initiated by AASHWAS can be emulated in this regard. In a multi-ethnic situation like Assam every precaution should be taken by the Authorities so that minor/petty issues do not flare up into serious clash among communities
15. Underdevelopment, lack of opportunities for education, unemployment, etc. are some of the major contributing factors that provoke young people to join extremist/terrorist organizations. Therefore, government should take adequate measures to ensure that fruits of development percolate down to all sections of society and socio-economic disparities are minimized.

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# **CHAPTER - 1**

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Violence has always been a feature of human history from time immemorial. Worldwide, violence is used as a tool of manipulation to achieve one's desired goals even at the cost of unjustified sufferings of others, most often, innocents. With the passage of time and the progress of human society from primitive to civilized state and advent of modernism, violence of all types, categories and forms have gone down as the culture of tolerance has been gaining ground in human society. Sadly enough, however, violence is still used as a means to achieve social, religious, economic and political agenda of individuals, groups, communities, as well as the nations. Individuals, communities and nations still indulge in violence for innumerable causes and factors and these incidences of violence take different forms. Among these, violence in public life usually takes an acute form and affects large groups of people in a short period and takes a heavy toll of human lives and causes untold sufferings. Such violence involving public life may be in the form of war, communal and ethnic riots, violence perpetuated by extremists/terrorist bodies, etc. It may be mentioned here that, many nations of the world today including India have been witnessing such incidences of violence involving or affecting large groups of people.

As India is a nation of a population having numerous ethnic, religious and cultural diversities, the issue of national integration and communal harmony is of paramount importance for peace and progress and well being of all its citizens. Although at one time the country could boast of 'Unity in Diversity', yet, the present social, cultural, political and economic scenario of the country is replete with instances of conflicts and intolerance. The present day India faces serious challenges by divisive forces and illegal actions by individuals and groups that have threatened the country's unity and integrity. Although Indian society has unparalleled spiritual heritage and has been blessed by great sages from time immemorial and the modern India had the fortune of having Mahatma Gandhi who professed the philosophy of non-violence to the world, yet, the country is now experiencing communal/caste, extremist/terrorist violence for a host of social, religious, political, economic and other reasons. At present India is seriously affected by occasional and sporadic incidences of communal/ethnic violence besides, a continuous spate of organized violence unleashed by different militant/extremist/insurgent/terrorist groups often targeting both civilians and security forces. While the whole country at times comes to the grip of such violence, some particular regions/states are particularly affected by the activities of the armed militants. States like Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chattisgarh and a few states of the North Eastern region are the worst affected by such violent incidences. Of the North eastern states Assam, Manipur, Nagaland etc. have experienced unabated violence due to sporadic ethnic clashes and the terrorist tactics of the militants.

Whether it is communal conflict or terrorist activities, violence always lead to bloodshed and leaves behind horrible saga of human sufferings, death, destruction, displacement and destitution. While all sections of society are affected by acts of violence, it is always the women and children who have to bear the most severe brunt of senseless armed conflicts. Women and children suffer in many ways in such situations and they have also proven to be the most vulnerable groups. The incidences of violence have both

immediate and long term destructive effects for the child victims. They may not only be targeted as they are the most defenseless and often get maimed or killed, but are also rendered orphan and become destitute when their parents/guardians are killed. Numerous incidences of killings of parents of children have led to situations where the survivor child has no one to take care of him/her and the child is deprived of much needed care, nutrition, education and other essentials for its optimum development and a pall of uncertainty descends in the life of the child. Fortunately, all out efforts are being taken by both Government as well as civil society organizations to prevent/curb such violence and also ameliorate the sufferings of the victims of violence particularly, women and children. One such initiative is setting up of the National Foundation for Communal Harmony by the Government of India.

### **1.1 National Foundation for Communal Harmony**

National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH) was set up as an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Home Affairs by the Government of India in 1992 with the basic objective of undertaking activities for promoting communal harmony and national integration. The Home Minister of the country is the *ex-officio* chairman of the foundation. The foundation undertakes a variety of programmes and other initiatives like providing financial assistance to children rendered orphan or destitute in various communal, caste, ethnic or terrorist violence. It conducts studies and grant scholarship, fellowship, etc. to institutions/scholars for conducting studies on issues relating to communal harmony and national integration, confers award for outstanding contribution to communal harmony and national integration, etc. The Foundation undertakes these activities in close collaboration and partnership with both government and civil society organizations.

### **1.2 Project Assist**

Of the various programmes launched by it, Project Assist is the flagship scheme of the NFCH to assist children rendered orphan or destitute in various communal, castes, ethnic and terrorist violence for their care, education and training. The financial assistance is provided to such children for their care, education and training. The assistance is given to those children whose both parents or the bread winner of the family is killed or permanently incapacitated because of the above mentioned incidences of violence. At present, the financial assistance is given to children belonging to below poverty line families. In order to ensure optimum utilization of the limited resources, those victim children are only given the financial assistance who are not receiving such financial assistance on regular basis from any other source. However, one- time financial assistance received by such victim children is not considered as another source of assistance for the purpose. Presently, financial assistance under project assist is provided up to the age of 18 years of victim children. In exceptional cases where the child is pursuing some professional and vocational courses is extended upto the age of 21 years. Each beneficiary child is given Rs. 800/- per month in A and B class cities where as in other places they are given Rs. 750/- per month. In case the beneficiary is pursuing professional/vocational courses then he/she is given an additional Rs. 150/- per month. The assistance is mainly provided to ensure that the orphan/destitute children can pursue their education and also to cater to some of their essential needs. If the beneficiary child drops out from his/her education, the financial assistance under Project Assist is discontinued.

According to the norms setup by NFCH, in each state a District Committee under the concerned District Magistrates/Collector/Deputy Commissioner with other members such as Superintendent of Police, District Social Welfare Officers, District Education Officer etc.

verifies, screens and identifies the eligible children and sends recommendations to the NFCH. The NFCH after scrutinizing the necessary documents and facts sanctions the assistance and disburse the amount to the identified beneficiaries through the Deputy Commissioners/Districts Magistrates of the concerned districts. Every year the assistance is renewed on submission of a current study certificate from the institution where the child is studying testifying that the beneficiary child is continuing his/her studies. The Income Certificate of the parents/ guardians has to be submitted after every three years for continuance of the assistance. Since, the year 2002 the beneficiary children under Project Assist are also covered under Group Personal Accident Insurance whereby in case of any unfortunate incident like death or incapacitation the beneficiary shall receive financial compensation. As per the available information, till March 2010 a total of 10431 children were covered under Project Assist in 19 states and a Union Territory and more than 35 crores have been paid to the beneficiary children. In a few states like Assam, Jammu & Kashmir the Project is being implemented in active partnership with some non-governmental organizations.

### **1.3 Project Assist in Assam**

As has been mentioned earlier Assam is one of the worst violence affected states in the country. Assam has been experiencing continued violence due to the operation of a number of extremist/ militant groups for past several decades. Civilians, members of these armed groups as well as security forces had fallen casualties during the period. Over and above, in the last about one decade there has been a number of violent incidences of clashes between various ethnic groups. These violent incidences have led to killing of a large number of people and made equally large number of children orphans and destitute bringing darkness to their future. Like in other parts of the country, along with the other rehabilitation programmes, the Project Assist has also extended support to a large number of children in Assam since 2002 in 25 districts of the state. Nearly 1000 children have been receiving the financial assistance under the scheme. In Assam NFCH is implementing Project Assist with active cooperation and collaboration of AASHWAS, an Assam Police Project. An NGO named Society to Save Victims of Violence and Terrorism is also supporting in implementation of the scheme in Kokrajhar district of Assam. The support and assistance to children provided under Project Assist have contributed enormously to overcome the trauma of witnessing the violence and the loss of parents and guardians.

### **1.4 Study on Project Assist**

The major evaluation of Project Assist was conducted by NIPCCD Regional Centre Lucknow in 2001. The study covered children victims of communal riots in Uttar Pradesh. The study was undertaken to elicit the views of destitute/orphan children, community and administrators on the scheme, evaluate the extent to which the assistance scheme has provided the physical and psychological rehabilitation of victims of communal violence, particularly children, with special reference to their care, education and training; identify various socio-economic and cultural factors affecting national integration and communal harmony; and find out inhibiting factors of national integration and communal harmony. The study revealed that the assistance provided under the scheme enabled majority of the beneficiary children to pursue and continue their education. Most of the children were in a very tender age (3 – 10 years) when they became victims of communal violence. The scheme of assistance has definitely helped the children in the process of their rehabilitation both physically and psychologically. However, majority of the beneficiaries and their guardians were not aware of some provisions of the scheme. The study on the basis of the

responses, however, opined that the amount of financial assistance is not sufficient to cover the costs of educational and other basic needs of the children. The time line for the disbursement of the financial assistance was not always maintained. The study also brought to light a few other draw backs in the modalities of implementation of the scheme. By and large, however, the study established that the Project Assist is fulfilling a major national need and immensely contributed towards the physical and psychological rehabilitation of the children affected by communal violence.

## **1.5 The Present Study**

The Scheme of Project Assist is in operation in the country for nearly two decades. In Assam children are being assisted under the Scheme for almost last one decade. In this backdrop, the NFCH felt the need to evaluate the Project Assist in the state of Assam in terms of its effectiveness, coverage, usefulness etc. and requested the Institute to carry out a study to evaluate the Scheme in the context of Assam. It is in this connection, the present Study titled: Scheme of Project Assist to Children affected by Communal, Caste, Ethnic and Terrorist Violence/Riots – An Evaluation has been carried out in Assam by NIPCCD Regional Centre, Guwahati.

### **1.5.1 Objectives**

The objectives of the study were:

- to elicit views of the destitute/orphan children, community and administrators on the Scheme;
- to evaluate the extent to which the Project Assist has provided the physical and psychological rehabilitation of children victims of violence with special reference to their care, education and training and also to understand the impeding factors in rehabilitation of children;
- to examine the modalities of the implementation of the Scheme;
- to suggest corrective measures;
- to identify various socio-economic and cultural factors affecting national integration and communal harmony; and
- to find out the inhibiting factors of national integration and communal harmony

Keeping in view the objectives, the study focused on the following:

- socio-economic background of the families of the beneficiary children;
- profile of the affected children;
- views of children, parents/guardians;
- community and administrators on the scheme;
- extent of support provided by the scheme to meet educational and other essential needs for rehabilitation of children victims of violence;
- efficacy and efficiency of the present mechanism for implementation of this scheme;
- problems and constraints faced by the implementing agencies in administration of the scheme;
- difficulties encountered by the target beneficiaries while availing the benefits of the scheme ; and also

- views and opinions of the guardians of beneficiary children and selected community leaders on prevention of communal and and terrorist violence and fostering of communal harmony.

## **1.5.2 Methodology**

Although the scheme is being implemented in twenty five districts of the state, yet, keeping in view the time constraints and other factors it has been decided to carry out the study in Kokrajhar and undivided Kamrup Districts of Assam. Kokrajhar District was selected keeping in view the fact that it has the highest number of beneficiaries under Project Assist since the implementation of the scheme in Assam. Kamrup District was selected taking into consideration that it is one of the Districts where Project Assist was initially implemented and covers a sizable number of beneficiaries from urban areas (Guwahati City). Some logistics factors were also taken into account for selection of the districts.

### **1.5.2.1 Coverage and Selection of respondents**

Data for the study were collected from two sets of respondents – one set included the beneficiary and non-beneficiary children and their guardians and the other set included community leaders and officials and other functionaries involved with implementation of the scheme. Thus, data for this study were collected from mainly five categories of respondents –

- Parents/guardians of beneficiary/ non-beneficiary children
- Beneficiary children
- Non-beneficiary children (those children who dropped out for exceeding age limit and those who stopped receiving the assistance for discontinuation of studies/for not fulfilling the conditions)
- District authorities identified under the scheme for implementation of the scheme in the two districts including officials of Project ASHWASH of Assam Police.
- Community leaders comprising Village Headman, PRI Members, Teachers, etc.

### **1.5.2.2 Selection of Beneficiary and Non Beneficiary Children and Guardians**

As per the available data, since 2002 a total of 234 children victims of violence have so far received the assistance under the scheme in Kokrajhar District. Likewise, in undivided Kamrup districts comprising of Kamrup Rural and Kamrup Metro, 69 children have received the assistance till 2010. At the time of data collection for the present study 229 children out of 303 in the selected three districts were actually receiving the financial assistance and the rest 73 children were not receiving the assistance for one or other reasons. Thus, for the purpose of the study, these 229 children who were presently receiving the assistance were considered as beneficiaries and those 73 who were not receiving the assistance had been tagged as non-beneficiary. These 303 beneficiary and non-beneficiary children and their surviving parents/guardians constituted the universe for the study. Using the PPS sampling method beneficiary and non-beneficiary children respondents and their guardians were randomly selected for collection of data. Although initially it was planned to randomly select 50% of these children and their guardians, yet, to have an optimum size of respondents from each category, at times, more than 50% of the population of the study was actually interviewed. Thus, district wise the following respondents were interviewed:

Sl. No.	Target Respondents	Numbers of respondents			Total
		Kokrajhar	Kamrup Metro	Kamrup Rural	
1	Guardians of beneficiary/ non-beneficiary children	72	18	15	105
2	Beneficiary Children	88	24	12	124
3	Non-Beneficiary Children	48	05	10	63

It may be mentioned here that, in a number of cases a single family had several beneficiaries/non-beneficiaries. Therefore, often more than one beneficiary/non-beneficiary was interviewed from the same family for data collection. While selecting the children efforts were made to interview only children of higher age groups to ensure that the respondents were able to logically respond to the queries. Besides, data were also collected from selected community leaders and district officials including officials of ASHWASH from the three districts as detailed below:

<u>Respondents</u>	<u>Numbers</u>
3. Community leaders	23
4. District Officials and functionaries of ASHWASH	06

Secondary data for the study had been collected from the records of Project ASHWAS, and also District authorities.

### 1.5.2.3 Tools of Data Collection

Data for the study were mainly collected by interviewing the target beneficiaries. In order to ensure systematic collection of data, interview schedules and interview guides were used. For collection of data from the beneficiary and non-beneficiary children and their guardians, Interview schedules were used. These schedules were pre-coded for facilitating computerization of data. Altogether three kinds of interview schedules were developed as detailed below:

- Interview schedule for parent/guardians of beneficiary children
- Interview schedule for beneficiary children
- Interview schedule for Non-beneficiary children

These schedules contained mostly close ended queries that focused on socio-economic background of beneficiary children and their families, details of receipt of the financial assistance under the scheme, perception/views of the respondents regarding objectives behind the financial assistance, pattern of utilization of the assistance received, difficulties/problems encountered during the process of application, benefits accrued, causes of disruption, suggestions for making the scheme more effective etc.

On the other hand, for interviewing the community leaders and officials, simple interview guides with mostly open-ended queries were used. While interviewing the community leaders the focus was mainly on understanding the factors behind communal/terrorist violence, ways and means to controlling/preventing such violence, role

played by community leaders in prevention and containing communal violence, etc. In case of the officials, efforts were made to know the efficacy of the existing procedures for implementation of Project Assist, monitoring of implementation of the project, follow-up of the beneficiary children, suggestions and views of the officials regarding the content and mode of implementation of Project Assist.

# **CHAPTER - 2**

## CHAPTER 2

### BACKGROUND OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

While assessing the impact of the scheme of Project Assist, it becomes pertinent to understand the socio - economic background of the families of the beneficiary children since it helps in analyzing the context and the need and utilization of the financial assistance. This chapter makes an attempt to highlight the profile of the respondent guardians, beneficiary and non beneficiary children in Kokrajhar, Kamrup Rural and Kamrup Metro districts.

#### 2.1 A Profile of Parents/Guardians and Families

The parents/guardians of beneficiary and non-beneficiary children of Project Assist constituted one of the major categories of informants for the present study. Altogether, 105 parents/guardians of beneficiary/non-beneficiary children were interviewed in the three districts of Kamrup Metro, Kamrup Rural and Kokrajhar. In most of the cases the mothers of the children were acting as the guardians (91%) and were, therefore, interviewed. It may be also mentioned here that, in large majority of the cases (84%) the beneficiary children were living in their own families. Only about 16 per cent of the respondent beneficiary children were living in the families of their close relatives. The following paragraphs highlight the profile of the parents/guardians and families of children.

Table 2.1 shows the tribe/caste wise distribution of the respondent families of children. It can be seen that, majority of the families of assisted children belonged to general category (41%). A large percentage of the families of the assisted children were

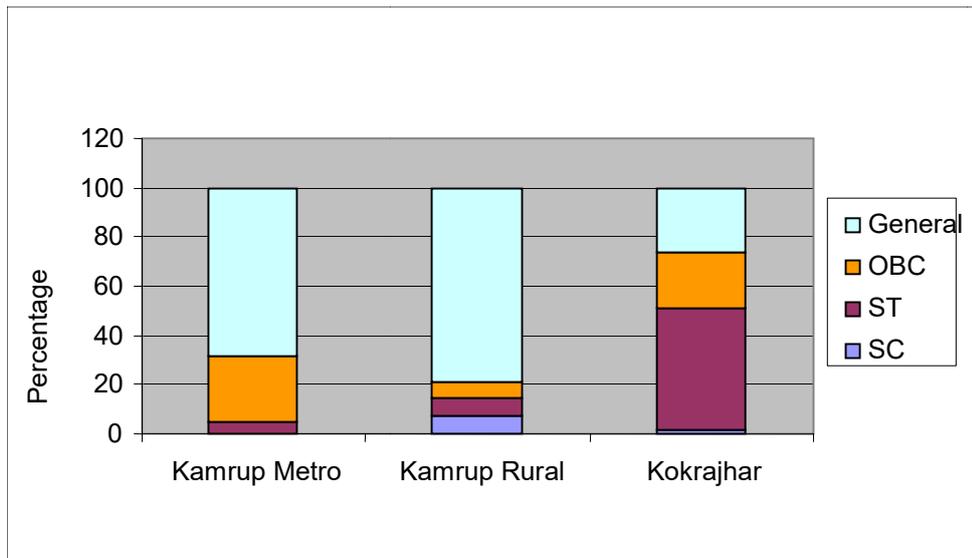
**Table 2.1: Tribe/Caste wise distribution of respondent guardians**

District	Tribe/Caste				Total
	SC	ST	OBC	General	
Kamrup (Metro)	00 (0.00)	01 (5.26)	05 (26.32)	13 (68.42)	19 (100.00)
Kamrup (Rural)	01 (7.14)	01 (7.14)	01 (7.14)	11 (78.57)	14 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	01 (1.39)	36 (50.00)	16 (22.22)	19 (26.39)	72 (100.00)
Total	02 (1.90)	38 (36.19)	22 (20.95)	43 (40.95)	105 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage from schedule tribe

category followed by beneficiaries belonging to other backward classes. In Kokrajhar district half of the beneficiaries belonged to ST population which is somewhat natural since Kokrajhar is inhabited by a predominantly tribal population. On the other hand, in both Kamrup Metro and Kamrup Rural districts the, large majority of the beneficiaries belonged to general category. It may also be noted that there were only a few beneficiary guardians belonging to scheduled caste category. Figure 2.1 depicts the tribe/case wise distribution of the beneficiary families in the three districts.

**Fig: 2.1: Tribe/Caste wise distribution of respondent guardians**



### 2.1.1 Religious Affiliations and Languages Spoken

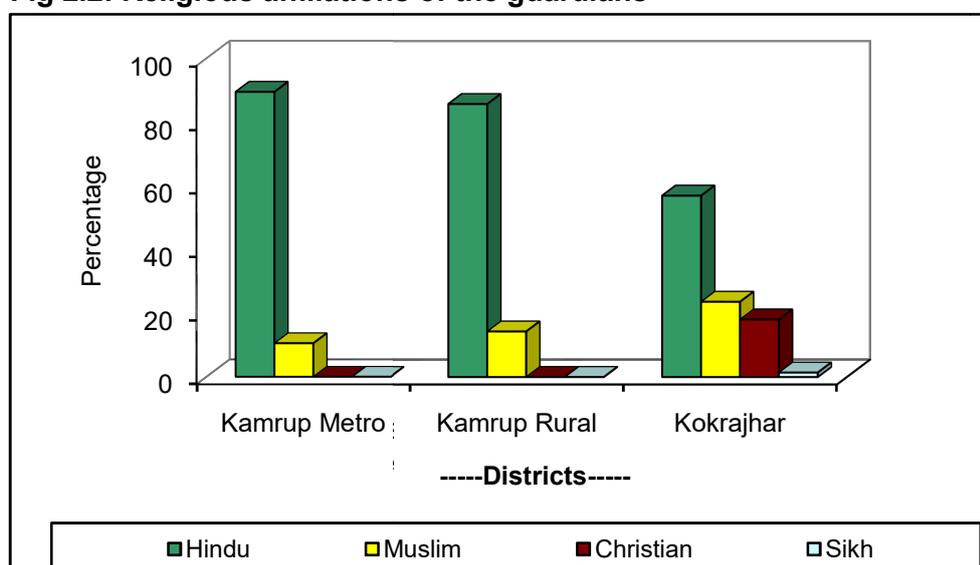
A look at the religious affiliation of the respondent guardians as depicted in Table 2.2 reveals that, the large majority of the guardians of beneficiary children are Hindus (more than 66%), followed by Muslims (20%) and Christians (12.38%). Only one beneficiary guardian belonged to Sikhism. As can also be seen in Figure 2.2 Hindus dominate the respondent families in all the districts.

**Table 2.2: Religious affiliations of the guardians**

Districts	Religion				Total
	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Sikh	
Kamrup (Metro)	17 (89.47)	02 (10.53)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	19 (100)
Kamrup (Rural)	12 (85.71)	02 (14.29)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	14 (100)
Kokrajhar	41 (56.94)	17 (23.61)	13 (18.06)	01 (1.39)	72 (100)
Total	70 (66.67)	21 (20.00)	13 (12.38)	01 (0.95)	105 (100)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 2.2: Religious affiliations of the guardians**



ound that a large followed by Bodo

speaking families (31%). The rest included families speaking Bengali, Santali, Bhojpuri, Rabha etc in small numbers.

## 2.1.2 Occupation

Information elicited from the respondent guardians regarding their occupation revealed that, the parents/guardians of the beneficiary children were pursuing different occupations like Cultivation, Services, Business, and Wage Labour etc. It is significant to note that, a large percentage of the parents/guardians were housewives only. As has been mentioned earlier, the majority of the guardians of the beneficiary children are their mothers, since in most cases the fathers of these children were killed due to terrorist/communal violence. In absence of the father or the main bread winner of the family, some of these helpless women had to take the mantle of earning for sustaining their families. These women, have thus, been compelled to engage themselves in different vocations as shown in Table 2.3. It may be noted that, a sizable number of the

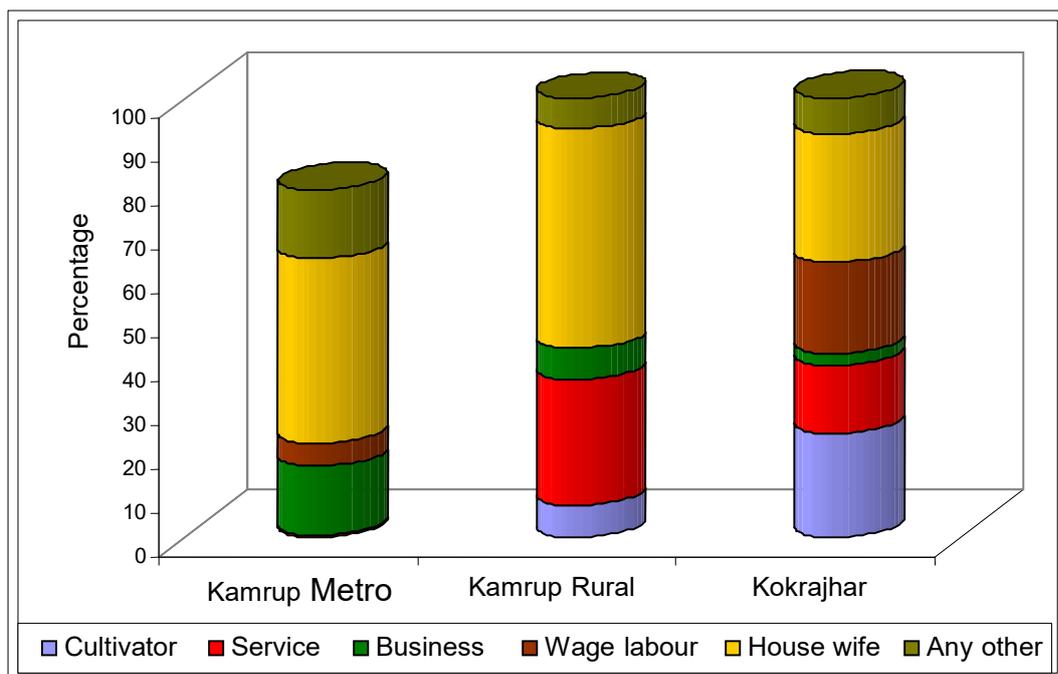
**Table 2.3: Occupation of the parents/guardians**

District	Occupation						Total
	Cultivation	Service	Business	Wage Labour	House wife	Any other	
Kamrup Metro	00 (0.00)	04 (0.21)	03 (15.79)	01 (5.26)	08 (42.11)	03 (15.79)	19 (100.00)
Kamrup Rural	01 (7.14)	04 (28.57)	01 (7.14)	00 (0.00)	07 (50.00)	01 (7.14)	14 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	17 (23.61)	11 (15.28)	02 (2.78)	15 (20.83)	21 (29.17)	06 (8.33)	72 (100.00)
Total	18 (17.14)	19 (18.10)	06 (5.71)	16 (15.24)	36 (34.29)	10 (9.52)	105 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

wives of the victims of violence were not engaged in any job or self-employment activities and that is why the occupation of more than 34 per cent of the respondents parents/guardian was recorded as housewives. It also needs to be mentioned here that the rest of the parents and guardians who were pursuing different occupations were actually engaged in very low paying jobs, petty businesses and other occupation earning meager amounts. Figure 2.3 also shows the occupational pattern of the parents and guardians.

**Fig 2.3: Occupation of the parents/guardians**



### 2.1.3 Income of the families

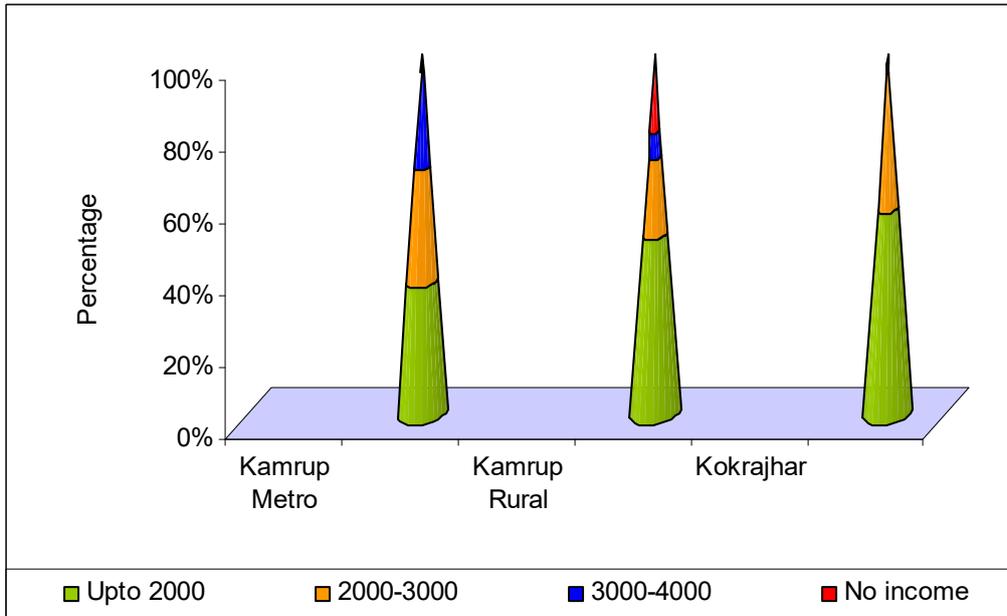
Income of the parents/guardians is an important factor that decides, to a large extent, whether the dependent children shall have access to essentials of life like adequate nutrition, proper health care, education etc. Efforts were made in the study to know the present monthly income of the families of the respondents. It has been learnt that, since in majority of the cases the bread winner or the main earning member of the family, that is, fathers/husbands were

**Table 2.4: Average monthly income of the family**

District	Present average monthly income of the Parent/Guardian				Total
	Upto 2000	2000-3000	3000-4000	No income	
Kamrup Metro	07 (36.84)	06 (31.58)	05 26.32	01 5.26	19 100
Kamrup Rural	07 (50.00)	03 (21.43)	01 (7.14)	03 (21.43)	14 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	41 (56.94)	27 (37.50)	02 (2.77)	02 (2.77)	72 (100.00)
Total	55 (52.38)	36 (34.28)	8 (7.63)	06 (5.71)	105 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 2.4: Average monthly income of the family**



killed, the income level of the concerned families had gone down drastically. It can be seen from Table 2.4 that more than half of the respondent families (52.38%) reported that their monthly income to be upto Rs.2000/- only. The monthly income of another large group of respondent families (34.28%) ranged from Rs.2000/- to Rs.3000/-. There is only a very small group (7.63%) who earned between Rs.3000/- to Rs.4000/- per month. It may be noted that a few respondent families even stated that they had no such income to declare. Thus, it can be said that almost all the beneficiary/non-beneficiary families were below poverty line. And there were only a very few families who were marginally above poverty line as per their declared income.

#### 2.1.4 The Type and Size of the Families

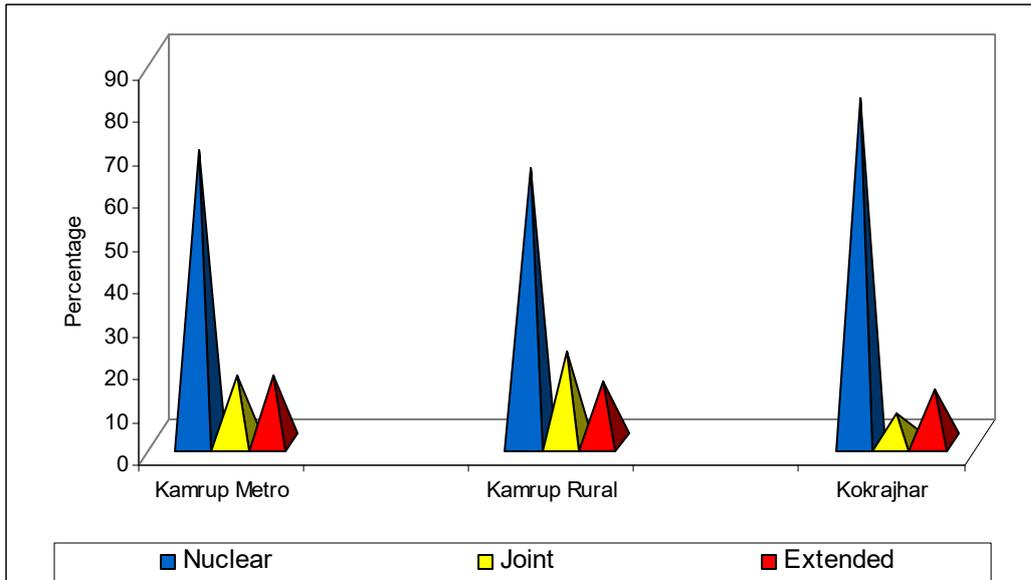
In most cases the beneficiary/non-beneficiary children are living in nuclear families consisting mostly of their mother and their siblings

**Table 2.5: Type of the families of children**

District	Type of Family			Total
	Nuclear	Joint	Extended	
Kamrup Metro	13 (68.42)	03 (15.79)	03 (15.79)	19 (100.00)
Kamrup Rural	09 (64.29)	03 (21.43)	02 (14.29)	14 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	58 (80.56)	05 (6.94)	09 (12.50)	72 (100.00)
Total	80 (76.19)	11 (10.48)	14 (13.33)	105 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 2.5: Type of the families of children**



(76%). Only few children were found to be living in joint or extended families as shown in Table 2.6. When it comes to the size of families, it can be seen from Table 2.7 that, the large majority of the children live in small families having maximum of three members only (77.14 %). It can be seen that less than one-fourth of the families have four or more

**Table 2.6: Size of families of children**

District	Number of Family Members				Total
	1-3	4-6	7-9	10 and above	
Kamrup Metro	14 (77.77)	03 (16.66)	01 (5.55)	00 (0.00)	18 (100.00)
Kamrup Rural	12 (80.00)	02 (13.33)	01 (6.66)	00 (0.00)	15 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	55 (76.39)	14 (19.44)	02 (2.78)	01 (1.39)	72 (100.00)
Total	81 (77.14)	19 (18.09)	04 (3.08)	01 (0.95)	105 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

members. This is some what expected since, as mentioned above, the majority of the children were living in nuclear families which are usually small. Only in case of the joint or extended families the number of members increased.

### 2.1.5 Age Groups of Parents/Guardians

It can be seen from Table 2.8 that majority of the parents/guardians were in the age range of 36-50 years (61%). It is also to be noted that one-third of the parents/guardians were

**Table 2.7: Distribution of parents/guardians according to age groups**

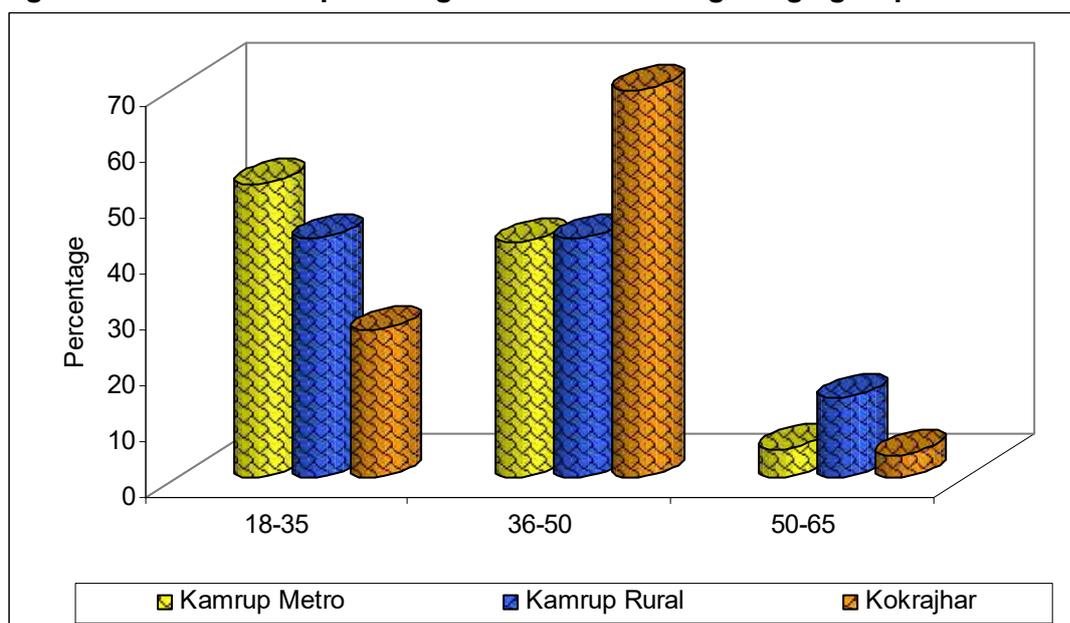
District	Age of the Respondent			Total
	18-35	36-50	50-65	
Kamrup Metro	10 (52.63)	08 (42.11)	01 (5.26)	19 (100.00)

Kamrup Rural	06 (42.86)	06 (42.86)	02 (14.29)	14 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	19 (26.39)	50 (69.44)	03 (4.17)	72 (100.00)
Total	35 (33.33)	64 (60.95)	06 (5.71)	105 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

quite young in the age group 18-35 years. Only a very small percentage of the respondent parents/guardians were above 50 years of age. Figure 2.6 makes a graphic presentation of the age wise distribution of the parents and guardians.

**Fig 2.6: Distribution of parents/guardians according to age groups**



### 2.1.6 Sex Composition of Parents/Guardians

Table 2.9 shows the sex of the parents and guardians of children affected by violence. It can be seen that almost all the existing parents/guardians of the children were females (93.33%). It has been mentioned earlier that in most cases the male members or the fathers of

**Table 2.8: Sex composition of parents/guardians**

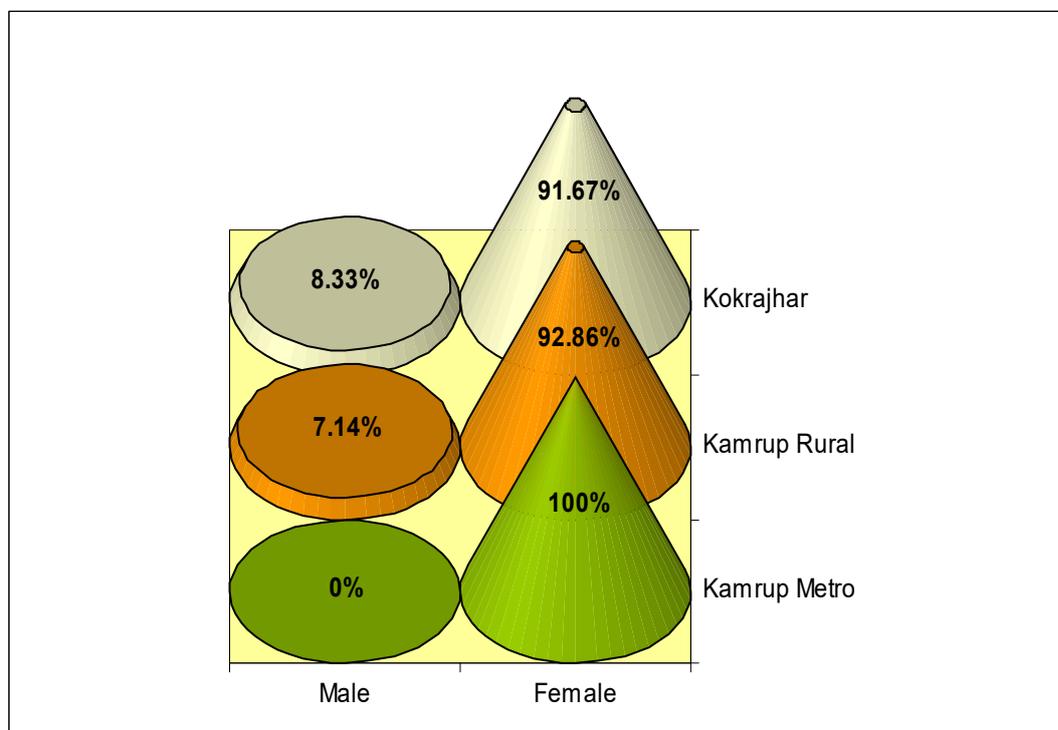
District	Sex of Parents/Guardians		Total
	Male	Female	
Kamrup Metro	00 (0.00)	19 (100.00)	19 (100.00)
Kamrup Rural	01 (7.14)	13 (92.86)	14 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	06 (8.33)	66 (91.67)	72 (100.00)
Total	07 (6.67)	98 (93.33)	105 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

the families were killed and hence, the existing guardians were usually the mothers or other senior female relatives of the children. Only in case of a small percentage of children male persons were acting as guardians. It could be learnt that this happened in those cases

where both the parents of the child were killed in violence. Figure 2.7 shows the sex wise distribution of parents/guardians.

**Fig 2.7: Sex composition of parents/guardians**



### 2.1.7 Educational Qualifications of Parents/Guardians

An analysis of educational qualifications of the parents/guardians of the affected children as presented in Table 2.10 shows that a sizable percentage of the parents/guardians were illiterate (34.29%). In Kokrajhar district the number of illiterates was much higher (44%). This may be mainly because of the reason that, the victim families of violence were mostly from poor, backward communities living in remote

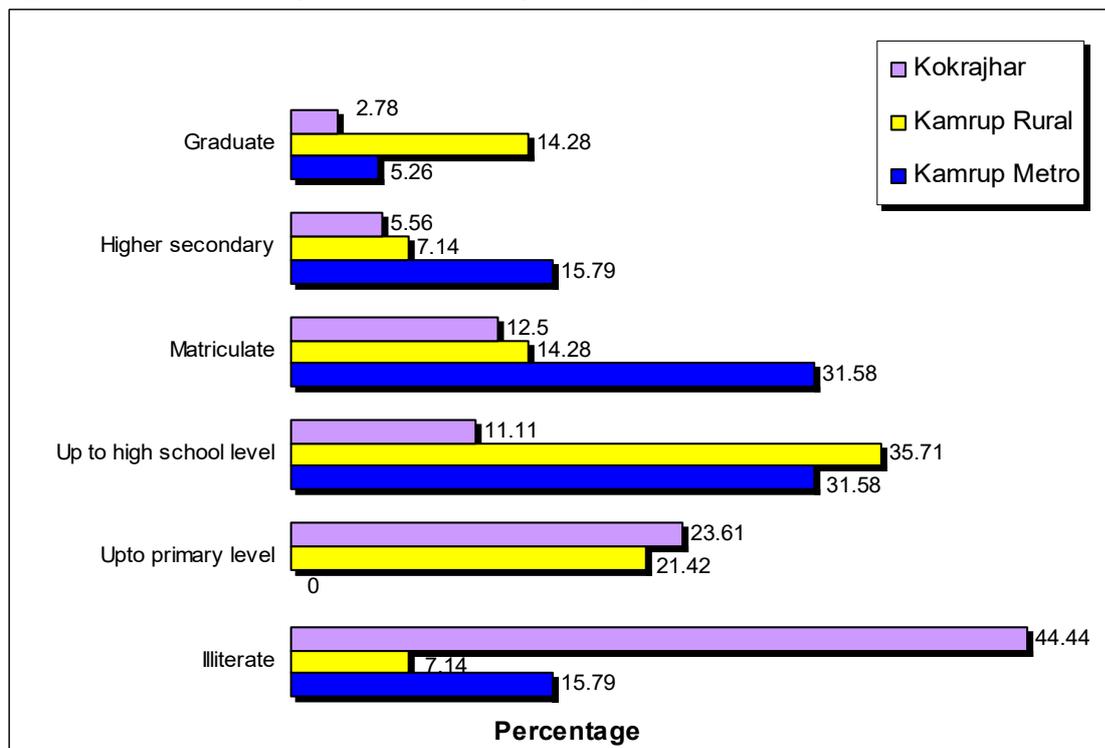
**Table 2.9: Educational qualifications of parents/guardians**

District	Educational Qualification						Total
	Illiterate	Upto primary level	Up to high school level	Matriculate	H.S	Graduate	
Kamrup Metro	03 (15.79)	00 (0.00)	06 (31.58)	06 (31.58)	03 (15.79)	01 (5.26)	19 (100.00)
Kamrup Rural	01 (7.143)	03 (21.42)	05 (35.714)	02 (14.28)	01 (7.14)	02 (14.28)	14 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	32 (44.44)	17 (23.61)	08 (11.11)	09 (12.50)	04 (5.56)	02 (2.78)	72 (100.00)
Total	36 (34.29)	20 (19.05)	19 (18.10)	17 (16.19)	08 (7.62)	05 (4.76)	105 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

villages of the district. Among the parents/guardians, only little more than 16 per cent were Matriculates and fewer had qualifications above matriculations. There were very few graduates and there were no post graduates amongst the parents/guardians. Figure 2.8 depicts the educational qualifications of the respondent parents/guardians.

**Fig 2.8: Educational qualifications of parents/guardians**



### 2.1.8 Type of Houses and Ownership of Houses of the Families

The condition of housing, its ownership, etc often indicate the living condition of a group of people. In the present study data were collected regarding house type and ownership of the respondent families. Table 2.11 shows that, the majority of the families of the children were living in *kutcha*, i.e. semi-permanent houses. A Small percentage (12.38%) of the families was living in small huts in interior villages. More than one-fourth of the beneficiary families were living in *pucca* (permanent) houses. Figure 2.9 further shows that in Kamrup Metro district

**Table 2.10: House types of the families**

District	Type of House			Total
	Permanent ( <i>Pucca</i> )	Semi-Permanent ( <i>Kutcha</i> )	Hut	
Kamrup Metro	14 (73.68)	05 (26.32)	00 (0.00)	19 (100.00)
Kamrup Rural	5 (35.71)	09 (64.29)	00 (0.00)	14 (100.00)

Kokrajhar	10 (13.89)	49 (68.06)	13 (18.06)	72 (100.00)
Total	29 (27.62)	63 (60.00)	13 (12.38)	105 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

largest percentage of the families live in permanent houses. On the other hand, majority in Kamrup Rural and Kokrajhar districts live in semi permanent houses and in Kokrajhar district only some section live in huts.

**Fig 2.9: House types of the families**

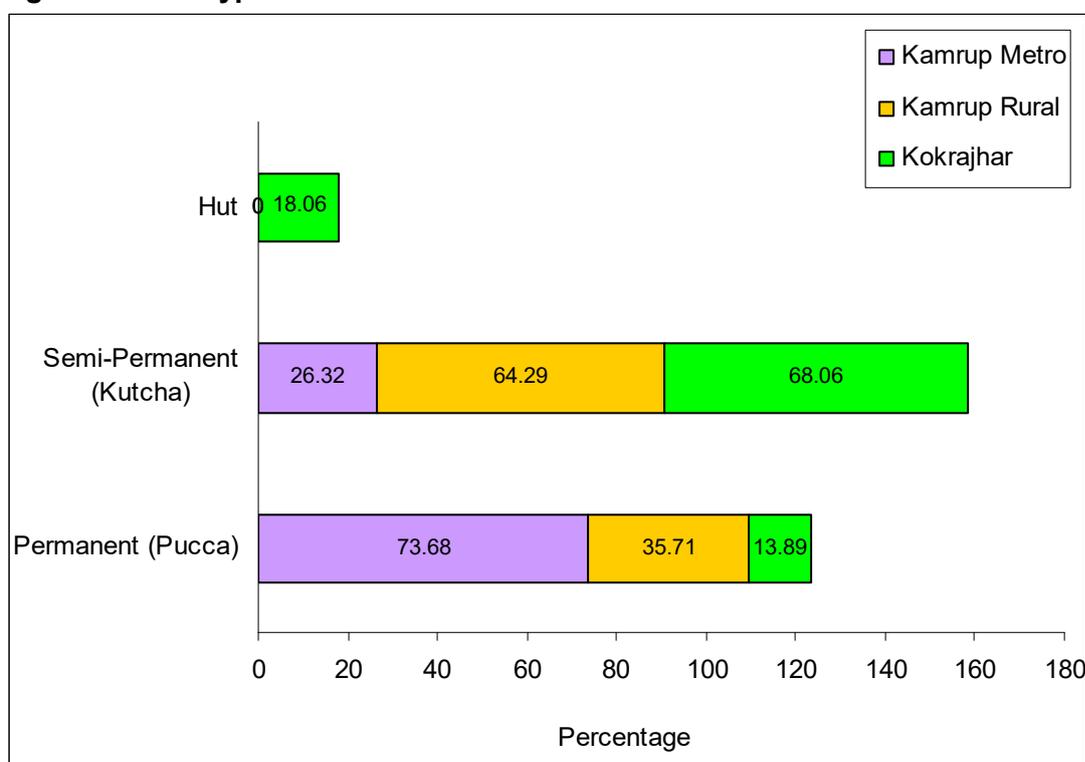


Table 2.11 shows the nature of ownership of houses of families of the children affected by violence. It can be seen that majority of the families were living in their own house (80%) and a very few of them were living in the houses of their relatives (13%). A small number of the families were using rented or other kinds of accommodation.

**Table 2.11: Nature of ownership of house of the families**

District	Nature of ownership of house				Total
	Own	Rented	Relative's house	Quarter	
Kamrup Metro	11 (57.89)	03 (15.79)	05 (26.32)	00 (0.00)	19 (100.00)

Kamrup Rural	11 (78.57)	01 (7.14)	01 (7.14)	01 (7.14)	14 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	62 (86.11)	03 (4.17)	07 (9.72)	00 (0.00)	72 (100.00)
Total	84 (80.00)	07 (6.67)	13 (12.38)	01 (0.95)	105 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

Possession of land, both cultivable and homestead is another indicator of economic status of a family, particularly in a rural setting. It was found that more than half of the families of children (53%) possessed only homestead land while a little more than 32 percent owned cultivable land besides homestead. There were some families (15%) who did not possess any landed property.

## 2.2 A Profile of Affected Children

There were a total of 303 children in the districts of Kamrup Metro, Kamrup Rural and Kokrajhar who benefited since the operation of the Project Assist in these districts in the year 2002. As per the available data, the age group of these children ranged from two years to eighteen years and above. Sex wise, girls (51%) slightly out-number the boys (49%) among the beneficiaries. As mentioned earlier, at the time of the present study 229 children out of 303 were actually receiving the financial assistance and the rest 73 children were not receiving the assistance for one or other reasons. Thus, for the purpose of the study, these 229 children who were presently receiving the assistance were considered as beneficiaries and those 73 who were not receiving the assistance had been tagged as non-beneficiary. For collection of data for the study, 124 beneficiary out of 229 and 63 non-beneficiary children out of 73 were selected using stratified purposive sampling method for interviewing. A profile of these respondent children is presented in the following paragraphs.

### 2.2.1 Beneficiary Children

Amongst 124 respondent beneficiary children there were equal number of boys and girls (62 each). Age wise, a little more than half of these children were in the age group of 11-15 years as shown in Table 2.12. A sizable number (32.26%) of the children were in the age range of 16 – 18 years. Rests of the children (16%) were between six to ten years of age. Figure 2.10 also shows the age wise distribution of the beneficiary children.

**Table 2.12: Age wise distribution of the beneficiary children**

District	Age of the Respondent			Total
	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	16-18 yrs	
Kamrup (Metro)	10 (41.67)	07 (29.17)	07 (29.17)	24 (100.00)
Kamrup (Rural)	03 (25.00)	04 (33.33)	05 (41.67)	12 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	08 (9.09)	52 (59.09)	28 (31.82)	88 (100.00)

Total	21 (16.94)	63 (50.81)	40 (32.26)	124 (100.0)
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Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig: 2.10: Age wise distribution of the beneficiary children**

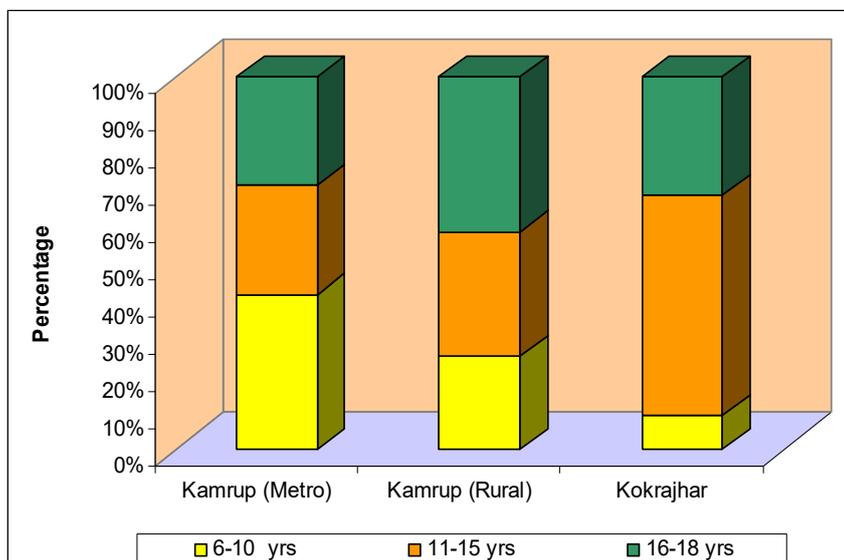


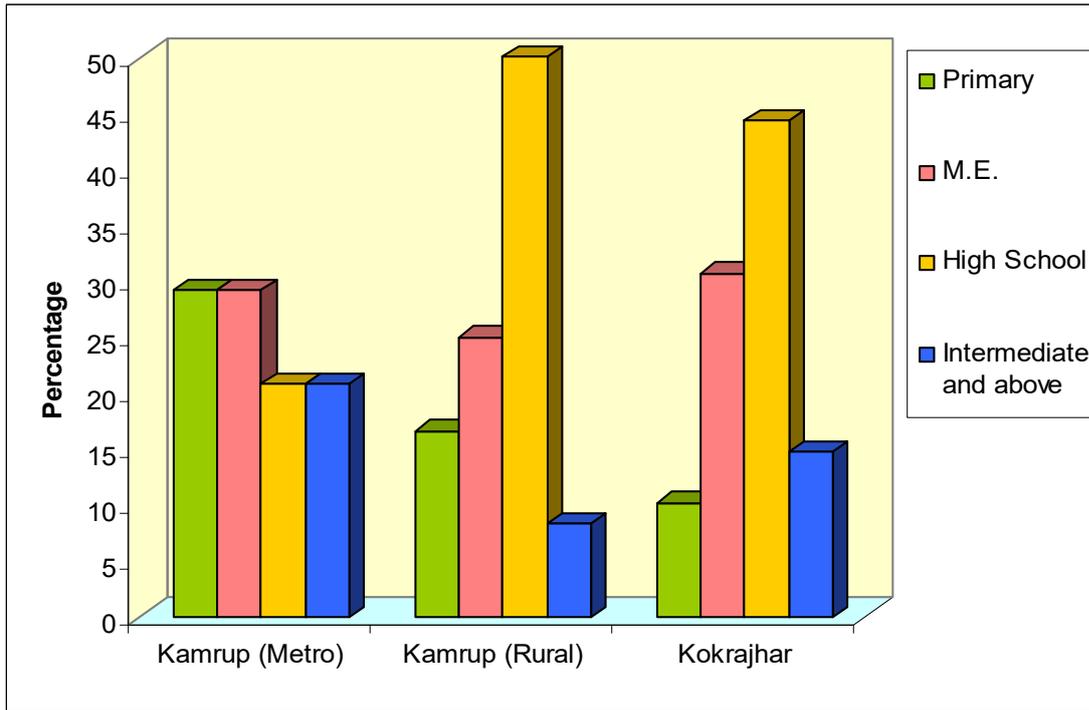
Table 2.13 and Figure 2.11 show the educational status of the respondent beneficiary children. It can be seen that a large chunk of the beneficiary children

**Table 2.13: Educational status of the beneficiary children**

District	Educational status				Total
	Primary	M.E.	High School	Intermediate and above	
Kamrup (Metro)	07 (29.17)	07 (29.17)	05 (20.83)	05 (20.83)	24 (100.00)
Kamrup (Rural)	02 (16.67)	03 (25.00)	06 (50.00)	01 (8.33)	12 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	09 (10.23)	27 (30.68)	39 (44.32)	13 (14.77)	88 (100.00)
Total	18 (14.52)	37 (29.84)	50 (40.32)	19 (15.32)	124 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig: 2.11: Educational status of the beneficiary children**



(40.32%) were studying in various classes of high school. A sizable percentage (29.84%) were continuing their studies in ME sections while 14.52 per cent of the children were studying in primary schools and 15.32 per cent were pursuing studies in intermediate classes or above. The large majority of these children were living in their own families (84%) while the rest 14 per cent were living with their relatives.

### 2.2.2 Non-Beneficiary Children

As reported earlier, 63 out of 73 non-beneficiary children were interviewed for the present study in the selected districts. Among the non-beneficiary respondents, boys (51%) marginally surpass the girls (49%) in number. Table 2.14 shows the distribution of the non-beneficiary children in terms of age. As can be seen, the bulk of the

**Table: 2.14: Age wise distribution of the non- beneficiary children**

Districts	Age of the Respondent		Total
	16-18 yrs	18 yrs above	
Kamrup (Metro)	01 (20.00)	04 (80.00)	05 (100.00)
Kamrup (Rural)	01 (10.00)	09 (90.00)	10 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	03 (6.25)	45 (93.75)	48 (100.00)

Total	05 (7.94)	58 (92.06)	63 (100.00)
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Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

non-beneficiary children had attained the age of 18 years or more. Only a small percentage of children were between 16 to 18 years. Figure 2.12 presents the age-wise distribution of the non-beneficiary children.

**Fig: 2.12: Age wise distribution of the non- beneficiary children**

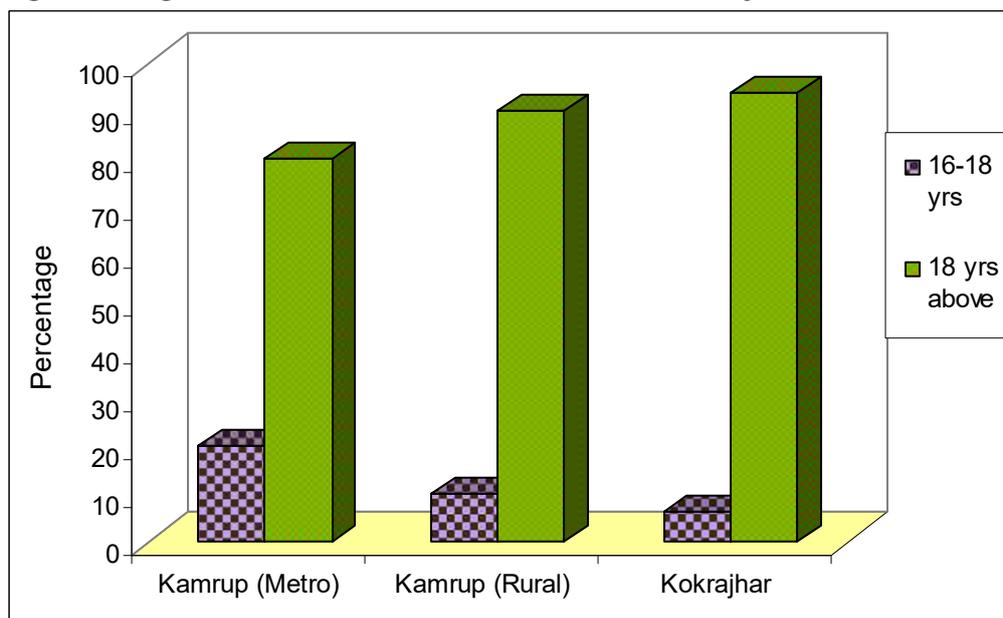


Table 2.15 shows the educational status of the non-beneficiary children. As can be seen, majority of the non-beneficiary children (54%) were continuing their studies, while a large section of them (44.44%) had dropped out of their studies. A small number of the non-beneficiary reported to have completed their studies. Figure 2.13 also shows the educational status of non-beneficiary children.

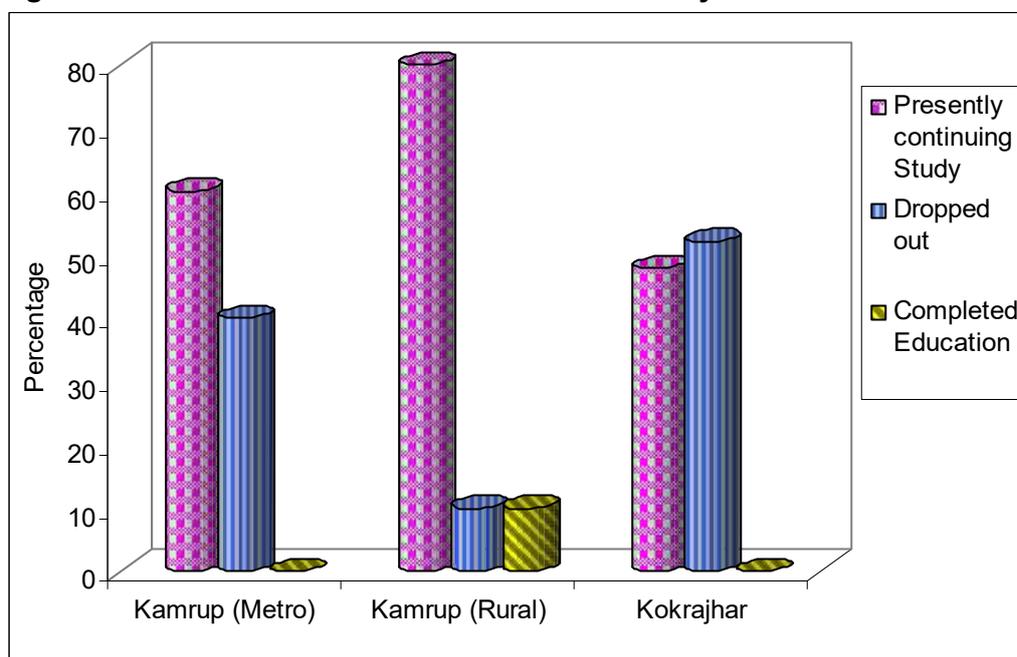
**Table: 2.15: Educational status of the non-beneficiary Children**

Districts	Educational Status			Total
	Presently continuing Study	Dropped out	Completed Education	
Kamrup (Metro)	03 (60.00)	02 (40.00)	00 (0.00)	05 (100.00)
Kamrup (Rural)	08 (80.00)	01 (10.00)	01 (10.00)	10 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	23 (47.92)	25 (52.08)	00 (00.00)	48 (100.00)

Total	34 (53.97)	28 (44.44)	01 (1.59)	63 (100.00)
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Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig: 2.13: Educational status of the non-beneficiary children**



It may be mentioned here that, as per the criteria laid down under Project Assist, a beneficiary shall not receive the assistance if he/she discontinues his/her studies prior to attaining the age of 18 years. At the same time, beneficiaries shall not be entertained after 18 years of age unless they continue their studies in professional courses. That is why we find larger number of respondents above 18 years of age in the non-beneficiary category as depicted in table 2.15. For similar reasons Table 2.16 depicted a large number of dropped out students (44.44%) who stopped receiving the assistance for discontinuing their studies.

In terms of residential status, 92 per cent of the non-beneficiaries were living in their own families and the rest eight per cent were living else-where.

# **CHAPTER - 3**

## CHAPTER 3

### VIEWS OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND CHILDREN

In order to assess the efficacy of Project Assist in supporting the children affected by communal/ terrorist violence it becomes necessary to gauge the level of awareness of parents, beneficiary children and community members about the scheme, its objectives and contents and also analyze their views about the usefulness, adequacy and utilization of the assistance provided under the scheme, etc. In the present chapter attempts have been made to highlight the views and opinions of the parents/ guardians, beneficiary and non-beneficiary children and community leaders on the above mentioned aspects.

#### 3.1 Awareness about the Scheme

For utilizing the benefits of any Governmental programme and scheme by the target groups it becomes essential that the intended beneficiaries or their guardians are aware of the existence of such interventions. This is more so in case of the parents/ guardians of children who had been rendered orphan due to violence perpetuated as a result of communal tension or terrorist/extremist activities.

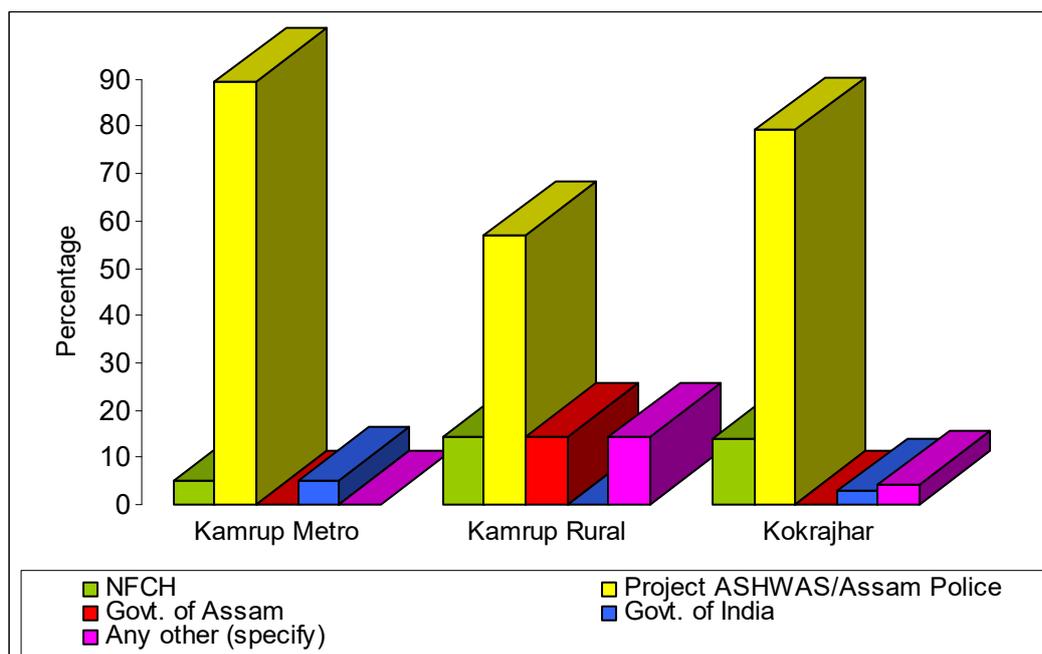
In the present study efforts were made to understand the perception of the parents/ guardians of children receiving the financial assistance under Project Assist about the source of such assistance. Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1 show the responses of the parents and guardians in this respect. It can be seen that, only 12.38 per cent of the parents/ guardians were aware that the financial assistance for their wards was actually extended by NFCH. The large majority of the respondents (78 %) were under the impression that the assistance was being given by Project AASHWAS of Assam Police. This was mainly because of the reason that AASHWAS has been instrumental in coordinating between NFCH and the beneficiaries and facilitating the process and therefore, the beneficiaries and their guardians were under the impression that the financial assistance had come from AASHWAS. A few parents/guardians thought it came from other sources like the state government, NGOs, etc.

**Table 3.1: Views of parents/ guardians about source of financial assistance**

District	Source of financial assistance					Total
	NFCH	Project ASHWAS/ Assam Police	Govt. of Assam	Govt. of India	Any other (specify)	
Kamrup (Metro)	01 (5.26)	17 (89.47)	00 (0.00)	01 (5.26)	00 (0.00)	19 (100.00)
Kamrup (Rural)	02 (14.29)	08 (57.14)	02 (14.29)	00 (0.00)	02 (14.29)	14 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	10 (13.89)	57 (79.17)	00 (0.00)	02 (2.78)	03 (4.17)	72 (100.00)
Total	13 (12.38)	82 (78.10)	02 (1.90)	03 (2.86)	05 (4.76)	105 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 3.1: Views of parents/ guardians about source of financial assistance**



Only two per cent of the parents/guardians stated that, they were aware about the Scheme of Assistance of NFCH prior to the incidence of killing of their husbands/ parents/ close relatives.

The query about the source of financial assistance was also made to the respondent beneficiary and non-beneficiary children. An analysis of the responses of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in this regard showed similar results wherein 80 per cent of the beneficiaries and 87 per cent of non-beneficiaries stated that they were receiving the assistance from AASHWAS. Only, four and six per cent of the beneficiary and non-beneficiaries respectively were aware that the assistance came from NFCH. Few beneficiary and non-beneficiary children were under the impression that, the assistance was offered by other agencies. It is worth mentioning here that, none of the community leaders interviewed in the three districts were also aware of NFCH or its activities for providing relief to the victims of communal or terrorist violence.

Although, the majority of the parents/ guardians and also the children were not aware about the exact source of the financial assistance, yet, they were largely aware about the purpose for which this support is provided for. Ninety eight per cent of the parents/guardians and almost 95% of the children knew that the financial assistance was given mainly to enable them to meet expenses related to their education and other essential needs and continue their studies.

Parents and Guardians were asked as to how they came to know that financial assistance were available for supporting the education of children whose parent(s) had been killed during communal/ terrorist violence. The responses of the parents have been recorded in Table 3.2. It can be seen that the parents/ guardians had come to know about the assistance under Project Assist from a number of sources. Deputy Commissioner's office,

Police as well as functionaries of Project AASHWAS and NGOs were the main source of information for these parents/ guardians. Since in Kokrajhar

**Table 3.2: Source of information about the scheme of assistance (Multiple Choice)**

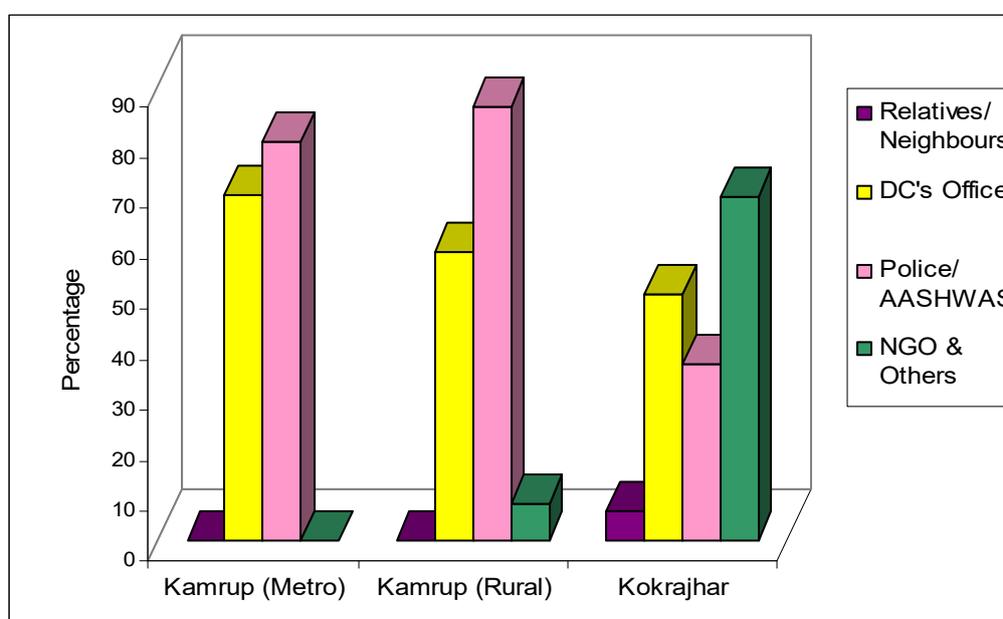
(N=105)

District	Source of information			
	Relatives/ Neighbours	DC's Office	Police/ AASHWAS	NGO & Others
Kamrup (Metro)	00 (0.00)	13 (68.42)	15 (78.95)	00 (0.00)
Kamrup (Rural)	00 (0.00)	08 (57.14)	12 (85.71)	01 (7.14)
Kokrajhar	04 (5.56)	35 (48.61)	25 (34.72)	49 (68.06)
Total	04 (3.81)	56 (53.33)	52 (49.53)	50 (47.62)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

district the NGO Society to Save Victims of Violence has been working, a large group of respondents also learnt about the assistance from it as can also be seen in Figure 3.2.

**Fig 3.2: Source of information about the scheme of assistance**



### 3.2 Usefulness of the Scheme of Assistance

Views of the parents/ guardians and their children were also elicited on the usefulness of the financial assistance provided under Project Assist. Almost all the parents/

guardians (99%) agreed that the financial assistance provided to their children had been useful. They were on the opinion that the financial assistance had helped in the education of their children. Only one respondent opined that the financial assistance was not useful without assigning any reason.

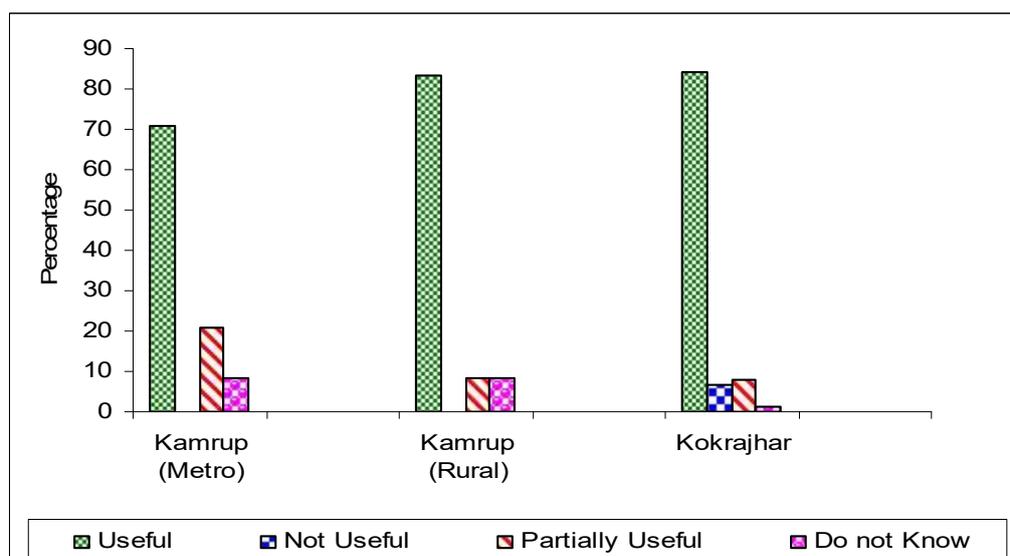
Likewise, a very large number of beneficiary children (81.5%) found the assistance useful as shown in Table 3.3. It can be seen that few beneficiaries found the scheme partially useful (10.5%) and according to another few (4.8%) the assistance was of not much use and 3.2 per cent did not comment. The same is also shown in Figure 3.3.

**Table 3.3: Views of beneficiary children on usefulness of the financial assistance**

District	Usefulness of the Financial Assistance				Total
	Useful	Not Useful	Partially Useful	Do not Know	
Kamrup (Metro)	17 (70.83)	00 (0.00)	05 (20.8)	02 (08.3)	24 (100.00)
Kamrup (Rural)	10 (83.33)	00 (0.00)	01 (8.33)	01 (8.33)	12 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	74 (84.1)	06 (6.8)	07 (8.00)	01 (01.1)	88 (100.00)
Total	101 (81.5)	06 (4.8)	13 (10.5)	04 (03.2)	124 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 3.3: Views of beneficiary children on usefulness of the financial assistance**



Responses of the beneficiary children regarding the way the financial assistance was supporting them are shown in Table 3.4 and Figure 3.4. As can be seen, large majority of the beneficiary children (92%) expressed that, the financial assistance has enabled them to continue their studies. Some of the beneficiary children (10.48%) also informed that, the assistance was also helping in meeting some day to day needs besides education.

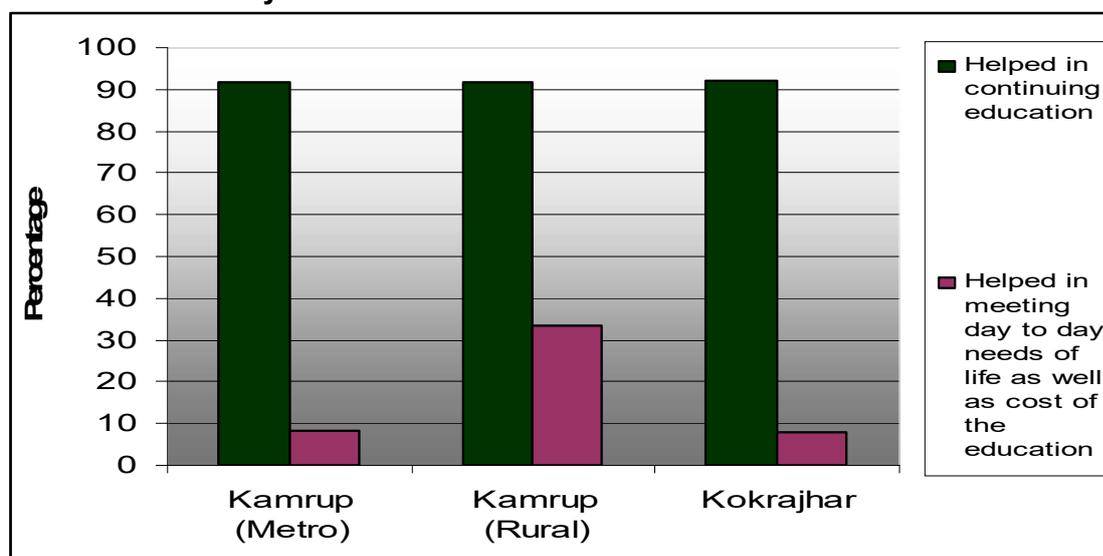
**Table 3.4: Supports received due to financial assistance - Views of beneficiary children (Multiple Choice)**

(N=124)

District	Supports Received	
	Helped in continuing education	Helped in meeting day to day needs of life as well as cost of the education
Kamrup (Metro)	22 (91.67)	02 (8.33)
Kamrup (Rural)	11 (91.67)	04 (33.33)
Kokrajhar	81 (92.05)	07 (7.95)
Total	114 (91.94)	13 (10.48)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 3.4: Supports received due to financial assistance - Views of Beneficiary Children**



Likewise, 86 per cent of the non-beneficiary children who had earlier received the financial assistance also expressed that it had helped them in continuing their education as shown in Table 3.5 and Figure 3.5. Thus, by and large, it can be said that for most of the guardians/ parents and beneficiary and non-beneficiary children the financial assistance was useful in terms of enabling the children to continue their education. Other than meeting educational expenses, the assistance could hardly help in meeting other day to day needs of the children as evident from the responses recorded in Table 3.4 and Table 3.5.

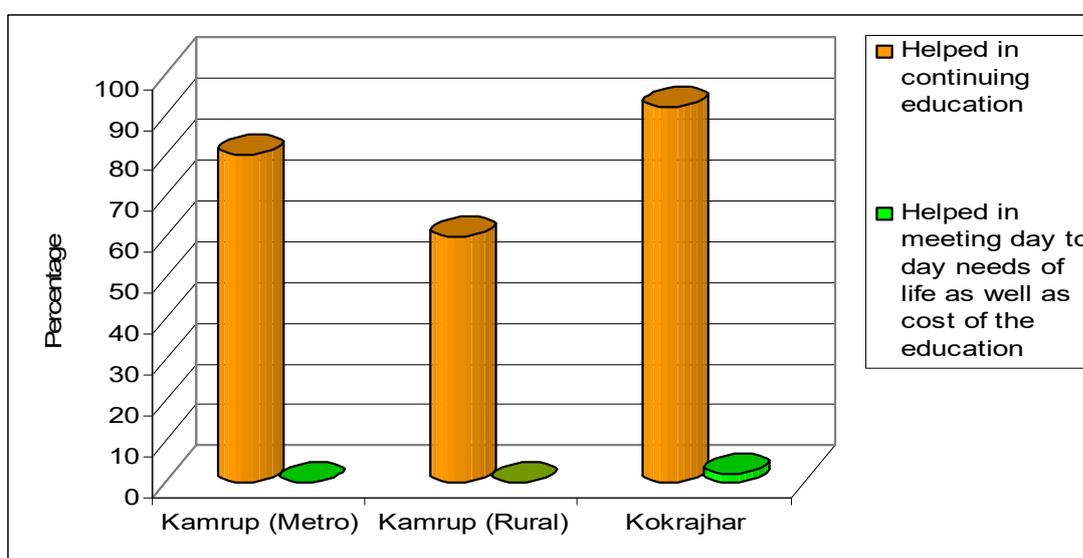
**Table 3.5: Supports received due to financial assistance - Views of non-beneficiary children (Multiple Choice)**

(N=63)

Districts	Supports Received	
	Helped in continuing education	Helped in meeting day to day needs of life as well as cost of the education
Kamrup (Metro)	04 (80.00)	00 (0.00)
Kamrup (Rural)	06 (60.00)	00 (0.00)
Kokrajhar	44 (91.67)	01 (2.08)
Total	54 (85.71)	01 (1.59)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 3.5: Supports received due to financial assistance - Views of non-beneficiary children**



### 3.2.1 Adequacy of the Assistance

The present study also attempted to elicit the responses of the parents/ guardians and also beneficiary and non-beneficiary children regarding adequacy of the amount of financial assistance extended to the beneficiaries. Table 3.6 and 3.7 shows the responses of the parents/ guardians and children in this respect. It can be seen that most of the parents/guardians (97.14%) felt that the amount was insufficient. Figure 3.6 also vividly displays that the parents and guardians found the assistance amount insufficient. Likewise, the large majority of the beneficiary (87.10%) and non-beneficiary

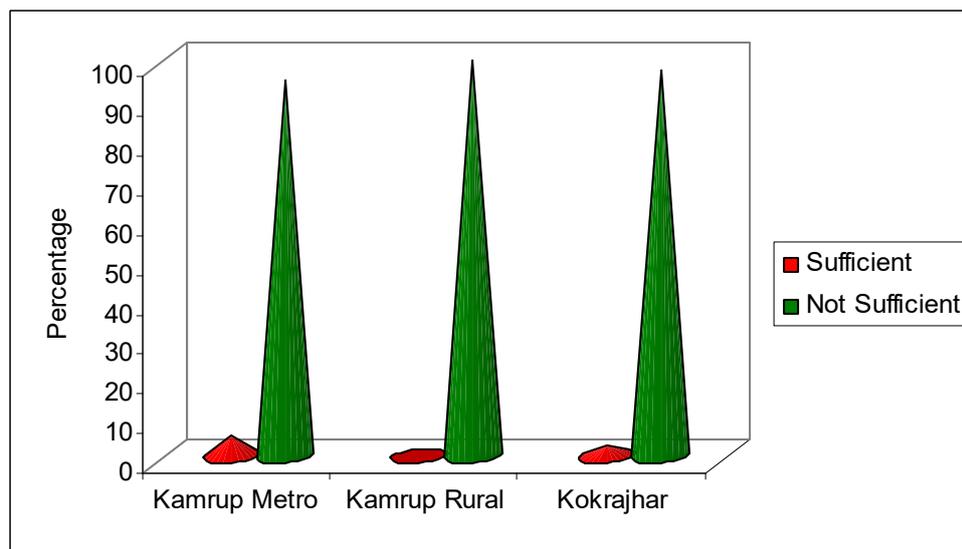
**Table 3.6: Adequacy of the amount of financial assistance - Views of parents/guardians**

District	Whether the Amount of Assistance is sufficient	
	Sufficient	Not Sufficient
Kamrup Metro	01 (5.26)	18 (94.74)
Kamrup Rural	00 (0.00)	14 (100.00)

Kokrajhar	02 (2.78)	70 (97.22)
Total	03 (2.86)	102 (97.14)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 3.6: Adequacy of the amount of financial assistance - Views of parents/guardians**



children (84.13%) also had similar opinions regarding the quantum of assistance received by them as depicted in table 3.7.

**Table 3.7: Adequacy of the amount of financial assistance - Views of beneficiary and non-beneficiary children**

District	Whether the amount of assistance is sufficient					
	Beneficiary			Non-Beneficiary		
	Sufficient	Not sufficient	Cannot say	Sufficient	Not sufficient	Cannot say
Kamrup (Metro)	00 (0.00)	20 (83.33)	04 (16.67)	00 (0.00)	03 (60.00)	02 (40.00)
Kamrup (Rural)	00 (0.00)	10 (83.33)	02 (16.67)	01 (10.00)	07 (70.00)	02 (20.00)
Kokrajhar	02 (2.27)	78 (88.64)	08 (9.09)	00 (0.00)	43 (89.58)	05 (10.42)
Total	02 (1.61)	108 (87.10)	14 (11.29)	01 (1.59)	53 (84.13)	09 (14.29)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

The guardians/parents were also asked about the utilization pattern of the financial assistance received from NFCH. Almost all the respondents (98%) stated that the assistance was utilized for education of the child. Only two per cent of the parents/ guardians said that it was also used to meet some other basic needs of the child besides education. It was also enquired whether the parents/guardians could meet the entire expenses of education of the

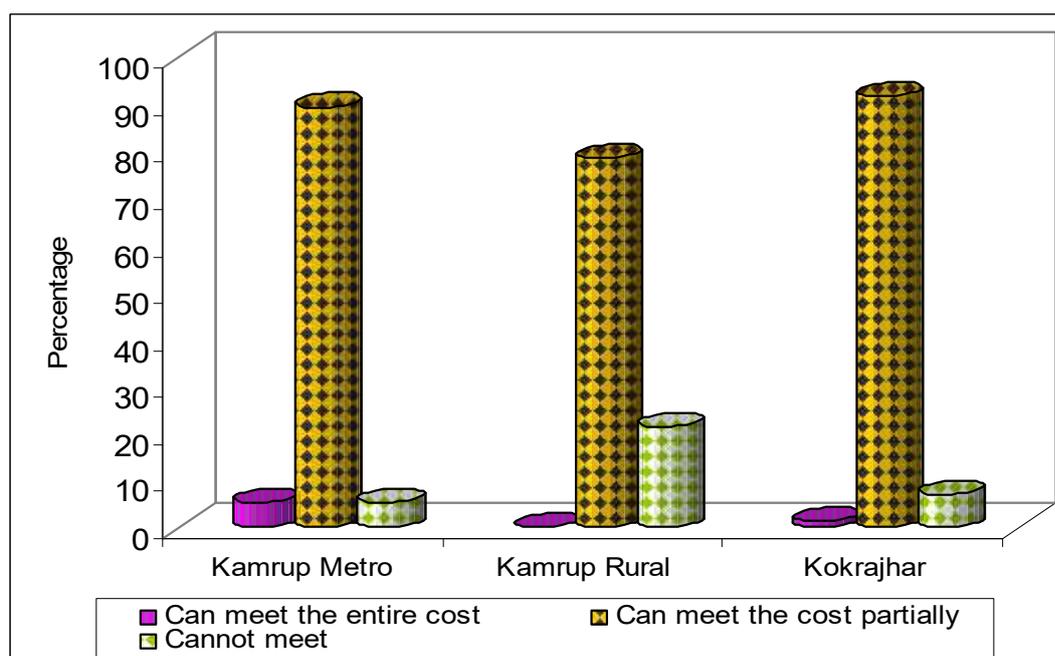
beneficiary children out of the amount of assistance received from NFCH. The responses of the parents/guardians are shown in Table 3.8. It can be seen that, according to nearly 90 per cent of the parents/guardians the expenses

**Table 3.8: Coverage of expenses of education with the assistance**

District	Extent to which cost of education is met			Total
	Can meet the entire cost	Can meet the cost partially	Cannot meet	
Kamrup Metro	01 (5.26)	17 (89.47)	01 (5.26)	19 (100.00)
Kamrup Rural	00 (0.00)	11 (78.57)	03 (21.43)	14 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	01 (1.39)	66 (91.67)	05 (6.94)	72 (100.00)
Total	02 (1.90)	94 (89.52)	09 (8.57)	105 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 3.7: Coverage of expenses of education with the assistance**



could be met partially only. A mere two per cent of the respondents had opined that, they could meet the expenses fully from the amount of assistance whereas, for little more than eight per cent the amount of assistance could not meet the expenses at all. Figure 3.7 also vividly displays the majority parents/guardian's view that the assistance amount can meet the educational expenses only partially

In the context of the present study it was pertinent to understand whether the parents/ guardians and the children desired any enhancement of the present amount of assistance. The responses of the parents/ guardians and the children show that almost all the parents/ guardians (97%), and beneficiary (91.0%) and non-beneficiary children (90.5%) desired enhancement of the present amount of assistance. All the respondents were also

asked to suggest the optimum amount to be given to the beneficiaries under Project Assist. Table 3.9 shows the amounts suggested by different parents/ guardians for this purpose. It can be seen that a sizable number (44%) of the parents/guardians suggested Rs.1500/- per month per child as the optimum amount while, nearly one-third

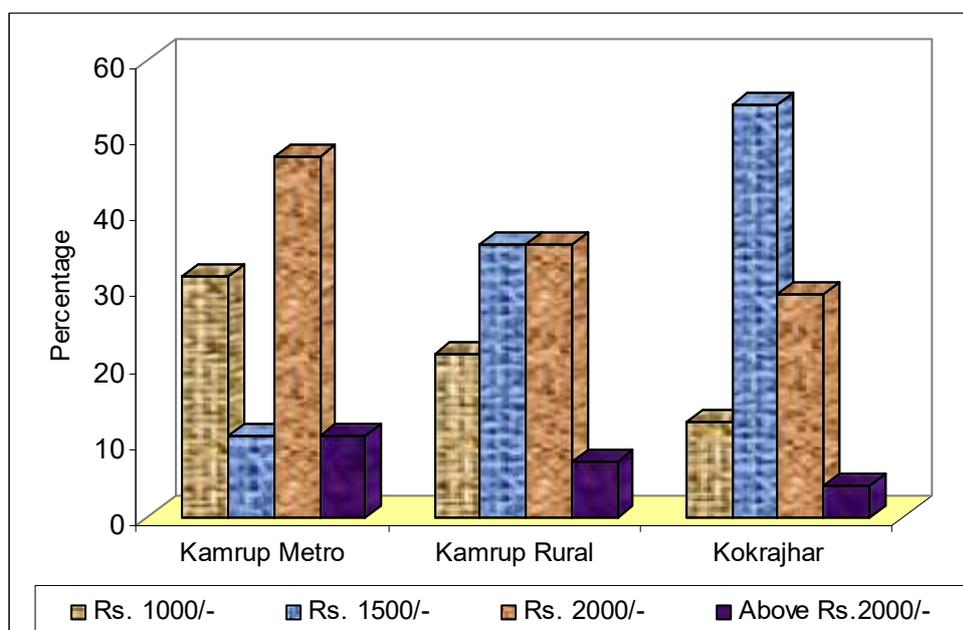
**Table 3.9: Views of parents/ guardians on optimum amount of assistance**

District	Suggested Optimum Amount per month/child				Total
	Rs. 1000/-	Rs. 1500/-	Rs. 2000/-	Above Rs.2000/-	
Kamrup Metro	06 (31.58)	02 (10.53)	09 (47.37)	02 (10.53)	19 (100.00)
Kamrup Rural	03 (21.43)	05 (35.71)	05 (35.71)	01 (7.14)	14 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	09 (12.50)	39 (54.17)	21 (29.17)	03 (4.17)	72 (100.00)
Total	18 (17.14)	46 (43.81)	35 (33.33)	06 (5.71)	105 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

of the respondents desired Rs.2000/- per month per child. Little more than 17 per cent opted for Rs.1000/- and a few even asked for more than Rs.2000/- per month per child. Figure 3.8 also presents the views of parents/guardians on the optimum amount they desired.

**Fig 3.8: Views of parents/ guardians on optimum amount of assistance**



The views of beneficiary and non-beneficiary children in this regard are shown in Tables 3.10 and 3.11 respectively. It can be seen that like the parents/ guardians, both the beneficiary and non-beneficiary children asked for hikes in the present amount of assistance

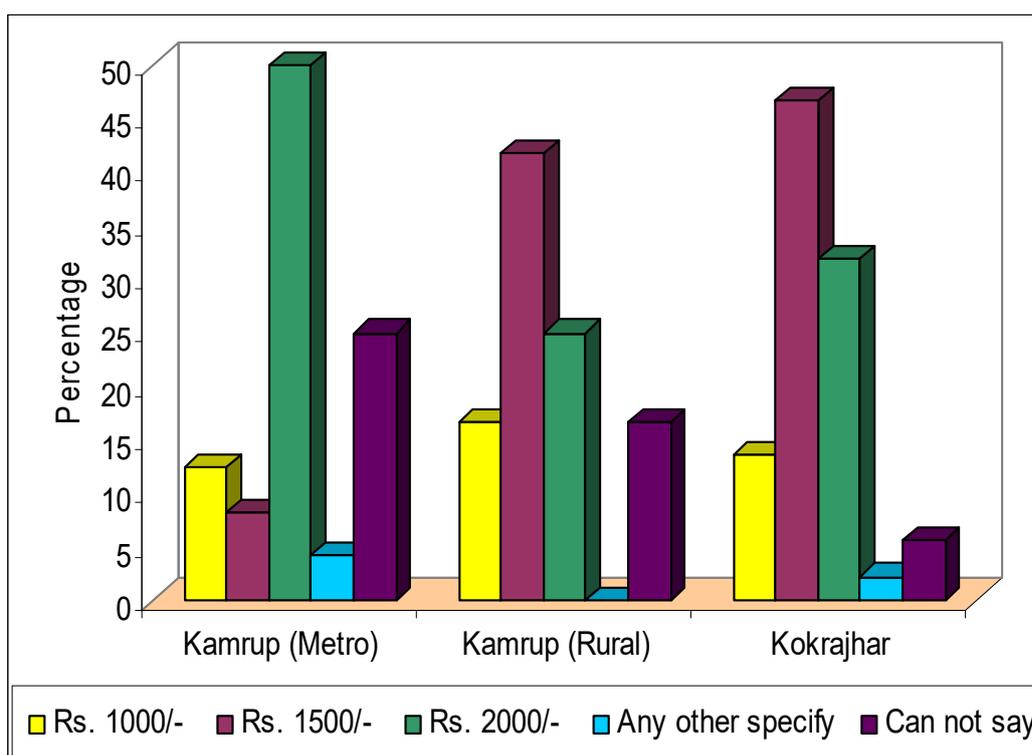
in a range Rs.1000/- per month per child to Rs.2000/- and above. Figures 3.9 and 3.10 also show the views of both the beneficiary and non-beneficiary children regarding this.

**Table 3.10: Views of beneficiary children on optimum amount of assistance**

District	Suggested optimum amount per month/child					Total
	Rs. 1000/-	Rs. 1500/-	Rs. 2000/-	Any other specify	Can not say	
Kamrup (Metro)	03 (12.50)	02 (8.33)	12 (50.00)	01 (4.17)	06 (25.00)	24 (100.00)
Kamrup (Rural)	02 (16.67)	05 (41.67)	03 (25.00)	00 (0.00)	02 (16.67)	12 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	12 (13.64)	41 (46.59)	28 (31.82)	02 (2.27)	05 (5.68)	88 (100.00)
Total	17 (13.71)	48 (38.71)	43 (34.68)	03 (2.42)	13 (10.48)	124 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 3.9: Views of beneficiary children on optimum amount of assistance**



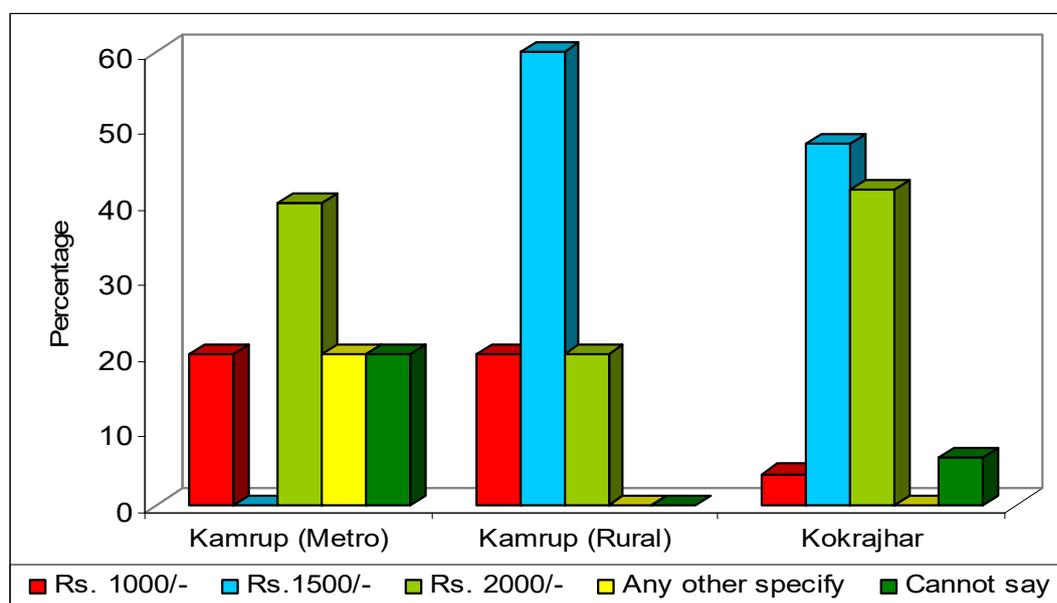
**Table 3.11: Views of non- beneficiary children on optimum amount of assistance**

District	Suggested optimum amount per month/child					Total
	Rs. 1000/-	Rs.1500/-	Rs. 2000/-	Any other specify	Cannot say	

Kamrup (Metro)	01 (20.00)	00 (0.00)	02 (40.00)	01 (20.00)	01 (20.00)	05 (100.00)
Kamrup (Rural)	02 (20.00)	06 (60.00)	02 (20.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	10 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	02 (4.17)	23 (47.92)	20 (41.67)	00 (0.00)	03 (6.25)	48 (100.00)
Total	05 (7.94)	29 (46.03)	24 (38.10)	01 (1.59)	04 (6.35)	63 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 3.10: Views of non-beneficiary children on optimum amount of assistance**



The parents/ guardians were requested to specify their reasons for asking for enhancement of the amount of assistance. The responses of the parents in this regard are shown in Table 3.12. and Figure 3.11. It can be seen that the parents/ guardians cited a number of reasons for enhancing the amount. Almost all the respondents (97%) opined that increasing cost of education of the child warrants an increase in the amount

**Table 3.12: Reason for enhancement of the assistance – Views of parents/ guardians (Multiple Choice)**

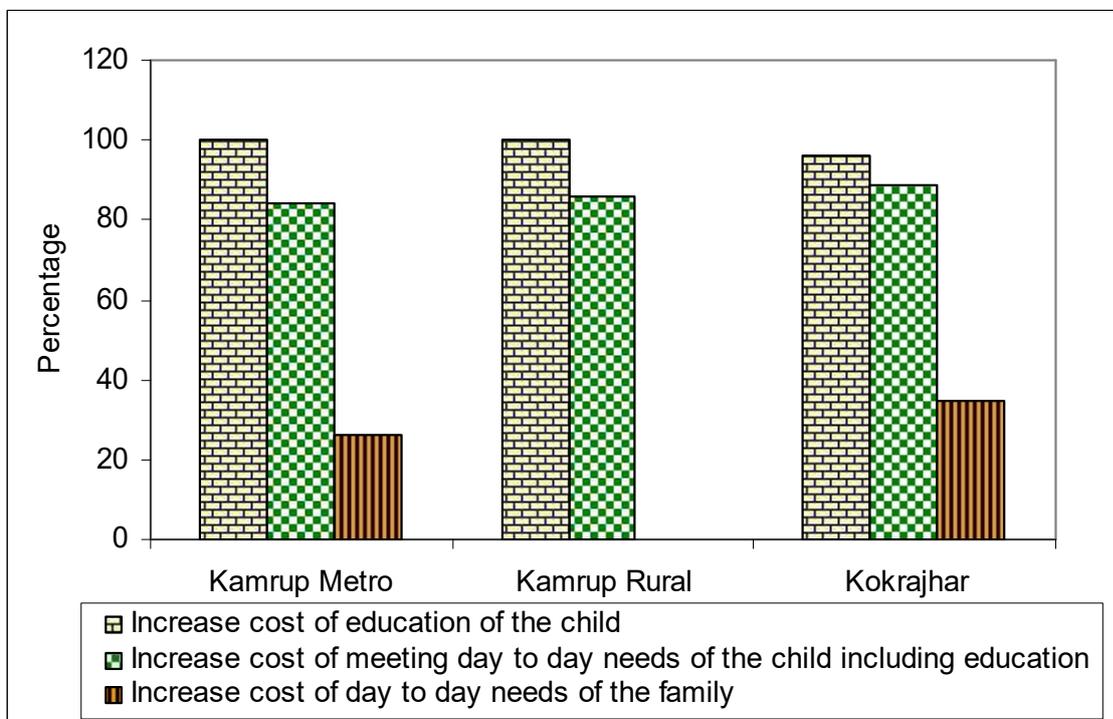
(N=105)

Districts	Reason for Enhancement of the assistance		
	Increase cost of education of the child	Increase cost of meeting day to day needs of the child including education	Increase cost of day to day needs of the family
Kamrup Metro	19 (100.00)	16 (84.21)	05 (26.32)
Kamrup Rural	14 (100.00)	12 (85.71)	00 (0.00)
Kokrajhar	69 (95.83)	64 (88.89)	25 (34.72)

Total	102 (97.14)	92 (87.62)	30 (28.57)
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Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 3.11: Reason for enhancement of the assistance – Views of parents/ guardians**



of assistance. Nearly 88 per cent of the parents/ guardians also argued that ever increasing costs for meeting other day to day needs of the child also demands that the financial assistance be suitably enhanced. Another about 29 per cent of the respondents also added that increasing cost of day to day needs of the family should also be taken into account for enhancement of the amount of assistance.

The present study made an attempt to make a rough assessment of financial requirement as stated by the families for each child to meet his/her essential needs like food, clothing, education and some miscellaneous needs. For this purpose each of the respondent families were asked to provide some details of expenditures involved against each beneficiary child under different heads like school fee, books and stationeries, clothing and miscellaneous expenses etc in the last six months. From the details provided by the families an average expenditure per month for each child had been worked out. It was found that, in the context of the families covered under the study in the three districts for each child on an average Rs.1436/- is required to meet the minimum expenses for education, food, clothing and some other miscellaneous needs. Out of this an approximate amount of Rs.400/- per month per child on an average for education purposes alone. Although, the out come of the exercise cannot be said to be accurate yet, it gives us an idea of minimum expenses involved for meeting some essential requirements of each child.

### 3.3 Other Compensations/ Financial Support

It must be mentioned here that the next of the kin(s) of victims of communal/ caste/ terrorist/ extremist violence are usually offered one-time monetary compensation (Ex-gratia) by the Government(s). It has been learnt, during the present study that, 80 per cent of the respondents had received such financial compensations. All of these recipients had received such compensation from the Government of Assam. The amount of the financial compensations received by the concerned families varied from case to case from Rs. One lakh to Rs. Sixteen lakhs. The parents/ guardians were also asked to narrate as to how this amount was utilized. The responses of the parents/ guardians in

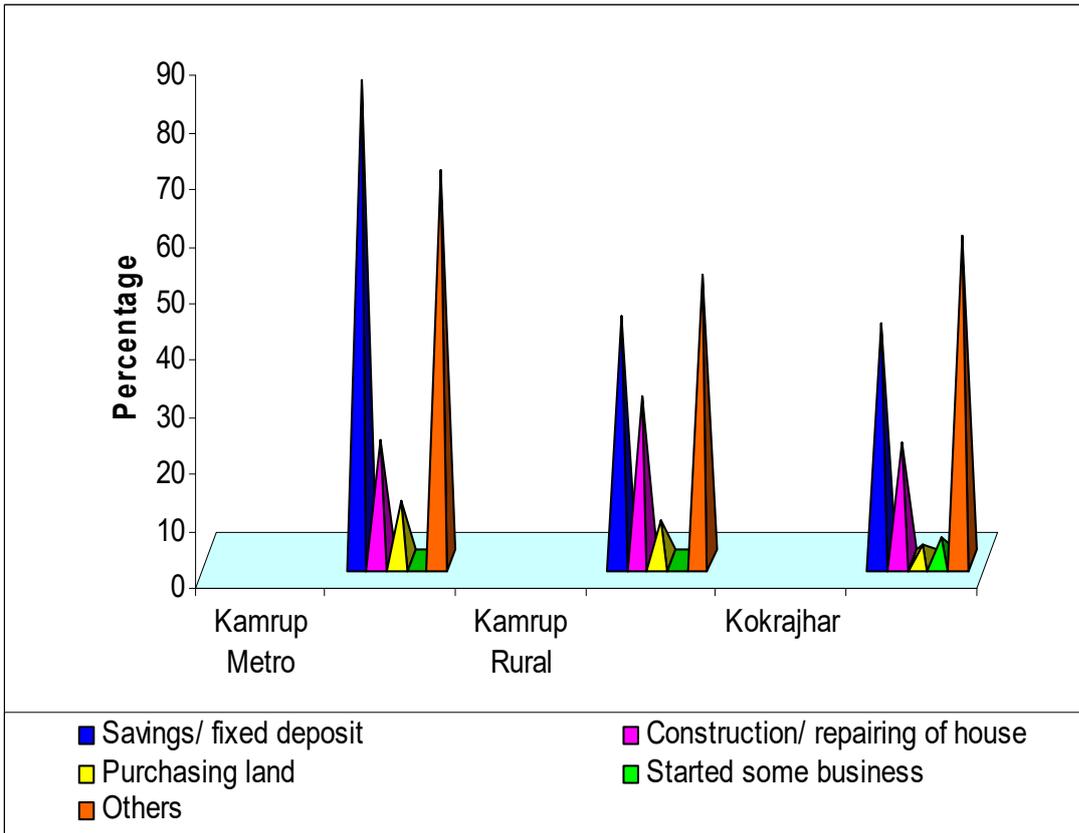
**Table 3.13: Utilization of financial compensation (Multiple Choice)**

(N=105)

Districts	How this amount was utilized				
	Savings/ fixed deposit	Construction/ repairing of house	Purchasing land	Started some business	Others
Kamrup Metro	16 (84.21)	04 (21.05)	02 (10.53)	00 (0.00)	13 (68.42)
Kamrup Rural	6 (42.86)	04 (28.57)	01 (7.14)	00 (0.00)	07 (50.00)
Kokrajhar	30 (41.67)	15 (20.83)	02 (2.78)	03 (4.17)	41 (56.94)
Total	52 (49.52)	23 (21.90)	05 (4.76)	03 (2.86)	61 (58.10)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 3.12: Utilization of financial compensation**



this respect are shown in Table 3.13. It can be seen that about half (50%) of the parents/ guardians had saved some of this amount in fixed deposits, besides other use. Construction and repairing of dwelling houses was another major means for utilization (22%). The amount was also utilized by a large section of the recipients (58%) for repaying their debts and other familial and household needs. Few of the recipients have also invested these amounts for purchase of land (5%), starting some small business (3%). Figure 3.12 also shows the utilization pattern of the assistance.

# **CHAPTER - 4**

## CHAPTER 4

### MECHANISM OF IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT ASSIST IN ASSAM

In the present chapter attempt is made to examine the efficacy and efficiency of the present mechanisms for implementation of Project Assist in Assam, particularly in the districts covered by the study. The views and opinions of the parents/ guardians, the District Administrations, officials and functionaries of Project AASHWAS on various aspects of implementations of the scheme are discussed in the following paragraphs.

#### 4.1 Aspects of Mechanisms of Implementation

Project Assist has been in operation in Assam since 2002. The Scheme is being implemented in Assam with active collaboration of AASHWAS, a Project of Assam Police. As has been mentioned earlier, as on 2011, nearly 1000 children had been covered in the state under the scheme. Normally, as per the guidelines of the scheme, a District Committee under the District Magistrate/Collector or Deputy Commissioner with Superintendent of Police, District Social Welfare Officer, District Education Officer, etc as members is supposed to identify the beneficiaries. However, in Assam, AASHWAS takes the lead role in identifying the eligible children to receive the financial assistance under Project Assist. Usually, at the initiative of the Nodal Officer of Project AASHWAS, the officials at the different Police Stations identify and collect the details of such children from their records. Thereafter, representatives from the Police Stations contact the parents/ guardians of the children whose parent(s) have been killed in communal/terrorist violence and inform them about the scheme of assistance under Project Assist. They also supply the required application forms to the parents/ guardians and often help them to fill up the forms and guide them to collect the necessary certificates and documents. At times, the functionaries of Project AASHWAS of Assam Police themselves deposit the forms etc. at the Deputy Commissioner's Office for forwarding to NFCH. In Kokrajhar District an NGO named Society to Save Victims of Violence and Terrorism in Kokrajhar Assam, had been supporting AASHWAS and doing commendable work by way of contacting the eligible beneficiaries, helping their guardians/ parents to do the required paper works, doing liaison with Project AASHWAS and the District Authorities to enable the parents/guardians of eligible children to submit their applications for financial assistance, etc. Generally the parents/ guardians themselves procure the requisite certificates etc from different authorities. If required, functionaries of Project AASHWAS and the NGO help the parents/ guardians in collecting the necessary documents. After the applications are received, the Office of the Deputy Commissioner sends these to the NFCH. Usually the district authority forwards the applications of all the eligible children of the district in one lot to NFCH. The NFCH on receiving the applications scrutinizes them and sanctions the assistance and sends the amounts of assistance to the office of the concerned Deputy Commissioner who, in turn, issues the cheque to the beneficiaries. Many a times, the parents/ guardians of the beneficiaries are informed by officials of Deputy Commissioner's Office, officials of concerned Police Station/ Project AASHWAS and functionaries of the NGO when the cheque are ready for disbursement.

##### 4.1.1 Problems in Application Process

The parents/ guardians were requested to highlight the difficulties faced by them while applying for assistance under the scheme. The responses of the parents/ guardians in

this regard have been shown in Table 4.1. It was nice to note that the large majority of the respondents (92.38%) encountered no problem while applying for the assistance. A small number of the parents/ guardians had trouble in filling up the application form and in obtaining necessary documents/ certificates. Only very few had faced some other problems like non-cooperation from officials, community leaders and Police, late receipt of information relating to the formalities to be observed, etc. Thus, it can be said that the parents/ guardians seldom faced difficulties while applying for the assistance. It must be mentioned here at this point that, the support and assistance

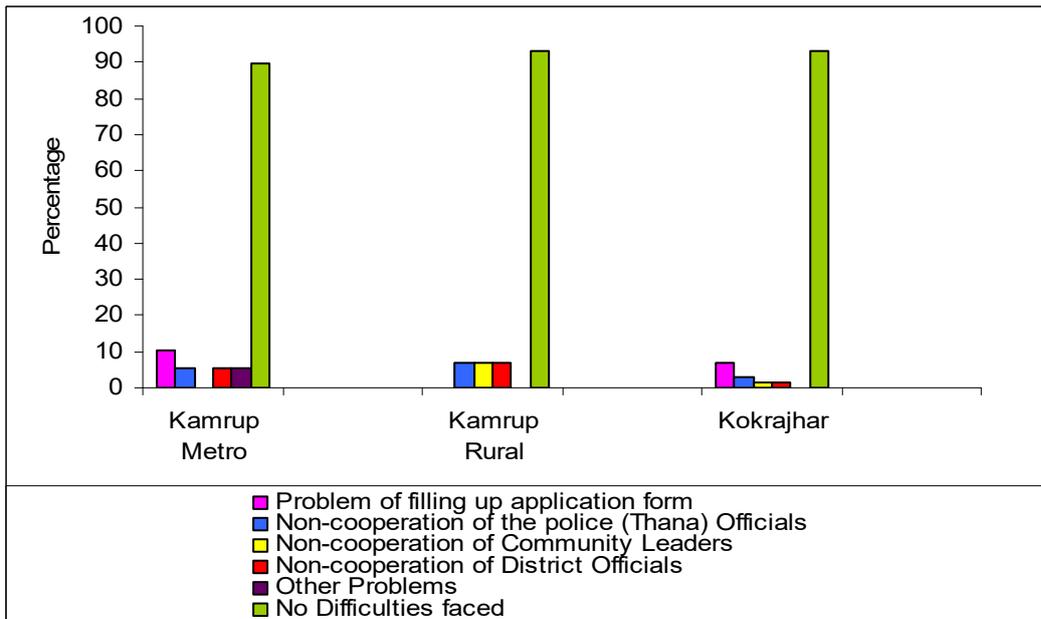
**Table 4.1: Difficulties faced by parents/ guardians while applying for assistance (Multiple Choice)**

(N=105)

Districts	Difficulty faced while applying for assistance under the scheme					
	Problem of filling up application form	Non-cooperation of the police (Thana) Officials	Non-cooperation of Community Leaders	Non-cooperation of District Officials	Other Problems	No Difficulties faced
Kamrup Metro	02 (10.53)	01 (5.26)	00 (0.00)	01 (5.26)	01 (5.26)	17 (89.47)
Kamrup Rural	00 (0.00)	01 (7.14)	01 (7.14)	01 (7.14)	00 (00.0)	13 (92.86)
Kokrajhar	05 (6.94)	02 (2.78)	01 (1.39)	01 (1.39)	00 (0.00)	67 (93.06)
Total	07 (6.67)	04 (3.81)	02 (1.90)	03 (2.86)	01 (0.95)	97 (92.38)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 4.1: Difficulties faced by parents/ guardians while applying for assistance**



provided with by the functionaries of Project AASHWAS and the NGO in Kokrajhar district to the parents/guardians of children greatly helped the intended beneficiaries. Figure 4.1 also depicts the difficulties faced by the parents and guardians while applying for assistance

After receiving the assistance for the first time, the parents/ guardians of beneficiary children have to again apply for renewal of the assistance every year. The parent/ guardians were also asked whether they had faced any problem while applying for renewal of the assistance. Once again the large majority of the respondents (94%) informed that they did not have much problem while filing application for renewal. The few parents and guardians who had problem at time of renewal cited that they had difficulties in obtaining the necessary documents/ certificates (6%) and also because they did not receive the information as to when they should submit the renewal application (5%).

The applicants have to submit a few documents like Income certificate, Birth Certificate, Copy of FIR, Copy of Death cum Postmortem Report of the deceased person, Study Certificate of the concerned child etc while filling application for financial assistance under Project Assist. These documents have to be obtained from different authorities. It was presumed while conducting the present study that, the parents/ guardians, particularly those who were living in remote areas, were illiterate or semi-literate and were usually not accustomed with official procedures etc. could face problems in obtaining these documents/ certificates. Keeping this in view, the study enquired into whether the parents/ guardians had difficulties in obtaining the specified documents. Responses of the parents/ Guardians in this regard showed that the majority of the applicants did not have difficulties in procuring the required documents as shown in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2. However, a sizable percentage of the parents/ guardians did face problems in obtaining some of the documents. Maximum number of the respondents (41%) had

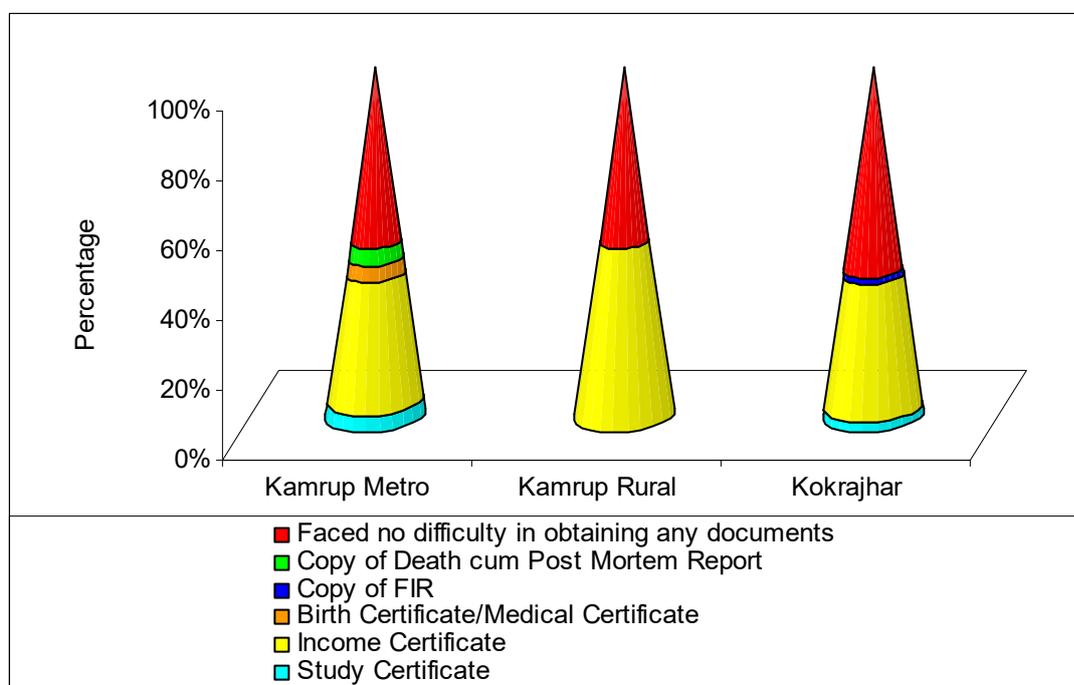
**Table 4.2: Difficulties faced by parents/ guardians while obtaining necessary documents (Multiple Choice)**

(N=105)

Districts	Difficulties faced in obtaining					
	Study Certificate	Income Certificate	Birth Certificate /Medical Certificate	Copy of FIR	Copy of Death cum Post Mortem Report	Faced no difficulty in obtaining any documents
Kamrup Metro	01 (5.26)	08 (42.11)	01 (5.26)	00 (0.00)	01 (5.26)	11 (57.89)
Kamrup Rural	00 (0.00)	07 (50.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	07 (50.00)
Kokrajhar	02 (2.78)	28 (38.89)	00 (0.00)	01 (1.39)	00 (0.00)	43 (59.72)
Total	03 (2.86)	43 (40.95)	01 (0.95)	01 (0.95)	01 (0.95)	61 (58.95)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 4.2: Difficulties faced by parents/ guardians while obtaining necessary documents**



problems in procuring the income certificate. Of course, very few respondents had difficulties in arranging other documents as can be seen from the table. It may be mentioned here that almost all the parents/ guardians acknowledged that functionaries of AASHWAS, officials of Police Stations and the NGO had helped them in obtaining the documents. Perhaps, that

was the reason for which almost all the parents/ guardians did not have problems in acquiring the papers other than the Income certificate.

As per the scheme, the financial assistance is to be paid in advance annually in the first quarter of the academic year so that the child or the family does not face problem in meeting the expenditures relating to his/her education for the current year. However, it could be learnt that the assistance is not usually received by the beneficiaries within the very first quarter of the year as prescribed under the scheme, but is usually disbursed within the same academic year. Some sections of the parent/ guardians of beneficiary children were also not aware of the fact that the assistance should be received during the first quarter of the academic year. At the same time, the exact day/date of disbursement of the cheque does not remain same for every year and as a result, most of these respondents were not in a position to reply in affirmative as to whether delay occurred in receipt of the assistance or not. Therefore, majority of the respondents (74%) opined that they usually received the assistance on time and 26 per cent informed that the receipt of the assistance was occasionally delayed. According to about 20 per cent of the parents/guardians the assistance is delayed, at times, upto six months or more. The parents/ guardians who informed that the assistance was delayed were, however, unable to pin point the cause(s) of delay.

#### 4.1.2 Views for Effective Implementation

The present study also made efforts to generate suggestions from the parents/ guardians for making the scheme more effective. The responses of the parents/ guardians in this regard are shown in Table 4.3. It can be seen that almost all the respondents suggested for enhancement of the amount of assistance and its timely disbursement (99% and 90% respectively). Some of the respondent parents/ guardians (11.43%) also suggested for checking red- tapism and procedural complications. A small percentage of parents/ guardians (8.57%) also made a few other suggestions like increasing the age limit for eligibility, continuation of assistance for students upto post-graduate level, providing the assistance in cash, employment opportunities, etc. It may

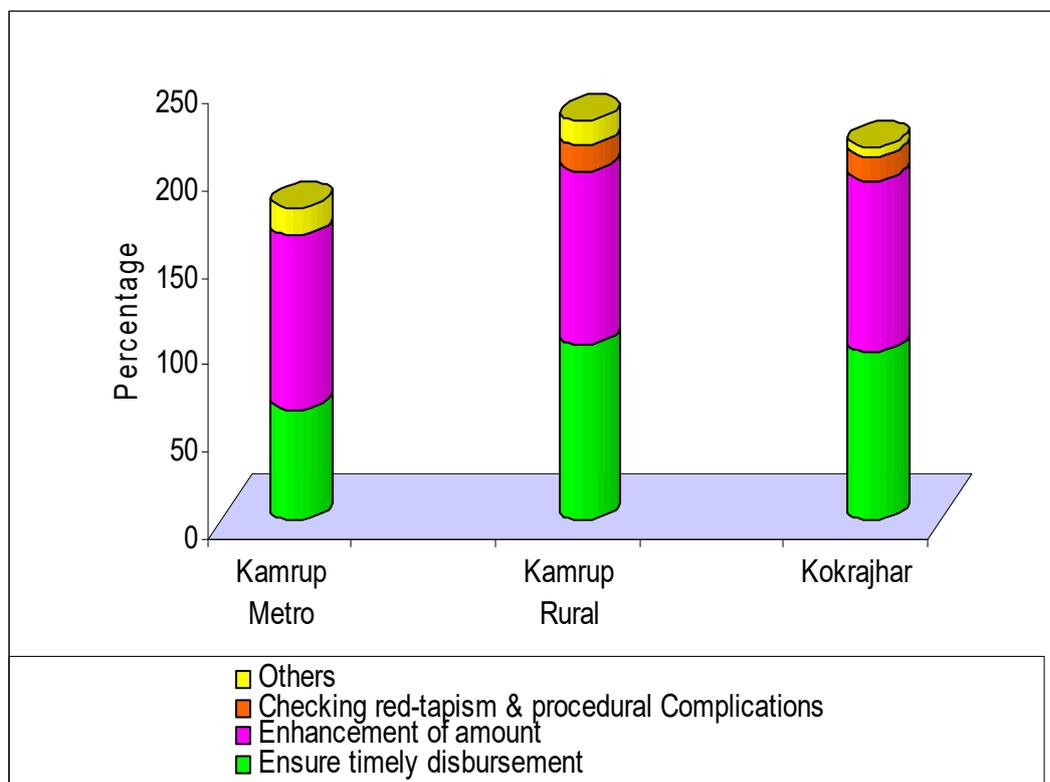
**Table 4.3: Suggestions of parents/ guardians for making the scheme effective (Multiple Choice)**

District	Suggestions for making scheme more effective			
	Ensure timely disbursement	Enhancement of amount	Checking red-tapism & procedural Complications	Other Suggestion
Kamrup Metro	12 (63.16)	19 (100.00)	00 (0.00)	03 (15.79)
Kamrup Rural	14 (100.00)	14 (100.00)	02 (14.29)	02 (14.29)
Kokrajhar	69 (95.83)	71 (98.61)	10 (13.89)	04 (5.56)
Total	95 (90.48)	104 (99.05)	12 (11.43)	09 (8.57)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

be mentioned here that, those few who had suggested for cash disbursement of the assistance reside in the most interior areas and for them access to banks is usually very difficult. The parents and guardians were also requested to specify ways and means for simplifying the procedures of disbursement of assistance under the scheme. However, most of the respondent could not come up with any specific suggestions. Only three per cent of the respondents suggested that the target beneficiaries should be asked to submit the various documents only once rather than every year to reduce difficulties of the parents/ guardians in procuring these. Figure 4.3 graphically represents the same.

**Fig 4.3: Suggestions of parents/ guardians for making the scheme effective**



Views of the beneficiary and non-beneficiary children were also elicited on making the scheme of Project Assist more effective. Both the beneficiary (45.2%) and non-beneficiary (29%) children respectively emphasized on increasing the upper-age limit from 18 years to about 22/23 years for availing the financial assistance. Another important suggestion for making this scheme better was to provide employment/vocational training to beneficiary and non-beneficiary children. Thirteen per cent and twenty-nine per cent of the beneficiary and non-beneficiary children respectively suggested for this. About 11% of the beneficiaries wanted timely disbursement of the assistance. Few beneficiary children (3%) felt that the scheme should include the provision of providing free text-books and that they

should also be excused from paying the yearly admission fee to the schools they are studying in. Two per cent of the non-beneficiary children suggested that the functionaries of Project Assist and AASHWAS should keep a check on the malpractices that occur during the process of application and renewal for the assistance so that all the children of the victim families receive the assistance without much trouble. Thirty per cent of the non-beneficiaries did not put forward any suggestions for making the scheme better and more effective.

#### **4.2 The District Committee and its Views**

During the present study the Deputy Commissioner and his representatives, concerned Superintendent of Police/ Additional Superintendent of Police, functionaries of AASHWAS and the NGO -Society to Save Victims of Violence and Terrorism in the districts of Kamrup Metro, Kamrup Rural and Kokrajhar, were interviewed on various aspects of implementation of Project Assist.

All the respondents of the above categories opined that the present procedure of identification/ selection of children to be covered under Project Assist are comprehensive. Usually, the members of the District Committees like the Deputy Commissioner/ Additional Deputy Commissioner, Superintendent of Police/ Additional Superintendent of Police etc. carry out the work relating to Project Assist with the help of their subordinate officials. Effort was made to understand whether all members of the District Committee were equally involved in implementation of the scheme in the districts. It has already been mentioned that some district level officials like the District Social Welfare Officers, District Level Officers from Education Department were never involved in matters relating to implementation of Project Assist and usually the officials of Deputy Commissioner's Office and Superintendent of Police were only involved. However, it could be learnt that, practically almost all the tasks relating to identification of beneficiaries, procuring application forms and other documents from the eligible beneficiaries, initial verification etc. were carried out under Project AASHWAS of Assam Police. The Deputy Commissioner's office forwards these applications to the NFCH and later on when the amount of assistance is received the cheques are disbursed by it. It was also enquired whether the beneficiary children were monitored by the officials.

In line with the parents and guardians, some of the officials too opined that, parents/guardians do face problems in procuring some of the documents. More than half of these officials (57%) narrated that, obtaining an Income Certificate had been a problem for the beneficiary parents/guardians. About 29 per cent of the officials informed that getting the Study Certificate also becomes difficult for some of the parents/guardians.

As per the scheme, the maximum age limit for receiving assistance under Project Assist is 18 years. However, the large majority of the district officials (67%) opined that the age limit should be increased from present 18 years to 22 years to 25 years. More than 16 per cent of these officials were in favor of continuation of payment of assistance as long as the beneficiary is continuing his/her education. Another about 16 per cent of these officials, however, refrained from making any comments regarding the age limit.

All the officials at the district level pointed out that, the assistance under the scheme is actually helping the children rendered orphan due to communal/ terrorist violence. However, all of them also felt that the amount of assistance needs to be enhanced. According to 83 per cent of these officials the amount should be enhanced to about Rs.

1000/- to Rs. 3000/- per month per child. The rest of the officials, of course, left the matter to be decided by the concerned authorities.

Follow-up and monitoring of the beneficiary children and their families is important to ensure not only proper implementation of the scheme but also to check appropriate utilization of the financial assistance and keep a tab on the process of development of the child. Although, the large majority of the officials (83%) informed that they monitor the beneficiary children, yet it could be learnt that only the officials and functionaries under Project AASHWAS of Assam Police actually do the monitoring and the monitoring is mostly limited to checking whether the children are regularly receiving the assistance or not. The District Magistrate/ Deputy Commissioners informed that, on their part it is difficult to monitor the cases of beneficiary children mainly due to constraint of time. It is also considered by the district administration officials that, since works relating to the Project Assist are primarily carried out by the functionaries of AASHWAS at the field level, monitoring is also the responsibility of AASHWAS. Interactions with the Nodal Officer of Project AASHWAS revealed that since Project AASHWAS did not have its own functionaries and its activities were carried out by officials of Assam Police over and above their usual duties, full-fledged monitoring of each and every child by these officials was also not practically possible. However, in Kokrajhar District Project AASHWAS has collaborated with the NGO-Society to Save Victims of Violence and Terrorism and this NGO reportedly keeps in touch with all the beneficiary children and their guardians. Moreover, Project AASHWAS has evolved a few innovative ways to follow up, monitor and also provide other support to the beneficiaries and their families for ensuring that these children grow up to be physically and mentally healthy and productive individuals. A detailed discussion on these aspects shall be taken up in the next Chapter.

# **CHAPTER - 5**

## CHAPTER 5

### PROJECT ASSIST: SOME OTHER IMPORTANT FACETS

This chapter is devoted to discuss the role played by AASHWAS, an Assam Police initiative, in implementation of Project Assist in Assam, particularly follow-up of the beneficiary children who had been receiving the financial assistance. It discusses the benefits accrued to the children, their performance in the studies, aspirations. The chapter also highlights a few cases of beneficiary and non-beneficiary children in order to understand various aspects of the implementation of Project Assist in a better manner. Besides, this chapter presents a summary of the views of selected community leaders on the causative factors for communal/terrorist violence and its prevention and promotion of communal harmony and national integration.

#### 5.1 Project AASHWAS of Assam Police

The state of Assam had witnessed a gory saga of violence and blood-shed during the last several decades due to secessionist activities, separatist movements, ethnic conflicts, etc. The counter activities by the security forces had also contributed to further worsening of the situation for the common people, particularly women and children. In the midst of this gloomy situation there had been efforts at both government and non-government level to bring in succor to the suffering lot, particularly the innocent children victims of senseless violence. Project AASHWAS of Assam Police is one such initiative. Undertaken by this state law enforcement agency, AASHWAS endeavors to help the violence ravaged children to enjoy a normal childhood with opportunities to grow into healthy, productive and responsible future citizens. Thus, Project AASHWAS of Assam Police came into existence on 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2001 with the following objectives-

- to create and develop an attitude of a humane approach towards children in general and those in conflict situation in particular;
- to sensitize the people in general and those living in the affected areas of conflict on issues relating to children;
- to create public opinion against all kinds of violence and terror that have direct bearing on children; and
- to collect and collate data relating to children's families affected by violence

To achieve these stated objectives a host of activities have been undertaken by Project AASHWAS since its inception. It organized sensitization campaigns against violence in various places of Assam particularly in those areas which had experienced large scale violence. So far, AASHWAS conducted seven such sensitization campaigns in different districts of Assam. In 2004, AASHWAS organized Social Mobilization Campaign at Majuli, the river island and once a hot bed of extremist activities. This Social Mobilization Campaign was organized with a view to empower its children in particular and people in general keeping in mind the difficult nature of terrain of this river island, limited opportunities for its inhabitants and the need for positive intervention to create an atmosphere of awareness and self-confidence. As a part of the Social Mobilization Campaign interactive sessions with Police Officials and children were held besides on-the-spot essay competition for children, free medical and health check-up camps, exposure visits of children of Majuli to other parts of Assam, etc. were undertaken. Project AASHWAS also organized exhibitions, seminars, skits and one-act plays, erected road-side hoardings, conducted training for self-employments for youths in collaboration with other Government agencies in violence

affected villages of Assam. AASHWAS made a documentary film on impact of violence on children and this film was screened in all theaters of Assam prior to screening of regular feature films. As a part of AASHWAS initiative a series of training of Assam Police Officials on Community Oriented and Child Friendly Policing was conducted using a specially prepared module in collaboration with NIPCCD and sponsored by UNICEF.

### **5.1.1 AASHWAS and Project Assist**

One of the major land-mark of AASHWAS had been linking the children of those parent(s) who were killed or permanently incapacitated during communal caste, ethnic or terrorist violence with Project Assist of NFCH to enable these children to avail financial assistance under Project Assist of NFCH. Functionaries of AASHWAS came to realize that those children who had suddenly lost their parents during such violence faced severe financial crisis besides the trauma of loss of their near and dear ones. Many of them had to discontinue their studies due to financial constraints and their future became uncertain. Therefore, AASHWAS moved NFCH to extend financial assistance under Project Assist to the children whose parent(s) lost their lives during ethnic clashes or violence perpetrated by extremist groups. AASHWAS took a lead role in identifying such children through its network of Police Stations all over the state and helped and supported the existing parent/ guardian of these children to carry out the necessary formalities for availing the financial assistance under Project Assist of NFCH as has already been mentioned in the previous chapter. In Kokrajhar District, AASHWAS has also roped in the assistance of an NGO named Society to Save Victims of Violence and Terrorism in Kokrajhar Assam, to support its initiative in helping the eligible children beneficiaries and their guardians to avail the benefits of the scheme of assistance. In-fact, it can be said that AASHWAS had been instrumental in enabling the eligible beneficiaries of Project Assist to reap the benefits of the assistance scheme.

### **5.1.2 Follow-up of Beneficiaries of Project Assist**

The basic objective of the financial assistance under Project Assist to the children rendered orphan by societal violence is to ensure their care, education and training in order to accelerate the process of their rehabilitation. The assistance is supposed to be utilized for meeting the essential needs of the child so that he/she is not deprived of the opportunities to develop into a healthy and productive individual. Besides the primary needs of food, shelter and clothing every child has some other psychosocial needs which are required to be fulfilled by the parents/ family and the society at large. This is particularly true for those orphaned children who had had to face serious consequences of losing their parent(s) due to senseless violence. Such children need constant supervision, guidance and counselling to deal and over come the trauma experienced at a tender age. Therefore, it becomes important in this context to follow-up the children beneficiaries of Project Assist from time to time to keep a check on utilization of the Assistance and also to arrange for other necessary interventions. However, under the existing system under Project Assist there are no such in-built mechanisms for such follow-up of the beneficiary children. Keeping this in view AASHWAS has initiated a number of steps to follow-up these children.

It is pertinent to mention here that, Project AASHWAS of Assam Police has no exclusive regular functionary. The activities of AASHWAS are taken care of by different officials of the Police Department as and when required over and above their normal duties under the supervision of the Nodal Officer of AASHWAS. It has already been discussed in the previous Chapters as to how the officials of different Police Stations of the state extend

help and support to the parents/ guardians of beneficiary children in carrying out necessary formalities and paper works relating to submission of applications for assistance under Project Assist. These officials are also instructed to personally visit and contact each and every beneficiary at the later stage to take stock of various matters like receipt of the assistance amount, its utilization pattern, performance of the beneficiary students in their studies, familial atmosphere, any psychosocial problems faced by the beneficiaries, etc. During the present study, however, it came to light that these Police Officials were not always able to carry out the tasks of follow-up comprehensively mainly due to the constraints of time. A discussion with the Nodal Officer of Project AASHWAS revealed that many a times the officials at the Police Station level are too heavily pre-occupied with their normal duties of maintenance of law and order. As a result, it becomes practically very difficult to follow-up the beneficiary children very frequently and regularly.

In order to over-come these problems of deploying only Police men to follow-up the children beneficiaries Project AASHWAS has come up with some novel initiatives.

#### **5.1.2.1 Some Good Practices of AASHWAS**

Project AASHWAS has associated an NGO named Society to Save Victims of Violence and Terrorism in Kokrajhar district of Assam to provide support to parents and guardians of eligible beneficiaries to avail the financial assistance under Project Assist. This NGO has been involved right from the beginning in implementation of Project Assist in Kokrajhar District. This organization is responsible for reaching out to beneficiary families in very remote areas of the district. The NGO not only helps the parent/guardians in filing their applications for assistance but also regularly keeps in touch with these families and liaise between the functionaries of AASHWAS and the district officials. It has been acknowledged by the Nodal Officer of Project AASHWAS that this NGO also follows-up the beneficiary children and their families and apprise the concerned officers of AASHWAS in case of any development. It may be mentioned here that, during its investigation the research team found that many beneficiary parents/ guardians gratefully appreciated the support extended by the functionary of the NGO. Few of them were even found to be under impression that the financial assistance was actually given by the NGO. However, the activities of the NGO in this regard were sometimes hampered due to lack of financial support since Project Assist does not have any provision of financial support either to AASHWAS or this NGO for meeting some unavoidable essential expenditure like travel cost to interior areas of the district. Taking into consideration such genuine needs and the services provided by the NGO, AASHWAS has been making efforts to compensate such expenses through different sources.

A very unique approach to follow-up of beneficiary children initiated by Project AASHWAS had been organizing *Shishu Shanti Samaroh* (Children's Peace Conclave) in different places in Assam. AASHWAS has so far organized four such conclaves, one each in the district of Sivasagar and Kokrajhar and two in Guwahati. Beneficiary children and their parents/guardians from all the districts were invited to the conclaves. All arrangements for boarding and lodging, transportation, etc. of the children and accompanying parents were made by AASHWAS during the conclave. The mission of this *Shishu Shanti Samaroh* was to reach out to the victim children and their parents/ guardians, give them a platform to put up the various issues and problems they face and bridge the gap from a life of grief and sorrow to a happy and healthy life. The *Shishu Shanti Samaroh* is a three days program in which AASHWAS arranges for a variety of activities for the children and their parent/guardians.

One of the important activities during the *Samaroh* were stock taking sessions in which some resource persons comprising of eminent social activists, academicians, journalists, artists, psychologists, psychiatrists and other professionals of the state as well as selected students from various schools interacted on an one-to-one basis with each child and his/her existing parent/guardian and recorded their observations in a proforma on the progress in their studies, physical and mental health of the child and assessed the need for any further intervention and also recorded grievances and suggestions of the beneficiary child and the parent/guardian about the assistance under Project Assist.

One important activity during the peace conclave was an interactive psycho-social counselling session for the beneficiary children. These sessions were conducted to understand the mental health status of the children who had witnessed serious kinds of violence and had gone through a lot of trauma at a very tender age which might have led to some psychological and behavioral problems. The sessions were conducted by some noted psychiatrists and psychologists of the state who interacted and counseled the children with regard to various psychological issues. On the basis of the initial findings of these sessions, those children who required further psychiatric and psychological evaluation and interventions were referred to relevant agencies for consultations. In addition to this, a free medical and health camp was organized for both children and their parents/guardians where a team of eminent doctors examined them and distributed free medicines.

Peace Conclave also included a number of recreational sessions for the children to provide them a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, which incorporated various exercises, games, jokes and music sessions. The beneficiary children were also given opportunities to express their talents in drawing, painting, writing etc. To make these sessions lively and enjoyable and help the children to take back some learning experiences some prominent dramatists, theater artists and actors were invited to interact with the children. The children and their parents/guardians were also entertained with an over-whelming view of the Light and Sound show at Shrimanta Shankardev Kalakshetra and a trip to an amusement park in Guwahati.

A few snapshots of *Shishu Shanti Samaroh* by AASHWAS



Group address session by Psychiatrist

Counselling session in progress



Health check up camp during  
*Shishu Shanti Samaroh*

Torch light procession for peace and communal harmony



Painting competition amongst children



A performance by the children in Shishu Samaroh



Photographs courtesy AASHWAS

The experiences of the Peace Conclaves were applauded by all the beneficiary children and their parents/guardians. Their feedback on the conclaves gave an impression that they went back with an attitude to look at life in a positive way and shun violence from their lives.

The success and positive outcome of the *Shishu Shanti Samaroh* boosted up the functionaries of Project AASHWAS and planned to follow-up the child beneficiaries who are receiving the financial assistance from NFCH under Project AASHWAS in a detailed manner. For this task AASHWAS mobilized some eminent and noted social activists, journalists, dramatists and actors who were requested to volunteer to assess the beneficiary children. Those who volunteered were supposed to visit the homes and schools of the beneficiaries at least once and preferably twice a year as a routine check up on the children and the environment surrounding them. AASHWAS allotted the districts to these civil society members according to their preferences. Usually one/two volunteer(s) were asked to follow-up children of one district. To facilitate systematic feedback the volunteers were supplied with a proforma for collecting the necessary detail and forward these to AASHWAS for further necessary action. The process of this follow-up activity has already started and AASHWAS has been in constant touch with these volunteers for their feedback and hopes this community based approach shall pay rich dividends. AASHWAS have won accolades from various quarters for its services to children victims of violence. The International Sarvodaya Peace Summit, 2012, held at Coimbatore specially appreciated and lauded Project AASHWAS for its special focus on these children.

## **5.2 Academic Performance and Aspirations**

From the fore-going discussions it can probably be deduced that, the financial assistance provided by Project Assist and the follow-up activities undertaken by AASHWAS have combinedly contributed to enable the beneficiary children to leave behind the painful past and continue with their lives and their studies and rebuild their future. In this backdrop it is some what pertinent to discuss the performance of the beneficiary children in the studies, their aspirations etc.

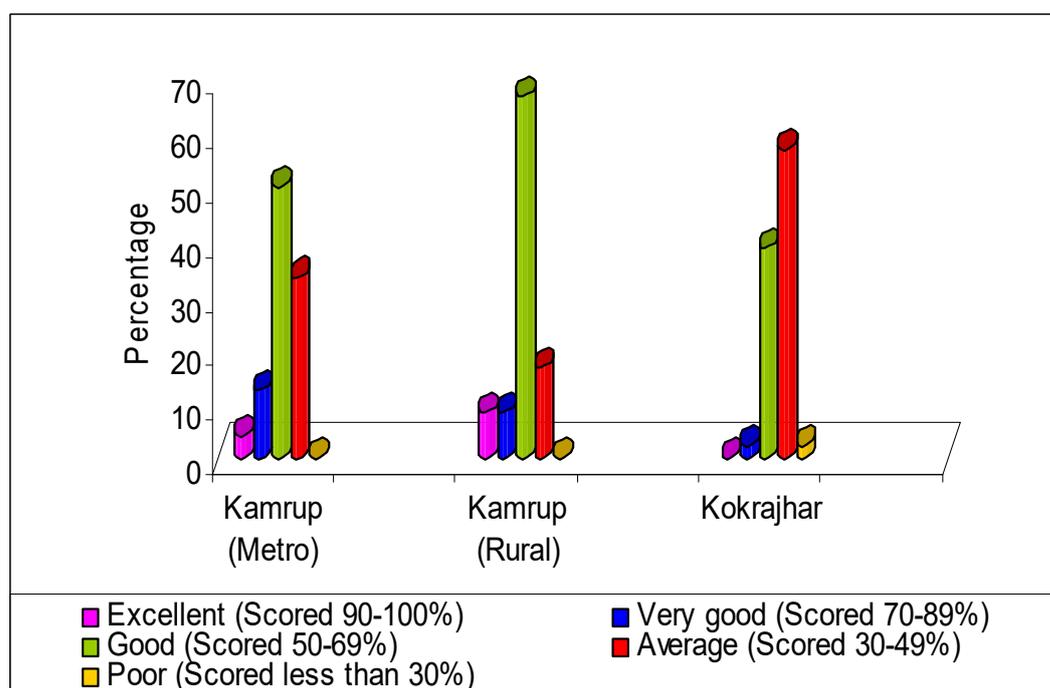
To understand the performance of the beneficiary children in their studies the average marks scored by these children in the last two qualifying examinations were recorded and children were categorized on the basis of their scores. Table 5.1 shows the distribution of the beneficiary children in different categories. It can be seen that, a large group of these children (44%) had come under the category 'good' scoring 50 to 69 per cent marks. However, nearly half of the population (48.39%) of the beneficiary children covered in the study belonged to the 'average' category who scored between 30 to 49 per cent of marks. A small section of the children (5%) did 'very good' with 70 to 80 per cent marks. It may also be noted that there were a few children who were 'excellent' and another few whose performance was poor (2%). Thus, by and large, it can be said that the beneficiary children were doing fairly well in their studies. Figure 5.2 also depicts the same.

**Table 5.1: Performance of the beneficiary children in their studies**

District	Average Performance in the last two qualifying exam					Total
	Excellent (Scored 90-100%)	Very good (Scored 70-89%)	Good (Scored 50-69%)	Average (Scored 30-49%)	Poor (Scored less than 30%)	
Kamrup (Metro)	01 (4.17)	03 (12.5)	12 (50.00)	08 (33.33)	00 (00.00)	24 (100.00)
Kamrup (Rural)	01 (8.33)	01 (8.33)	08 (66.67)	02 (16.67)	00 (0.00)	12 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	00 (00.00)	02 (2.27)	34 (38.64)	50 (56.82)	02 (2.27)	88 (100.00)
Total	02 (1.61)	06 (4.84)	54 (43.55)	60 (48.39)	02 (1.61)	124 (100.00)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

**Fig 5.1: Performance of the beneficiary children in their studies**



The present study also attempted to know the aspirations of the beneficiary children with regard to their studies. A look at the educational aspirations of the respondent beneficiaries as depicted in Table 5.2 reveals that, a large majority of the

beneficiary children wanted to continue their studies upto graduation (53%) followed by 18 per cent of the beneficiary children wanting to go for post graduate studies. About 12 per cent of these children expressed their aspirations to pursue professional courses. Thirteen per cent of the beneficiary children just wanted to complete their higher secondary education (10+2). However, a few of the children (6%) could not say how far they would like to continue their studies. It may be mentioned here that many of the beneficiary children expressed during interactions with research team that they planned to look for a job as soon as possible in order to supplement/strengthen the family income. It appeared that, for these children continuing their studies for a long term was not a priority.

**Table 5.2: Aspirations of the Beneficiary children**

District	How far would you like to continue your studies					Total
	Up to HS level	Up to Graduation	Up to Post Graduation	Pursue professional Courses	Cannot Say	
Kamrup (Metro)	02 (8.33)	11 (45.83)	03 (12.50)	06 (25.00)	02 (8.33)	24 (100.00)
Kamrup (Rural)	00 (00.00)	05 (41.67)	02 (16.67)	05 (41.67)	00 (00.00)	12 (100.00)
Kokrajhar	14 (15.91)	49 (55.68)	17 (19.32)	03 (3.41)	05 (5.68)	88 (100.00)
Total	16 (12.90)	65 (52.42)	22 (17.74)	14 (11.29)	07 (5.65)	124 (100.0)

Figures within parenthesis indicate percentage

### 5.3 Views on Communal/Ethnic and Armed Conflicts in Assam

In the context of the present study it was also attempted to understand the factors behind communal/ethnic clash and extremist violence in Assam and the ways and means to prevent recurrence of such violent incidences. Views of the parents and guardians of the beneficiary and non-beneficiary children and selected community leaders in this regard were generated and are presented below.

According to a large section of the parents and guardians (68%) who were themselves the victims of violence, the extremists/terrorist groups resort to violence in order to achieve their objectives. These groups used the socio-economically backward communities as soft targets and indulge in violence to terrorize and also pressurize the government. In this process innocent people are victimized. About 16 per cent of the parents and guardians also pointed out that vested elements in society sometimes target their personal enemies in collusion with the extremist groups to settle some personal grudge. Clash of interests among different ethnic groups over different issues like land

ownership, use of forest and its products etc. have also led to communal violence particularly in Kokrajhar district of Assam as stated by about 13 per cent of the respondents. The parents and guardians also identified some other factors like unemployment, illiteracy, lack of awareness etc. as factors that often fuel violence.

A large section of the respondents (37%) opined that, this kind of violence can be controlled and avoided with strict governmental and Police action. Nearly one-fourth of the parents and guardians advocated for public initiative for maintenance of peace and harmony among different groups and also to prevent the activities of extremist groups. Some of the respondents also were of the view that the government should take appropriate measures to address the problems like lack of opportunities for education, unemployment, etc to prevent young people from joining extremist groups. It is pertinent to mention here that most of the respondent parents and guardians were reluctant to respond to the queries relating to these issues and were unwilling to comment for fear of reprisal by extremists/terrorists group. In fact, some of the respondents altogether refused to respond in this regard. Their apprehensions could be well appreciated since they had already been victimized.

During the course of present study the research team also interacted with some community leaders comprising Village Headman, PRI Members, Teachers, etc on the subject of increasing violence in society and ways and means to prevent these. Like the parents and guardians of beneficiary children these community leaders were also showed their reluctance to speak on these issues for fear of attracting wrath from the extremist groups. However, a large group of the community leaders (36%) stated that the extremist groups resort to violence and target innocent people just to make their presence felt by the authorities. About 33 per cent of the community leaders identified lack of education and employment opportunities as one of the prime reasons for increasing violence in society. Poverty, lure of easy money, conflict of interests among communities, political rivalry etc also contributed to occurrence of violence in society according to some of the community leaders.

In tune with the parents and guardians of the children a large section of these community leaders (38%) also favored strong administrative and police action against the extremists and other perpetrators of violence to prevent occurrence of such violence in society. At the same time, more than half of the community leaders who were interviewed opined that, spread of education, awareness generation among the community and economic security particularly among the youth can only effectively keep violence in check in the long run. According to around 13 per cent of these community leaders, mutual understanding among the communities can reduce tension and conflict. However, most of these community leaders (87%) could not specify if they had any initiative at their level to prevent such violence in society. Only about 13 per cent of these beneficiaries had under taken some activities like awareness campaigns and motivating and mobilizing youths to stand up against violence among the community. The community leaders identified a host of measures that can bring in communal harmony in society like spread of education, frequent interactions between communities, expression of mutual respect, joint initiatives of the communities through some common platforms to defeat divisive forces, etc.

#### **5.4 Some Cases of Beneficiary and Non-Beneficiary Children**

In the following paragraphs some cases of the beneficiary and non-beneficiary children are discussed which have been collected during the process of data collection. These cases elucidate and highlight the various aspects of implementation of Project Assist in Kamrup and Kokrajhar Districts of Assam.

##### **CASE 1**

Priya Ray, a young girl of about twelve years of age lives at Kekormari village in the interior of Kokrajhar district in Assam. She is the only child of Late Dinesh Ray and Smt. Krishna Ray. Priya's father Dinesh Ray was a businessman and their family of three was a happy and a well-to-do family. Unfortunately, however, in the evening of 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2000 when Dinesh Ray was returning from work; on the way he was attacked by some un-identified extremists and they shot him dead. Priya was 1 year old when her father died. After her father's sudden and untimely demise, the family faced crisis in all fronts and particularly their financial condition became severely bad. Priya's mother brought her up with lots of struggle and difficulty.

In the year 2001-2002 Priya's mother got the information about the assistance provided for educational expenses of children of victims of communal/terrorist violence by NFCH through AASHWAS from DC's office. The NGO-Society to Save Victims of Violence and Terrorism in Kokrajhar Assam helped her to procure the application forms. Initially Priya's mother did not have any idea as to how to go about in submitting the application. However, the NGO assisted her in filling up and submitting the application along with the necessary documents. The functionary from the NGO supported her in all the steps and she too followed all the instructions and procedures accordingly and did not find any difficulty to obtain the essential certificates.. The NGO also made sure that Krishna does not face any problem in renewal too. They keep on informing her about the time of renewal and to collect the cheque of assistance from the Deputy Commissioner's office on time. Because of this Priya is receiving the assistance timely. Priya's mother Krishna now gratefully acknowledge the support from the NGO that made her task easy

Currently Priya is studying in VI<sup>th</sup> Standard and doing quite well in her studies. The financial problem faced by the family particularly for the education of Priya is now addressed to a large extent. Priya's mother is thankful to AASHWAS and the NGO-Society to Save Victims of Violence and Terrorism in Kokrajhar Assam for helping her in availing the financial assistance under Project Assist without which it would have been difficult for her to support Priya in her studies.

##### **CASE 2**

Rani Duarah and Raja Duarah are the two children of Late Nilanjan Duarah and Smt. Rimli Duarah who reside at Rupnagar, Guwahati Assam. Nilanjan Duarah was a businessman. Life was easy for the family until 16<sup>th</sup> August, 2002 when Nilanjan Barua and his friend were killed on their way to Rangia by some unidentified extremist in their car. The extremists killed them to acquire their car to accomplish some secret mission of spreading terror/violence. They hid their body in a nearby ditch and fled with the car. The

bodies were found after two days of the killing. Rani and Raja were 10 years and 9 years respectively when their father died.

Initially the family of Rani and Raja faced many problems in managing both household and educational expenses. But since Rani and Raja were very good in some performing arts like dancing, acting etc, they both started earning at a very young age by taking part in these activities. Thus, they could supplement to some extent to the family income by showcasing their talent. However, in spite of this, Rimli Duarah had a hard time in managing the financial front of her family. Although nearly five years had passed since the death of her husband, Smt. Rimli Duarah was not aware about the financial assistance under Project Assist till 2007. At this juncture officials from Police Department and DC's office informed Rimli Duarah, about the financial assistance provided for educational expenses by NFCH under Project Assist through AASHWAS. It came as pleasant news to them. They collected the application forms from Police Head Quarters from the functionaries of AASHWAS and carried out all the formalities with support from AASHWAS. Smt. Duarah started receiving the financial assistance for Rani and Raja from 1-8-07. Since then they are receiving the assistance without break as they have been submitting their applications for renewal without fail. They had not faced any problem regarding their applications for the assistance. Smt. Duarah expressed that because of this assistance Rani and Raja had been able to persure their studies comfortably. Rani is now doing graduation in a local college. Raja is perusing a professional course in para-medical science and is still receiving the assistance. Although Rimli Duarah and her two children appreciate the financial relief received through Project Assist yet, according to them the amount of assistance should be enhanced as the cost of education has increased.

### **CASE 3**

Jai Mushahary and Radhika Mushahary children of Lt. Ramesh Mushahary and Jayanti Mushahary are from an interior village in Kokrajhar District of Assam. At present Jai lives with is younger sister Radhika and widowed mother. Jai's father was a woodcutter and he was the sole earning member of the family. This family of four led a happy life till that fate-full day in the year 1999 on which Lt. Ramesh Mushahary was killed on his way back from work by a mob during some incidences of violent clash between two ethnic groups. When Ramesh was killed Jai and Radhika were about 7 and 3 year old respectively. After the death of Jai's father, his mother had a tough time managing the household and educational expenses of the family as the bread earner of the family was lost.

After about nine years of the death of Jai's father, in 2008 Jayanti came to know about the assistance provided to the children of the victims of communal violence for educational expenses by NFCH through AASHWAS and the NGO- Society to Save Victims of Violence and Terrorism in Kokrajhar Assam. She then filed her application for the assistance and carried out all the necessary procedures with support from the functionaries of NGO and AASHWAS. Later on after some months she received two cheques for Rs. 1500/- each as the assistance for her two children for the period 01-02-2009 to 31-03-2009 at the rate of Rs.750/- per moth per child. However, Jayanti was not

fully acquainted with the procedure of depositing crossed cheque in the accounts of her children and on someone's advice just dropped the cheques in the drop-box of the bank without filling and attaching the deposit slips with necessary details. As a result, the Bank returned the cheques to her much later and by that time the validity period of the cheques was over. Jayanti did not know what to do and some people advised her to go to the Deputy Commissioner's Office for revalidation. But once again Jayanti neither had enough money to travel to the District Head-Quarter nor she had anyone to guide her and she left the matter there it-self. She also did not apply for renewal. The old cheques are still with Jayanti and she does not know what to do with these.

Jayanti's family is still in an acute financial crisis and life had been very tough for them. Radhika had to drop out from school and Jai, in spite of all the odds is now studying in X<sup>th</sup> Standard and is trying hard to stand on his own feet to support the family. Jayanti and her children now neither have the enthusiasm to apply for the assistance once again and nor have the idea whom to approach for this purpose. Also, till the time of collection of data by the researchers no one had contacted them in this regard.

#### **CASE 4**

Smt. Damaynti Rabha and her two children Rupjyoti and Dhon live in village Khetry of Kamrup Metro district of Assam. Damaynti works as a nurse at a local government dispensary. Her husband Late Rajib Rabha was a businessman and prior to her husband's death at the hands of militants they lived in a joint family along with the other members of Late Rajib Rabha's family. Darkness suddenly came to the lives of Damaynti and her two children on 13<sup>th</sup> January, 1997, when some unidentified extremists suddenly broke into the residence premises and forced Rajib Rabha inside the house and shot him dead after some arguments. After shooting him the group of extremists ransacked the house and took away the cash and other valuables. During this incident all the other male members of the family were not present. The terror struck women and children stood paralyzed while all this was happening. Rabha left behind his wife, two sons, Rupjyoti and Dhon, his parents, three brothers and their families.

After this incidence Damaynti Rabha and her two sons had to leave her in-law's house due to some familial disputes. She somehow bought some land and built a small house by taking some loans. Damaynti has been having a hard time managing her family with two sons since the death of her husband. Both the children were too young (5 years and 3 years) at the time of the death of Rajib Rabha. Over and above, the elder son Rupjyoti is a mentally challenged child. At the time of the present study it was learnt that Rupjyoti was not receiving any interventions since there was no such facilities in the village itself and the mother was also financially not in a position to make alternative arrangements. The younger son, Dhon has been attending school and had appeared in school leaving examination.

Damaynti was somehow managing the household and educational expenses of her younger child with her sole income with great difficulties. Then in 2002 she got the information about the financial assistance by NFCH under Project Assist through AASHWAS from Police. When she came to know about this assistance she applied for

the assistance with lot of enthusiasm and excitement. She filed the application sincerely to avoid any mistake. She, however, had to face some problems during the process of application particularly in acquiring the Income certificate and the Study Certificate. She then received the assistance for both the children during 2002-03. After that she applied for the renewal of assistance only for her younger son Dhon as the elder son Rupjyoti could not continue studies due to mental retardation. Unfortunately, however, after receiving the assistance for the first time Damaynti did not receive any further assistance for her younger son Dhon till date. According to Damaynti, she had applied thrice for renewal but due to “*some procedural error in the Deputy Commissioner’s Office*” Dhon was deprived of the assistance, as informed by her. Dhon has not yet attained 18 years of age and is still studying and his mother is in feels incapable of managing his educational expenses besides taking care of her mentally retarded elder son. Damaynti’s job at the local dispensary is somehow helping her to manage the family with great difficulty. She feels that the Government should look into these kinds of matters seriously and apart from giving assistance for education, the scheme should also include some provision such as vocational training for children with special needs like Rupjyoti Rabha who are mentally/physically challenged.

#### **CASE 5**

Rajo Kumari, Suresh Sharma and Rano Kumari were 13, 11 and 9 year old respectively when their father Late. Rajesh Sharma died in the serial bomb blast of 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2008 in the premises of the Court of the District and Session Judge, Guwahati. On the day of the blast late Sharma went to the court in connection with some work. However, unfortunately Sharma died when a bomb planted by extremist group exploded in the court premises. Rajesh Sharma lived with his family in the Noonmati area of Guwahati. He left behind his wife Roma Devi and three children. After his death his family has been looked after by Roma’s brother Munna. Otherwise she would not have been able to sustain the family as she is an illiterate and a simple lady who does not understand the complexities of life and has no source of earning.

Roma Devi and her brother came to know about the assistance provided for educational expenses of children of the victims of terrorist/communal violence by NFCH through AASHWAS in a Peace Meet where all the victim families of bomb blast assembled. There they got all the information about the process of filing the application i.e. from where to acquire the application form, how to fill the form and what are the necessary documents to be attached, etc. All the doubts regarding the procedure were addressed and clarified in the Meet. After that Munna brought the application form from the DC’s office and applied for the assistance for the three children following all the instructions religiously. The only problem he faced was during the time of renewal, as he was not aware when renewal application should be made. He found that many a times when he approached the concerned officials at the DC’s office did not respond well to his queries and he had to come back without any information. Therefore, the renewal application got delayed. All the children of Late Rajesh Sharma are receiving the assistance just because Munna has been contacting the DC’s office regularly in time spite of all the hitches he had to face during the process to renewal. Roma Devi and her brother think that NFCH/District Authority should intimate the families of the beneficiaries when the time of renewal comes.

Now Rajo Kumari is studying in XIIth Std, Suresh Sharma in VIIIth Std and Rano Kumari in IVth Std. They and their family members gratefully acknowledge that the children were able to continue their studies just because of the assistance provided by Project Assist.

*\* Names of the parents/guardians and children mentioned in the above cases have been changed.*

# **CHAPTER - 6**

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Project Assist is the flag-ship program of National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH), an organization under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Project Assist extends financial assistance to the children of those parents who had been killed or permanently incapacitated during communal, caste, ethnic and terrorist violence. The assistance is offered for the care, education and training of those children who are rendered orphan due to such violence. Along with the rest of the country, in Assam too Project Assist has been in operation and benefited more than one-thousand children whose either or both parents had been killed during many episodes of ethnic, extremist/terrorist violence in the state in last one or two decades. In Assam the scheme is being implemented from 2002 in active association of AASHWAS, an Assam Police initiative. After about a decade of implementation of Project Assist in Assam NFCH felt the need for carrying out an evaluation of Project Assist in state and requested the Institute in this regard. Accordingly, NIPCCD Regional Centre Guwahati carried out the present Study titled: Scheme of Project Assist to Children affected by Communal, Caste, Ethnic and Terrorist Violence/Riots – An Evaluation. The present study was conducted for assessing the effectiveness of the scheme in rehabilitation of the orphan children of the victims of violence particularly for their care, education and training and also to elicit the views of beneficiary families, community and the administrators on different aspects of implementation of the scheme and suggest corrective measures.

The study was carried out in three selected districts of Assam, viz Kamrup Rural, Kamrup Metro and Kokrajhar. In the foregoing chapters the findings of the study has been discussed in detail. In the following paragraphs attempt is being made to summarize the findings of the study and based on this recommendations have been attempted.

#### 6.1 Profile of Parents/Guardians and Families

Altogether 105 families of beneficiary/non-beneficiary children were covered through the study. In most of the cases the mothers of the children were acting as the guardians (91%) and were, therefore, interviewed. The largest section of the respondent families belonged to general category (41%), followed by scheduled tribes (36%) and Other Backward Classes (21%) and there were only a few families of scheduled castes (2%). Religious affiliation wise majority of these respondent families were Hindus (67%) and there were smaller factions of Muslims (20%) and Christians (13%). A large chunk of the families of the victims were Assamese speaking (48%), followed by Bodo speaking families (31%). The rest included families speaking Bengali, Santali, Bhojpuri, Rabha etc in small numbers. It has been found that cultivation, engagement in low paying jobs, petty businesses, wage labour, etc were the main occupations of the parents/guardians of the children. Again, a large number of the parent/guardians (34%) were housewives only since they were not engaged in any job or self employment activities. This is because in most cases the fathers who were the main bread earners

for the family were killed during violence and later on their widows could not find any employment opportunity. Thus, the study revealed that the income level of the families of the respondents came down drastically and majority of the families were found to be below poverty line. The findings of the present study showed that the majority of the families of children (60%) were living in *kutcha* (semi-permanent) houses. More than one-fourth of the families was living in *pucca* (permanent) houses. A small section (12%) was living in huts. The large majority of the families (80%), however, owned their dwelling houses. Rest others were either living in their relative's houses or in rented accommodation. The families of the children were mostly nuclear type (76%) with up to three members and less than one-fourth of the families were either joint or extended with four or more members.

Majority of the existing parents and guardians (61%) of the children were in the age group of 36-50 years and about one-third of the parents/guardians were quite young (18-35 years). Since in most cases the fathers or male members were killed, nearly 94 per cent of the cases the surviving mothers or other female members were acting as guardians of the children. In terms of educational qualification, it was found that, a large section (34%) of the parents/guardians was illiterate. The educational qualification of about 53 per cent of the parents/guardians ranged from primary level to matriculation and for about 12 per cent it was up to higher secondary/graduation level.

## **6.2 Profile of Affected Children**

As per the available data, a total of 302 children in the districts of Kamrup Metro, Kamrup Rural and Kokrajhar benefited since the operation of the Project Assist till date. At the time of data collection for the present study 229 children out of 302 were actually receiving the financial assistance and the rest 73 children were not receiving the assistance for one or other reasons. Thus, for the purpose of the study, these 229 children who were presently receiving the assistance were considered as beneficiaries and those 73 who were not receiving the assistance had been tagged as non-beneficiary. For collection of data for the study, 124 beneficiary out of 229 and 63 non-beneficiary children out of 73 were selected for interviewing. While selecting the children efforts were made to interview only children of higher age groups to ensure that the respondents were able to logically respond to the queries. Amongst 124 respondent beneficiary children there were equal number of boys and girls (62 each). Age wise, a little more than half of these children (51%) were in the age group of 11-15 years. A sizable number (32%) of the children were in the age range of 16 – 18 years. Rests of the children (17%) were between six to ten years of age. These children were studying in various classes of high school (40%), M.E. schools (30%), primary schools (15%) and the rest 15 per cent of these children were studying in intermediate classes or above. Among the 63 non-beneficiary children who were interviewed, 51 per cent were boys and 49 per cent were girls. However, unlike among the beneficiary children, the bulk of the non-beneficiary respondents (92%) had attained the age of 18 years or more. Only eight per cent of the children were found to be between 16 – 18 years of age. In terms of education majority of the non-beneficiary children (54%) were continuing their studies, but a large section of the non-beneficiaries (44%) had dropped out of their studies. A small number of the non-beneficiary (2%) reported to have completed their studies. It needs to be mentioned here that, under Project Assist, a beneficiary ceases to receive the financial assistance if he/she discontinues his/her studies prior to attaining the age of 18 years. Again, after 18 years of age a beneficiary shall not receive the assistance

unless they continue their studies in professional courses. Therefore, we have larger number of respondents above 18 years of age in the non-beneficiary category. For similar reasons there are a large number of dropped out students (44%) who stopped receiving the assistance for discontinuing their studies.

### **6.3 Awareness about the Scheme**

Successful implementation of any government program depends, to a large extent on the awareness of the target community about the programme, its objectives, contents/services etc. Efforts were made in the present study to understand the perception of the parents/guardians and beneficiary children on Project Assist. It was found that only little more than 12 per cent of the parents and guardians were aware that the financial assistance for their wards was actually extended by NFCH. Large majority of the respondents (78%) were under impression that the assistance was being given by AASHWAS of Assam police. This was perhaps because of the fact that AASHWAS has been coordinating and facilitating between the beneficiaries and NFCH. Few parents/guardians even thought the assistance came from state government or other sources. Almost none of the parents and guardians, except a mere two per cent were aware about the scheme of assistance of NFCH prior to the incidence of killing of their husbands/parents/close relatives. Like parents/guardians, 96 per cent beneficiary and 94 per cent non-beneficiary children also did not know that they were receiving the financial assistance from NFCH. They were under the impression that the assistance had come from other sources. Only four and six per cent beneficiary and non-beneficiary children respectively, knew that the assistance was provided by NFCH. However, almost all the parents and guardians (98%) and the children (95%) were aware that, the financial assistance was given mainly to enable them to meet expenses related to their education, training and other essential needs. The study has also revealed that, the parents and guardians had come to know about the financial assistance from a number of sources like the Deputy Commissioner's office, Police as well as functionaries of Project AASHWAS and NGOs etc. only after the incidences of killing of their husbands/ fathers etc.

### **6.4 Usefulness of the Scheme**

On the usefulness of the financial assistance provided under Project Assist almost all the parents and guardians (99%) agreed that the assistance had been very useful particularly for the education of their children. Likewise, nearly 82 per cent of the beneficiary children found the assistance to be useful. A small number of the beneficiaries (11%) opined that the assistance was partially useful. While a very few (3.2%) did not comment, another few (5%) had to say that the assistance was not useful. The large majority of the parents/guardians, beneficiary (those who are at present receiving the assistance) and non-beneficiary (who had earlier received the assistance) children were of the unanimous view that the financial assistance was useful in terms of enabling the children to continue their education. However, they also opined that other than meeting educational expenses the assistance could hardly help in meeting other day to day needs of children.

Although most of the parents/guardians beneficiary and non-beneficiary children stated that the financial assistance received by them was useful and particularly enabled the children to continue with their education, yet, almost all the parents/guardians (97%) and the large majority of beneficiary (87%) and non-beneficiary (84%) children found the amount of assistance to be insufficient to meet the educational as well as other essential expenditures of the child for whom the assistance is provided with. Nearly all the parents and guardians informed that they utilized the amount of assistance for education of the child but also asserted that the assistance helped in meeting the educational expenses only partially.

The present study also aspired to understand whether the parents/guardians and the children desired any enhancement of the present amount of assistance. As could be expected almost all the parents/guardians (97%), and beneficiary (91.0%) and non-beneficiary children (90.5%) desired enhancement of the present amount of assistance. About 44 per cent of the parents/guardians wanted the present amount to be enhanced to Rs.1500/- per month per child. On the other hand, nearly one-third of the respondent parents/guardians desired Rs.2000/- per month per child. About 17 per cent of the respondent opted for Rs.1000/- per month per child and a few (6%) even asked for more than Rs.2000/- per month per child. Like the parents/guardians both beneficiary and non-beneficiary children also asked for hikes in the present amount of assistance in a range of Rs.1000/- to Rs.2000/- per month per child. The parents and guardians cited a number of reasons in support of their request for enhancement. Increased cost of education and other day to day essential needs of the child are some of the major reasons that warrant a suitable enhancement of the assistance amount. In this context it can be mentioned that the present study attempted to find out the average financial requirement by the families for each child to meet his/her essential needs like food, clothing, education and some miscellaneous needs. From the details provided by the families an average minimum expenditure per month for each child had been worked out and was found that, for each child on an average Rs.1436/- is required to meet the minimum expenses for education, food, clothing and some other miscellaneous needs. Out of this an approximate amount of Rs.400/- per month per child on an average for education purposes alone. It also needs to be mentioned here that, the expenses for education increases if the student(s) pursue professional courses.

More than 80 per cent of the beneficiary families of Project Assist had also received one-time monetary compensation paid by the government(s) to the next of the kin of those killed in communal/terrorist violence. It could be learnt that the beneficiary families had utilized this amount in different manners like saving in fixed-deposits as future security, construction/repairing of house, purchasing of land, starting some small business, repaying their debts and other familial and household needs.

## **6.5 Aspects of Mechanisms of Implementation of Project Assist**

Project Assist has been implemented in Assam since 2002. Normally, as per the guidelines of the scheme, a District Committee under the District Magistrate/Collector or Deputy Commissioner with Superintendent of Police, District Social Welfare Officer, District Education Officer, etc as members is supposed to identify the beneficiaries, receive applications from the parents/guardians of the eligible children and after scrutiny forward the applications to NFCH and on receiving the approval and fund from NFCH

disburse the cheques to the beneficiaries. However, in Assam, AASHWAS, a project under Assam Police takes the lead role in identifying the eligible children to receive the financial assistance. Usually, at the initiative of AASHWAS, the officials at the different Police Stations identify and collect the details of eligible children from their records and help and guide the parents and guardians of these children to carry out the required procedures like filling and submission of the application forms and to collect the necessary certificates and documents. The filled-in application forms are then submitted by functionaries of AASHWAS or the applicants themselves at the Deputy Commissioner's Office. In Kokrajhar District an NGO named Society to Save Victims of Violence and Terrorism in Kokrajhar Assam, had also been mobilized by AASHWAS for supporting and helping the guardians/ parents of the target beneficiaries to do the required paper works, liaise with Project AASHWAS and the District Authorities to enable the parents/guardians of eligible children to submit their applications for financial assistance, etc. After the applications are received, the Office of the Deputy Commissioner sends these to the NFCH. The NFCH on receiving the applications scrutinizes them and sanctions the assistance and sends the amounts of assistance to the office of the concerned Deputy Commissioner who, in turn, issues the cheque to the beneficiaries. Often the officials of Deputy Commissioner's Office, Officials of Police Stations/AASHWAS and functionary of NGO inform the beneficiaries when the cheques are ready for disbursement.

Since one of the objects of the present study was to examine the effectiveness of the modalities of the implementation of the scheme, the views of parents and guardians were sought on different aspects of scheme implementation. The parents/guardians were particularly asked whether they had faced any problem while applying for the assistance. Most of the respondents (92%) opined that they had no difficulties in doing so except in procuring some necessary supporting documents particularly the Income Certificate. A sizable number of the parents and guardians (42%) pointed out that they had difficulties in obtaining the Income Certificate from the concerned authorities. On the other hand, a small number of parents/guardians also reportedly faced some other difficulties in one or other step of the process of application like filling-up the prescribed form, lack of adequate support from some of the district officials and the police officials, non-cooperation of community leaders etc. Although, the applicants had to submit quite a few other documents like study certificate, birth certificate, copy of FIR, copy of death cum post-mortem report, etc they did not face much difficulties in procuring these unlike the income certificate.

As per the norms of Project Assist the financial assistance is to be paid in advance annually in the first quarter of the academic year to enable the parents/guardians to meet the expenditures of the child's education for the current year. However, in most cases the assistance is not disbursed in the very first quarter of the academic year but is usually delayed by about six months or so. It could be learnt after interaction with functionaries of Project AASHWAS and the District authorities that the delay occurs due to some procedural reasons.

## **6.6 Views for Effective Implementation**

The present study generated suggestions from various quarters including the parents and guardians for making the scheme more effective. Two major suggestions

that came from the parents/guardians was enhancement of the amount of assistance (99%) and timely disbursement of the assistance amount (90%). Some sections of the parents also suggested checking red-tapism and procedural complications and increasing the age limit of eligibility, continuation of assistance for students upto post-graduate level, better disbursement procedure, employment opportunities for beneficiary children etc. The beneficiary and non-beneficiary children also suggested for enhancement of assistance amount, increasing upper age limit for availing financial assistance. The children also suggested for providing vocational trainings and employment opportunities to them. Some other suggestions given by the beneficiary/non-beneficiary children were timely disbursement of assistance, exemption from payment of yearly admission fee, if any, in the institutions, checking mal practices indulged in by some functionaries etc.

The officials and functionaries of AASHWAS including members of NGO involved with implementation of Project AASHWAS too made a few suggestions. The large majority of these officials (67%) advocated for increasing the upper age limit from 18 to 22-25 years and favored continuation of the assistance as long as the beneficiary is pursuing his/her education. Nearly 83 per cent of these officials suggested enhancement of the amount to about Rs.1000/- to Rs.3000/- per month per child.

## **6.7 Project Assist and AASHWAS**

As has been mentioned earlier implementation of Project Assist has been facilitated greatly by AASHWAS, which is a project of Assam Police. AASHWAS came into being to sensitize and mobilize people against violence and to alleviate the sufferings of the victims, particularly the children victims of ethnic/ communal/ terrorist violence. A host of activities have been initiated under Project AASHWAS by Assam Police in the state. One of the major land marks of AASHWAS had been linking the children of those parents who were killed during communal, ethnic or terrorist violence with Project Assist of NFCH to enable these children to avail financial assistance. AASHWAS with its network of police stations identified such children all over the state and helped their existing parents/guardians to carry out necessary formalities for availing the financial assistance under Project Assist. AASHWAS has also mobilized the support of an NGO in Kokrajhar district to supplement its effort to reach out to the eligible beneficiaries of Project Assist.

## **6.8 Follow up of Beneficiaries of Project Assist**

The basic objective of the financial assistance under Project Assist to the children rendered orphan by societal violence is to ensure their care, education and training in order to accelerate the process of their rehabilitation. It also seeks to ensure that the essential needs of the child are fulfilled and the child develops into a healthy and productive individual. In this context it becomes important to follow up the beneficiaries of Project Assist from time to time to keep a check on utilization of the assistance and to arrange for other necessary interventions. Although under Project Assist there are no such built in mechanisms for follow up of beneficiary children, AASHWAS has initiated some steps to follow up the children. Ordinarily police officials from different police stations across the state had been instructed to do the follow up. However, it soon turned out that due to other heavy pre-occupations of these police officials they were

always not in a position to regularly follow up the children. Faced with this situation AASHWAS adopted some innovative measures to follow up the children beneficiaries of Project Assist.

Project AASHWAS has associated an NGO named Society to Save Victims of Violence and Terrorism in Kokrajhar district of Assam to provide support to parents and guardians of eligible beneficiaries to avail the financial assistance under Project Assist. This organization reaches out to beneficiary families in very remote areas and helps the parents/guardians in filing their applications for assistance and also regularly keeps in touch with these families and liaises between the functionaries of AASHWAS and the district officials. This NGO also follows-up the beneficiary children and their families and apprise the concerned officers of AASHWAS in case of any development. Many beneficiary parents/ guardians gratefully appreciated the support extended by the functionary of the NGO. However, the activities of the NGO in this regard were sometimes hampered due to lack of financial support since Project Assist does not have any provision of financial support either to AASHWAS or this NGO for meeting some unavoidable essential expenditure like travel cost to interior areas of the district. Taking into consideration such genuine needs and the services provided by the NGO, AASHWAS has been making efforts to compensate such expenses through different sources.

AASHWAS adopted a very unique approach to follow up the beneficiary children of Project Assist by organizing *Sishu Shanti Samaroh* (Children's Peace Conclave) in different places of Assam. It is usually a three day affair in which a variety of activities for children and parents and guardians are under taken. One such was the stock taking sessions in which some resource persons engage in one- to -one interaction with each child and his/her parent/guardian for making an assessment of general well-being of the child and the family, progress of education of the child, record grievances and suggestions etc. for further interventions. Another important activity of the Peace Conclave was an interactive psycho-social counselling of the beneficiary children conducted by professionals like psychiatrists, psychologists, etc. Based on the findings of these initial counselling sessions those children who required further psychiatric and psychological evaluation and interventions were referred to relevant professionals/agencies. AASHWAS also made efforts that, as far as possible, these children receive free services from the professionals/agencies. Besides, medical and health check-up for the children and their parents/guardians was also organized during the three days. *Sishu Shanti Samaroh* includes a variety of recreational sessions of games, exercises, music, drawing and painting, essay writing, trips to children's park, amusement parks etc for the children and their parents. These kinds of gatherings not only enabled to follow-up the beneficiary children and their families but also helped the children to overcome the trauma, develop a positive attitude and shun violence in their lives.

Further, AASHWAS mobilized some eminent and noted social activists, journalists, dramatists, actors and industrialists, etc, and motivated them to follow-up beneficiary children in different parts of districts. They were supposed to visit the homes and schools of the beneficiaries at least once and preferably twice a year in a systematic

manner. AASHWAS allotted the districts to these civil society members according to their preferences. Usually one/two volunteer(s) were asked to follow-up children of one district. To facilitate systematic feedback the volunteers were supplied with a proforma for collecting the necessary details and forward these to AASHWAS for further necessary action. The process of this follow-up activity has already started and AASHWAS has been in constant touch with these volunteers for their feedback and hopes this community based approach shall pay rich dividends. Such initiatives of Assam Police through AASHWAS have also been applauded in various forums and have won accolades. Recently International Sarvodaya Peace Summit held at Coimbatore specially appreciated Project AASHWAS for its special focus on children victims of communal, ethnic and terrorist violence.

### **6.9 Academic Performance and Aspirations**

An attempt to understand the academic performance of the beneficiary children revealed that the bulk of the beneficiary children have done fairly well in their studies. Analysis of the average marks scored by these children in the last two qualifying examinations placed 44 per cent children in category 'good' (scoring 50-69% marks), five per cent in 'very good' (70-89% marks) and two per cent in 'excellent' category (90-100% marks). However, a large 48 per cent could be categorized in 'average' category only who scored between 30 to 49 per cent marks. These children also expressed their aspirations with regard to their studies. Nearly 53 per cent of these children expressed their desire to continue their studies till graduation while 18 per cent wanted to go upto post-graduation and beyond. More that 11 per cent aspire to pursue professional courses like engineering, medical science etc. Thus, it can be assumed that, in spite of the severe set back, these children were progressing well in their academics and some credit for this has to be awarded to Project Assist.

### **6.10 Views on Communal/Ethnic and Armed Conflicts in Assam**

The present study generated views of parents/guardians of the children and selected community leaders on various aspects of communal/ethnic/terrorist violence in Assam and the ways and means to prevent recurrence of such violent incidences. According to them these extremist groups used the socio-economically backward communities as soft targets and indulge in violence to spread terror and to pressurize governments and others to give in to their demands. The community leaders and the parents/guardians stated that there are a number of factors that contributed to the occurrence of violence. Some of the prime reasons are lack of access to quality education and employment opportunities, poverty, lure of easy money, conflict of interests among communities, political rivalry, etc. Both parents/guardians and community leaders had a common opinion that strong administrative and police action, spread of education, awareness generation among the community and economic security particularly among the youth, mutual respect and tolerance among communities, etc can bring down the incidences of violence to a large extent.

### **6.11 Suggestions and Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study as presented in the fore going chapters the following suggestions and recommendations are made:

1. Successful implementation of a scheme like Project Assist particularly, its utilization by the target groups depends, to large extent, awareness among the people about the scheme, its objectives, contents, the administrators/ implementing agency etc. The present study brought to light that awareness among the masses about Project Assist or NFCH is rather low. Even the beneficiary children and their parents/guardians were not adequately aware of the source of assistance, modalities of implementation etc. There is a need for undertaking planned awareness generation activities about Project Assist and its package of assistance among the community particularly in violence ravaged areas. It will enable the victim families to take their own initiatives in availing the benefits of assistance under Project Assist. This would not only lead to optimum utilization of the assistance scheme but would also reduce the work load of AASHWAS, the implementing partner and would result in better coverage.
2. While the necessity of supporting documents along with the application for assistance for verifying the authenticity of the claim can never be denied, efforts need to be made for avoiding unnecessary hassle for the parents/guardians of children. Although Police authorities, functionaries of AASHWAS, etc. do help the parents/guardians in this regard, it has been found that the parents often had to face a lot of difficulties in obtaining the Income Certificate which has to be submitted once in every three years. In view of the fact that, most of the applicant families belong to low income category and their main bread earner of the family had already expired, there is very little likelihood of drastic improvement in the income level of the families thereafter. Therefore, concerned authorities may consider doing away with the practice of asking for Income Certificates every three years and may insist on the Income Certificate during initial application. However, the requirement of study certificate to be submitted for renewal every year may be continued.
3. NFCH requires that some documents from the Police authorities like the copy of FIR etc. be translated to English while submitting along with the application. This results in extra paper work for the other wise busy police men at the Police Stations and at times become de-motivating. Therefore, the translation may be avoided to reduce the work load of the officials at the Thana level.
4. Often the distribution of the cheque from the District Magistrates' office takes a long time for which the beneficiaries have to face problem. Some times the *Mandal* (a functionary from SDC's office) who have to identify the child before the District authorities also demands money as transportation charge etc. to go to DM's office. Besides, though very few, there are cases when the beneficiary parents could not en-cash the cheque and its validity expired and the family was deprived of the benefits. Keeping this in view NFCH may consider transferring the assistance amount in the respective bank accounts of the beneficiaries directly through bank to bank transfer with intimation to the district authorities and AASHWAS for record and follow-up. This will facilitate fast and hassle free delivery of the assistance amount.
5. As per the norms of NFCH the assistance should be disbursed to the beneficiaries within the first quarter the academic year. However, for some unavoidable procedural matters the disbursement of the assistance gets delayed.

Besides, the exact dates/months of disbursement differs from year to year and as a result the beneficiary parents remain in dark about the probable dates/months of receipt and have to depend on the functionaries of AASHWAS or DM's office for the information relating to arrival of cheque from NFCH. Although, the delay cannot be entirely avoided, yet, maximum efforts need to be made to ensure timely disbursement at specific dates/months. Measures like bank transfer to the accounts of the beneficiaries can facilitate the process.

6. Financial assistance is extended under Project Assist till the age of 18 years of beneficiary child. However, normally if a child is continuing his/her studies, by 18 years of age one may usually complete 10+2 level. When the assistance is stopped at this stage the students face acute financial hardship and often have to dropout. There are a number of instances like this. Hence, the matter of increasing the age limit from 18 years to about 22/23 years need to be looked into so that the beneficiary children can go for higher education/complete their education. The issue of enhancing the upper age limit can be linked to continuation of education of the beneficiary after 18 years of age which should also include vocational education/training after 10+2 level.
7. At present only families below poverty line (BPL) are eligible to avail the benefits under Project Assist. It appears that there is a need for waiving the BPL criteria for the families for availing the financial assistance. In India, BPL families are officially identified as the target groups for many developmental schemes/programmes. However, for all practical purposes for a scheme like Project Assist BPL criteria should not be very strictly adhered to. Even if a family's income is above the poverty line, the family may not be able to meet the educational and other essential expenditures of the children. It is more likely to happen in a family which had lost the main bread earner. It may also be mentioned that, the assistance does not only mean financial help but is also an expression of concern of the government towards the victims of communal/ethnic or terrorist violence and their families. Therefore, the assistance needs to be extended to as many victims as possible.
8. Keeping in view the rising cost of education and livelihood there is a need for enhancing the present amount of assistance to each child. In case of children upto 18 years of age the amount may be raised from present Rs.750/- per child per month to Rs. 1000/-. For those who are pursuing professional courses after 18 years the amount may be increased to about Rs.1500/- per month.
9. It has come to light that in a number of cases the beneficiary parents/guardians were not aware whom to approach when they face a problem relating to their application, or to clarify a doubt or when need some assistance, etc. until and unless they could meet someone from Project AASHWAS. Therefore, it may be considered to set up a Helpline or an Information Centre at the DM's/SP's office with a designated official/functionary to attend to the beneficiary parents/guardians.
10. There is a need to develop a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation the implementation of Project Assist and follow-up of the beneficiary children and their families. This will help in ensuring that the assistance amount is received and utilized properly by the beneficiary families. It can also keep a track of the

progress of the beneficiary children in their education and support them in need. The mechanisms/modalities for follow-up and the indicators for monitoring and evaluation can be developed in consultation with partners like AASHWAS in Assam.

11. AASHWAS of Assam Police has very successfully and effectively partnered with an NGO in implementation of Project Assist in Kokrajhar district of Assam. Like wise, NFCH may consider engaging of some credible NGOs/VOs under supervision of AASHWAS in other districts of Assam for assistance, follow up and monitoring of the beneficiaries of Project Assist. AASHWAS can identify such NGOs/VOs, orient them to the task and also guide and supervise them so that the NGOs can play the desired role in implementation of the scheme. Appropriate association of community based organizations would also enable NFCH to ensure better coverage and broaden its reach among communities.
12. There is a need for making provision for some funds by NFCH to meet some essential administrative cost. In case of Assam the fund may be put at the disposal of AASHWAS with guidelines for its use. This fund may be utilized for follow up and monitoring of the beneficiary children.
13. Essentially the financial assistance under Project Assist is meant for children of victims of ethnic/communal/ terrorist violence who had been killed or permanently incapacitated by mobs/extremists/terrorists etc. There is no denying that extremist/terrorist elements deserve punishment as per the laws of the land. However, many a times these perpetrators of violence themselves are killed during the actions of security forces. In such a situation the innocent children of these anti-social elements have to suffer in many ways after the death of their parents. NFCH may consider enlarging the scope of Project Assist to include even the children of the perpetrators as they too become the innocent victims of the circumstance.
14. One of the basic eligibility conditions for children to receive the financial assistance under the scheme is their continuation of studies in schools/institutions. However, sometimes an otherwise deserving child with special needs (physically/mentally challenged) have to discontinue/dropout from the main stream schools/institutions. When the child is from a remote rural area he/she usually does not have access to special schools and the child has to languish without proper interventions. There are instances when the assistance is discontinued in case of such children for the simple reason that the Study Certificate could not be produced for renewal. On the other hand, such children from poor families require the assistance more than the others. Therefore, special provisions should be made in Project Assist to cater to the eligible children with special needs.
15. Organizing awareness generation campaigns on importance of peace and communal harmony for progress and development particularly targeting youths can go a long way in preventing violence in society. Therefore, such activities should be rigorously undertaken particularly among violence affected communities involving all sections of people. The community mobilization programmes initiated by AASHWAS can be emulated in this regard.

16. Disputes among communities on various issues should be immediately attended to and intervened by the concerned authorities and efforts should be made for amicable settlements at its earliest for preventing escalation of tension/resentments.
17. Under development, lack of opportunities for education, unemployment, etc. are some of the major contributing factors that provoke young people to join extremist/terrorist organizations. Therefore, government should take adequate measures to ensure that fruits of development percolate down to all sections of society and socio-economic disparities are minimized.

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