

# A statistical survey and analysis of community participation in school management in tribal-dominated areas of Meghalaya, with special reference to the Bhorimbong Block in the Aspirational District of Ribhoi

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## Abstract

This research study aimed to statistically examine the extent of community engagement in school management and the challenges faced in the process. Conducted in the Bhoirimbong block of Meghalaya's Ribhoi district—a predominantly tribal and rural region—the study involved 50 participants, including local officials and parents serving on School Management Committees, selected from 25 schools across nine educational clusters through simple random sampling. Data collection was facilitated through structured interviews in December 2019 and open focus group discussions in January 2020 with *Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan* officials and community members. These interactions explored the formation of management committees and the nature of meetings held. The collected data were analyzed using basic statistical techniques, focusing on response frequencies and stakeholder insights. Findings revealed limited awareness among school management committee members regarding the Right to Education Act, 2009, and proper committee formation. While government schools had functioning committees, participation was constrained by socio-economic hardships. In contrast, private unaided and missionary schools often lacked alignment with statutory norms. Community involvement was more evident in addressing absenteeism and in operational tasks such as distributing educational materials and monitoring infrastructure. However, engagement in school development planning remained minimal. Financial oversight was a notable area of contribution, though members raised concerns about implementation gaps, including poor infrastructure, delayed resource delivery, and inadequate facilities. The study underscored the need for enhanced state-level interventions to strengthen SMCs and foster meaningful community participation, particularly in underserved regions.

**Keywords:** community participation, elementary school education, right to education of children, school management committee, tribal-dominated areas

## **A statistical survey and analysis of community participation in school management in tribal-dominated areas of Meghalaya, with special reference to the Bhorimbong Block in the Aspirational District of Ribhoi**

### **1. Introduction**

The Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009 identifies parents and the community as vital stakeholders in a child's education, granting them significant roles and responsibilities. One of the key initiatives under this Act was the establishment of School Management Committees (SMCs). However, the formation and functioning of SMCs have faced several challenges, including limited awareness about their roles, inadequate funding, insufficient training and competence to develop School Development Plans (SDPs), and constrained autonomy to hold school authorities accountable. The Act stipulates that SMCs are responsible for monitoring school operations. In 2020, the Government of India (GOI) introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasized various aspects of the RTE Act, including the role of SMCs. NEP 2020 highlighted the necessity for SMCs to approve periodic teacher performance evaluations and emphasized effective governance through mechanisms such as the school complexes management committee.

**Rationale and Justification** - The Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) is a constitutional commitment, reinforced by the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act through the RTE Act, 2009. This Act ensures free and compulsory education for all children aged six to fourteen years, with a focus on access, equity, and quality. Despite substantial improvements in educational infrastructure and resources through initiatives like *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (GOI, 2011), achieving UEE remains an ongoing challenge, particularly in regions with social and economic disadvantages. The RTE Act incorporates several progressive provisions, including equitable access to education, inclusive practices for children with disabilities, teacher qualification standards, and safeguards against discriminatory practices such as physical punishment or capitation fees. The Act also emphasizes integrating Out-of-School Children (OoSC) into age-appropriate classes with additional training to bridge educational gaps.

The effective realization of UEE depends largely on grassroots implementation, especially in Scheduled Casts (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) dominated areas, where socio-economic and cultural barriers often impede progress. The RTE Act's success is contingent upon active participation from the community, parents, teachers, and local stakeholders in fostering a supportive educational environment. However, a study conducted by Singh (2013) on RTE implementation revealed significant disparities among States and Union Territories, highlighting the need for consistent and rigorous measures. Recent amendments and clarifications issued by the GOI have sought to strengthen the RTE Act's implementation. Despite these efforts, persistent issues such as teacher shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and low levels of community involvement continue to hinder progress, particularly in marginalized regions (Nawani, 2017).

**Purpose of the Research Study** - This study seeks to examine and evaluate the role of community participation in advancing elementary education in ST-dominated areas. Community involvement is essential for raising awareness about the significance of education and tackling localized challenges. The specific objectives of the study are:

- **Understanding Community Contributions:** Investigating the extent and nature of community participation in supporting elementary education, including their collaboration with schools, teachers, and local authorities.
- **Identifying Challenges:** Analyzing the obstacles communities face in contributing effectively to the implementation of the RTE Act.

- Evaluating Progress: Assessing the steps taken by States/Union Territories in ST-dominated regions to enhance community participation and identifying existing gaps.
- Proposing Solutions: Developing actionable recommendations to improve community engagement and address challenges hindering effective implementation of the RTE Act.

**Relevance** - Elementary education is not just a constitutional obligation but a fundamental element for achieving equitable social and economic growth. This study will provide valuable insights into the dynamics of community engagement in elementary education, particularly in underprivileged areas. The findings will aid policymakers and stakeholders in devising targeted strategies to bridge gaps, overcome challenges, and fulfill the objectives of the RTE Act, ensuring that every child has access to quality education.

**Objectives of the Research Study** - The primary goal of this study is to examine the challenges encountered by the community in managing schools and to propose actionable strategies for strengthening the community's involvement in school development within the rural and tribal areas of Bhoirybong block, situated in the aspirational district of Ribhoi, Meghalaya. Specifically, the study aims to:

- Analyze the obstacles faced by the community in enhancing school performance, and
- Develop and recommend strategies to improve community participation in fostering school development.

## 2. Review of Literature

The discourse on community participation in Indian early education is deeply embedded in constitutional provisions and evolving policy frameworks. Articles 21A, 45, and 46 of the Indian Constitution affirm the state's responsibility to provide free and compulsory education, while Articles 29, 30, 350A, and 350B safeguard the rights of linguistic and religious minorities, thereby reinforcing the principles of equity and inclusion (GOI, 2009). Historical policy developments—from the recommendations of the Kothari Commission (1966) to the National Policy on Education (1986)—have consistently emphasized the role of community involvement in school governance. Initiatives such as Operation Blackboard, the District Primary Education Programme, and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan introduced participatory mechanisms like Village Education Committees, which were later formalized as SMCs under the RTE Act, 2009 (GOI, 1998; 2010; 2020).

Academic literature highlights the reciprocal relationship between schools and communities. Communities contribute local knowledge, cultural continuity, and resources, while schools serve as centers for civic development and social cohesion (Govinda & Diwan, 2003). The RTE Act institutionalizes this collaboration by mandating inclusive SMCs—with 75% parent representation, gender balance, and participation from disadvantaged groups. These committees are responsible for planning, monitoring, grievance redressal, and ensuring constitutional compliance in school operations. Empirical evidence from regional studies, including descriptive research conducted in the Bhoirybong block of Meghalaya, underscores the critical role of community awareness, constitutional literacy, and active engagement in achieving universal early education. The literature concludes that sustained educational reform depends not only on policy directives but also on grassroots ownership and collaborative governance (Singh, 2015; Singh, 2020).

Community participation in school management reveals a positive and motivating trend in promoting early education. This trend indicates that local engagement is proving instrumental in expanding educational access. However, to fully realize constitutional mandates and ensure the community's effective role—particularly in empowering SMCs—there is a need for more structured, rigorous, and uniformly implemented measures in public policy and program execution. These measures must go beyond procedural formalities to reflect the true spirit of participatory governance (Tyagi *et al.*, 2023). In this context, a research study by Singh and Singh (2024) evaluated community contributions to school functions across various dimensions—such as school location,

drinking water, sanitation, classroom facilities, school provisions, and human resource monitoring. The study found commendable community involvement in areas like teacher arrangements, water supply, and infrastructure strengthening. However, participation in other aspects remained limited, suggesting that future improvements are possible through the awareness strategies outlined in the NEP - 2020.

Community participation is a critical component in achieving effective school management, particularly in regions with unique socio-cultural dynamics such as tribal-dominated areas. Research indicates that involving communities in decision-making processes enhances accountability, ensures efficient resource utilization, and fosters a sense of ownership among stakeholders. According to Rout (2013), active community participation in school governance can lead to better educational outcomes by addressing local needs and priorities.

### *2.1 Tribal Context in Meghalaya*

Meghalaya, a state predominantly inhabited by tribal communities, exhibits distinct socio-cultural norms that influence school education. Studies, such as those by Nongkynrih (2015), emphasized the importance of aligning educational interventions with tribal traditions and practices. Community-driven initiatives in Meghalaya, supported by traditional governance structures like the “Dorbar Shnong” (village councils), have demonstrated potential in mobilizing resources and ensuring school accountability. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives often varies due to challenges such as low literacy levels, limited awareness of educational policies/programmes, and socio-economic constraints.

### *2.2 Role of School Management Committees*

The RTE Act of 2009 mandates the establishment of SMCs to strengthen community participation in school governance. Studies by Govinda and Bandyopadhyay (2010) highlight the transformative potential of SMCs in bridging the gap between schools and communities. However, in tribal areas, including those in Meghalaya, SMCs often face challenges such as inadequate training, lack of clarity regarding roles, and limited resources, as noted by Singh (2013).

### *2.3 Educational Challenges in Tribal Areas*

Tribal-dominated regions, particularly in aspirational districts like Ribhoi, grapple with various educational challenges. These include inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, and high dropout rates. The NITI Aayog (2018) identifies Ribhoi as one of the districts requiring focused interventions to improve educational outcomes. Specific studies, such as those conducted by the North Eastern Hill University, Shillong as available elsewhere in the literature, underline the need for culturally sensitive pedagogical approaches and stronger community-school linkages to address these challenges.

### *2.4 Community Participation in Meghalaya's Educational Framework*

Meghalaya's education policy emphasizes grassroots involvement to improve school management. Nongkynrih (2015) explored community participation models in the state, noting that success often depends on the integration of traditional tribal governance with modern educational management frameworks. The Bhorimbong block, located within Ribhoi district, exemplifies a tribal-dominated area where traditional structures play a pivotal role in education. However, the literature suggests that community involvement in such areas remains sporadic, with significant variations in participation levels and effectiveness.

### *2.5 Statistical Approaches to Community Participation*

Statistical surveys provide valuable insights into the dynamics of community participation in school management. Quantitative methods allow for the identification of patterns, correlations, and gaps in participation. Jick (1979) suggested statistical tools to analyze community engagement in rural schools, highlighting the

impact of socio-economic factors on participation rates. In tribal contexts, statistical analysis can reveal how variables such as income levels, literacy rates, and cultural practices influence community involvement.

## 2.6 Gap Analysis

While existing literature underscores the importance of community participation in school management, there is a paucity of research focusing specifically on tribal-dominated areas in Meghalaya, particularly in the Bhorimbong block. Most studies provide broad overviews without delving into localized dynamics or employing comprehensive statistical analyses. Additionally, there is limited exploration of how aspirational district interventions have impacted community participation in school governance. This literature review highlights the need for a focused study on community participation in school management in tribal-dominated areas of Meghalaya. By combining qualitative insights with statistical analysis, the proposed research can fill critical gaps in understanding and provide actionable recommendations for improving educational outcomes in the Bhorimbong block and similar contexts. The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on tribal education and community engagement, aligning with the goals of the RTE Act of 2009 and the aspirations of national education policies.

## 3. Research Methodology

A random sampling method was employed to select community members, including local authorities and parents serving as SMC members, based on their willingness to participate in the study. A total of 50 community members were chosen as respondents from all 9 educational clusters of block for data collection. An interview schedule and focus points for Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) (held in December 2019 and January 2021, respectively) with these community members were prepared to gather data. The study examined several data points, including awareness of the RTE Act of 2009, and the formation of SMCs, participation in SMC orientation programs, perceptions of SMC formation, awareness of OoSC children enrolled, views on key achievements of SMCs, SDPs, oversight for effective school functioning, monitoring of academic and infrastructural activities, the use of grants/funds by SMCs, and obstacles in implementing the Act.

Data collection took place with the administrative support of the Meghalaya State Government in December 2019. Additionally, FGDs were conducted in January 2020 on various discussion topics with community members and other stakeholders following the guidelines as suggested by Krueger *et al.* (2000). The data was analysed using a straightforward statistical analysis method, as recommended by Czaja and Blair (2005), Jick (1979), and others. The study carefully incorporates ethical practices—such as informed consent, safeguards for stakeholders, and protocols for data confidentiality—to uphold integrity, respect, and accountability throughout the process of collecting primary data from schools.

## 4. Data Presentation and Analysis

The data underwent a mixed analysis method, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches, to draw conclusions based on the frequency of responses for each data item. The findings are presented with figures and tables in the following paragraphs.

### 4.1 Profile Analysis of School Management Committee Members on Key General Parameters

Table 1 presents a detailed profile of SMC members, segmented by their affiliation—either as representatives of the local authority or as parents. The data offers insights into gender distribution, social categories, positions held, organizational memberships, and levels of awareness regarding SMC structures and formation procedures as outlined below.

- **Gender Composition:** The gender distribution reveals a male-dominated composition, with 36 male members (24 from local authorities and 12 parents) compared to 14 female members (1 from local

authorities and 13 parents). This indicates relatively higher female representation among parent members, suggesting a modest shift toward gender inclusivity in parental engagement.

**Table 1***Profile of School Management Committee Members on Key Parameters of General Information*

Key Parameters of General Information about Members	SMC Members		
	Local Authority	Parents	Total
Gender			
Male	24	12	36
Female	1	13	14
Social Category			
SC	1	1	2
ST	23	23	46
General	1	1	2
Present Position Held			
SMC President	6	1	7
SMC Convenor	1	0	1
SMC Teacher Member	0	3	3
Ex-officio Member	1	0	1
Others (Parent / Guardian of Child/ Elected Member of Local Authority/ Teacher of the school/ Local Educationist)	17	21	38
Member of Body			
SMC	21	22	43
PTA	1	3	4
Others	3	0	3
Awareness about SMC	25	24	49
Awareness about procedure of formation of SMC			
Election	4	4	8
Selection	14	16	30
Nomination	6	5	11
Others (Specify)	1	0	1

- **Social Category Representation:** The majority of SMC members belong to ST, accounting for 46 individuals (23 from each group). SC and General category members are minimally represented, with only 2 members each. This demographic profile reflects the regional sociocultural composition and highlights the need for broader representation from diverse social groups.
- **Present Positions Held:** Leadership roles within the SMC are primarily occupied by local authority members, with 6 serving as Presidents and 1 as Convenor. Parent members contribute more significantly as Teacher Members (3) and in other roles such as guardians, elected representatives, school teachers, or local educationists (21). The “Others” category, comprising 38 members, underscores the multifaceted nature of community involvement in school governance.
- **Membership in Educational Bodies:** A total of 43 members are affiliated with SMC/SMDCs, with near-equal representation from both groups (21 local authority, 22 parents). Additionally, 4 members are part of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), and 3 are associated with other bodies. This distribution suggests a strong institutional linkage and potential for collaborative governance.
- **Awareness about SMC/SDMC:** Awareness levels regarding the existence and functions of SMC/SDMCs are notably high, with 49 members (25 local authority, 24 parents) reporting familiarity. This reflects successful dissemination of information and community sensitization efforts.
- **Awareness of Formation Procedures:** When examining awareness of the procedures for forming SMCs/SDMCs:

**Selection** emerges as the most recognized method (30 members),

Followed by **Nomination** (11 members),

**Election** (8 members), and

**Other methods** (1 member).

This pattern indicates a preference or prevalence of selection-based processes, which may warrant further scrutiny to ensure transparency and democratic participation.

The profile of SMC members reveals encouraging trends in tribal representation and parental involvement, particularly among women. However, disparities in leadership roles and procedural awareness suggest areas for capacity building and policy refinement. Strengthening gender balance, diversifying social representation, and promoting democratic formation processes are essential for enhancing the effectiveness and inclusivity of school governance structures.

#### 4.2 Sources of Awareness about the RTE Act, 2009 and the Constitution of SMC

Responses regarding the sources of awareness about the Act were gathered from community members. Analysis of these responses revealed that mass media (newspapers and television) and panchayats had the least impact on rural respondents, despite being considered effective sources of information about policies and programs in recent years. In contrast, schools (34%) and the Education Department (22%) emerged as the primary sources of awareness among community members. A notable gap of 18% between awareness of the Act and the constitution of SMCs among members were reported. Additionally, local authority members reported an awareness gap of 20%, while parent members had a gap of 16%.

#### 4.3 Members Participation in the Orientation Programme on SMC

Table 2 presents data on members' participation in the SMC orientation program held over the past two years.

**Table 2**

*Members' Participation in the Orientation Programme on SMC Conducted during the Last Two Years under the RTE Act, 2009*

Key Parameters of Orientation about SMC & Training Programmes Attended	Response of SMC Members As		
	Local Authority	Parents	Total
Orientation about the role and functions of SMC under the RTE Act, 2009	4 (16%)	5 (20%)	9 (18%)
Details of Orientation Programme Attended			
Number of Programmes Attended			
One	4	4	-
Duration of Programme			
One Day	4	3	-
Two Days	0	1	-
Main Focus of the Programme	About the role and functions of SMC, To improve the teaching process, and To uplift the school infrastructure		

Approximately 18% of members received orientation regarding the roles and functions of the SMC, with participation rates of 20% among parents and 16% among local authorities. In total, members attended four programs during this period. All orientation sessions lasted one day, except for one that was conducted over two days. The primary objectives of these programs were to inform members about the SMC's roles and functions, enhance the teaching process, and improve school infrastructure.

#### 4.4 Perception about the Constitution of SMC

Approximately 52% of members viewed the constitution of the SMC as being in accordance with the Act. Conversely, members also cited reasons for non-compliance with the Act's provisions regarding the SMC's constitution in schools. The SMCs were established according to the constitution of the sponsoring body

(mission), and members typically followed directives from the school leader as needed. The norms of the Act were being adhered to base on resolutions from the sponsoring body. Parent members also pointed out a lack of awareness about the Act. Additionally, members were selected by the sponsoring body from among its members due to the minority status of the schools. However, nearly 48% of members felt that the SMC's constitution did not comply with the Act.

#### 4.5 Awareness about Out of School Children Admitted

Members' awareness about OoSC admitted to schools was assessed to determine the number of such children in the current and previous academic sessions, including any special training provided to help them catch up with their peers. Table 3 outlines members' awareness regarding OoSC. It was found that approximately 75 children (35 boys and 40 girls) were reported as OoSC in the current year, while 58 children (23 boys and 35 girls) were identified as OoSC in the previous year, according to members' information. Notably, the enrollment of girls as OoSC was higher than that of boys. The admitted OoSC received special training through dedicated classes, and in some cases, schools arranged for remedial teaching, as reported by the members.

**Table 3**  
*Members' Awareness of Out-of-School Children Admitted in the Schools*

Awareness about Out of School Children Admitted in Schools	Response of SMC Members As		
	Local Authority	Parents	Total
Number of Out of School Children Admitted			
Current Year			
Boys	23	12	35
Girls	31	9	40
Total	54	21	75
Previous Year			
Boys	16	7	23
Girls	27	8	35
Total	43	15	58
Special training has been provided to such children to bring them to par with others	1	1	-

#### 4.6 Opinion about the Significant Achievements of SMCs

Information was collected to understand members' views on the significant achievements of the SMCs. The members' opinions are outlined below.

- Since the RTE Act 2009 was implemented, the SMCs have functioned smoothly to maintain and enhance the quality of education in schools.
- The SMCs have been actively monitoring teachers, students, and SDPs while holding monthly meetings.
- Members ensured 100% enrollment in schools and managed various aspects, such as the distribution of free textbooks, uniforms, mid-day meals, and other items for students.
- Members reported that the Act was being followed, except regarding the selection of SMC members.
- Some members mentioned that they were not fully familiar with the Act and were therefore hesitant to share their opinions, while others were aware of its provisions.
- A notable achievement was the selection/election of a woman as a member of the SMCs, thanks to the implementation of the Act.
- The admission process for OoSC has been straightforward, and there has been an increase in enrollment following the establishment of SMCs due to the Act.

#### 4.7 School Development Plans

Community members indicated their involvement in designing the SDPs, with only 58% reporting participation. Among these, 68% of local authorities expressed their involvement, while only 48% of parents did. In terms of the nature of their participation, members addressed various issues related to the design and development of the SDPs, including other relevant aspects. They contributed ideas for the construction of school buildings, kitchen sheds, toilets, and the proper placement of playground facilities during SMC meetings. Members consistently encouraged parents to send their children to school by organizing awareness programs. They also worked to improve school infrastructure and advocated for financial assistance for repairs by sharing their opinions within the community. Members actively expressed their views on the SDPs during SMC meetings and engaged in discussions about how to design and develop these plans.

#### 4.8 Monitoring for Ensuring Proper Functioning of School

The information regarding members' involvement in ensuring effective functioning by monitoring and assessing each child's learning abilities, conducting regular meetings with parents, and preventing teachers from engaging in private tutoring were obtained from the responding community members. Notably, 90% of members participated in holding regular meetings with parents to inform them about attendance, learning capabilities, progress, and any other relevant information about their children, which was a top priority for the members. This was followed by 77% of members assessing each child's learning abilities and providing additional instructions as needed to meet individual learners' needs. Additionally, 77% of members were engaged in monitoring to ensure that teachers did not participate in private tuition.

#### 4.9 Monitoring of Academic-cum-Infrastructural Activities

The distribution of members regarding their involvement in monitoring academic and infrastructural activities were collected on selected items from the community members. As per obtained response, it is clear that members focused primarily on monitoring the mid-day meal program (84%), followed by all-weather buildings (80%), functional toilets/urinals (76%), and other activities. The responses collected are summarized in the following paragraphs.

**Monitoring of School in General:** Members actively monitored teacher and student attendance, student performance, surrounding schools, tree planting, disaster awareness, cleanliness, school discipline, SDPs, and classroom facilities such as chalk, dusters, window panes, and doors. Repairs to the school were carried out during the winter break, with payments made to laborers by the SMC. Members participated in school monitoring on a quarterly basis and visited the school during hours to check teacher attendance and student discipline.

**Drinking Water:** Members were involved in monitoring the drinking water supply and approached the panchayat to address safe drinking water issues and tap water infrastructure for the schools. In some cases, they contacted the Department of Public Health Engineering to secure a safe drinking water supply and took an interest in repairing the drinking water supply pipeline. For tap water, members negotiated with local darbaars.

**Functional Toilets/Urinals:** Members monitored the cleanliness of toilets and urinals. They frequently discovered non-functional toilets for boys, girls, and staff and were involved in repairing these facilities, reporting issues to the relevant local authorities for action.

**All Weather Building:** Members sought alternative buildings in case the school structure was unsafe during certain weather conditions. They reported that many school buildings were in poor condition and worked to ensure that school buildings were safe, clean, and well-maintained. They also helped construct additional classrooms with public support, particularly for pre-primary classes, and took preventive measures to prevent water from dripping from school roofs.

**Adequate Number of Classrooms:** Members reported a shortage of classrooms in schools. To address this, wooden partitions were used to create additional rooms, and this arrangement was generally accepted as there were no better alternatives.

**Free Transport for Children with Special Needs (CWSN):** Members indicated that free transportation for CWSN was not available, as no children in this category were enrolled in the schools covered in this study. However, the SMC provided special attention to CWSN when necessary and reported to the government to make provisions for these children, though the issue remained unresolved at the government level.

**Residential Facility for Children:** Members stated that a residential facility for children would not be beneficial, as students typically came from nearby rural areas.

**Mid-day Meals:** Members were vigilant in monitoring the quality of raw materials for mid-day meals and oversaw the cooking and distribution of meals to students on a daily or weekly basis, ensuring compliance with the State mid-day meal guidelines.

#### *4.10 Utilization of Grants by the SMCs*

The SMC members were questioned about their involvement in utilizing grants, including their awareness of funding sources, participation in planning and budgeting for the SDPs, proper deployment of funds for intended purposes through transparent and accountable procedures, monitoring of fund utilization, and submission of audited accounts for the school's receipts and expenditures. In aggregate, the members had the least involvement in planning and budgeting for the SDPs (40%), while their participation in submitting audited accounts of receipts and expenditures was the highest at 88%.

Members also provided insights into financial activities, indicating that occasional funding sources included contributions from State Legislative Assembly members, the Meghalaya Development Corporation, the sponsoring body, public donations, government grants, and donations from SMC members, trusts, and committees, as per their knowledge of funding sources. The SMCs were involved in planning SDPs and assessing infrastructural needs for submission to the government. Members reported that school funds were utilized for their intended purposes, including minor repairs and honoraria for additional teachers appointed by the SMCs. They noted that a fund utilization register was maintained, and details of fund expenditures were recorded in the register.

#### *4.11 Bottlenecks in the Implementation of the RTE Act, 2009*

The responding members expressed their views on the obstacles faced in implementing the Act in schools. The main areas of concern identified included issues related to mid-day meals, school buildings and infrastructure, timely distribution of free textbooks and uniforms to students, poor learning outcomes, a lack of awareness about the Act among many rural parents, teacher shortages, and insufficient awareness of the importance of education among parents.

#### *4.12 Focus Group Discussions with Officials: On Process for Constitution of SMC*

A FGD was conducted with officials from the State Government's Officials, leading to the following points:

- Schools in Meghalaya are categorized into government, private aided, private un-aided, and missionary schools operated by Christians.
- The SMCs are composed of 11 members for Upper Primary Schools and 9 members for Lower Primary Schools, and these SMCs are registered with the District School Education Office.
- Although SMCs were established in government schools, member participation in school management

has been reported as low due to their involvement in livelihood activities.

- Government-aided schools adhere to the guidelines for forming SMCs, while un-aided private and missionary schools operated by Christians do not follow these guidelines and instead implement their own rules and regulations based on minority rights.
- In some instances, un-aided private and missionary schools have attempted to replicate SMC activities, but members often lack awareness of their rights, roles, and responsibilities within the SMC.

#### *4.13 FGD with Community Members: On Process for Constitution of SMC*

FGDs were conducted with community members, parents, and other stakeholders, and the findings are summarized below:

- Female representation in existing SMCs is a significant issue, particularly in un-aided private and missionary schools, while government schools typically achieve around 50% female participation.
- SMC meetings are held periodically, but the frequency varies from monthly to every six months, with approximately 40 minutes dedicated to discussions. Government schools maintain SMC-related records effectively.
- Generally, at least four SMC meetings are conducted in an academic year, or more as needed, based on requests from school teachers to the Secretary or Chairman of the SMC.
- Major discussions during SMC meetings focus on students' academic performance, often neglecting other critical issues such as infrastructure, session planning, curriculum implementation, and teaching methodologies.
- Issues raised during SMC meetings are typically brought up by school teachers who actively participate as SMC members, but the SMCs overall lack effective monitoring of school activities.
- Members are aware of the SMC constitution, noting that there should be 9 members from primary schools and 11 from upper primary schools. This formation includes PTAs, and minority mission schools must register their SMCs with the Office of District School Education.
- Alarming, un-aided private schools follow a markedly different model for their SMCs, which exercise monitoring and financial powers. A separate SMC is formed that includes all segments of society, diverging from government norms and failing to comply with the Act's requirements.

#### *4.14 FGD with Community Members: On SMC Meeting Details*

During FGDs with SMC members and parents, several key points were raised regarding the agenda items for SMC meetings:

- Items related to school infrastructure, including issues such as lack of water supply, inadequate toilets, classroom expansions, minor and major repairs, and school fencing.
- Items concerning financial grants, such as grants for furniture, uniforms, textbooks, mid-day meals, and teaching-learning materials.
- Items related to school performance, including the performance of teachers and students, parent participation, dropout rates, and the presence of OoSC.

Additionally, information about SMC meetings was typically shared in advance with members. The frequency of meetings was flexible, but many SMC members reported having little understanding of how to

prepare SDPs. Decisions regarding the SMC agenda were forwarded to the sponsoring body, which then processed and submitted them as deemed appropriate to the relevant authorities for necessary action.

## 5. Findings

The study's findings were derived from the data collection schedule and FGDs conducted with stakeholders, summarized as follows:

- A gap was identified in awareness of the Act and the constitution of SMCs among members. Many believed that the SMCs in private unaided and missionary schools did not comply with the Act. The primary sources for raising awareness were the schools and the Education Department, while mass media had little impact, likely due to the remoteness of rural areas.
- Most members reported not having received orientation programs on the roles and functions of SMCs or the Act. For those who attended programs in the past two years, all but one were one-day sessions, with the aim of educating members on SMC roles, enhancing the teaching process, and improving school infrastructure.
- The constitution of SMCs includes 11 members for Upper Primary Schools and 9 members for Lower Primary Schools, which are registered with the District School Education Office. Although SMCs were established in every Government school, participation in school management was reported to be very low, with many members reluctant to attend meetings. Parental participation was particularly low due to socioeconomic challenges.
- Un-aided private and missionary schools follow a different model for SMC management, creating separate SMCs that include various community segments and are not dominated by a specific group. This practice diverges from government norms and does not meet the requirements of the RTE Act, 2009. These schools often base their SMC formation on resolutions from their sponsoring bodies rather than the Act itself, reflecting their minority status.
- The implementation of the Act faced challenges due to approximately 14,000 un-aided private and missionary schools in the state, which operate under their own regulations, citing minority rights. These schools often resist external oversight and are generally not receptive to the SMC provisions outlined in the Act.
- Female representation in existing SMCs is a significant concern, particularly in unaided private and missionary schools, while Government schools typically maintain 50% female participation. Members also noted a general lack of awareness regarding the Act.
- Member involvement concerning OoSC was found to be satisfactory, with special training provided to help these children catch up with their peers. Teachers conducted special classes and remedial teaching for these students, as reported by the members.
- SMCs managed various aspects of school operations, including distributing free textbooks, uniforms, mid-day meals, and other supplies to children. Members reported compliance with the Act, except regarding the selection process of SMC members. An increase in enrollment was observed following the implementation of the Act and the establishment of SMCs in schools.
- SMCs contributed to the overall development of schools as outlined in the Act. Members noted achievements such as effective school functioning, monitoring of teachers and students, oversight of SDPs, holding meetings, and ensuring student enrollment. They also monitored activities such as academic planning, sports, cultural programs, teacher training and recruitment, prevention of discrimination, and submission of school reports to authorities.

- Members engaged in monitoring school operations, focusing on the punctuality of students and teachers, as well as ensuring the curriculum was completed within the academic year.
- Regular meetings with parents were held to update them on attendance, learning abilities, and progress, and to assess each child's learning needs for additional support. However, overall member participation in these processes was lacking and needed improvement.
- Members addressed various issues related to SDPs, offering suggestions for school buildings, kitchen facilities, toilets, and playgrounds. They worked to improve school infrastructure and raised agendas for funding repair work. SMCs discussed developing SDPs and were actively involved in enhancing school infrastructure, including repairing buildings, erecting bamboo fencing, and acquiring furniture. They also initiated the construction of additional classrooms using bamboo partitioning.
- SMC meetings were held periodically, with intervals ranging from monthly to six months, dedicating about 40 minutes to discussions. Government schools maintained proper records of SMC activities. Typically, there were at least four meetings per academic session, or additional meetings as requested by school teachers.
- Major discussions during SMC meetings focused on students' academic performance, while other critical issues requiring attention, such as infrastructure and curriculum planning, were often overlooked. Issues raised in these meetings were generally addressed by school teachers serving as SMC members, but overall supervision and monitoring of school activities were lacking.
- Members monitored various school activities, including general school management, drinking water facilities, functional toilets, all-weather buildings, adequate classroom space, and the provision of mid-day meals. Their focus on monitoring activities was particularly strong regarding mid-day meals, followed by all-weather buildings and functional toilets.
- Member involvement in planning and budgeting for SDPs was minimal, while participation in submitting audited financial accounts was high. Positive efforts were noted in financial management, including managing school bank accounts, paying teacher salaries, raising community funds, and maintaining separate accounts for midday meals. Fund utilization registers were kept up to date, and the SMCs thoroughly reviewed account-related activities.
- Members identified several bottlenecks in the implementation of the Act, including issues with mid-day meals, school buildings and infrastructure, timely distribution of free textbooks and uniforms, and teacher shortages. Many rural parents were also unaware of the Act.

## 6. Conclusions

Based on the data presentation, analysis, and findings, the following conclusions have been made:

- The impact of mass media on the community was minimal due to limited access to electronic, print, and social media in the challenging hilly terrain.
- There is a significant lack of awareness among community members about the Act and the structure and functions of SMCs.
- Most SMC members have not undergone orientation or training related to the Act.
- Member involvement in addressing OoSC issues was satisfactory.
- Although SMCs were constituted in all Government schools, member participation in school management was notably low, especially parental involvement, which was hindered by socioeconomic

challenges.

- Un-aided private and missionary schools follow distinct management models for SMCs that are not aligned with the provisions of the Act.
- There was a significant lack of member participation in monitoring school operations, which requires immediate attention.
- While SMC members contributed ideas for improving school infrastructure—such as buildings, kitchen sheds, toilets, and playgrounds—their engagement in preparing SDPs remained limited.
- Although SMCs were tasked with monitoring both academic and non-academic activities in schools, their participation was inadequate and needs strengthening.
- Monitoring of financial activities was effectively carried out by SMCs, reflecting a commendable practice.
- Government officials observed that the effectiveness of SMC members in school management was particularly poor in private, missionary, and minority institutions.
- The community highlighted several challenges, including issues with mid-day meals, school infrastructure, timely distribution of free textbooks and uniforms, and a shortage of teachers.

The study indicated a positive trend in community participation in SMCs, except in un-aided private and missionary schools. However, the community faces challenges in school management related to the timely distribution of entitlements, school infrastructure, teacher shortages, and low community involvement, all of which require more rigorous and uniform measures from the State. This includes empowering SMCs both in principle and practice.

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