

Final Report

Ex-post Evaluation of

Selected German government co-financed projects in the sector of primary education in the states of Assam and Meghalaya in Northeast India

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Carried out on behalf of
German Doctors e.V.
(formerly Ärzte für die Dritte Welt)

by

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Abbreviations

BENGO	BMZ helpdesk for NGOs
BMZ	German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BTAD	Bodo Territorial Autonomous Districts
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the United Nations
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
DBYES	Don Bosco Youth Mission and Educational Services
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
NDFB	National Democratic Front of Bodoland
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SEBA	Secondary Education Board of Assam
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (English: The Education for All Movement)
ToR	Terms of Reference
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Asom
USD	American Dollars

Preface

At the very beginning of this report, the evaluator would like to heartily thank all involved partner representatives for their support and for their hospitality. He would like to express his respect for the highly engaged contributions to this evaluation, thus allowing a fruitful exchange of ideas in a trustful, warm and harmonic atmosphere.

0. Executive Summary

Historical Background

Already in 1947, with increasing economic problems in the region, separatist groups began forming along ethnic lines, and demands for autonomy and sovereignty grew, resulting in fragmentation of Assam. In recent times, ethnicity based militant groups have mushroomed. Finally, regional autonomy has been ensured for four so called Bodo Territorial Autonomous Districts (BTAD) after agitation of the communities due to an unsatisfactory rate of development and general apathy of successive state governments towards indigenous communities. During longstanding violent struggles for autonomy, especially ethnic minorities had been displaced and were living in refugee camps. The fact that many of these people still live around the former camps without any arable land and in deep poverty under autonomous Bodo district governments is depressing.

The four visited implementing partners of German Doctors in Assam increased the numbers of their students by six to ten times after completion of new school buildings. Together with numerous school visits also submitted school statistics clearly underlined constantly increasing numbers of students during recent years as a result of good quality teaching, thus leading to a very high demand among parents.

Today, the Government of India is undertaking serious efforts in various educational programs. Recently, a bill was passed on education for all. Against this background setting up parallel structures may appear as a general risk for external funding of private non-profit schools. But not so in Assam with its remote rural areas, with its high numbers of different ethnic groups, with its longstanding violent minority issues, and with the young and not yet very efficient autonomous Bodo districts.

From the perspective of representatives of the Secondary Education Board of Assam (SEBA) Catholic schools are considered to be complementary to already existing schools. They provide high quality teaching and cover best existing needs for education, especially in remote and disadvantaged regions. In addition, all evaluated projects clearly contribute to poverty reduction and to the “education for all” strategy and they fully meet the requirement of the millennium goals one to three.

Background of the Evaluation

Since the year 2002, “German Doctors e.V.” supports school construction, co-funded by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in the project region. Since then, a total of 30 school buildings have been constructed by

diverse partners. The selection of sites for school constructions predominantly followed criteria of complementarity in view of already existing government schools, aspects of the remoteness of an area of intervention, as well as the particular circumstances of disadvantaged and/or conflict and war affected ethnic groups and minorities.

The overall objective of all school construction projects always was to increase the share of young people who are able to read and write on a sustainable basis. Thus the projects' objectives aimed at the improvement of learning conditions through a better and more appropriate learning infrastructure. All project interventions considered construction of school buildings only. Teachers' training, school management, didactical learning materials etc. were only part of the external project support to a very limited extent.

For this evaluation, twelve schools were selected in the Northeast of India. The relevant project proposals for this evaluation did so far not follow the logical framework approach. BMZ only insists on logframe-based project proposals since the year 2011. Accordingly, in practice no detailed results and indicators had been formulated during the planning phase.

All support towards the evaluated projects had ended, partly even five to several years ago. Consequently, for this evaluation an ex-post evaluation was chosen. One of the key instruments of the ex-post evaluation is the use of so-called "proxy indicators". These are indirect measures or signs, approximating or representing a phenomenon in the absence of a direct measure or sign after a project's end. Considered as a whole this evaluation has a strong qualitative character. In contrast to the focus on construction activities during project implementation, aspects of school operation after the projects' ends are in the foreground here.

Major Remarks and Conclusions

Construction and maintenance:

1. The cost-benefit ratio of visited school constructions is excellent, due to accurate follow-up, procurement and monitoring practices.
2. Perhaps not from an esthetic perspective, but in terms of stability aspects in the earthquake prone project region, all schools fully correspond to safety rules and quality regulations for public buildings in India.
3. Using a modular construction technique, and unique foundations strong enough to carry three floors, construction is highly flexible and can be used like a model kit.
4. After operation periods of four to seven years all visited schools are excellently maintained.

Organization and management:

5. Almost all schools achieved financially autonomous operation during many years.
6. The salary level with the evaluated schools is comparatively low and causes a rather high fluctuation of teaching staff in some places.
7. Although the schools impose school fees, every visited school offered exemptions and subsidy schemes for students from poorer families.

8. Many schools in rural areas are organizing transport facilities (mostly by buses) to render school visits possible for students of remote and isolated homesteads.
9. Drop-out rates are minimal. Having gained access to a school once, nearly all students stay until the end of the secondary school cycle (after class ten).

Pedagogics and teaching:

10. Although the level of discipline is rather high and strict, the learning atmosphere does not include any indication of fear or intimidation. In contrast, students appear open-minded and seem to consider coming to school as a happy event.
11. All employed teachers are graduates and professionals of official teacher training centers and all of them hold a teaching license and are principally authorized to teach as well at government schools.
12. Globally, teachers of the evaluated schools are rather young and quite often even beginners. Intensified on-the-job training is therefore provided regularly.
13. Quality of teaching in the visited schools is not always at a same level. However, considered as a whole, teaching can be assessed between satisfying and excellent.
14. Instead of imposing repetition of a school year due to poor performance, the schools' philosophy requests an intensified effort for an accelerated learning of weak pupils.
15. All interview partners strongly underlined the high quality standards of Catholic schools.
16. In all visited classes school books were available for every student.

Political and policy aspects:

17. As a result of a longstanding remoteness, manifold ethnic groups and related violent conflicts and due to still rather weak organizational structures challenges for education are very specific in Assam and not comparable with other Indian states.
18. By government officials Catholic schools are considered as complementary facilities for an "education for all", but not as competitors of government schools.
19. Regardless of their ethnic and/or religious origin, all students have access to the evaluated schools.
20. Sites for school constructions have been, to a large extent, selected according to existing needs, in terms of remoteness of an area, ethnic minorities, low incomes etc.
21. Beneficiaries of the schools mainly belong to different ethnic groups speaking other mother tongues than Assamese. Therefore teaching in English constitutes a big advantage.
22. There is a constant and strong increase of demand for schooling from parents' side since several years. After construction of new buildings, the average number of students per school is six to ten times higher than before.
23. The alternative for the majority of students of Catholic schools was mostly not to visit government schools, but to stay at home without visiting any school.

Recommendations:

Construction and maintenance:

1. The unique planning and design for the construction of the school buildings excellently stood the test and should be maintained for any school construction in the future.
2. Established procurement and monitoring practices and follow-up allowed good quality and highly cost efficient school constructions within short and predefined time frames. Similar proceedings should be carried on in the future.

Organization and management:

3. Amounts of school fees are discussed and fixed by the schools' principals and administrators together with parents' committees according to particular socio-economic situations. Under this financial autonomy school operation worked very well so far. This practice should be maintained.
4. In the near future at least some schools will no longer be able to accept all applications for schooling. At this stage clear limits of students per class must be defined and strictly respected. Otherwise the schools risk losing their excellent reputation and high quality teaching.
5. The teachers' salaries should be increased wherever possible so as to avoid too much fluctuation.
6. In some cases school fees could be slightly higher in order to fully cover operational costs. Subsidies for most vulnerable families should then be increased.

Pedagogics and teaching:

7. It is recommended to intensify the already existing practice of teacher training in view of a better integration of very young and less experienced teachers. Hereby joint trainings, planned and organized by the partners, could be an advantage.
8. It is not easy to abandon front-class-teaching teaching, due to many students per class and lacking didactical materials. Nevertheless, some class visits have shown that also with a piece of chalk and a blackboard an animating and challenging lesson can be held. Here, the most experienced practitioners should be deployed for a better dissemination of their knowledge.
9. Digital teaching is costly and should never replace daily teaching. However, if available, it can compensate deficient didactical material and at the same time guide not so experienced teachers.
10. Teacher training could be a domain for looking for a closer collaboration between Catholic school operators and government's education departments in view of joint trainings for non-profit school and government school teachers.

Political and policy aspects:

11. The strong poverty-related school operation, together with the support of ethnic and discriminated minorities, should also play a crucial role in Catholic education projects in the future in order to compensate obvious deficits and giving the opportunity of school attendance to the rural poor.
12. The pluralistic multi-ethnic and multi-religious society in Assam does not exclude closer cooperation between government authorities and private non-profit

schools by law. However, it will need numerous discussions and requests for increasing the level of support through government. Nevertheless, this dialogue should continue.

Lessons learned:

The situation in Assam and especially in the autonomous Bodo districts strongly differs from the general situation all over India. Looking at the level of existing needs in education, on the very heterogeneous multi-ethnic situation, and on the constantly existing risk of violent clashes, ongoing support of private non-profit schools is highly recommended in this part of India.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Evaluation

Since the year 2002, “German Doctors e.V.” supports school construction, co-funded by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in the project region. Since then, a total of 30 school buildings have been constructed by diverse partners. Projects of four partners have been visited during the evaluation, (1) of the Archdiocese of Guwahati, (2) of the Montfort Brothers, (3) of the Diocese of Bongaigaon, and (4) of Don Bosco Youth Mission and Educational Services (DBYES). Besides some minor extra components, the funding nearly exclusively was considered for construction work. Based on more or less unique technical constructions, in full compliance with the rules and regulations for public and especially educational buildings in the earthquake prone region of Northeast India, all planning and executive work has been organized and monitored by the partners.

In the ethnically very heterogeneous project region, with a length of approximately 350 kilometers and a width of some 60 kilometers, the funded schools are situated in the narrow corridor between Assam-Meghalaya and the Bhutanese border; mainly along the Brahmaputra River (see map in chapter 3). During recent years violent clashes (in some districts even to be called a civil war) left this region repeatedly unstable and finally led, after longstanding negotiations with the Central Government of India, to four Bodo Territorial Autonomous Districts (BTAD).

The selection of sites for school constructions predominantly followed criteria of complementarity in view of already existing government schools, aspects of the remoteness of an area of intervention, as well as the particular circumstances of disadvantaged and/or conflict and war affected ethnic groups and minorities.

1.2 Purpose and Objectives of Evaluation

For many years *German Doctors* received continuous co-funding from BMZ for their projects in India, especially in the sector of primary and secondary education (construction of elementary schools) in the Northeast. An evaluation has never been carried out so far. Against this backdrop an ex-post evaluation was carried out now.

The overall objective of all school construction projects always was to increase the share of young people who are able to read and write on a sustainable basis. Thus the projects' objectives aimed at the improvement of learning conditions through a better and more appropriate learning infrastructure.

So far the impact of the projects has not been assessed by any external evaluator. In the final reports for the German government only the situation of the starting year of the particular new school buildings (e.g. students' figures) could be reported. However, there is no information about the improvement of the schools after their start. The status of the schools, several years after the end of external funding, should therefore be one of the focal points of the evaluation.

For this evaluation, twelve schools (of overall more than 30 supported schools) were selected in the states of Assam (11) and Meghalaya (one school only) in Northeast India. As the co-financed projects were very similar, a comparative evaluation was envisaged. Therefore, strengths and weaknesses should be elaborated in a better way.

The schools of the following four different partners of *German Doctors* had been selected:

- Four schools in the Archdiocese of Guwahati
- Two schools of the Montfort Brothers
- Two schools in the Diocese of Bongaigaon and
- four schools of the Don Bosco Youth Mission and Educational Services, DBYES.

Funding of the selected schools took place between 2005 and 2011.

The essential evaluation questions were structured along the so-called DAC criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (see detailed ToR in Annex 3). In addition, this report follows the binding table of content (Mustergliederung für Evaluierungsberichte), provided by the BMZ helpdesk for NGOs (BENGO) for this type of evaluations.

In 2010, German NGOs had been informed that school constructions in India would be henceforth only co-financed in exceptional cases by BMZ and special arguments would be needed for any ongoing funding. One key question of this evaluation was therefore, if there are specific arguments justifying a continuation of co-financing school constructions in Northeast India by the German government.

1.3 Evaluation Mission

The evaluation in India was carried out from Sunday, October 28th to Saturday, November 9th (see detailed work plan in Annex 1). The available time was generally divided up between four partners of *German Doctors* in order to visit several schools of each partner, each accompanied by one partner representative.

Neither a joint briefing meeting with all partners, nor a common debriefing workshop could be organized due to organizational problems (and a National Catholic Conference that took place towards the end of the evaluation in Guwahati). Brief resumes have been therefore discussed with each partner after visiting some of his schools.

For facilitation of first contacts, the project coordinator of *German Doctors* was present in Guwahati at the beginning of the site visits.

After clearance with BMZ, *German Doctors* assigned Mr. Thomas Ranz for this evaluation. He is member of AGE G Consultants e.G. and carried out almost 100 short-term evaluations and project preparation missions in the sectors of education as well as rural and social development during the last 20 years, apart from his part-time employment as project manager with AGE G. He has a profound knowledge of strate-

gies, methodological approaches, administrative procedures, tools and instruments of numerous donor agencies.

His working experience includes assignments for bi- and multi-lateral donors such as EC and GIZ, the UN as well as for clients of the NGO sector, and especially faith-based NGOs. Since obtaining his first University degree in education, he has specialized in community mobilisation strategies and rural development. During recent years, he carried out evaluations of education projects in Afghanistan, Cambodia, South Sudan, Malawi, Ruanda, Haiti, Cameroon, Eastern Congo, Liberia and Niger.

During the site visits abroad no unpredictable incidents occurred.

2. Methodological Approach

2.1 Methodology

At a first step, all existing project proposals and final reports (Verwendungsnachweise) of the particular school projects were reviewed. Hereafter relevant information was gathered during the site visit on different levels and from varying sources, thus allowing the so-called “cross-checking” of all collected available data. For this evaluation, this included:

- General and global information: Government and religious authorities, partner representatives, school inspection etc.
- Technical and procedural information: Technicians, architects and maintenance staff.
- Management and administrative information: Principals, headmasters and school administrators.
- Pedagogical level: Headmasters and teaching staff.
- Beneficiary level: School girls and boys including their parents and families.

All project interventions considered construction of school buildings only. Teachers’ training, school management, didactical learning materials etc. were only part of the external project support to a very limited extent. However, the overall objective of the school construction projects was “to increase the share of young persons who are able to read and write on a sustainable basis”. Also, the projects’ objectives aimed at the improvement of learning conditions.

The relevant project proposals for this evaluation (from 2005 to 2010) did so far not follow the logical framework approach. BMZ only insists on logframe-based project proposals since the year 2011. Accordingly, in practice no detailed results and indicators had been formulated during the planning phase. This meant that no check lists for easy measuring of the initially intended project effects existed. Nevertheless, the particular impact – intended and/or unintended - of the projects had to be assessed now; partly several years after their end. As a result, for this particular evaluation three basic aspects were analyzed in detail:

- School statistics, considering total figures of pupils after the projects’ end, the proportion between boys and girls, the number of pupils per class, their social and religious parentage, and especially the respective drop-out rates;
- Self-sufficiency in terms of school financing in view of an autonomous and sustainable school operation;
- Pedagogical aspects of child-friendly school areas and learner-centered instruction techniques and practices.

Looking on the similarity of the twelve school projects of four different partners, a comparative evaluation approach was applied. *German Doctors*, together with the four Indian partners, therefore agreed upon a well-balanced time schedule for the evaluation (see annex 1). The projects to be evaluated had been selected mainly ac-

ording to the requirement to keep travel time at a minimum level and to visit at least several schools of each partner organization at a same time.

Due to the amount of twelve schools - to be visited in approximately twelve days in an ample intervention zone by only one evaluator - no statistically relevant data could be collected without the internal statistics being provided by the particular schools. No standardized questionnaires have been applied and no pre-structured surveys were organized. While paying special attention to differences and/or similarities of the four implementing project partners, the key instrument mainly included randomized, detailed in-depth interviews and discussions, structured by means of a consistent list of pre-formulated key questions. Furthermore, a certain number of interviews and discussions have been held with male and female groups separately.

2.2 Assessment of Applied Methods

All support towards the evaluated projects has ended, partly even five to seven years ago. Generally, evaluations are classified into three different types, such as ex-ante evaluations, ongoing evaluations, and ex-post evaluations (after completion of project activities). Consequently, for this evaluation an ex-post evaluation was chosen. One of the key instruments of the ex-post evaluation is the use of so-called “proxy indicators”. These are indirect measures or signs, approximating or representing a phenomenon in the absence of a direct measure or sign after a project’s end.

Considered as a whole this evaluation has a strong qualitative character. In contrast to the focus on construction activities during project implementation, aspects of school operation after the projects’ ends are in the foreground here.

3. Framework Conditions

Nearly all school constructions under this evaluation are situated in Assam State in Northeast India¹. The Assamese capital is Dispur, located within the municipal area of Guwahati city, with approximately 2 million inhabitants. Assam connects six neighbor states with the rest of India via a narrow strip of land called the Siliguri Corridor or "Chicken's Neck". In addition, Assam shares international borders with Bhutan and Bangladesh and numerous different ethnic groups are living in the 23 state districts. Consequently, Assam is very rich in culture, ethnic groups, and languages, but at the same time is prone to manifold conflict potentials.

Main spoken languages in Assam are Assamese (49.44%), Bengali (27.91%), Bodo (4.93%), Nepali (2.15%), and Hindi (5.97%). Religion depends, to a large extent, on the social affiliation with a particular ethnic group. Considered as a whole, the Assamese society is composed by Hinduism (64.92%), Islam (30.93%), and Christianity (3.71%) together with certain elements of natural religions.

In Assam, among all productive sectors, agriculture (producing mainly tea and rice) makes the highest contribution to its domestic sectors, accounting for more than a third of Assam's income and employs 69% of the workforce. This high percentage of employed workforce (mainly laborers in tea plantations) proves the high number of landless rural population, forced to accept low-paid jobs as a result of no own land resources. This is especially the case in tea plantations, traditionally owned by great land owners, where the landless poor are working as laborers².

The following table provides some figures on the total population of the 23 districts of Assam:

Population	Sex Ratio (Females per 1000 males)	Literacy	Growth of Population 1971-91
22,294,562	925	43.20%	52.44%

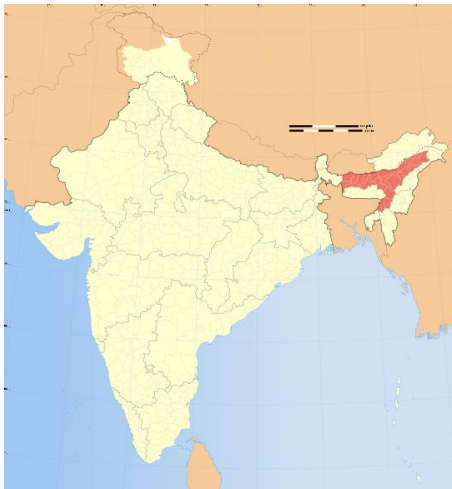
Source: Assam Portal: <http://www.assam.org/node/2356>

The following maps show India and especially the position of Assam (in red), forming the Siliguri Corridor, which connects the entire landlocked Northeast with the rest of India through one single highway. The second map clearly shows the Assamese districts in different colors, most of them situated on both banks of the Brahmaputra River.

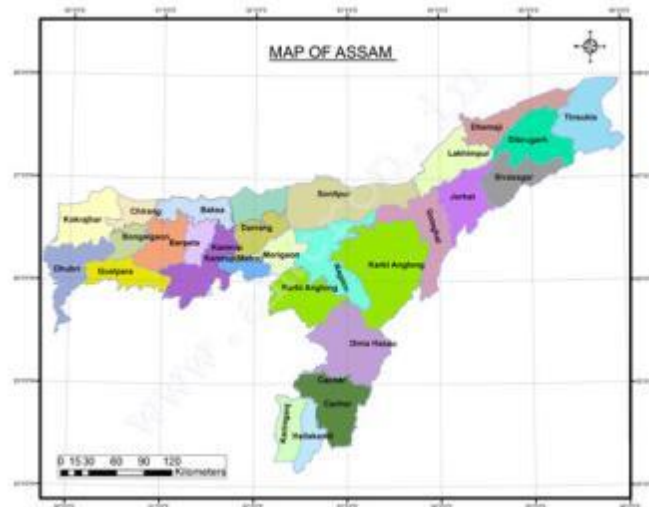
¹ Only one visited school was in the neighboring state Meghalaya.

² Assam's biggest contribution to the world is tea.

India with Assam State in red



Assam State along the Brahmaputra river



Source: <http://online.assam.gov.in/assammmaps>

Already in 1947, with increasing economic problems in the region, separatist groups began forming along ethnic lines, and demands for autonomy and sovereignty grew, resulting in fragmentation of Assam. Since the 1950ies, people from present Bangladesh have been migrating to Assam. In 1961, the Government of Assam passed a legislation making the use of Assamese language compulsory. It had to be withdrawn later. Still, in the 1980ies the Brahmaputra valley saw the six-year Assam Agitation triggered by the discovery of a sudden rise in registered voters on electoral rolls. It tried to force the government to identify and deport foreigners illegally migrating from neighboring Bangladesh and changing the demographics. The agitation ended after an accord between its leaders and the National Government in Delhi, which remained unimplemented and thus caused simmering discontent.

The Wikipedia dictionary explains the recent history of Assam as follows: “The post 1970ies experienced the growth of armed separatist groups like United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB). In November 1990, the Government of India deployed the Indian army, after which low-intensity military conflicts and political homicides have been continuing for more than a decade. In recent times, ethnicity based militant groups have also mushroomed. Finally, regional autonomy has been ensured for four so called Bodo Territorial Autonomous Districts (BTAD) after agitation of the communities due to an unsatisfactory rate of development and general apathy of successive state governments towards indigenous communities.”

In 2012 violent clashes once again destabilized the region. Major victims in this conflict mainly were Moslems. In order to find more security, many of them left their original homesteads and settled down as migrants in traditionally Moslem-dominated locations.

Also today, certain tensions in the BTADs can be clearly felt where administrative and organisational capacities are still rather weak and unprofessional. Financial resources from the National Government are not directly transferred to the BTADs, but

they are channelled through the capital of Assam, Guwahati, and hereafter only reach the Bodo districts to a certain extent.

During longstanding violent struggles for autonomy, especially ethnic minorities (e.g. Santals, Garos, Rabhas, Adivasis etc.) had been displaced and were living in refugee camps. The fact that many of these people still live around the former camps without any arable land and in deep poverty under autonomous Bodo district governments is depressing.

4. Evolution of the Achievement Potential of the Project Holder and his Partners

As already mentioned earlier, four of the implementing partners of German Doctors in Assam are (i) the Archdiocese of Guwahati, (ii) the Montfort Brothers, (iii) the Diocese of Bongaigaon and (iv) the Don Bosco Youth Mission and Educational Services, DBYES. These partners operate their schools autonomously. And all of them increased the numbers of their students by six to ten times after completion of new school buildings. Together with numerous school visits also submitted school statistics clearly underlined constantly increasing numbers of students during recent years as a result of good quality teaching, thus leading to a very high demand among parents.

Among government officials in Assam, Catholic schools have an excellent reputation and are considered to play an essential and complementary role in today's educational system. Cooperation is increasing slowly and step by step. For instance, the Board of Secondary Education of Assam recently concluded a service contract for professional training of 1,000 government school teachers with Don Bosco Institute in Guwahati. This is not least the result of a constant, close and trustful dialogue of German Doctors' partners with the state and district governments.

5. Assessment of the evaluated Projects regarding DAC Criteria

5.1 Relevance

As already mentioned in chapter 2.1, the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) informed German NGOs in 2010 that school construction in India could only be co-funded in exceptional cases. From a global view on India's efforts in the educational sector this may be comprehensible:

Since the year 2000/2001 the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) [English: The Education for All Movement] as a national Indian Government program aims at the universalization of elementary education, thus providing free and compulsory education to children aged six to fourteen (estimated to be 205 million for India in 2001) as a fundamental right. The program goals of 2011 were:

- to open new schools in areas where there are none and to expand existing school infrastructures and maintenance;
- to address inadequate teacher numbers, and provide training for existing teachers, and
- to provide quality elementary education including life skills with a special focus on the education of girls and children with special needs as well as computer education.

Today, the Government of India is undertaking serious efforts in various educational programs. In 2009, a bill was passed on education for all. Besides, the government of India, through the State government of Assam, is developing connecting roads to all interior, otherwise hardly accessible villages. Government offices are moved from urban to rural areas. Banks are told to operate in remote areas. Hospitals and dispensaries are opened outside towns. Awareness programs of various NGOs operating in rural areas are funded by the state and central governments. These activities are a big step towards decentralized development.

Against this background setting up parallel structures may appear as a general risk for external funding of private non-profit schools. In well-organized federal states (e.g. in Kerala) this apprehension may be the case. But not so in Assam with its remote rural areas, with its high numbers of different ethnic groups, with its longstanding violent minority issues, and with the young and not yet very efficient autonomous Bodo districts.

In Assam only very few of the financial resources, provided by the National Government, for the educational sector reach the target population. Parents complain that opening hours of government schools are at least 25% less than those of "private" schools. Failure rates in state exams after class ten are extremely high in government schools. It is common that teachers do not appear for working. Numerous so-called "ghost schools" only exist in statistics, as after receiving the funds state authorities never executed any construction work. Moreover, particularly ethnical minority groups in remote areas do not have any access to education.

The projects' concept is therefore highly appropriate considering the existing situation in the project region. Furthermore, it is in full compliance with the development goals

of German Government and with the millennium development goals (MDGs). From the perspective of representatives of the Assamese Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Catholic schools are considered to be complementary to already existing schools. They provide high quality teaching and cover best existing needs for education, especially in remote and disadvantaged regions.

All evaluated projects clearly contribute to poverty reduction and to the “education for all” strategy. They fully meet the requirement of the millennium goals one to three, (i) to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, (ii) to achieve universal primary education, and (iii) to promote gender equality and empowering women.

5.2 Effectiveness

The overall objective of all school construction projects was to increase the share of young people to read and write on a sustainable basis. Accordingly, the project objectives targeted the improvement of learning conditions through a better and more appropriate learning infrastructure. All relevant project proposals of *German Doctors* (from 2005 to 2010) did, at that time, not follow the logical framework approach, which is due to the fact that the BMZ only insists on logframe-based project proposals since 2011. All evaluated projects had ended before the evaluation. Therefore, in practice no detailed results and indicators had been formulated during the planning phase. This means that no check lists for easy measuring of the initially intended project effects existed.

An ex-post evaluation was indicated now. One of the key instruments of an ex-post evaluation is the use of so-called “proxy indicators”. As already mentioned in chapter 2.2, these are indirect measures or signs, approximating or representing a phenomenon in the absence of a direct measure or sign after a project’s end. Quality of initial targeting, especially of pre-defined (impact) indicators can therefore not be part of this evaluation. Instead, concentration on construction work, on quality aspects of produced school buildings, on management issues, and on process indicators considering school operation is required.

Project activities were almost all limited to school constructions. Planning documents have been provided by the respective partners. The basic construction model always followed the same structure with more or less the same framework conditions. The size per classroom is defined by school authorities and is scheduled to offer space for an average of 40 students on a surface of approx. 50 square meters (22 by 22 feet).

The two following photographs below show the rather unified construction style, applied for the entire project region. Foundations are laid in a way that they can carry a maximum of three floors. Reinforcing bars are always long enough for raising the building by another floor (see photographs below). All together school constructions follow a construction kit.

Both schools below show a more or less unique and modular construction technique.



St. Basil's Academy Chaparmukh



Don Bosco Secondary School in Amguri

Assam is situated in an earthquake prone zone. Correspondingly, all buildings fully comply with government rules and regulations made as per the climatic and soil conditions of Assam. Necessary precautions have been taken by putting extra concrete belts at every alignment. Technical key components of the building are as follows:

- Type of structure: Compacted concrete shell structure
- Columns and Beams: Compacted reinforced ferro-concrete
- Flooring: Flooring over cat slab with neat cement finish
- Roofing: Compacted concrete cast slab
- Walling: 12.5 centimeters thick class brick walling plastered on both sides
- Doors: Timber shutters fitted on first class timber frames
- Windows and Ventilators: Steel or timber casement windows and ventilators

The schools were built as per the technical advice of the architect. The constructions were carried out in different stages after the inspection of the architect: foundation, ventilation level, superstructure, division of rooms, flooring, wiring, painting, plumbing and carpentry etc. Funding provided by *German Doctors* together with the German Government was always sufficient to complete the construction work.

Considering the required different professions of craftsmen, enterprises have been selected based on restricted tenders. Any procurement of construction materials has been made by the particular project partner. But, the partners did not charge any administrative fee for their coordination work. They also sent one permanent professional to every construction site. Building supervision always was with the architect. As a result of an accurate and unified construction practice, all school buildings could be finalized within the scheduled time frames. This is considered as an indicator for a very efficient and close follow-up and monitoring practice, from the partners' side, but also from *German Doctors*.

From a technical perspective constructions are rather conservative, strong and very heavy, and they require high quantities of concrete. However, the applied techniques are simple and allow carrying out the entire constructions independently, even in remote areas. Modern, prefabricated building materials could contribute to a faster as well as less expensive construction. Yet, this strongly increased dependency on specialized technicians from outside.

5.3. Efficiency

Appraising the benefit of education projects is always a challenge. Large parts of an estimated benefit are not measurable in monetary terms. Moreover, non-monetary effects, such as lower illiteracy rates and/or higher levels of knowledge and qualification only become visible and significant in a longer term perspective. Two aspects of “benefits” shall therefore be discussed separately. The monetary aspects of a cost-benefit ratio will be part of this efficiency chapter against the more holistic and non-monetary aspects of the projects. They will be presented as a longer term impact in chapter 5.4.

Without going too much into detail, one model case seems to be the easiest way for illuminating some cost-benefit aspects. For this purpose, the project 2005.3411.5 was selected to be most appropriate. With a total budget of 632,000 Euro five school buildings, including toilets, were constructed and finalized in 2007. This represents expenditures of 126,400 Euro per school. Today, Chaparmukh Secondary School, which was part of the five funded buildings (see photograph in chapter 5.2), disposes of ten classes - two kindergarden levels plus classes one to eight. The total number of students amounts to 458, among them 273 boys and 185 girls. Teaching staff includes six male and fifteen female teachers, among them two Catholic sisters.

The project proposal of 2005 mentions an average of approximately 50 students per proposed location. Today, the total numbers of students among visited schools amounted from a minimum of 300 up to 800 students, with still expanding tendencies.

Today 458 students are visiting Chaparmukh Secondary School instead of only 32 in 2005. They come from distances up to 25 kilometers. Transport is organized by private minibuses.

Although construction costs strongly increased during recent years in India, and especially in Assam (long distance transports), construction of school buildings was and still is executed in an excellent and highly cost efficient way. Comparing construction costs with the government’s manual for construction of public buildings, any construction costs of all visited schools stay far below the listed cost estimations e.g. expenditures for cement, for armoring iron, for daily labor and transport etc.).

For this evaluation a total of twelve school visits had been scheduled. Due to very bad road conditions, the visit of Bolaikmar secondary school had to be cancelled. Nevertheless, a total of twelve schools was visited, among them three rural primary schools (class one to five). The following table only shows the so-called secondary schools. This type of school includes kindergarden level (KG1 and KG2), primary school level (class 1 to 4), middle school (class 5 to 8) and higher secondary (class 9 to 10). Only Montfort school in Abhayapuri intends to also offer the junior high school (classes 11 and 12) in the future.

Compared with the numbers of former students before construction of the new school buildings, today's number of students is approximately ten times higher per school than before. Some examples of schools, mentioned in the table below, clearly show the evolution of the total number of students before and after project interventions: The number of students increased in Nagrijuli from originally 64 students to 797, in Chaparmukh from 32 to 458, in Matia from 58 to 448 etc.

Considering the total number of 30 schools, constructed during recent years by *German Doctors'* partners in Northeast India, their total number of students easily amounts to a total of **15,000 direct beneficiaries**. On the other side, monetary investments in total amount to approximately **2.5 million Euro**. This input-output ratio is without any doubt impressive.

Name of school	Operational since	No. of students	Males	Females	No of teachers	Males	Females	Remarks/Comments
1. Secondary School Nagrijuli	2007	797	492	305	20	6	14	Up to class five two classes per level (1a+b, 2a+b etc.)
2. St. Basil's Academy Chaparmukh	2007	458	273	185	20	6	14	Few girl students due to tribal habits
3. Don Bosco School Amguri	2009	525	265	260	18	4	14	Construction site on former refugee camp: many Santali students
4. Secondary School Joypur	2013	440	248	192	20	17	3	App. 5% Catholics only
5. St. Claret's School Kochugaon	2006/2011	500	296	204	15	10	5	Initial construction in 2006, second floor in 2011
6. Sacred Heart School Magurmari	2006/2010	298	188	110	16	5	11	Initial construction in 2006, second floor in 2010
7. Montfort School Abhayapuri	2010	626	419	207	22	6	16	Rural school with manifold different ethnic groups
8. Montfort School Jonglapara	2006	630	316	314	19	15	14	85% Christians, among them 75% Methodists and 15% Catholics
9. St. Sebastian's School Matia	2005	448	270	178	16	6	10	20% Catholics
Total of students and teachers		4,722			166			

The schools mentioned in the table above have been funded between 2005 to 2011 under the BMZ project numbers 2005.1664.1, BMZ 2005.3411.5, BMZ 2005.3448.7, BMZ 2008.3417.6, BMZ 2009.1568.6, and BMZ 2010.1699.7.

5.4 Impact

During this evaluation schools were visited some three to even seven years after completion of the construction work. This long period of financially independent school operation strongly facilitated the assessment of a long-lasting and continuous impact. The following different aspects and their contribution to the projects' impact shall therefore be examined:

- Selection criteria of school sites
- Criteria for access to Catholic schools
- Equipment and maintenance of schools, including didactical materials
- Qualification of teaching staff and salary schemes
- Proficiency level of students
- Appreciation by parents
- Catholic schools as parallel structures to government schools.

Originally, in the ToR for this evaluation, it was planned to compare the different project partners and their strengths and weaknesses with each other. However, the field visits clearly showed that any kind of disparity was far more the result of specific ethnic and/or socio-economic conditions and the environment in the surrounding field of a school than the outcome of a specific management practice of a particular partner. As a result of the altogether very appropriate organization and management practices of all visited schools, differentiation shall be made in the following along specific conditions of a school instead of a particular operating partner institution.

Selection criteria of school sites: Basically two types of schools have been visited, three primary schools (class 1 to 5) and nine secondary schools (at the moment mostly class 1 to 8, developing as well classes 9 and 10 during the next two years).

Visited primary schools, managed by Don Bosco, have been built in very remote areas for children of former refugees, mostly belonging to ethnic minorities. Students of these schools would never have had access to any school in their neighborhoods. The beneficiaries of these schools are solely the rural poor.

The visited secondary schools (see table in chapter 5.3) are situated outside bigger cities in rural or peri-urban environments with strong demand for schooling and with rather low presence of government schools. The catchment areas of these schools are some 10 to even 25 kilometers around the schools. Transport is sometimes provided by school-owned buses or it is organized privately by the students' parents.

All schools have been constructed on church-owned compounds with existing official land title.

Criteria for access to Catholic schools: All visited schools are open for everybody, regardless of ethnic or religious parentage, poor- or wealthiness. Children who cannot afford payment of school fees or school uniforms receive subsidies from the school administration. The numbers of Christian and especially Catholic students finally depend on particular ethnic groups living in the surroundings of a school as well as their religious affiliations. Instead of "religion" as a subject, all schools are offering

“moral science” for non-Christian students. Some visited schools are almost unable to accept more children due to lack of classrooms.

Equipment and maintenance of schools, including didactical materials: All visited schools have been properly maintained and are fully operational. Considering the level of equipment, this strongly depends on the level of school fees; and school fees ultimately depend on the socio-economic environment of a particular school. Thus, one could say that remoteness of an area reduces school fees and simultaneously weakens the level of equipment of a school (see sourcing of schools in chapter 5.5). However, in all visited classes (a total of approx. 25) school books were available for every student.

Nowadays several private enterprises offer digital instruction modules for each class level and subject in India. These modules are designed along the governmental school curricula. This instrument can be used as an interactive medium. Together with frequent software updates, training of teaching staff is provided twice a year. However, only the Montfort School Abhayapuri can afford the considerable monthly rent for this electronic equipment.

The strength of digital teaching consists without any doubt in the replacement and in the compensation of lacking didactical materials, especially in natural sciences. Also, certain pedagogical weaknesses of very young and/or inexperienced teachers can be compensated to a certain extent. However, digital teaching must be considered as a complementary approach without leading to the replacement of traditional teaching. Furthermore, using the interactive facilities of the instrument appropriately requires a high professional level.

Qualification of teaching staff and salary schemes: All teaching staff of the schools fulfills the official requirements of the state and national government in terms of initial teacher training.

Considered as a whole, teaching in all visited schools is comparatively good. However, the mainly front-of-class teaching often strictly follows a book’s lesson, with few creative inputs. One common practice is to ask questions and receive answers by the students in chorus. Intensified teacher training in more learner-centered techniques could be helpful here.

It is an obvious fact that salaries of Catholic schools only achieve some 30% to a maximum of 60% in comparison to government schools (see sourcing of school in chapter 5.5). Principals and headmasters of the schools are applying diverse measures in order to avoid too strong yearly fluctuations of teaching staff. Wherever possible they preferably recruit teaching staff in the region of the school. In addition, they often recruit young professionals and even beginners and provide intensified on-the-job training for an improvement of teaching skills. But, although this reduces salary expenditures, it includes the risk that once better qualified, teachers try to find an employment at a government school.

Nowadays, the Indian government applies more and more flexible employment practices for teachers (in order to reduce costs) such as so-called vendor schools³ or contractual teachers; thus once again complicating teacher recruitment for private non-profit schools.

Proficiency level of students: Most of the project funded schools are still in the built-up phase. After finalizing school buildings and the availability of additional class rooms, new classes were added on a yearly basis. And, in the meantime, most visited schools achieved class 8 as the highest level.

In contrast to government schools, all teaching is provided in English only (except in some primary schools), and not in Assamese. This is the result of having rather few native Assamese speakers among the beneficiary students of the evaluated schools, but far more children from diverse ethnic minorities with their own mother tongues. Predominantly, parents make demands on teaching in English in view of better job opportunities for their children in the future.

Up to class 8 private schools are independent considering the selection of school books. From class 9 to 10 the government books are used for an appropriate preparation of the students for the state exam after class 10. Although only one visited school currently offers the class 10, all interviewed teachers and school principals estimated that 100% of their students would finally pass the state exam. For them, the question only was to what extent their students would achieve the level of excellency. Within these discussions it was also repeatedly underlined that there is practically no drop-out rate in visited schools. Once a student is allowed to come, it was said that he or she would never take the risk to lose this opportunity.

Appreciation by parents: Government schools are not allowed to charge any school fees. In contrast, Catholic schools must cover 100% of their running costs through school fees. Anyhow, the demand for being accepted as a student of a school is constantly high and increasing since many years. After several focus group discussions with male and female parents, the following key criteria for sending their children to Catholic schools have been expressed again and again:

- There is more cheerfulness;
- There is more discipline;
- The quality level of the schools is much better;
- English as teaching language includes better opportunities for a professional future;
- The number of teaching hours per day is much higher (in general from 8.30 am to 2.30 pm);
- There is far less cancelation of instruction.

It was quite interesting to hear even from interviewed teachers at government schools, from politicians and also from civil servants of the school inspection that they are sending their children to Catholic schools.

³ This new job opportunity for young and still unemployed graduated teachers allows them to set-up and run a small school on their own thus receiving (small) monthly salaries by the government.

5.5 Sustainability

All visited schools are run autonomously since four to almost seven years with yearly increasing numbers of pupils.

Catholic schools generally must be able to fully cover their expenditures through school fees (This is not always the case with remote primary schools for ethnic minorities.). The fees are slightly differentiated considering the different class levels. However, they differ much more depending on the individual average income situation among the parents in a particular school environment. School fees are equal for all students. In case of obvious needs, subsidies can be provided by a school. Besides monthly school fees also yearly admission fees have to be paid. Also transport has to be paid separately in case of need and, if available, boarding facilities. But a considerable share of students is not able to pay monthly contributions and has to be subsidized.

An average monthly salary of a government employed teacher was mentioned to be, depending on the level of experience, between **10,000 and 28,000 Rupees** (120 to 330 Euro). The average salary scheme of Catholic schools starts with **app. 3,000 Rupees** and achieves a maximum of **15,000 Rupees** (35 to 180 Euro). Basically it can be said that salaries for government teachers are two to three times higher than the ones of Catholic schools. Moreover, workload with government schools is much lower.

Each school is run autonomously and can define its school fees. In fact, school fees are negotiated yearly between school authorities and parents' representatives. They have been fixed between a minimum of 200 Rupees and a maximum of 450 Rupees per month and student (2.36 to 5.31 Euros). Taking into consideration that only two thirds of all students are able to pay regularly, a school with 600 students has an available budget of approximately 80,000 to 180,000 Rupees (950 to 2,100 Euros) per month. In general, 85 percent of a school's income is used for salary payments, the rest for maintenance of school buildings and other running costs.

Similar to other countries, also government authorities in India refuse payment of any salary costs for teaching staff of so-called "private schools". A distinction between private profit-making schools, e.g. in bigger cities, and non-profit faith-based schools is not made. In addition, for being officially recognized as a "private" school, any claim for financial support by the government has to be renounced.

On the other hand, quality of the schools is highly admired as well by state ministries for education and other government institutions. The school administration considers Catholic schools as complementary support vis-à-vis an enormous need of education, which to satisfy government is still far away. Although it will take time and require a long breath, cooperation with government institutions should not be excluded at a longer term perspective. Even indirect forms of funding may be possible in future, such as e.g. teacher training for 1,000 government teachers by the Don Bosco training center in Guwahati. In this case, the Board for Secondary Education of Assam commissioned a service contract to a Catholic training center.

Initial training of a great number of graduate teachers is carried out all over India. However, only very few can find an employment with the government. Therefore, also

at a mid-term perspective, qualified teaching staff should be available regionally and for comparatively low salaries, too. This phenomenon also fosters an autonomous operation of private non-profit schools.

6. Cross-cutting Issues

Compared to government schools, the number of instruction hours with Catholic schools is much higher. In addition, private schools are not bound to strictly follow the government syllabus before class nine. They are free to include additional subjects and themes to their lessons. In practice, this allows the integration of diverse cross-cutting issues such as environmental pollution, climate change, and ethics as well as gender issues.

The very high number of girls in Catholic schools (see table in chapter 5.3) is a visible result of intensive sensitization of parents by the respective schools.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

Construction and maintenance:

1. The cost-benefit ratio of visited school constructions is excellent, due to accurate follow-up, procurement and monitoring practices.
2. Perhaps not from an esthetic perspective, but in terms of stability aspects in the earthquake prone project region, all schools fully correspond to safety rules and quality regulations for public buildings in India.
3. Using a modular construction technique, and unique foundations strong enough to carry three floors, construction is highly flexible and can be used like a model kit (e.g. enlargement of floor space and/or addition of floors).
4. After operation periods of four to seven years all visited schools are excellently maintained.

Organization and management:

5. Almost all schools achieved financially autonomous operation during many years.
6. The salary level with the visited schools is comparatively low and causes a rather high fluctuation of teaching staff in some places.
7. Although all visited schools impose school fees, every visited school offered exemptions and subsidy schemes for students from poorer families (sometimes for up to 25 percent of the total number of students).
8. Many schools in rural areas are organizing transport facilities (mostly by buses) to render school visits possible for students of remote and isolated homesteads.
9. Drop-out rates are minimal. Having gained access to a school once, nearly all students stay until the end of the secondary school cycle (after class ten).

Pedagogics and teaching:

10. Although the level of discipline is rather high and strict, the learning atmosphere does not include any indication of fear or intimidation. In contrast, students appear open-minded and seem to consider coming to school as a happy event.
11. All employed teachers are graduates and professionals of reputed teacher training centers and all of them hold a teaching license and are principally authorized to teach as well at government schools.
12. Globally, teachers of Catholic schools are rather young and quite often even beginners. Intensified on-the-job training is therefore provided regularly.
13. Quality of teaching in the visited schools is various. However, considered as a whole, teaching can be assessed between satisfying and excellent.
14. Instead of imposing repetition of a school year due to poor performance, the schools' philosophy requests an intensified effort for an accelerated learning of weak pupils.
15. All interview partners – and among them also representatives of state government and school administration – strongly underlined the high quality standards of Catholic schools.

16. In all visited classes school books were available for every student.

Political and policy aspects:

17. As a result of a longstanding remoteness, manifold ethnic groups and related violent conflicts, and due to still rather weak organizational structures (e.g. in the autonomous Bodo districts) challenges for education are very specific in Assam and not comparable with other Indian states.
18. By government officials – in Assam and especially in the autonomous Bodo districts - Catholic schools are considered as complementary facilities for an “education for all”, but not as competitors of government schools.
19. Regardless of their ethnic and/or religious origin, all students have access to the schools.
20. Sites for school constructions have been, to a large extent, selected according to existing needs, in terms of remoteness of an area, ethnic minorities, low incomes etc.
21. Beneficiaries of the schools mainly belong to different ethnic groups speaking other mother tongues than Assamese. Therefore teaching in English constitutes a big advantage. This has been strongly and repeatedly expressed by the students’ parents.
22. There is a constant and strong increase of demand for schooling from parents’ side since several years. After construction of new buildings, the average number of students per school is six to ten times higher than before.
23. The alternative for the majority of students of Catholic schools was mostly not to visit government schools, but to stay at home without visiting any school.

7.2 Recommendations

Construction and maintenance:

1. The unique planning and design for the construction of the school buildings excellently stood the test and should be maintained for any school construction in the future.
2. Established procurement and monitoring practices and follow-up – from the partners but from German Doctors as well – allowed good quality and highly cost efficient school constructions within short and predefined time frames. Similar proceedings should be carried on in the future.

Organization and management:

3. Amounts of school fees are discussed locally and fixed by the schools’ principals and administrators together with parents’ committees according to particular socio-economic situations. Under this financial autonomy school operation worked very well so far. This practice should be maintained.
4. In the near future at least some schools will no longer be able to accept all applications for schooling. At this stage clear limits of students per class must be defined and strictly respected. Otherwise the schools risk losing their excellent reputation and high quality teaching.

5. The teachers' salaries should be increased wherever possible so as to avoid too much fluctuation.
6. In some cases school fees could be slightly higher in order to fully cover operational costs. Subsidies for most vulnerable families should then be increased.

Pedagogics and teaching:

7. It is recommended to intensify the already existing practice of teacher training in view of a better integration of very young and less experienced teachers. Hereby joint trainings, planned and organized by the partners, could be an advantage.
8. It is not easy to abandon front-of-class teaching, due to many students per class and lacking didactical materials. Nevertheless, some class visits have shown that also with a piece of chalk and a blackboard an animating and challenging lesson can be held. Here, the most experienced practitioners should be deployed for a better dissemination of their knowledge.
9. Digital teaching is costly and should never replace daily teaching. However, if available, it can compensate deficient didactical material and at the same time guide not so experienced teachers.
10. Teacher training could be a domain for looking for a closer collaboration between private school operators and government's education departments in view of joint trainings for non-profit school and government school teachers.

Political and policy aspects:

11. The strong poverty-related school operation, together with the support of ethnic and discriminated minorities, should also play a crucial role in Catholic education projects in the future in order to compensate obvious deficits and giving the opportunity of school attendance to the rural poor.
12. The pluralistic multi-ethnic and multi-religious society in Assam does not exclude closer cooperation between government authorities and private non-profit schools by law. However, it will need numerous discussions and requests for increasing the level of support through government. Nevertheless, this dialogue should continue.

7.3 Lessons learned

The situation in Assam and especially in the autonomous Bodo districts strongly differs from the general situation all over India. Looking at the level of existing needs in education, on the very heterogeneous multi-ethnic situation, and on the constantly existing risk of violent clashes, ongoing support of private non-profit schools is highly recommended in this part of India.