

THE  
CONFLICT AND  
EDUCATION  
TANGLE



A STUDY ON CONFLICT AND  
EDUCATION IN GAJAPATI  
DISTRICT OF ODISHA





EDUCATION IS A  
FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN  
RIGHT THAT IS LINKED  
WITH THE IDEALS  
OF HUMAN DIGNITY,  
RESPECT FOR ALL,  
EQUITY AND JUSTICE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Greetings readers!

NEG-FIRE believes that every child is unique and has tremendous capacity and ability – to learn, to retain and to grow. Education is a fundamental human right that is linked with the ideals of human dignity, respect for all, equity and justice.

The contemporary state of Odisha, India, has been experiencing a series of ethnic, caste, religious, resource-based, and political conflicts. These conflicts are the product of different magnitudes of deprivation, marginalisation, and exploitation, which have created unrest among different communities. Furthermore, the percentage of rural families living below the poverty line is found to be much higher in the State. Besides structural poverty, the State also faces conjunctural poverty (due to floods, cyclones, droughts, etc.) and destitute poverty (of persons lacking either money or material to survive). In terms of the development indicators like literacy rate, infant mortality rate, per capita income, etc., the living conditions of the people of the State are considerably lower than the national average.

'The Conflict and Education Tangle – A study on conflict and education in Gajapati district of Odisha' aims at highlighting the adverse effects that conflict (personal, societal or communal) can have on education and holistic development of children from marginalized communities and recommends measures to prevent this from occurring or mitigating the adverse effects already being caused. This report can be helpful for individuals and organisations working either in the Gajapati District or working towards providing education to the children from the marginalised communities.

I would like to express my gratitude to all who have helped in the successful completion of this study – our local partner from Odisha, Solidarity For Developing Communities (SFDC), the Education and Knowledge Management team at NEG-FIRE, our Finance, HR and Admin teams and most importantly our various stakeholders, children, parents, teachers etc., from the area that the study was carried out in. Thank you all for making this study what it is – An element of awareness, sensitization and change.

  
K. Venkatesh Krishna  
Executive Director, NEG-FIRE



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The Conflict and Education Tangle:** A study on conflict and education in Gajapati district of Odisha is an exploratory research designed to examine, inter alia, the relationship between two key variables, conflict and education. As the Gajapati district is known for presence of conflict and divisions in society that centre around religious, tribal and other identities; it is imperative to understand the dynamics of education in such a complex social environment that would ensure quantitative and qualitative development of education. Salient aspects of the study have been captured in the following sections.



### Key objectives

The key objectives of this research are to:

- Find out the nature of conflict and its effects on education
- Examine status and adequacy of schools and basic services for children's wellbeing
- Recommend measures that would ensure qualitative development of children's education in a non-threatening environment

### Geographical coverage

Two school clusters namely Pindiki and Merapalli in Mohana block of the Gajapati district

### Methodology

Considering the problem-oriented and exploratory nature of the study, qualitative methods of data collection were considered appropriate in order to obtain analytical inputs. This was supplemented by desk research that helped gather quantitative data and past analyses of general nature

### CREDITS

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covering status of education, conflict and socio-economic dynamics of the coverage area. Triangulation of data could be made possible due to adoption of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection.

The stakeholders covered for data collection included children, community members, local opinion makers, school teachers, local partner organization of NEG-FIRE - Solidarity for Developing Communities (SFDC), government officials dealing with education and NEG-FIRE. Methods used for data collection included the following:

- ▶ Review of literature
- ▶ Interaction with children
- ▶ Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with community members and local opinion makers
- ▶ Key Informant Interviews (KII) covering school teachers and government officials
- ▶ Field Observation
- ▶ Interaction with local partner organization of NEG-FIRE
- ▶ Interaction with NEG-FIRE

### Salient findings

#### SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF GAJAPATI DISTRICT

A predominantly tribal district with nearly 88 percent population living in rural areas (Census 2011), Gajapati has been in a state of economic and educational backwardness from long. The major religions in the district are Hindu (61.12 percent), Christian (37.98 percent) and Buddhists (0.38 percent) indicating although Hindu predominance is there Christians are a major discernible group. The Scheduled Castes (SCs) constitute 6.78 percent of the population, while the Scheduled Tribes (STs) account for 54.29 percent. Dependence of people on agriculture and forest for livelihood is overwhelming. While 90% of land

owners are either small or marginal farmers, most of the privately owned land belongs to the STs. The SCs are mostly agricultural labourers, and the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and general category people are into trading and other occupations.

#### EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF CONFLICT

The issue of conflict has been analysed from macro and micro dimensions. The macro dimension has a religious and socio-economic angle as it portrays intertwining of socio-economic and religious factors with two ethno-religious identities, namely, Hindus and Christians. They act in accordance with their own set agendas which often put them on path of confrontation. This has resulted in loss of lives, destruction of properties and animosity between the two communities. Left-wing Extremism (LWE) with its avowed objective of overthrowing Indian State through armed insurgency has also resulted in loss of lives and property; and the movement continues to evoke fear despite scaling down of operations following coordinated anti-Naxal operations by Government of Odisha backed by central para-military forces.

At the micro level, conflict has three distinct dimensions viz. land, religion and caste. These can be often overlapping in nature as can be seen clearly in the Mohana block which has dalit Christians, dalit Hindus, tribal Hindus, tribal Christians, Viswa Hindus and others. While disputes and conflicts exist in the area simultaneously, some disputes like issues of SMC, anganwadi etc. occur within the broader framework of conflict with clear caste and religious overtones.

#### EDUCATION AND BASIC SERVICES IN



Workshop for teachers on inclusive education

#### THE REGION

Although the district has seen some development of physical infrastructure like availability of classrooms, facilities within schools like toilets for boys, boundary wall and a defined playground; electricity and computer facilities still remain unsatisfactory. While the rate of enrollment decreases with an increase in the grade level that indicates poor retention rate, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in primary and upper primary school levels implies exclusion of large number of children from the education system. Other important challenges to education are below average performance by majority of students, irregular attendance, illiteracy of parents, lack of learning

environment at home, domination of School Management Committee (SMC) by dominant social groups, teachers' absenteeism, gender discrimination by parents, caste discrimination in schools and communication gap with Telugu-speaking teachers. However, the district achieves more than recommended average instruction days for Grade

I-V and nearly conforms to the requirement of Grade VI-VIII. As regards basic services, children of 0-6 years receive immunisation, breakfast, mid-day meal etc. in anganwadis but many anganwadis, still, do not have their own buildings, own kitchens and other utilities like water, utensils etc.

#### INTERPLAY BETWEEN CONFLICT AND EDUCATION

Nature of conflict determines its effects on physical structures of education. Significantly, physical structures of education and institutional deficiencies like inadequate classrooms, non-availability of toilets etc. are conditioned by policies and programmes of the government, and

hence unrelated to macro-level socio-economic and religious dimensions of conflict. Physical structures of education are also not affected by micro dimensions of conflict namely land, religion and caste. However, LWE has adversely affected physical structures of education as manifested in attacks of school buildings by Naxals and occupation of schools by security forces during anti-Naxal operations. With gradual decline of LWE in Gajapati, threat to physical structures of education has subsided in recent times. But the threat of violence continues to dominate public thinking, which in turn indicates existence of certain level of potential threat to physical structures of education.

LWE has also resulted in an increased rate of dropout of children from schools, teachers' absenteeism, loss of instruction days and several other hardships for children due to dislocation. Micro dimensions of conflicts have some degree of resonance on quantitative and qualitative aspects of education. Disputes like domination of SMC by dalit majority and location of school in area dominated by tribal majority occur within the broader framework of conflict that has caste and religious

GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO (GER) IN PRIMARY AND UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVELS IMPLIES EXCLUSION OF LARGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN FROM THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

overtones. Instances of religious and caste prejudices in schools like names of children written on back of eating plates, sitting arrangements etc. also came to light during interaction with stakeholders. It can be inferred from the interplay between conflict and education that the worst sufferers under the circumstances are the children of affected areas, as conflict adversely affects physical structures of education, school management, quality of education, school attendance and moral development of children.

#### Recommendations

**Intervention for parental motivation:** Parental motivation would neutralize their apathy for education and would help parents create learning space at home.

**Supplementary educational support:** Supplementary educational support should focus on fundamentals of key subjects namely language, mathematics, science and social science. Children of the most deprived families should be accorded priority attention.

**Advocacy for systemic deficiencies:** Government offices dealing with education should be targeted under advocacy initiative in order to address deficiencies like discrimination on the basis of castes and religion, teachers' absenteeism, inadequate classrooms etc. Use of right to information will help in collecting relevant data in this regard.

**Need for generating baseline data:** The baseline data should include views of stakeholders with special focus on intended beneficiaries.

Social inclusion as component of education and outreach: The purpose of lessons on social inclusion is to sensitize children as well as parents about equality, freedom, tolerance and dignity.

# GETTING FAMILIARISED

The Conflict and Education Tangle: A study on conflict and education in Gajapati district of Odisha has two distinct central components for analysis namely 'conflict' and 'education'. Education is a vital indicator of human development as it builds human capabilities, expands opportunities for socio-economic development and helps fight social frictions that preclude development and peaceful co-existence of human beings. Social conflict, on the other hand, is a manifestation of social differences that may exist at one or multiple aspects of social life namely social identity, economic opportunities available in society, social entitlements and power that determines the social status of people. While education is a state-sponsored and state-initiated; conflict is a reflection of social dynamics, or more appropriately social inequalities, which the democratic states are committed to address through measures like affirmative action and promotion of human rights. Education has immense positive connotation and value for human development, unlike conflict that hinders peace and development. Study of these two variables is both challenging and illuminating in view of its complexity, contextual relevance and potential for guiding the future course of ameliorative actions.



### 1.1. OBJECTIVES

With a focus on study of interplay between conflict and education in the Gajapati district, the objectives of the research are to:

- ▶ Understand the nature and intensity of the conflict
- ▶ Find out the nature of conflict and its effects on education
- ▶ Document education-related experiences of children, teachers and members of community
- ▶ Examine the status and adequacy of schools and basic services that are essential for education and wellbeing of the children
- ▶ Recommend measures that would ensure qualitative development of children's education in a non-threatening environment

### 1.2. APPROACHES

The study has been guided by three distinct approaches namely participatory, rights-based and analytical in matters concerning collection and interpretation of data. The research team ensured that the process of data collection remained participatory, interactive and inclusive with emphasis on involvement of different stakeholders. While interpreting data, rights of children, especially their right to education, was the key concern. Analyses in the report aim at answering the 'what', 'when', 'why' and 'how' of the dynamics of education and conflict, keeping in view the objectives of research. On the whole, the three approaches guided the course of research and ensured that analyses in the report remained focused and purposeful.

### 1.3. GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

The study covered two school clusters namely Pindiki and Merapalli located in the Mohana block of Gajapati district. As the district map below indicates, Mohana is located on the north eastern part of district. Gajapati district is situated on the southern part of Odisha. Almost entire east and part of its north are surrounded by Ganjam district. While Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh surrounds the entire south and a part of eastern boundary, the northwest and western borders touch Kandhamal and Rayagada districts of Odisha respectively.

### 1.4. METHODOLOGY

In view of the problem-oriented and exploratory nature of the study, it was considered appropriate to collect data from different stakeholders through qualitative methods, and supplement the field exercises with desk research. While desk research



**From top:**  
Odisha and its districts;  
Gajapati district

helped gather quantitative data and past analyses of general nature covering status of education, socio-economic dynamics and conflict, field exercises captured perceptions and experiences of stakeholders in regard to prevailing scenario in the geographical area of study. The following sections deal with methods of the study and coverage of stakeholders for data collection.

### COVERAGE OF STAKEHOLDERS FOR DATA COLLECTION

The stakeholders covered for data collection are the following:

- ▶ Children
- ▶ Community members and local opinion makers
- ▶ School teachers
- ▶ Government officials dealing with education
- ▶ Partner organization of NEG-FIRE
- ▶ NEG-FIRE

### METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION

The methods used for collection of data are the following:

- ▶ Review of literature
- ▶ Interaction with children

- ▶ FGD with community members and local opinion makers
- ▶ KII covering school teachers and government officials
- ▶ Field Observation
- ▶ Interaction with partner organization of NEG-FIRE (SFDC)
- ▶ Interaction with NEG-FIRE

**Review of Literature:** The research team reviewed articles, study reports, newspaper clippings, books and other available literature on conflict, education and development in the study region. Besides building a perspective on the topic of research which came in handy during data collection, review of literature helped gather qualitative and quantitative data on different aspects of study as reflected in the objectives of research.

**Interaction with children:**

Interaction with children was carried out in 10 schools from Pindiki & Merapalli school clusters (@ 5 from each cluster). Schools were selected randomly after obtaining preliminary data from the partner organization of NEG-FIRE. These interactions were held in an informal and stress-free setting, so that children could share their views without fear or hesitation.

**FGDs with community members and local opinion makers:** FGDs with community members and local opinion makers like educated and socially active people were organized in the catchment areas of 10 schools located in the study region. A format containing salient talking points were used for conducting these discussions. Each FGD witnessed participation of 10-15 people including community women.

KII covering school teachers and government officials: The research team conducted 10 KIIs covering school teachers and government officials dealing with

**EDUCATION IS A VITAL INDICATOR OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AS IT BUILDS HUMAN CAPABILITIES, EXPANDS OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. IN CASE YOU NEED LESS, JUST STICK WITH THE FIRST 8 WORDS ONLY.**

*Celebration of international peace day*

education. These interviews focused on status of education in the area and challenges to development of education and social dynamics.

**Field Observation:** Field observation included observation of physical infrastructure like schools, anganwadis and other basic services available in the project regions, especially the ones provided by the government, which contribute to education and wellbeing of children. The observation reports helped in triangulating data and obtaining general views about the prevalent basic services.

**Interaction with partner organization of NEG-FIRE:** The research team received important inputs on different aspects of study

from Solidarity for Developing Communities (SFDC) - the partner organization of NEG-FIRE working in the project area on the themes of education and peace. More specifically, SFDC provided insights into dynamics of society, economy, education and other local conditions of the area, shared literature on its project and other related issues and facilitated process of data collection including identification of stakeholders covered during field work.

**Interaction with NEG-FIRE:** The research team obtained views of NEG-FIRE on regular basis during the course of implementation of the assignment. While the first interaction took place soon after commencement of the project leading to the preparation of the inception report; subsequent ones coincided with different project milestones viz. finalisation of field work plan, data collection and finalisation of research report.

**METHODS FOR DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis involved scrutiny of field reports and data to check inconsistencies, if any, in order to make them analytically relevant. While qualitative and quantitative data were interpreted in light of the objectives of study; wherever possible, suitable illustrations, tables and charts have been incorporated into the report to highlight status of issues and substantiate analyses and conclusions. Although the study specifically only aimed at covering the Pindiki and Merapalli school clusters of Mohana block; general conditions of the society, education and economy prevalent in Gajapati district have also been presented in the report to make the analyses contextually appropriate.



## DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT IN SOCIETY

Being a social phenomenon, conflict in a society is conditioned by the dynamics of the society. Conflict occurs between and within social groups as a result of clash of values and ideological dispositions, tensions between those who have opportunities for fulfillment of needs and those who do not, gaps in representation in or access to structures of power and differences between 'what is' and 'what ought to be' in matters that are considered intrinsic to human development. In other words, issues involved in social conflict could be of diverse nature and understanding of these issues necessitates understanding of social dynamics. It is, therefore, important to throw light first on social dynamics of the geographical area of study, and subsequently on the nature of conflict that is prevalent in the society and other related aspects.



**2.1. SOCIAL DYNAMICS  
OF GAJAPATI DISTRICT**

Society is an aggregation of multiple aspects of human life and relationship that include, inter alia, social systems, customs and traditions, religious beliefs and practices, political system and economic life. These aspects need dispassionate analysis in order to understand the nature of social dynamics. While analyzing these dynamics in the context of Gajapati district, the condition of Mohana block, being the area of study, has been specifically highlighted.

Gajapati district was created in 1992 following bifurcation of undivided Ganjam district. Analysis of data of the district brings out many interesting facets of its people, geography and economy. According to 2011 Census of India, out of the total population of 577817, Scheduled Tribes (STs) constitute 54.29 percent, signifying their predominant demographic status. The Scheduled Castes (SCs), on the other hand, constitute only 6.78 percent, and the remaining 38.93 percent are Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and general category people. Gajapati is the third least populous district of Odisha<sup>1</sup>. As regards literacy, with only 53.49 percent literate population, the district's achievement is much less than that of Odisha (72.9 percent literacy) and India (74.04 percent literacy). While 59.19 percent of the district's 1512 inhabited villages have primary schools, only 8.33 percent villages have middle schools and 3.9 percent have secondary/ senior secondary schools<sup>2</sup>. Institutions of higher and technical education are very few in number, as only 0.4 percent of the villages have colleges<sup>3</sup>.

Out of seven development blocks of the district, five including Mohana are tribal blocks<sup>4</sup>. The Saora

community, with over 80 percent of the total tribal population, is the largest among the tribal communities of Gajapati. Saoras are also known as Sabara and Sora. Kandhas (also known as Khond) with about 15 percent share in tribal population is another important tribe living mostly in Mohana block. While some tribal people live in plains and practice wet cultivation and are engaged in daily wage labour, sale of firewood and leaf plates in local markets; those living in hill sides practice shifting cultivation. Agriculture and collection of minor forest produce are two principal occupations of tribal population of the district. They have their unique culture, ceremonies and faith in spirits. For example, Saoras believe in sorcery and witchcraft, and the Kandhas respect nature.

As regards religion, Hindus with 61.12 percent share in district's population constitute the majority, which is followed by Christians with 37.98 percent share. Believers of other religions like Buddhism, Jainism, Islam etc. are very less in number. While STs believe in animism, Hinduism and Protestant Christianity; the SCs are mostly believers of Hinduism and Catholic Christianity. The OBC and other general category people are mostly followers of Hinduism. During interaction with villagers, it came to light that people who are members or followers of Viswa Hindu Parishad- a nation-wide Hindu religious organization, call themselves as Viswa Hindus, who, according to them, are different from Hindus. It is important to note that the status of religion of the district defies the trend of Odisha and the country as a whole. In Odisha, share of Hindus in total population is 93.63 percent and their share in India's total population is 79.8 percent, according to 2011



Non violence day  
celebration by  
school children.

**CONFLICT OCCURS  
BETWEEN AND WITHIN  
SOCIAL GROUPS AS A  
RESULT OF CLASH OF  
VALUES AND IDEOLOGICAL  
DISPOSITIONS**



census. The shares of Christians in Odisha and India, on the other hand, are 2.77 and 2.3 percent respectively. In other words, share of Hindus in Gajapati district is significantly less than their shares in Odisha and India. This demographic trend, as section below on conflict indicates, has added intensity to identity-based mobilization of people along religious lines that has contributed to conflict in geographical area of research.

As major parts of the district are covered with forests and hills<sup>5</sup>, its people and economy are predominantly rural. According to 2011 census, only 12.23 percent people of Gajapati are urban dwellers and the remaining 87.77 percent live in rural areas. While the district produces forest products like timber, bamboo, hill broom, Patala Garuda, soap nut, Kochila seeds, Genduli gum, Siali leaves etc.; it has no industry and industrial estate, except few agro-processing and cottage industries, which in turn indicates predominance of agriculture and forest-based products in the economy. Significantly, 87 percent of the district's total workforce is engaged in agriculture, which includes cultivators and agricultural labourers. While

8.73 percent work force is engaged in trade, commerce, mining and other household activities, only 5.6 percent are employed in services sector<sup>6</sup>.

In view of predominance of agriculture in the economy, it is important to highlight the patterns of landholding in the district. Nearly 90% of the people holding land in Gajapati district are small and marginal farmers. While marginal farmers with 0-1 acre land constitute 66.65 percent of total 62362 operational holdings of the district, the share of small farmers with 1-2 acres land is 22.69<sup>7</sup> percent. According to the Revenue Department, Government of Odisha, the number of landless people in the district was 14,998 in 2006<sup>8</sup>. Private land constitutes only 14 percent of the total land of the district. The above data indicate not only scarcity of land for private ownership but also insignificant size of landholding for those who possess land. Most of the privately owned land belongs to STs. The SCs, on the other hand, are mostly agricultural labourers, and the OBCs and general category people are into trading and other occupations. Private ownership of land by non-tribal is less, especially in Mohana block.

With low level of literacy, inadequate access to information and high incidence of poverty<sup>9</sup>, the level

1 Debagarh and Boudh are the first two least populous districts of Odisha, according to Census of India 2011.  
2 Orissa Review (Census Special), (December 2010). Retrieved from <http://odisha.gov.in/e-magazine/Orissareview/2010/December/engpdf/108-111.pdf>  
3 The prominent educational and technical institutions of the district are Sri Krushna Chandra Gajapati College, Jagannath Institute for Technology and Management, Centurion School for Rural Enterprise Management and Hill Top College, Mohana.  
4 The other four tribal blocks are Guma, Rayagada, R. Udayagiri and Nuagada.  
5 Out of district's total geographical area of 4325 square kilometer, total forest area measures 2301.98 sq.km. (53%).  
6 Vision 2020: Gajapati District, District Administration, Gajapati, p.42  
7 District Statistical Handbook: 2005, Cited in Vision 2020: Gajapati District, District Administration, Gajapati, p.40  
8 Revenue Department, Government of Odisha 31/12/2006  
9 Number of BPL families in the district was 68763 (1997 survey). Out of this 11340 were SCs and 37197 were STs. Gajapati has 1.4 lakh households. Vision 2020: Gajapati District

of people's political awareness and participation in governance issues is very low. This is especially so in case of deprived communities like STs and SCs. They possess no or limited knowledge of their rights guaranteed under the Constitution of India. Their level of participation in meetings and activities of gram sabhas and access to development and welfare measures of the government like BPL card, ration card etc. is limited<sup>10</sup>. The prevailing social dynamics, as highlighted above, portray underdevelopment of high magnitude and diversities in regard to religion, culture and demography in Gajapati district. The critical issues that adversely affect livelihood capabilities of tribal and scheduled castes communities are inadequate access to and ownership of productive assets, non-existent institutional credit and linkages to financial institutions, depletion of forest cover, reduction of non-timber forest produce and minor forest produce due to excessive exploitation by non-tribal communities and inadequate skills training that can result in economic empowerment.

**2.2. CONCEPT OF SOCIAL CONFLICT**

Conflict occurs at three broad levels namely intrapersonal, interpersonal and societal. While intrapersonal conflict occurs within an individual and is a subject matter of Psychology, interpersonal conflict involves two individuals like conflicts that happen in an organization or in a social setting. Societal conflict, which is the focus of the present study, on other hand, refers to conflicts of social nature that occur between societies or nations involving multiple actors and have complex dynamics.

According to Wilmot and Hocker, whose focus is on interpersonal

conflict, "Conflict is a felt struggle between two or more interdependent individuals over perceived incompatible differences in beliefs, values and goals, or over differences in desires for esteem, control and connectedness."<sup>11</sup> Sociologist Lewis A. Coser, on the other hand, defines conflict from societal perspective. He sees conflict as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals"<sup>12</sup>. References to conflict from a societal perspective can be traced to the work of thinkers like Karl Marx in early to mid-1800 whose focus of analysis was economic classes (viz. bourgeoisie or owners of means of production and proletariat or workers) and dialectics of capitalism, Max Weber in early twentieth century who broadened the analysis of conflict by including three factors namely economy (or class), social prestige (or status) and political influence (or power) and Georg Simmel- a contemporary of Weber who viewed conflict as a natural and necessary part of society, and advocated that social actions always

*Talent search on independence day*

involve harmony and conflict, love and hatred. Coser views conflict as a normal and functional part of human life and that it is present everywhere in human society. He distinguishes between internal conflicts that occur within a social system (between and among groups that exist within

THE DEMOGRAPHIC TREND HAS ADDED INTENSITY TO IDENTITY-BASED MOBILIZATION OF PEOPLE ALONG RELIGIOUS LINES WHICH HAS CONTRIBUTED TO INCREASED CONFLICT IN THE GAJAPATI DISTRICT



10 <http://infochangeindia.org/poverty/features/the-poor-fight-to-stay-on-bpl-list.html>  
 11 Wilmot. W.W. & Hocker, J. (2011). Interpersonal conflict (8th ed.) (New York: McGraw Hill), p.11  
 12 Coser, Lewis A. (1956), The Functions of Social Conflict (New York: The Free Press), p.8



Statutory  
committee  
meetings

the system) and external conflicts that take place between external social groups (between different nations or social groups). Unlike internal conflict, external conflict is more violent in nature as it is characterized by 'stronger group boundaries, higher social solidarity and more efficient use of power and authority'. Conflict theorist Ralph Dahrendorf<sup>13</sup>, like Coser, sees conflict as a universal phenomenon present in all human relations. He argued that there is an unequal distribution of authority in society that 'creates a division between the dominant and the subordinate, between those who rule and those who are ruled'. Differences notwithstanding, contemporary theorists of conflict like Coser and Dahrendorf, with their emphasis on structural division of power and resource inequalities in society, put forward an alternate

theoretical paradigm to counter the structural functionalism in Sociology for its emphasis on consensual and conflict free nature of societies.

While the above theoretical formulations bring clarity to the concept of social conflict, there is a need to highlight the analytical distinction between three inter-related yet different concepts, relevant for the present purpose, namely dispute, conflict and violence. Dispute is short-term disagreement that centres around, in the words of John W. Burton, 'negotiable interests'<sup>14</sup>. It is easy to resolve as finding solution to a dispute is not impossible. Conflict, on the other hand, involves fundamental issues concerning needs, values or interests of the affected parties that are seemingly non-negotiable, deep-rooted and protracted in nature. Dispute and conflict may happen independently

of one another or may be connected to each other. A dispute may occur within a larger conflict, just as battles are fought within a war. Also, conflict may be negative or positive in nature. Positive conflict is one that gives rise to change and leads to negotiated resolution of issues without resorting to violence. Negative conflict, on the other hand, refers to such conflict which results in psychological trauma, loss of peace, undesirable consequences, and violence- its extreme manifestation. Violence always carries negative connotation as it leads to some form of destruction of human and/or natural resources and creates scars whose impact is often felt even in distant future. While all negative conflict may not necessarily manifest in the form of violence, violence is certainly the worst form

of negative conflict.

It is pertinent to note that conflict is not inherently bad, as is generally perceived. According to Lewis A. Coser, "conflict not only generates new norms, new institutions... it may be said to be stimulating directly in the economic and technological realm... Economic historians often have pointed out that much technological improvement has resulted from conflict activity of trade unions through the raising of wage levels"<sup>15</sup>. Conflict often opens up opportunities for change, innovation and growth, and has the potential for realizing greater social justice, inclusiveness and enrichment of personal lives.

## SOCIETAL CONFLICT REFERS TO CONFLICTS OF SOCIAL NATURE THAT OCCUR BETWEEN SOCIETIES OR NATIONS INVOLVING MULTIPLE ACTORS AND HAVE COMPLEX DYNAMICS

### 2.3. EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF CONFLICT

As one of the central themes of study, the issue of conflict has been analysed from both micro and macro dimensions in order to make the understanding holistic. While Mohana block, being the coverage area of present study, represents micro dimension of analysis; dynamics of conflict in Gajapati district in the overall context of Odisha captures the macro dimension. Existence and nature of conflict have been analysed below keeping in view the nature of social dynamics of the area as captured in earlier section, nature of past and present events, and the prevailing inter-personal and inter-community relationship in the area, as elaborated below.

### RELIGIOUS AND SOCIO- ECONOMIC DIMENSION

Events of conflicts are also indicative of the nature of conflict. Conflicts involving Hindus and Christians have been occurring in the State since 1980s which have often taken violent turn leading to deaths and destruction of resources. Burning down of 20 village churches in Kandhamal district during 1986-87, burning of Graham Staines- an Australian Christian missionary and his two sons in 1999 in Keonjhar district, gang rape of a Catholic nun and murder of Catholic priest Fr. Arul Doss in September 1999 in Mayurbhanj district, tonsuring of seven women and a male pastor in Jagatsinghpur district in 2004, violence in Kandhamal during 2007-08 that resulted in 38 deaths, torching of churches, hostels, convents and nearly 6000 houses exemplify the nature of attack on Christians and symbols of Christianity in the State. Gajapati district has also witnessed

anti-Christian activities. In 1998, about 5000 activists belonging to Sangh Parivar<sup>16</sup> allegedly attacked Christian dominated R. Udaygiri block of the district setting fire to 92 houses, a church, a police station and several government vehicles<sup>17</sup>. A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed in Odisha High Court by 268 persons from 19 villages of Gajapati district in June 2005 against forcible conversion. Invoking sections 3, 4, and 5 of the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, the court ordered district administration for immediate filing of charge sheets and registration of cases against conversion. In November 2005, 15 Christian houses in Gandahati village of Gajapati district were burnt down allegedly by Hindus. Following the event, police arrested eight Christians from the village, which resulted in violence.

Conflict and violence in the name of religious identity is a complex issue as it is linked to socio-economic conditions of people and the issue of religious conversion. Reports of conversion of Hindus and tribal to Christianity and their reconversion (*or ghar wapsi*) to Hinduism continue to happen in the State, indicating presence of identity-based conflict<sup>18</sup>.

13 Dahrendorf, Ralf. "Toward a Theory of Social Conflict", The Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 2. No.2 (June 1958), pp.170-183. Retrieved from <http://www.csun.edu/~snk1966/Ralph%20Dahrendorf%20Toward%20a%20Theory%20of%20Social%20Conflict.pdf>

14 Burton, John W., "Conflict Resolution as a Political Philosophy", in Dennis J. D. Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe (Ed) (1993), Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press), pp.55-64.

15 Coser, Lewis A., "Social Conflict and the Theory of Social Change", The British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 8, No. 3 (September 1957), pp.197-207

16 Right-wing Hindu organizations started by members of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) or organizations inspired by the RSS are collectively called Sangh Parivar. While Sangh Parivar has several organizations in its fold, prominent among them are Viswa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, Bhartiya Janata Party and Swadeshi Jagran Manch.

17 Chatterji, Angana, Hindutva's violent history, Tehelka Magazine (New Delhi), Vol.5, Issue 36 (13 September 2008). Retrieved from [http://archive.tehelka.com/story\\_main40.asp?filename=Ne130908HindutvasViolentHistory.asp](http://archive.tehelka.com/story_main40.asp?filename=Ne130908HindutvasViolentHistory.asp)

It is important to note that there are two distinct sets of organizations and people that are acting as the forces behind the acts of conversion, reconversion, religious propaganda and other activities that are perpetuating disharmony among the communities. While conversion of tribal and *dalits* to Christianity is guided by evangelical Christians, reconversion or *ghar wapsi* is spearheaded by Hindu right-wing organizations belonging to Sangh Parivar. The evangelical Christians are not linked to mainline Catholic or Protestant churches that came to India with the European colonizers, as pointed out by Scott Baldauf in a report in *The Christian Science Monitor*<sup>19</sup>. Linked to expansionist evangelical movements in the USA, Britain and Australia, the evangelical Christians have often been opposed even by mainstream churches for their aggressive methods of conversion practices<sup>20</sup>. The Hindu right-wing organizations, on the other hand, are promoting their religious agenda in the State aggressively in the form of *ghar wapsi* and other programmes in order to prevent conversion and to bring the converts back to the fold of Hinduism. The reach of these organizations in remote areas of Gajapati and other districts of the State as well as across the country is on the rise as the events noted in foregoing section indicate. This can also be noticed in the strength of membership of organizations under the Sangh Parivar fraternity: Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has 125000 primary workers in Odisha, Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh operates 6000 shakhas (or branches) with over 150000 cadre, the Bajrang Dal has 50000 members working in 200 akharas and Bharatiya Kisan Sangh with over 30000 members operates

in 100 blocks of the State<sup>21</sup>.

The role of socio-economic conditions of people is significant to the understanding of religious schism in the State. The people targeted by evangelical Christians and Hindu nationalists are mostly either dalits or tribals who are economically poor and socially oppressed because of skewed patterns of landholding, inadequate access to productive assets, caste-based discrimination and a host of other circumstantial issues pertaining to conditions of living, education etc. that keep them at the bottom of social ladder. Their subjugated socio-economic status makes them vulnerable to identity-based mobilization, which also results in further deprivation. A dalit, when converted to Christianity, is deprived of the benefits of caste-based reservation for government jobs and other benefits like admission to

**AGGRESSIVE  
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THE 1980'S**



Celebration of  
Grandparents' day  
in school



schools and colleges, as Christians do not believe in caste hierarchies. While Christians express concern at activities of Sangh Parivar, especially *ghar wapsi* and anti-Christian propaganda; the Hindu nationalists accuse the former of targeting poor and disempowered tribal and dalits with promises of good life. This, according to them, causes social disequilibrium and threatens Hinduism. Even the social and development activities undertaken by Jesuits and other mainstream churches in remote areas of the State are perceived as against established social order leading to violent reprisals. Burning of pastor Mukund Bardhan in Gajapati district in 2008, alleged murder to Rev Jaisankar, a medical doctor and pastor at the Blessing Youth Mission near Lamtaput in Kandhamal district in 2013, killing of pastor Saul Pradhan in Kandhamal district in 2011 and many such cases of violence exemplify the extent of animosity that exist between the communities<sup>22</sup>.

The macro dimension of conflict, as analysed above, is a complex picture of ground realities that portrays intertwining of socio-

economic and religious factors with two ethno-religious identities trying to act in accordance with their own set agendas putting them on path of confrontation that have resulted in loss of lives, destruction of properties and animosity between the communities. Whether it is aggressive and unprincipled missionary work or aggressive and chauvinistic right-wing Hindu nationalism; Odisha in general and Gajapati district in particular have been witnessing certain degree of conflict and violence since 1980s. **LEFT-WING EXTREMISM** One key dimension of conflict in Odisha is the presence of left-wing extremism (LWE) in the State that has taken the shape of the worst form of negative conflict in view of the extent of violence associated with it. Left-wing extremism (also called Naxalism or Maoist movement) has been going on in the country since last few decades with the avowed objective of overthrowing Indian State with the use of armed insurgency leading to revolutionary change in society. The Maoists are of the view that the state is an exploitative mechanism that is interested in extracting

18 "80 tribals converted to Christianity in Odisha", *The Times of India* (Bhubaneswar), December 27, 2014. Retrieved from <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/80-tribals-converted-to-Christianity-in-Odisha/articleshow/45660711.cms>; "Over 42000 converted to Christianity in Kandhamal". Retrieved from <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-over-42000-converted-to-christianity-in-kandhamal-1201209>; "VHP claims huge success in 'Ghar Wapsi' campaign", 5 July 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.newindianexpress.com/theSundayStandard/VHP-Claims-Huge-Success-in-Ghar-Wapsi-Campaign/2015/07/05/article2902434.ece>; Dayal, John, "Ghar Wapsi and not-so-veiled threat of the Sangh", *Mainstream*, Vol. LI, No. 26 (June 15, 2013). Retrieved from <http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article4260.html>

19 Baldauf, Scott, "A new breed of missionary: A drive for conversions, not development, is stirring violent animosity in India", *The Christian Science Monitor* (Jhabua, India), 1 April 2005. Retrieved from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0401/p01s04-wosc.html>

20 Ibid

21 Retrieved from <https://revolutionaryfrontlines.wordpress.com/2010/03/26/hindutva-violence-of-the-rise-in-orissa/>

22 Carvalho, Nirmala, "Christian clergyman's death in Orissa ruled an accident by police", 15 July 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Christian-clergyman-s-death-in-Orissa-ruled-an-accident-by-police-28472.html>; "Deaths mount as violence spreads in Odisha, India", 27 August 2008. Retrieved from <http://onenewsnow.com/persecution/2008/08/27/deaths-mount-as-violence-spreads-in-orissa-india>



mineral and forest resources and acquiring land for development of big industries. According to them, the existing processes of development are inherently pro-rich and anti-tribal, as they lead to displacement of tribal, depletion of natural resources and destruction of sources of livelihood. While the movement has emerged as a potent security threat to society and structures of administration at all levels, it has also been causing disruptions in development especially in remote areas that have been declared by the Maoists as liberated zones.

LWE has spread to ten Indian States namely Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. In Odisha, 19 out of 30

districts are affected by the Maoist movement. It has gained momentum since 2004 when the People's War (PW) of Andhra Pradesh and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI), then operating in Bihar and adjoining areas, merged to form the Community Party of India (Maoist). The intensity of LWE can be gauged from the extent of human casualties caused by it, as between 2010 to 2015 (up to 15 September 2015) around 2111 civilians and 793 personnel of security forces have lost their lives due to Maoist attacks in the country<sup>23</sup>.

LWE assumes significance in the context of this research as Gajapati was till recently one of the worst affected districts of Odisha not only due to its forest and hilly terrain but also due to its geographical proximity with neighbouring Andhra Pradesh which created operational advantages for the Maoists. In the district, Mohana block was one of the worst affected blocks and it was considered

as a major hideout of insurgents. The movement enjoys sympathy of tribal population of the area and is known to have strong bases in the forests.

However, recent actions by security forces that resulted in arrests of some top Odisha-based Maoists, including the outfit's leader Sabyasachi Panda in July 2014, known to have operational bases in Mohana block, have substantially reduced LWE activities in the area. According to data made public by Government of Odisha, Maoist activities have been brought under control in majority of affected districts except Malkangiri, Koraput, Nuapada, Raygada, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Balangir and Baragarh<sup>24</sup>. There have also been reports of surrender by Maoists, like prominent face Nachika Linga, and their supporters in different areas of the State in recent past, as the one in September 2015<sup>25</sup>, that indicate gradual weakening of the movement in the State<sup>26</sup>.

➔ **TABLE 2.1 LWE VIOLENCE IN ODISHA DURING 2010 TO 2015 (DATA IN NUMBER)**

YEAR	INCIDENTS	DEATHS
2010	218	79
2011	192	53
2012	171	45
2013	101	35
2014	103	26
2015	64(84)	18(20)

**Note:** Figures in parentheses are for corresponding period of 2014.

**Source:** Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

**LWE HAS BEEN PREVALENT SINCE THE LAST FEW DECADES WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF OVERTHROWING ODISHA WITH THE USE OF ARMED INSURGENCY LEADING TO REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE IN SOCIETY.**



According to analysis of over ground and underground activities by Institute of Conflict Management, "two Districts - Malkangiri and Koraput - remain highly affected; Nuapada and Sundargarh Districts are now moderately affected; while Gajapati, Ganjam, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Kandhamal, Balangir, Nabarangpur, Boudh, Angul, Deogarh, Kalahandi, Keonjhar and Rayagada remain marginally affected<sup>27</sup>." Data available with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, as in **table 2.1**, show almost continuous decline in number of incidents and deaths, except marginal increase in number of incidents in 2014, due to Maoist violence.

Interactions with people and other stakeholders have also revealed about the noticeable scaling down of

Grandparents' day celebration in school

Naxal activities in Mohana block, and Gajapati district in general, in recent months. However, a general sense of fear persists among people in view of not-so-distant violent and uncertain past, when combing operations, interrogation of villagers and stand-offs between security forces and Maoists were an everyday occurrence. Incidents like killing of five villagers, who according to villagers were not

23 Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

24 Odisha Assessment 2015, South Asia Terrorism Portal, Institute for Conflict Management (New Delhi). Retrieved from <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/maoist/Assessment/2015/Orissa.htm>

25 [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/odisha-about-150-maoist-supporters-surrender-to-police-115090900270\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/odisha-about-150-maoist-supporters-surrender-to-police-115090900270_1.html)

26 [http://indiablooms.com/ibns\\_new/news-details/O/2871/odisha-maoists-hanging-on-a-thread.html](http://indiablooms.com/ibns_new/news-details/O/2871/odisha-maoists-hanging-on-a-thread.html)

27 Odisha Assessment 2015, op. cit

28 In Bhaliaguda incident, four arrested persons branded as Maoists by police were later acquitted by court in 2014, which according to people is a proof that the killed people were not Maoists. "Slap on Odisha Police: 4 villagers branded Maoists acquitted by police", Odisha Sun Times (11 December 2014). Retrieved from <http://odishasuntimes.com/2014/12/12/slap-odisha-police-4-villagers-branded-maoists-acquitted-courts/>

29 SFDC is a non-governmental organization (NGO) working in the area in the domain of education for peace.

Maoists<sup>28</sup>, at Bhaliaguda village in the district in November 2012 during a combing operation by security forces are still fresh in public memory.

**MICRO DIMENSION OF CONFLICT**

Micro dimension of conflict refers to the prevailing scenario in Mohana block where field work for the research was conducted. Interaction with children, school teachers, anganwadi workers, community members, representatives of Society for Developing Communities (SFDC)<sup>29</sup>, government officials dealing with education and local opinion makers reveals existence of certain degree of conflict in the area. There are also villages where conflict is not visible, although their social dynamics are same as that of other villages with presence of conflict. For example, interactions with people in village Hikirikupa of Pindiki panchayat that has dalit (or SCs) Hindus, dalit Christians and tribal Hindus, village Tinigharia of Merapalli panchayat that has tribal Hindus and dalits, and village Luduru that has tribal (Kandhas) Hindus and dalit Christians reveal non-existence of conflict. However, people owing allegiance to multiple identities do have differences and practices like untouchability, despite being unconstitutional, continue to exist as in case of Hikirikupa and other villages. While discussing nature of conflict below,

this aspect has been analysed further.

While the research team did not come across any incidence of violence (i.e. worst form of negative conflict) in Mohana, disputes and conflicts, other than violent conflicts, could be found in most of the villages covered during field work. In order to understand the nature of disputes and conflict, it is necessary to analyse community-level dynamics in villages in light of the conceptual connotations noted in earlier section. In this regard, analyses of dynamics of three villages have been presented below.

Village Pindiki has three hamlets, one each for dalit Christians, adivasis (i.e. ST) and savarnas (i.e. OBCs and other general castes)<sup>30</sup>, colloquially known as Dalit Sahi, Adivasi Sahi and Odia Sahi respectively. With 60 households and over 350 people, the village has witnessed conflict between dalit Christians and Adivasi Hindus over possession of land right. Dalits do not have land, unlike their Adivasi counterparts who do not allow the former to collect minor forest produce. Despite approaching the revenue department and constitution of a Forest Right Committee, the matter has not yet been resolved. The village also has other critical issues that can be termed as ‘disputes’ like issues relating to the location of school building, dominance of dalits in the school management committee (SMC) and the anganwadi of Odia Sahi whose construction in the school complex is not allowed by dalit dominated SMC despite sanction of the district administration. The village exemplifies disputes like SMC, anganwadi etc. occurring within the broader framework of conflict that has a clear caste and religious overtones.

Village Andrema has 35 households, out of which nine are dalit Christians and 26 are Adivasi

Hindus. The conflict in the village pertains to three key issues namely caste, religion and land. The minority dalits complain that the majority adivasis have forcibly occupied their land which the former used to cultivate earlier. A police complaint was also filed by the dalits in 2014 following which land was given back to the dalit households. However, land of dalits has again been occupied by the adivasis, resulting in persistence of conflict in the village.

Village K. Kalameri in Merapli gram panchayat has 16 adivasi households out of which 15 are Hindus and one is Christian, and 19 dalit households which are all

Christians. While adivasis of the village own most of the land and have title deeds (patta), dalits have no right over forest land, leading to simmering conflict between the two communities. Interestingly, the situation in the village could only be captured during interaction with dalits, as the adivasis did not say anything about conflict in the village.

The village-level dynamics were echoed by some of the key informants as well. U. Rajendra Dora, a journalist and social worker of the area highlighted the genesis of conflict and the extent of deprivation that dalit people of the area face in regard to land. Marshall

➔ FIGURE 2.1

## DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT IN PROJECT



### LAND

**Key Actors:** Adivasis and Dalits

**Key Reasons of Conflict:** For land ownership as adivasis have most land ownership and dalits are mostly landless



### RELIGION

**Key Actors:** Hindu Adivasis and Dalit Christians, and among Hindus, followers of Hinduism and those indoctrinated by Viswa Hindu Parishad

**Key Reasons of Conflict:** Religious chauvinism and intolerance



### CASTE

**Key Actors:** Dalits (mostly Panas), OBCs and general castes

**Key Reasons of Conflict:** Caste prejudices, discrimination of dalits and practices of untouchability

Nayak, a retired School Inspector expressed similar views, while recommending measures for quality and discrimination free education. Based on the situations prevailing in villages and the inputs received from other stakeholders, it can be said that conflict in coverage area of study has three distinct dimensions viz. land, religion and caste. This is also true in case of Gajapati district as a whole as the dynamics of society, demographic composition, patterns of landholding are similar in nature across the district. The nature of conflict, as elaborated above, has been captured in figure 2.1

Out of three dimensions of conflict, land is considered as the most important dimension as the issue is linked to people’s livelihood. Religion is also a sensitive issue because of its uniqueness explained in earlier sections. The following observations would clarify the nature of conflict further.

Dimensions of conflict are often overlapping due to multiple identities as the area has people who are categorized as dalit Christians, dalit Hindus, tribal Hindus, tribal Christians, Viswa Hindus etc.

Disputes and conflicts exist in the society simultaneously. Many of the occurrences are actually village-level disputes linked to issues like location of school, matters concerning anganwadis etc. that are often considered as conflicts.

Caste-based prejudices, as is generally known, do not always lead to dispute or conflict. For example, untouchability is present, in varying degree, not only in the area of study but also in the entire district and in the State, but it becomes a cause of dispute or conflict only when it is used as an instrument for exploitation or deprivation.



➔ TABLE 2.2 FUNCTIONS AND  
FUNCTIONARIES OF VILLAGE COMMITTEE

FUNCTIONARIES	FUNCTIONS
Behera (also called Sabhapati in some villages)	The leader who presents issues to members and takes decisions
Adhikari	Assists the Behera, maintains records and in some villages, writes resolutions
Secretary	Writes resolution
Chhatia	Informs people about village committee meeting and ensures people’s participation

Intensity is another important aspect of conflict that needs elaboration. As pointed out earlier, conflict in the study area has not manifested in the form of violence, which is the worst form of negative conflict. But it has at times resulted in undesirable consequences and loss of peace like in village Andrema where dalits accuse the tribals of forcibly taking away their land and in village Pindiki where land-related conflict continues despite intervention of revenue department of the state government. These are instances of negative conflict. Also, some conflicts in the area can be termed as positive, as they have the potential of bringing about social change and during such conflicts community-based conflict resolution mechanism is used for restoring order. It is important to note that many villages in the area have village committees which act as a mechanism for settlement of disputes and resolution of conflicts. Each village committee has 3 to 4 members with specific responsibilities, as stated in table 2.2.

Significantly, the difference between positive and negative conflict is a matter of degree or intensity. When a conflict takes a negative shape, it implies not only seriousness of issue but also failure of the village-level conflict resolution mechanism to address it.

<sup>30</sup> Savarna refers to Hindu varna (colour or class) system under which Hindus are divided under four categories of varnas namely Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Shudras. Dalits and tribes are excluded from the Hindu varna system and are called avarna.

# EDUCATION AND BASIC SERVICES IN THE REGION

As education is one of the two components of the present research, it is imperative to analyse the issue in the context of the project area. Education is not just about availability of educational infrastructure, it also covers educational attainment of children. Since basic services like healthcare, nutrition etc, are complimentary to education, a note on them would make the analyses in the chapter holistic. The following sections contain details about education of children and basic services meant for their care and development. While the district level data has been presented to develop a contextual understanding, the situation in Mohana has been dealt with specifically to highlight local conditions.



### 3.1. AVAILABLE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES OF EDUCATION

Under the aegis of the Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan of the government, Gajapati district has seen certain degree of development of physical infrastructure of schools in terms of availability and condition of class and other rooms. According to the District Elementary Education Report Card: 2013-2014, rooms of 69.3 percent 'primary only' schools are in good condition, 14.7 percent need minor repair and 16.1 percent need major repair<sup>31</sup>. The corresponding figures for 'primary with UP Secondary and Higher Secondary schools' are 97 percent, 3 percent and nil respectively<sup>32</sup>. However, performance indicators of the district in regard to infrastructural facilities within schools are not very satisfactory, as the table below indicates. This is especially so in case of boys toilet, boundary wall, playground, electricity and computer facilities. In other words, the district needs to improve its performance in regard to availability and condition of classrooms, especially those classrooms that need major repair, toilets, boundary walls and other key facilities that would contribute to development of education. See table 3.1.

Two other important indicators of institutional structures are number of schools and number of teachers available in the district for school education. These particulars are given in tables below.

#### Mere availability of physical infrastructure and human resource

<sup>31</sup> Elementary Education in India: Where Do We Stand?, District Report Cards: 2013-14, Vol. II National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, p.433

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



EDUCATION IS NOT JUST ABOUT AVAILABILITY OF EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE, IT ALSO COVERS EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF CHILDREN.

TABLE 3.1 SOME KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS OF GAJAPATI DISTRICT

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	PERCENT
% schools with girls toilet	97.5
% schools with boys toilet	60.5
% schools with boundary wall	50.4
% school with drinking water	99.0
% school with playground	25.1
% school with ramp, if required	89.7
% schools with electricity	16.7
% school with computer	9.7

**Note:** Schools include primary (P) only, P+upper primary (UP), P+UP+Secondary (S)+Higher S (HS), UP only, UP+S+HS, P+UP+S and UP+S schools.

**Source:** Elementary Education in India: Where Do We Stand?, District Report Cards: 2013-14, Vol. II National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, p.433

➔ **TABLE 3.2 INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES FOR SCHOOL EDUCATION IN GAJAPATI DISTRICT**

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS			TOTAL
	GOVERNMENT	PRIVATE	UNRECOGNIZED	
Primary School	875	20	6	901
P+UP	463	19	2	484
P+UP+Sec+HS	0	1	0	1
UP only	7	3	0	10
UP+Sec+HS	2	0	0	2
P+UP+Sec	92	4	2	98
UP+Sec	31	24	1	56
Total	1470	71	11	1552

Source: Elementary Education in India: Where Do We Stand?, District Report Cards: 2013-14, Vol. II National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, p.433

➔ **TABLE 3.3 HUMAN RESOURCE AVAILABLE FOR SCHOOL EDUCATION IN GAJAPATI DISTRICT**

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS			TOTAL
	GOVERNMENT	PRIVATE	UNRECOGNIZED	
Primary School	1781	122	32	1935
P+UP	1621	169	22	1812
P+UP+Sec+HS	0	34	0	34
UP only	33	4	0	37
UP+Sec+HS	25	0	0	25
P+UP+Sec	731	70	27	828
UP+Sec	303	191	11	505
Total	4494	590	92	5176

Source: Elementary Education in India: Where Do We Stand?, District Report Cards: 2013-14, Vol. II National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, p.433



➔ **TABLE 3.4 SOME KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS OF GAJAPATI DISTRICT**

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES	NUMBER
Primary School	186
Upper Primary School	136
Upgraded (VII)	0
Middle English School	1
UGHS (Up-graded High School)	23
High School	17
NCLP (National Child Labour Project) School	0
Special School	8
Total	371

Source: Block Education Office, Mohana

➔ **TABLE 3.5 HUMAN RESOURCE AVAILABLE FOR SCHOOL EDUCATION IN MOHANA**

HUMAN RESOURCE	NUMBER
Sikshya Sahayak	481
Gana Sikshaks	248
Zilla Parishad Teachers	149
Regular Teachers	166
Total	1044

Source: Block Education Office, Mohana

does not ensure quality education. Like district-level dynamics, the facilities in Mohana also have many deficiencies, as noted below, which could be observed during field work and also captured through interactions with school teachers and other stakeholders.

- ▶ Small size of classrooms and inadequate space
- ▶ Teachers' absenteeism
- ▶ Non-availability of water, electricity etc.
- ▶ Non-availability of toilets/ separate toilets for boys and girls
- ▶ No boundary walls, kitchen and playground
- ▶ Shortage of trained teachers

The case studies of schools presented in text boxes below highlight various deficiencies in the schools.

### 3.2. KEY QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ASPECTS OF EDUCATION

Issues having bearing on quantitative and qualitative aspects of children's education are important for understanding the nature of educational services available in the area. This section deals with key quantitative and qualitative aspects namely school enrollment, rate of retention, average instruction days and level of learner's achievement and other challenges to children's education.

#### SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION

The tables below contain total enrollment for elementary education in different categories of schools and grade-wise enrollment starting from grade I till grade VIII in Gajapati district.

Grade-wise enrollment presents a holistic picture of the district as it

➔ CASE STUDIES 3.1

### KIRTING PUP SCHOOL

Located in Pindiki gram Panchayat, Kirting primary and upper primary school has provision for classes I to VIII. Presently 100 children are studying in the school. These children come from five villages. Although attendance of children is high, shortage of teachers hampers their education as the school has only two teachers for eight classes. Some other deficiencies are inadequate classrooms, no toilet and no boundary wall.

• During interaction with children and observation of visual parameters, the research team came across eating plates with names of children written underneath. This is indicative of discrimination on the basis of caste and religion, although teachers of the school do not consider the practice as such.

### KAMILIGUDA SCHOOL

Kamiliguda School is a primary and upper primary school with provision for classes I to VII. Presently it has 52 children and all of them belong to adivasi Hindu category. The school has five teachers. According to Lingaraj Palaka, In-charge Head Master, academic performance of about 30 percent children is good.

• The school, however, faces multiple challenges on the infrastructure and academic front. With only two classrooms, one for classes I to IV and another for classes V to VII, inadequate space for classroom is a major challenge. It adversely affects proper conduct of classes. Children's absenteeism also hampers education in a big way. Since most of the parents are illiterate, lack of parental guidance contributes to this state of affair. The school also has no boundary wall and a toilet for girls was under construction at the time of field work.

### KUNKUNI PUP SCHOOL

Situated in Merapalli gram Panchayat, Kunkuni Primary and Upper Primary School has provision for classes I to VII. Presently the school has 92 children. It has only one classroom for all the seven classes. Toilets and a kitchen were under construction at the time of data collection. While there is a boundary wall, the road that connects the school with nearby main road is not in good condition.

• The research team observed discrimination inside classrooms on the basis of caste and tribal identities as children of these communities occupy separate space. Even a member of the school management committee admitted existence of such discrimination. While children do not receive any support from their illiterate parents, they are also engaged in domestic and agricultural work. In other words, the circumstances in school and at homes are not conducive for quality education.

### NUNDRUGUDA SCHOOL

Nundruguda School is a co-educational school having provision for classes I to VII. It also has a boarding facility. Presently 203 children are studying in the school, out of which 150 (110 girls and 40 boys) are availing the boarding facility.

• Inadequate classrooms are a major problem for the school. Although the school has a boundary wall, it has toilets only for girls, and has no dining hall for the hostellers. The research team also observed identity-based discrimination in the school as tribal (Kandhas and Saoras) and dalit children occupy separate space within the classrooms. However, interaction with school teacher revealed that discrimination is not a reality in the hostel.

includes enrollment in government, private and unrecognized schools. As the above table indicates, the rate of enrollment decreases with the increase in grade level in all the four years for which data have been presented. This is indicative of the poor retention rate, which was 62.2 percent at primary level according to District Elementary Education Report Card: 2013-14. The rate of transition from primary to upper primary in the district was 68.2 percent. The status in regard to Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) and Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) in primary and upper primary school further reinforces the poor enrollment and retention rates in Gajapati. While GER and NER at primary level were 111.9 and 98.9 respectively in 2013-14, the corresponding figures for upper primary level were 69.1 and 56.3. This implies exclusion of a large number of children from the education system, which in turn explains poor development of education in the district.

**AVERAGE INSTRUCTION DAYS**  
Number of instruction days refers to the required number of days the schools should remain functional. This also includes non-instructional components like recess and examination. It is an important indicator to understand functional efficiency of schools, as available studies suggest adverse impact of reduced instruction days on children's academic performance. A study conducted by UNESCO suggests that reduced learning time disproportionately affects poor children whose dependence on school for learning opportunities is high<sup>33</sup>. This is especially relevant for Mohana block in particular and Gajapati district in general, as parental guidance is rarely available due to

➔ FIGURE 3.1

#### GER

The number of children enrolled in a level regardless of age, divided by population of the age group that officially corresponds to the same level.

#### NER

The number of children enrolled in a level who belong to the age group that officially corresponds to that level of schooling, divided by the total population of the same group.

Source: UNICEF



illiteracy of parents and inadequate motivation for education. Another study suggests that limited instruction time results in children's inability to read fluently, not being able to pass classes and increased drop outs<sup>34</sup>. However, it is important to note that number of instruction days portrays a broad picture of the physical functioning of school and is only one of the many indicators that one needs to consider to measure quality of education.

According to the Right of Children

Anganwadi training

to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, instruction days for Grade I-V should be 200 days and it should be 220 days for Grade VI-VIII during an academic year. The average instruction days for primary and upper primary schools of Gajapati district for the year 2013-14 were 217 and 219 respectively<sup>35</sup>. In other words, conformity of primary schools is more than the recommended level and the level is near conformity in case secondary schools. This is a positive indicator, if seen in the context of social milieu of the district and its poor level of educational development.

#### LEARNER'S ACHIEVEMENT AND OTHER CHALLENGES:

During the course of interaction with school teachers, children and parents, the research team was able to capture the level of achievement of children and other challenges to development of education. According to the teachers, 15-50% of the children have

33 "The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education", Education for All global Monitoring Report, UNESCO (Paris, 2011), p.92

34 Abadzi, H, "Absenteeism and beyond: instructional time loss and consequences", Working Paper No. 4376, Policy Research, The World Bank, (Washington, DC, 2007), p.v

35 Elementary Education in India: Where Do We Stand?, District Report Cards: 2013-14, op. cit.



average or above average academic performance. For example, out of 53 children studying in Pratappur primary school, about 15 percent children fall in the category of above average. In Liliguda up-graded high school and Bandhaguda primary school, the shares of average/above average children are about 50 percent and 30 percent respectively. These figures indicate that performances of majority of children are of below average level.

Interactions with stakeholders also revealed other challenges to education, as noted below:

- ▶ Irregular school attendance due to children's lack of interest for learning and their domestic engagements
- ▶ Illiteracy of parents that deprives children of parental guidance and motivation
- ▶ Lack of a learning environment at home
- ▶ Lack of a learning environment in community
- ▶ Domination of SMC by dominant social group(s)
- ▶ Teachers absenteeism, especially in cases of schools that are remotely located requiring teachers to cross rivers or travel through forest areas
- ▶ Gender discrimination by some parents who prefer boys over girls for education
- ▶ Caste discrimination that creates a sense of alienation in the minds of dalits
- ▶ Appointment of Telugu-speaking teachers<sup>36</sup> in schools with a majority of Adivasi children creates language barriers and makes it difficult for children to understand their teachers

### 3.3. BASIC SERVICES FOR CHILDREN'S CARE AND DEVELOPMENT

The children of the area in 0-6 years age group receive basic services covering immunisation, supplementary nutrition (breakfast and mid-day meal) etc. under the government's anganwadi (or 'courtyard shelter' in English) programme. As is the system, every revenue village has an anganwadi. However, many anganwadis like in Pindiki, Bandhaguda, Kamiliguda, Merapalli etc. do not have their own buildings or their own kitchens and are thus forced to function from school or panchayat buildings or from the houses of the anganwadi workers like in Dengasargi village. Some anganwadis are functioning from dilapidated buildings like the one in Kunkuni village. Arrangements for essential items like utensils, water etc. are at times not adequate, which in turn affect the quality of services of these anganwadis. According to the anganwadi workers, there is scope for improving quality of services provided by anganwadis. The text boxes below contain two case studies that highlight the services provided by anganwadis and the nature of challenges faced by them.

Availability of basic services for older children, who are not covered under the anganwadi scheme, is dependent on economic conditions of their families. As highlighted in previously, most of the families in the project area are economically poor due to lack of productive assets, skewed patterns of land holding and inadequate opportunities for employment. As a result, capacity of families to fulfill developmental needs of children is rather restricted. However, coverage of children under the government's other schemes like mid day meal scheme contribute to children's general wellbeing.

### ➤ CASE STUDIES 3.2

## BANDHAGUDA ANGANWADI CENTRE

Located in village Bandhaguda, the anganwadi centre provides services to 12 children. The services include immunization, breakfast, mid-day meal and mamta programme for women. As the anganwadi centre has no building of its own, it is functioning from the village school building. Although meals are cooked every day, the centre does not have a kitchen and all the cooking is done under a tree. It is evident from the present status that the anganwadi lacks proper infrastructure.

## DENGASARGI ANGANWADI CENTRE

The anganwadi centre of Dengasargi village serves 23 children. The services provided by the centre are the same as that of Bandhaguda namely immunization, breakfast, mid-day meals and mamta programme for welfare of women. The centre has no building and kitchen of its own. It is functioning from the house of anganwadi worker. Previously, tribal families were not sending their children to anganwadi centre, but now children of all communities avail the services.

<sup>36</sup> Appointment of Telugu-speaking teachers is linked to the district's geographical proximity with Andhra Pradesh where Telugu is the State language. The research team came across some such teachers whose fluency of Odia language is limited

# INTERPLAY BETWEEN CONFLICT AND EDUCATION

Following situational analyses of conflict and education, it is logically imperative to understand the interplay between the two components of study that would create benchmarks for future actions that are rooted in reality. Interplay, as the term implies, is about effects of the two components on each other. Analyses of interplay may also generate inputs for qualitative development of education. The two key questions that need to be answered in this context are: Does conflict affect education? If yes, how? The sections below deal with these aspects keeping in view the dynamics of conflict and education stated in earlier chapters.

## 4.1. EFFECTS OF CONFLICT ON PHYSICAL STRUCTURES OF EDUCATION

Conflict has two distinct dimensions namely micro and macro, as analysed previously in this study. While nature of conflict at micro level has taken the shape of either positive or negative conflict or mere dispute, but none of them has taken violent shape; nature of conflict at macro level has violent (or worst form of conflict) overtones in regard to socio-economic and religious dimension as well as left-wing extremism. Effects of conflict on physical structures of education are linked to the nature of conflict.

Conflict is rooted in social reality. But institutional structures of education, under which physical infrastructure has been discussed and institutional deficiencies (inadequate classrooms, non-availability of toilets, boundary walls etc.) have been pointed out in earlier sections, are not conditioned by social reality. They are the results of policies and programmes of government, and, more specifically, government's failure to address critical issues affecting the system of education. At the micro-level, conflicts pertaining to land or religion or caste do not in any way affect the physical structures of education.

However, macro-level conflicts, especially LWE, has in the past affected in varying degrees, physical structures of education. Maoist insurgency has on many occasions led to the blowing up of school buildings and occupation of school buildings by security forces<sup>37</sup>, which have resulted in destruction and wrongful use of these structural assets. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs,

Government of India, reported in December 2011, over 260 schools were destroyed in Naxal violence in five years. Number of schools destroyed in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 (till November) in six LWE-affected States - Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh were 59, 43, 25, 71, 39 and 21 respectively<sup>38</sup>. According to a report compiled by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 120 schools were used by security forces in Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra<sup>39</sup>. Schools, panchayat buildings etc. are attacked by Maoists in order to deter security forces from using them during their anti-Naxal operations. There have also been reports of Maoist attacks on schools that were not occupied by security forces<sup>40</sup>. The worst sufferers in a situation like this are the students who either stop attending schools or shoulder the burden of visiting temporary schools, and teachers who are forced to conduct classes in new locations and reschedule classes.

Gajapati district and especially Mohana block, in view of strong LWE activities till recent past, have witnessed disruptions of schools and anganwadis due to presence of security forces in the area. However, unlike other LWE-affected states like Jharkhand and Chhatisgarh, attacks by Naxals on schools are less in Odisha. According to a study on education in regions affected by civil strife, which covers inter alia Gajapati district, Naxals have never been a threat to local communities and there has never been any interference in education or attacks on schools of the area<sup>41</sup>. Instead, they have organized village-level meetings in which villagers were advised to send their children to schools and teachers were told to be

regular<sup>42</sup>. The communities put the blame on government for its inability to take up development measures including steps for promotion of education. According to them, presence of security forces and their actions on the ground have resulted in disruption of schools, absence of teachers and children's inability to attend schools. While one can debate about the nature of LWE-related violence rather endlessly, it can be inferred from the above narrative that the worst sufferers under the circumstances are the children of affected areas who are mostly poor and disempowered.

With gradual decrease in intensity of LWE in Gajapati district and the State of Odisha in general, threat to physical structures of education, especially the schools in remote areas like Mohana, has subsided to some extent. But the perception of threat continues in the minds of people. Although the recent years have witnessed arrests, surrenders and deaths of Naxals due to coordinated operations by security forces, LWE continues to dominate some of the remote districts of Odisha and other affected states causing periodic loss of lives and destruction of resources. According to a recent analysis that takes into account the number central security forces (108 battalions) and state police personnel (estimated to be 30000), '164667 pairs of boots are on the ground to crush an estimated 10000-15000 armed Naxalites - 10 jawans to kill one Naxalite'<sup>43</sup>. However, the LWE and the threats of violence continue despite some degree of containment. As rightly noted by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, "... LWE insurgency has to be seen from a long-term perspective since short-term fluctuations in violence profile is a recurring phenomenon"<sup>44</sup>.

ACCORDING TO THE  
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS,  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA,  
REPORTED IN DECEMBER  
2011, OVER 260 SCHOOLS  
WERE DESTROYED IN NAXAL  
VIOLENCE IN FIVE YEARS.



#### 4.2. EFFECTS OF CONFLICT ON QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ASPECTS OF EDUCATION

As noted in the above section, LWE has resulted in dropout of children, teachers' absenteeism, loss of instruction days and hardships for children due to dislocation. On the other hand, conflicts in the project area, categorized as micro-level conflicts, also have some degree of resonance on quantitative and qualitative aspects of education, as noted on the following page. Some of the disputes in project area occur within the broader framework of conflict that has caste and religious overtones, which in turn affect some aspects of education. The case of Pindiki, noted in the chapter dealing with dynamics of conflict, highlights domination of dalit majority in SMC and its impact on decisions regarding location of school building and construction of anganwadi building. A similar case came to light in villages Mahulpada, P. Bandhaguda and Bandhapada which are small hamlet-like villages located in close geographical proximity. Villagers of Christian-dominated

P. Bandhaguda ensured construction of school building in their village by offering land for the purpose. This created discontent among tribal Hindu people of Mahulpada, who now send their children to Merapalli school, but not to P. Bandhaguda school which is located very near to the village. The location of proposed anganwadi building is also a matter of dispute between Mahulpada and P. Bandhaguda. At the root of these disputes remains the conflict between the two religious communities.

Instances of religious and caste prejudices being used as an instrument for perpetuating discrimination also came to light during interaction with children, teachers and community members. For example, the research team found names of children written on

back of eating plates in schools of villages Kirting and Merapalli which is apparently meant to identify plates used by children belonging to different castes and religions. Caste-based discrimination could also be observed in some of the schools, like in schools of Kunkuni and Tuluguda, in regard to sitting arrangements of children. These aspects have also been highlighted in the case studies presented in earlier chapter.

It is important to note that conflicts involving land, although the most important dimension of conflict, do not affect education in any way in view of its livelihood connotation. Also, many of the problems of education noted in earlier sections like poor retention rate, children's exclusion from education, teachers' absenteeism etc. are results of governance-related systemic deficiencies unrelated to social dynamics and conflict.

37 "Maoists target school building", The Telegraph (3 May 2010), Retrieved from [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1100503/jsp/nation/story\\_12404112.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1100503/jsp/nation/story_12404112.jsp); "BSF men occupy schools, students miss classes", The New Indian Express (2 September 2010), Retrieved from <http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/article296951.ece>;

38 "Naxals destroys over 260 schools in 5 years", The New Indian Express (6 December 2011). Retrieved from <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/article230975.ece?service>

39 Rai, Sanjeev. "Don't let bullets destroy their blackboards", Hindustan Times, 31 March 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.hindustantimes.com/ht-view/don-t-let-bullets-destroy-their-blackboards/story-ySgbjT2vMZtroj4UojmUQP.html>

40 A research conducted by Human Rights Watch, New York negates the claim of Naxalites that they attack only those schools that are used by state security forces in counter-Naxalite operations. Many schools attacked by them were not used by security forces. Although the study covered in Bihar and Jharkhand, its findings can be applicable to Odisha because of contextual similarity. Sabotaged Schooling: Naxalite attacks and police occupation of schools in India's Bihar and Jharkhand (New York: HRW, 9 December 2009. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/12/09/sabotaged-schooling/naxalite-attacks-and-police-occupation-schools-indias-bihar>

41 Caught in Crossfire: Children and education in regions affected by civil strife, Save the Children, New Delhi (2013). Retrieved from [http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/caught\\_in\\_crossfire.pdf](http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/caught_in_crossfire.pdf)

42 Ibid

43 Yadav, Yatish, "Police vs. Maoists: Are Indian security forces strong against Naxals," The New Indian Express, 25 April 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.newindianexpress.com/magazine/Police-vs-Maoists-Are-Indian-Security-Forces-Strong-Against-Naxals/2015/04/25/article2779418.ece>

44 Annual Report: 2014-2015, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, p.4

# CONCLUSION

Considering the dynamics of conflict and education and the overall context in which the study has been conducted, following conclusions have been arrived at on different components of the study.



## Social Dynamics of Gajapati District

A predominantly tribal district with five out of seven blocks categorized as tribal dominated, Gajapati has noticeable undertones of economic and educational backwardness. Although Hindus are in majority and Christians are numerically second, the share of Hindus in the district is significantly less, and the share of Christians is quite high in comparison to their respective shares in Odisha and India. The people and economy are rural and agricultural with overwhelming dependence on agriculture and forest for livelihood. While 90% landholding people are either small or marginal farmers, most of the privately owned land belongs to STs. The SCs are mostly agricultural labourers, and the OBCs and general category people are into trading and other occupations.

**LWE HAS RESULTED IN DROPOUT OF CHILDREN, TEACHERS' ABSENTEEISM, LOSS OF INSTRUCTION DAYS AND HARDSHIPS FOR CHILDREN DUE TO DISLOCATION. HOWEVER, WITH ITS GRADUAL DECLINE, THREAT TO PHYSICAL STRUCTURES OF EDUCATION HAS SUBSIDED.**

## Existence and Nature of Conflict

The macro dimension of conflict has a religious and socio-economic angle as it portrays intertwining of socio-economic and religious factors with two ethno-religious identities viz. Hindus and Christians trying to act in accordance with their own set agendas putting them on path of confrontation which has resulted in loss of lives, destruction of properties and animosity between the communities. LWE with its avowed objective of overthrowing Indian State through armed insurgency has resulted in loss of lives and property in Gajapati; and the movement continues to evoke fear despite scaling down of operations following coordinated actions by security forces.

At the micro level, conflict has three distinct dimensions viz. land, religion and caste which are often

overlapping as Mohana has dalit Christians, dalit Hindus, tribal Hindus, tribal Christians, Viswa Hindus and others. While disputes and conflicts exist in the area simultaneously, some disputes like issues of SMC, anganwadi etc. occur within the broader framework of conflict that has a clear caste and religious overtones.

## Education and Basic Services in the Region

Although the district has seen some development of physical infrastructure like availability and condition of classrooms, infrastructural facilities within schools like toilets for boys, boundary wall, playground, electricity and computer facilities are not very satisfactory. While the rate of enrollment decreases with an increase in grade level that indicates poor retention rate, GER in primary and upper primary school levels implies exclusion of large number of children from the education system. Some other challenges to education are below average performance by majority of students, irregular attendance, illiteracy of parents, lack of learning environment at home, domination of SMC by dominant social groups, teachers' absenteeism, gender discrimination by parents, caste discrimination in schools and communication gap with Telugu-speaking teachers. However, the district achieves more than recommended average instruction days for Grade I-V and nearly conforms to the requirement of Grade VI-VIII.

As regards other basic services, children of 0-6 years receive services like immunisation, breakfast, mid-day meal etc. in anganwadis. But many of them do not have own buildings and some do not have kitchen and arrangements for essential items like utensils, water etc.

## Interplay between Conflict and Education

Physical structures of education and institutional deficiencies like inadequate classrooms, non-availability of toilets etc. are results of policies and programmes of the government, unrelated to social dynamics and macro-level socio-economic and religious dimensions of conflict. Physical structures of education are also not affected by micro dimensions of conflict namely land, religion and caste. However, LWE has adversely affected physical structures of education as manifested in attacks of school buildings by Naxals and occupation of schools by security forces during anti-Naxal operations. With gradual decline of LWE in Gajapati, threat to physical structures of education has subsided in recent times. But the threat of violence continues to dominate public thinking, which in turn indicates existence of certain level of potential threat to physical structures of education.

LWE has resulted in dropout of children, teachers' absenteeism, loss of instruction days and hardships for children due to dislocation. Disputes like domination of SMC by dalit majority and location of school in area dominated by tribal majority occur within the broader framework of conflict that has caste and religious overtones. Instances of religious and caste prejudices in schools like names of children written on back of eating plates, sitting arrangements etc. also came to light during interaction with stakeholders.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends following measures that could lead to qualitative and quantitative development of education.



## Intervention for parental motivation

There is need for community-level intervention for parental motivation and creating learning spaces at home that would neutralize parental apathy for education. Actions must not stop at mere enrollment at primary level, but should include guidance for continuation of studies at least up to the level of matriculation.

## Advocacy for systemic deficiencies

Issues arising out of systemic deficiencies like discrimination on the basis of castes and religion, teachers' absenteeism, inadequate classrooms etc. should be discussed with concerned authorities and correctional measures should be advocated. Advocacy actions should be backed by data showing systemic deficiencies. Use of right to information will be of help in this regard.

## Supplementary educational support

Supplementary educational support with focus on fundamentals of key subjects namely language, mathematics, science and social science should be provided to children who are not good at studies in the opinion of school teachers. Also, children belonging to most deprived families should be covered on priority basis.

## Need for generating baseline data

Any intervention at the grassroots needs to be designed on the basis of a baseline that includes views of stakeholders with special focus on intended beneficiaries. This is especially important for issues and areas that have complex socio-economic and religious dynamics like Gajapati district. Perceptions, even if widely held, may not always stand the scrutiny of methodical analysis and may not make the interventions measurable.

## Social inclusion as component of education and outreach

Keeping in view the divisive aspects of society as manifested in religious diversity, caste differences and economic deprivation; any future intervention should include lessons on social inclusion as a component of education and outreach programmes. The purpose of lessons on social inclusion is to sensitize children as well as parents and guardians about equality, freedom, tolerance and dignity.

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## ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

- FGD:** Focus Group Discussions
- GER:** Gross Enrollment Ratio
- HS:** Higher Secondary
- HDS:** Human Development Society
- IET:** Indian Evangelical Team
- KII:** Key Informant Interviews
- LWE:** Left-wing extremism
- NCLP:** National Child Labour Project
- NEG-FIRE:** New Education Group: Foundation for Innovation and Research in Education
- NER:** Net Enrollment Ratio
- OBC:** Other Backward Castes
- P:** Primary
- PIL:** Public Interest Litigation
- S:** Secondary
- SC:** Scheduled Castes
- SFDC:** Solidarity for Developing Communities
- ST:** Scheduled Tribes
- SMC:** School Management Committee
- UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
- UP:** upper primary
- UGHS:** Up-graded High School
- VHP:** Viswa Hindu Parishad



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