

Access to quality education for marginalised, indigenous population groups

(Assam, North East India, Project Progress Report, March 2020)



Good teaching promises a better future. (Photo: Chirang District, Assam, 2019)



This is the place to study for your degree.

Education is a fundamental right - but learning success cannot be subscribed to: With the passing of the Right to Education Act 2009, India declared education to be a fundamental right and anchored compulsory schooling and the right to free education for all in the law. Official statistics say: 97% of children are now registered in schools. But the reality in India is different: only 87.74% of the children finish primary school with the fifth grade. Only half of the pupils in class 3 can read texts from the curriculum of class 1. They are therefore at least two years behind the curriculum and are unlikely to catch up.



Practical learning is also the best for the little ones.

Good education works against poverty and disease: UN studies confirm that every additional year of good basic education statistically prolongs the life of a young woman by two to three years. It increases her lifetime income by a third and halves the mortality of her children. It has been shown that investment in basic education stimulates (with a time lag) the growth of a country's economy. But this return on education is still being wasted in Northeast India. If people there and in other regions of South Asia want to break out of poverty, the quality of education must improve significantly.



Interactive lessons are fun.



Full concentration is required here.



Children's parliaments are an important part of the projects.



There's so much to learn.



The children should be able to learn in a beautiful environment.

Poorhouse Northeast India: The seven sister states of Northeast India, together as big as the old federal states, are one of the poorest regions in the world. Hard to reach, barely developed and endangered by natural disasters and ethnic conflicts, more than half of the 45 million inhabitants live below the poverty line of one euro per day. In the mountains, four out of ten children do not live to see their fifth birthday. In our target group, more than 90% of the adults are illiterate - and even for the younger generation, good education is usually an unknown luxury.

Difficult conditions for good education in Assam

Structural difficulties: Government data on the education situation in Assam distort the picture. Tests carried out by our partners show that in Chirang District in Assam, for example, 57% of the children cannot read whole sentences after finishing third grade and 46% cannot write own sentences. 37% of the third graders cannot subtract, multiply or divide. These appalling results, even worse than the already shocking national averages, can be attributed to the poor quality of teaching. Due to poor teacher training, good tuition can hardly succeed. In addition, there are problems with the availability of teachers and an inadequate infrastructure, because the number of pupils continues to grow rapidly thanks to high birth rates.

Linguistic diversity: Perhaps the biggest problem is ethnic diversity. In Assam there are 175 language communities, but in Chirang, for example, there are only two languages of instruction. Many children are taught in Assamese, although it is not their mother tongue. In many schools there is no teacher who speaks the mother tongue of his minority pupils. The results are high drop-out rates and a very low level of learning. Only a few pupils from Assamese schools attend secondary school.

Hard living conditions in the tea gardens: Some of our project schools are located in the tea plantations of Assam. The tea gardens are idyllic, but for most workers they are a place of exploitation. Studies show that the daily wages are mostly below 2 € - far below the minimum wage. That is only enough for the bare necessities. If both parents work, often the older siblings have to look after the little ones at home. It is common practice for girls to help their mothers on a piecework basis. High absence rates and school drop-outs are the result.

Our project approaches are having an effect

The Quality Education Offensive: With a total of four partners, we are currently working on improving the quality of state schools. In 2017, our local partner "The ANT" (Action Northeast Trust, Bongaigaon, Chirang District, Assam) launched a first pilot program. It was initially scheduled to run for three years, so that the pedagogical methods and concepts could be successfully tested, optimized and implemented in schools in a stable and sustainable manner. Together with our partners NEAID, Aide et Action and now Ayang, we have launched further educational projects in

The educational projects in Assam 2019 in figures:

Total of 156 schools reached

238 teachers trained and accompanied

Learning environment for 8,638 pupils improved

44,430 Family members benefit indirectly



In the science exhibitions the students proudly present their work.

other districts of Assam, which will benefit from the experience gained in the pilot project of the ANT. A holistic approach at several levels is always central.

Parental involvement and extracurricular activities: In our projects we start with the mobilisation of the parents. If they understand how important a good education is for their children, they are a strong support for the project work. Our social workers make sure that the children attend school regularly. They also offer extra tuition and additional games and activities for the children. Aide et Action in particular has focused on the latter point. The children are strongly involved in the organisation of the extracurricular activities, which strengthens their self-confidence and sense of co-responsibility.

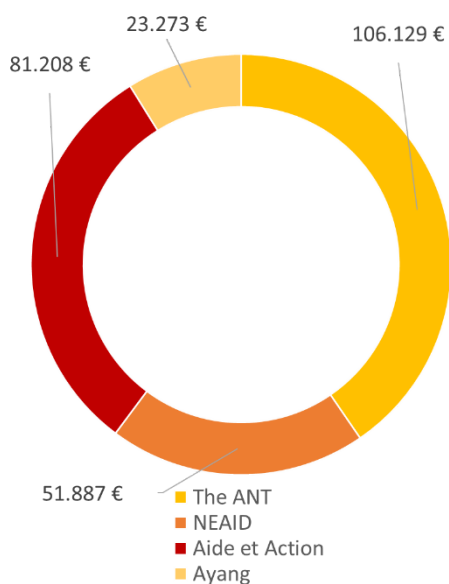
Further training of teachers: In the second step we train the teachers in modern child-centred methods. In primary schools, the focus is on teaching basic reading and arithmetic skills. Our partners organise teaching materials and learning games from local materials and network with government training programmes. The social workers and mobile teams of teachers then train and accompany the teachers in the application of these skills, because theoretical instruction alone has not proven to be effective. Our partner Aide et Action also makes use of technological progress. Teachers are trained to make lessons more vivid and exciting with the help of digital resources.

Special focus on natural sciences: In secondary schools, the "Lab-in-a-box" system is used, among other things. The schools receive rotating boxes of inexpensive, locally purchased materials with which they can conduct scientific experiments on a specific topic. The central idea is that all the children in the classes learn to carry out simple tasks themselves and achieve learning success through play. To this end, the teachers are also trained in the use of these materials beforehand and accompanied by mobile teams in the classroom.

Capacity building among those responsible: In a third step, the directors of the participating schools are trained and supported in school management and the involvement of School Management Committees (SMCs) in order to enable them to take responsibility for the development of learning objectives and quality improvement in their schools. They learn more about their rights concerning the school administration, about funding pools and resource calls.

Status of the projects and outlook

The target group reached: In 2019 a total of 8,638 pupils were reached in 156 primary and secondary schools in Assam through these projects. A small number of schools count double, as they offer two language sections - Assamese and Bodo. In numerous training sessions, 238 teachers were trained in pedagogical methods. Through meetings with the village communities, the local government and increased work with



Project costs 2019 by partners



This is what really exciting lessons with practical experiments look like.



The task is completed together.

the SMCs, more than 1,000 people have been sensitised to good education.

Close-meshed support for schools: In 2019, the partners carried out more than 2,500 school visits and trained the teachers "on the job" so that the methods developed in the training course are consolidated and questions can be answered promptly. Practical improvements are also introduced. The ANT team, for example, is particularly proud of the fact that in more than half of the classes the rigid seating arrangement has now been broken down into rows. Instead, the students sit in horseshoe shape and in groups of equal ability. All classrooms are now individually and attractively designed, also with the help of parents.

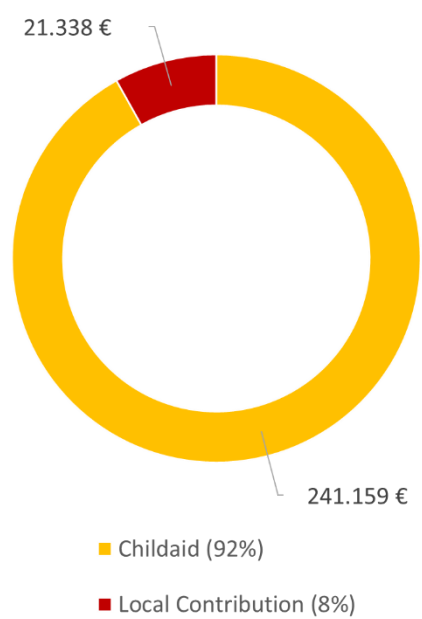
One of last year's highlights: In August 2019, all secondary schools in the ANT project held a science exhibition to show what they had learned to parents, school officials and the interested public. A total of 60 models were presented. In November, 94 students participated in a district-wide exhibition.

The successes are motivating: the project visits and pictures document that the learning atmosphere has changed massively. The attendance rate of the pupils is now over 97 % on average, comparable to German schools. The increased commitment is difficult to measure, but it is tangible in every school visit. The first formal tests of learning progress are promising. The aim is for all children (less than 50% in the unattended schools) to meet or exceed classroom targets. Random samples confirm that this is being achieved.

Outlook: In 2020, the three projects are to be extended to more than 250 schools. Together with our partner the ANT, we have also developed a four-year project that is being financed with the support of the BMZ. This project alone reaches 10,000 students in 130 schools. The successful work with NEAID, Aide et Action and Ayang also continues. We have launched similar projects in the neighbouring countries of Nepal and Bangladesh. In the coming years, the cross-border exchange of experience between the partners is to be strengthened. This will benefit more than 40,000 children whom we support in these school projects.

Please support us in our efforts to give about 20,000 students in Assam access to quality education and the path to a self-determined life in 2020.

March 2020, Silke Geißert



Project funding 2019



We want a good future for them.