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|  | **Opportunity Gaps in Rural and Urban India- in context to two districts in Assam**  Nimisha Katakee, Freelancer  June, 2018 |

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1. **Introduction**
   1. **Background of the study:**

The aim of this study is to capture the opportunity gap experienced by rural individuals as compared to their urban counterparts of an Indian state. Post liberalization, during the economic growth period, India witnessed an increase in both inter-state and within-state inequality. As Indian society is characterized by different caste groups, religions, regions and languages, similar questions like- Are Indians of different backgrounds provided with the same kind of opportunities? It becomes important from an academic as well as policy point of view to estimate the extent of inequality due to different circumstances of people in India. It will help in going to the roots of prevailing earnings inequality, evaluating the age old government programs aimed at bringing equality in society and developing policies for bridging gaps between different sections of society. These inequalities may arise due to plethora of problems and one being the access to the opportunities by all section of community or society.

Basically, the study aims at understanding the opportunity gaps in for the youths in the rural and urban context. The survey was administered with the youths within the age group of 18-25 age group. The opportunity gaps are being analysed over certain parameters like type of occupation, new sources of livelihood which has emerged, education level, highest qualification attained and level of education of their parents.

## **Context of the locale:**

The study has been carried out in two locations on is Tamulpur and other one is Rangia (rural and urban).

**Tamulpur**: It is a medium size village located in Tamulpur Circle of Baksa district, Assam with total 104 families residing. Baksa was notified as one of the districts of [Bodoland Territorial Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodoland_Territorial_Council) in October 2003 while it started functioning from 1 June 2004. It was created from parts of [Barpeta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barpeta_district" \o "Barpeta district), [Nalbari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nalbari_district), and [Kamrup districts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamrup_district) of Assam. Mushalpur town is the headquarters of the district. It has three Sub-division Salbari sub-division, [Salbari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salbari), Tamulpur Sub-division, [Tamulpur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamulpur) and Mushalpur sub-division. This district is bounded by [Bhutan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhutan) in the north, [Udalguri district](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Udalguri_district) in the east, [Barpeta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barpeta_district" \o "Barpeta district), [Nalbari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nalbari_district) and [Kamrup](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamrup_district) districts in the south and [Chirang district](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chirang,_Assam) in the west. Area of the district is 2400 km². The Tamulpur village has population of 547 of which 303 are males while 244 are females as per Population Census 2011. In Tamulpur village population of children with age 0-6 is 50 which makes up 9.14 % of total population of village. Average Sex Ratio of Tamulpur village is 805 which is lower than Assam state average of 958. Child Sex Ratio for the Tamulpur as per the census is 1083, higher than Assam average of 962. Tamulpur village has higher literacy rate compared to Assam. In 2011, literacy rate of Tamulpur village was 85.71 % compared to 72.19 % of Assam. In Tamulpur Male literacy stands at 94.27 % while female literacy rate was 74.77 %.

**Rangia:** Rangia is a town and a [municipal board](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Municipal_board) in [Kamrup rural district](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamrup_rural_district) in the [Indian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) [state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/States_and_territories_of_India) of [Assam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assam). It is the regional divisional headquarters of the [North East Frontier Railway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_East_Frontier_Railway). It's situated 52 kilometres away from the state headquarters [Guwahati](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guwahati). As of 2011 India [census](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Census), Rangia had a population of 26,389. Males constitute 54% of the population and females 46%. Rangia has an average literacy rate of 73%, higher than the national average of 59.5%: male literacy is 78%, and female literacy is 67%. In Rangia, 12% of the population is under 6 years of age. The count of working person of Rangia block is 44412 yet 87588 are un-employed, and out of 44412 occupied person 9495 persons are entirely dependent on farming.

* 1. **Why is Tamulpur considered rural and Rangia as urban?**

The traditional distinction between urban and rural areas within a country has been based on the assumption that urban areas, no matter how they are defined, provide a different way of life and usually a higher standard of living than are found in rural areas.  In many industrialized countries, this distinction has become blurred and the principal difference between urban and rural areas in terms of the circumstances of living tends to be a matter of the degree of concentration of population.  Although the differences between urban and rural ways of life and standards of living remain significant in developing countries, rapid urbanization in these countries has created a great need for information related to different sizes of urban areas.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Taking this distinction in mind, Rangia is considered an urban centre as it provides a different way of life a higher standard of living to the communities. It is a commercial hub, with a good presence of business establishments and also schools and colleges for the students within their vicinity. Tamulpur is considered a rural centre with very less concentration of shops and business establishments, the economy is basically agrarian and there is only 1 private school in the area rest are all Government schools.

1. **Motivation for the Study:**

The study is intended to help the development practioners to gain insights on the questions like what are the key gaps in accessing opportunities by a rural youth as compared to the urban youth, the kind of occupation which the youth aspires, impact on a rural youth when either of their parents are first generation school goers vis a vis an urban youth. Apart from these, he overall perception of the rural youths towards the kind of livelihood they wish to practice and that of the urban youths. These pieces of information will also be helpful for the policy makers to understand the current trend and incorporate the same while designing any policy related documents.

# **Organization of the report:**

# The whole report has been organized into different sections and chapters. The whole analysis has been made by juxtaposing the two situations side by side, one is the rural and other one is the urban. The series of pointers of different indicators like socio-economic conditions, demographic profile, education level of the youths and Vis a Vis with that of their parents has been analysed both for the rural and urban areas. The report has been classified into sections like the observations and findings around the socio economic indicators, education level of the respondents, educational background of their parents, type of skills present in both rural and urban areas and finally an overview of the occupation pattern and the aspirations of the youths.

After the presentation of the detailed analysis of the different parameters indicating the possible opportunity gaps, the report throws light on the discussions. Every aspect of the findings are discussed separately. This then follows the conclusion and recommendations.

1. **Research Methodology:**

The methodology which is used for carrying out this study involves secondary data to substantiate the information about the area and thereafter primary data to collect the real time data. The primary data has been collected through face to face interview, with the respondents. A total of 130 respondents have been interviewed from both the urban and rural locations. The interviewee comprise of the youths who fall in the age group of 18-25 and they have been selected on the basis of random sampling method. The sample size which has been chosen for undertaking the survey is:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sl. No | Name of the Village | Total of HH | Distance from Tamulpur Town | Nos. of Questionnaire Suggested |
| 1 | Kachubari | 370 | 0-5 km | 10 |
| 2 | Ramesuburi | 230 | 5-10 km | 10 |
| 3 | Barei | 420 | 0-5 km | 10 |
| 4 | Baroliapar | 320 | 10-15 km | 13 |
| 5 | Nagrijuli | 185 | 14 km | 10 |
| 6 | Total | | | 53 |
| Sl.No. | **Name of the Ward** | **Total of HH** | **Distance from Rangia** | **Nos. of Questionnaire Suggested** |
| 1 | Bongaon | 570 | 1 km | 18 |
| 2 | Tinali Rangia | 325 | 0 | 10 |
| 3 | Batahkuchi | 260 | 0-5 km | 8 |
| 4 | Society | 390 | 0 | 20 |
| 5 | Tulsibari | 300 | 5 to 10 | 6 |
| 6 |  |  |  | 62 |

The villages in the rural area are selected on the basis of the three basis: 1. The location of tat least one village in case of the rural survey needs to be within a radius of 0-5, so that it is more near the urban centre 2. At least two villages should be within a radius of more than 15 km and 3. One village can be within a radius of 5-20 km.

Again, in case of the wards, the wards which are nearer to the urban centre are chosen so that the difference can be more noticeable. The efforts has been made that the responses are collected from both the males and the females, even if not equal but at least more than 60% representation must be there.

Initially, attempts were made to collect qualitative data by conducting a Focussed Group Discussion, post the discussions, it was realised that the responses digressed the researcher. So, the quantitative tool was used for the analysis. The researchers initially, explored the area and an informal interaction was held with the youths from the areas, thereafter the formal questionnaire was administered.

To analyse the data, different tools were used and mostly it was analysed in excel using the pivot tables, correlation analysis and the other interpretations have been expressed in the form of tables, pie charts and line diagrams.

1. **Findings:** The findings of the study are discussed below in different sections pertaining to the responses, and sequencing of the questions to maintain a logical flow. Each section has therefore been further divided into sub-sections.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Tamulpur** | |
| **Row Labels** | **Count of Gender-M/F** |
| F | 24 |
| M | 29 |
| **Grand Total** | **53** |
| **Rangia** | |
| **Row Labels** | **Count of Gender-M/F** |
| F | 24 |
| M | 38 |
| **Grand Total** | **62** |

## **5.1. Chapter I- Profile of the respondents:**

***Gender breakup***- The number of females from the rural are who had participated in the survey are 24 and males being 29, while in Rangia, it is 24 and 38.

***Religion profile*-** The religion profile of the respondents from both the rural and urban location are:

The respondents from Tamulpur, belong to the Hinduism while that Tamulpur, majority being Hindu but a percentage of them are Muslims.

***Caste profile*-**

The caste profile indicates that in the rural, the majority of the respondents belong to the Scheduled caste tribe, while in the urban the majority of them belong to the General caste and then it is followed by the OBCs.

## **5.2. Chapter II- Occupation and Livelihood Pattern**

***Type of Occupation:*** The occupation which the youths are engaged in shows a pattern and that can be clearly understood from the following:

The types of occupation practised in the **rural,** is Agriculture, irregular wage earning activities and regular wage earning activities. Irregular wage earning activities include masonry, sand mining from the nearby rivers like Pagladia and Ranganadi. Irregular wages are taken up at the times of financial crisis faced by the family. These include working in factories in Changsari and Guwahati as security guards, assembling functions of the factories and also in malls and supermarkets in Guwahati. This is demand driven and not regular. Agriculture is predominantly practiced in Tamulpur. Paddy being the primary crop which is cultivated followed by mustard cultivation.

While in the **urban** the occupation pattern shows that Irregular wages followed by salaried jobs is mostly practiced. Under irregular wages the types of activities are unloading of trucks, masonry, during festivals they work in Guwahati in the retail outlets, hotels and restaurants. Others have expressed that they are salaried people, working mostly in factories in Changsari, Industrial Estates of North Guwahati and security guards in Guwahati.

***Income Pattern from the various sources:*** Income realised from the different avenues are as follows:

The income pattern reveals an interesting fact, that though the number of persons engaged in agriculture in Tamulpur are more than the urban counterparts but the income realised is more from agriculture in Rangia than Tamulpur. The maximum income earned is INR 40,000 in rural areas while in urban it is INR 1, 20,000. This may be due to a variety of factors like access to markets, increase in access to inputs and fertilisers. The seller’s awareness on the market prices is high as it is located close to Guwahati market. Even the minimum income is more in **Rangia areas as compared to Tamulpur**.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Urban Area | | | | |
| Type of Occupation | **Min. Income in INR/annum** | **Max. income in INR/annum** | **Average Income in INR/annum** | **Median Income in INR/annum** |
| Agriculture | 30,000 | 1,20,000 | 72,500 | 75,000 |
| Irregular Wages | 10,000 | 36,000 | 23,375 | 25,500 |
| Regular Wages | 28,000 | 2,00,000 | 64,833 | 38,000 |
| Salaried | 10,000 | 3,60,000 | 1,67,413 | 1,50,000 |
| Rural Area | | | | |
| Type of Occupation | **Min. Income in INR/annum** | **Max. income in INR/annum** | **Average Income in INR/annum** | **Median Income in INR/annum** |
| Agriculture | 10,000 | 40,000 | 25,000 | 25,500 |
| Irregular Wages | 10,000 | 30,000 | 25,000 | 20,000 |
| Regular Wages | 27,000 | 1,50,000 | 52,428 | 32,000 |
| Salaried | 30,000 | 3,60,000 | 47,000 | 40,000 |

The negotiating power of a rural youth is less than his urban counterpart. This can be apparently seen from the maximum income which an urban youth derives from the salaried income as compared to a rural youth.

***Choice of one’s occupation and the average distance from the nearest urban centre:*** The type of occupation which one opts for in both the rural and urban centres is also influenced by the distance for his/her residing area to the urban centres. Nearer the place of residence from the urban centre, the options for income broadens while more interior it is the options become less and is more agrarian in nature.

Within 5 km(1), 5-10km(2), 10-20(3), >20(4) Within 5 km(1), 5-10km(2), 10-20(3), >20(4)

***Rural:*** The respondents whose houses are located within a radius of 5-10 km, are mostly engaged in irregular wages, while those residing within a radius of more than 20 km are engaged in agriculture. Therefore, nearer the settlement to the urban centres, scopes for earning irregular wages increase, while if we move ahead the scopes become thinner.

***Urban:*** The respondents located within a radius of 0-5 km, are engaged in irregular wages and do salaried jobs. While further it is from the urban centres the scopes for earning livelihood through any of the sources become less. Options become limited and then the youths tend to remain unemployed instead of toiling hard to reach to places of work which are further from their houses.

* 1. **Chapter III- Type of assets the families possess**

The assets which the families possess are quite different in both the rural and urban areas.

If we look at the asset pattern, we can see that in Tamulpur, **electricity, mobile** are the two assets which are possessed by almost everyone. While in Rangia, **mobile is in highest possession**. In the urban areas, some families migrate from the nearby villages and stay for an interim period engaging in an irregular wage earning activity and thereafter move back to their villages. **Vehicles** are also possessed in the urban areas, as it can be used for varied purposes like commercial and passenger carriage.

* 1. **Chapter IV- Level of Education of the participants**

The level of education for both the rural and urban remains almost the same. But the percentage of the people responding under different categories are different. While in rural the percentage of people who has completed Class X are 26% while in Urban, it is 11%. The approach towards education was also captured during the study. The aspiration level of the respondents was captured, and this can be clearly seen from the challenges in taking up higher education as expressed by the respondents, which is explained later during the discussions.

***Distance and the level of education:*** **Urban-** **A correlation between the mode of communication** which one adopts to school or college and the level of education of the respondents was tried to analyse. It was observed that in Rangia, there is a positive correlation (+0.5), between the mode of communication and the level of education one attains. If the school/college is within the vicinity of the community, the respondents have higher chances of getting higher levels of education. It seems that the youths hesitate to travel to longer distances, they prefer that their places of education are located near to their residence.

**Rural-**In Tamulpur, the correlation was tried to establish between the level of education and the distance to schools/colleges. It was then observed that in the rural areas, there exists a positive correlation (+0.11), but it is very weak. The weak correlation indicates that, despite of the distance to the school/college from their residence is high, it does not affect the level of education of the youths. The youths are ready to travel to long distances for acquiring the right kind of education.

***Level of Education of the Parents and its impact on the youths:* Urban-** Correlation between the educational level of the parents and its relation with the educational level of the respondents was analysed. In Rangia, the correlation was found to be positive (+0.4) which indicates that higher is the educational level of the parents, the chance of the children to acquire higher levels of education is more.

**Rural-** Correlation between both the variables was also analysed, and it was found that the correlation is poor (+0.11), which indicates that there is not much relation between the Parent’s level of education and their children’s education level. The parents despite of their educational level, may or may not encourage their children to attend school/college. There seems to be a weak correlation between both the factors.

***Challenges in acquiring higher levels of education:*** The challenges in acquiring higher levels of education was also studied, both in rural and urban contexts. The major challenges as expressed:

**Rural-** In case of Tamulpur, the challenges faced by the respondents are **those of family problems, providing financial support to the family, could not perform well in exams as they were weak in their studies**. In context to family problems, the respondents have expressed that they did not get the adequate support from their family members for pursuing higher levels of education. The female respondents have expressed that parents pressurise them for marriage, take care of the household chores. Most of them have their siblings, and since the both the parents go to work they need to look after their house and the younger siblings. Need to provide financial support to one’s family has also appeared as one of the other major reason for not continuing studies. The low income households, want their children to provide a helping hand to meet their family needs. After the demise of one member of the family, the family then again needs the support of their children to run the house. So, the youths leave their studies at a young age and engage themselves in different kinds of income earning activities. The third reason which appears during the discussions, is the weakness in his/her studies. A significant proportion of the respondents have also expressed that the weakness in his/her studies, left them demotivated to continue the studies in the future. Flunking in some examinations, as for example the boards made them discontinue their studies and look for other avenues which are income generating.

**Urban-** In case of Rangia, the challenges as expressed by the respondents for not acquiring higher levels of education seems to be because of **personal family problems**, **providing financial support to their own families** and the **attitude that they can earn more even without studying**. **A clear difference in the attitude towards education is observed**. The urban youths, are of the attitude that earning money is easy even without higher education. It has also come to notice that the respondents feel that some short term courses like hospitality training, bank job coaching, driving etc. are more beneficial for them rather than taking up higher education Urban youths are mostly concerned about the income earning activities, how to earn quick money but they don’t give much emphasis to their education. Besides, the other problems like family commitments and need to support their family from a very young age are among the other reasons for not taking up higher education.

* 1. ***Chapter V- Type of Skill Set- Rural and Urban Youths***

The type of skill sets for the rural and urban youths was also captured and it has reflected that:

**Urban:** For Rangia, there are varied skills which are available with the youths. **Tailoring, beauty parlour and personal care, spinning and weaving,** **IT skills and mobile repairing** are the ones which are there with the youths. Tailoring is an art which the youths specially the girls learn from their mothers or other female members in their house. A new vocation has evolved over the past 6-7 years which is **Beauty and Personal care**. The girls take up short term courses within Rangia or in Guwahati so that they can open something within their locality. There is no lack of demand for such services as expressed by the respondents. Besides, spinning and weaving are the two traditional skills which the families have and the girls practice this, especially more during the festivals like Bihu. IT skills are present with 44% of the respondents. With regard to the IT skills, the youths from these areas mostly take up admission in the Computer Learning Centres to train themselves on the short term computer courses like MS Work, Excel and Power-point and some also learn Tally. This is mostly done with the holiday period like summer breaks, time till they need to wait for the results after appearing for boards. With the growth in the mobile market, smart phones have penetrated to almost all the villages and towns. The low income households cannot afford for smartphones which are within the range of INR 8,000-15,000, so they buy the cheaper brands which gets damaged within a year or half a year. Thereafter, they need to repair it. So the youths, have felt that opening up mobile repair outlets can fetch some significant income, and therefore they get trained on that. But, they have also expressed that since the number of youths who has got trained in it has increased significantly over the past 3 years, so the opportunities for some has come down. The market has become more or less saturated.

**Rural:** Similarly,for Tamulpur the skill sets commonly present with the households are **Computer skills, driving and Bamboo Handicraft.** Other skills though are present but are insignificant. As expressed by the respondents, most of their parents work in Guwahati in factories, or drive vehicles in Ola/Uber so they stay in rented houses. So, most of their parents insist their children to stay with them and take the computer training, so that they are eligible for the entry level jobs in the Government Departments or other private entities. But, since everyone cannot afford to have their own computers/laptops, they have expressed that they tend to forget some concepts and its overall utility remains less. Around 12% of the youths also know driving. They aspire to be self-employed and run vehicles under different aggregators in Guwahati. Some of the youths also have skills in making articles out of bamboo, and they do it mostly for their own consumption.

* 1. **Chapter VI- Choice of Livelihood/Preference for new source of Livelihood:**

It was also exploredwith the respondents about their choice of taking up a new source of livelihood. It was observed that the choice of the occupation of the youths differed highly in both the rural and urban areas. The choice also differed a lot based on the location of their residence from the nearest town and urban centre.

1. **Rural:** In Tamulpur, the inclination of the youths seems to be more for Rural and Hospitality and driving as their new sources of livelihood. This appears to be two dominating new sources of livelihood for those youths who have their places of residence further from the urban centres, **more than 20 km from the urban centre**. Nearer to the urban centre like **within a distance of 15-20 km**, they are inclined towards taking up other small businesses and beauty personal care jobs. It was further noticed that those youths who are located just near to the urban centre, **5-10 km,** no new choice of livelihood was seen dominating.

**Retail and Hospitality jobs:** The retail outlets which have come up in the nearby cities like Guwahati, helps to provide employment to quite a number of youths specially during the festival seasons like Bihu, Durga Puja and New Year. During this period the youths from Tamulpur, even work overnight and earn an income within the range of INR 7000-10000. The trend is also picking up after the penetration of quite a number of hospitals in Guwahati.

**Driving:** Driving has also started picking up as a new source of livelihood among the rural youths, considering the expanding businesses by aggregators like Ola, Uber. The range of income per months is between INR 18000-25000 from driving. This also enthuse the youths to join this profession

**Other Businesses:** Other Businesses which the youths have expressed are like the rice mills, hotels within the vicinity of Tamulpur. Presence of rice mills, as they have expressed has considerably come down in the past five to six years. People rely on the 1 or 2 mills which are present in Tamulpur. This has been seen as an opportunity by the youths.

**Beauty and Personal care**: Beauty and Personal Care has also come up as one of the demanded vocation among the rural youths specially the girls. The beauty parlours have started opening even in the remotest villages and there is no dearth for its demand. They have expressed that even of the basic skills like “Threading, Hair Cut, Hair Colour and Facial” are learnt, they can expect to earn a decent income between INR 8000-10000 per month.

1. **Urban:** In Rangia also it was explored, about the kind of new source of livelihood the youths prefer. It has been observed that: none of the households are located beyond 10-15 km distance from the nearest urban centre. Those who are within **5-10 km,** their preference for new source of livelihood seems to be agriculture and allied activities, driving, others. Those within **5 km** distance from the urban centre have expressed that Body Buildling/gym, driving and weaving, rest of them have expressed that they have no ambition at all and others.

**Agriculture and Allied:** It seems that the potential to earn income from agriculture and allied activities seems to be more in Rangia. So, the youths tend to prefer this opportunity over the others. Under this they have expressed that they some can engage only in supplying inputs to others, some can raise livestock like Kroilers and sell. There is a huge demand for milk from the Guwahati market, dairy farming is also feasible with opening up of milk booths.

**Weaving:** Weaving as a skill is present with the girls from the Rangia area, they feel that they can commercialise it and set up outlets to sell their products.

Others: Others indicate the transportation business like loading and unloading of stocks with small vehicles, different kinds of public transport for transit of the people to the remote villages and also to Guwahati.

Body Building and Gym: Young boys are also seen to be engaged in activities like body building. This has even penetrated to the small towns and the youths feel that they can earn a decent income of INR 5000-8000 per months from this activity.

**Challenges in taking up the new source of Livelihood:** It wasalso discussed about the key challenges which the youths from the areas face in taking up the choice of livelihood they desire for. The responses are:

**Rural**: The factors which hinder adoption of new source of livelihood are **shortage of capital, training availability and other reasons like support from family**. The reasons are lack of support from the family. Shortage of capital to take up any venture of their own is one reason which hinders the youths from taking up a new source of livelihood. They need to support their families from a very young age and therefore, sometimes need to give up studies. Some of them aspired to take up agriculture on a commercial scale, but for procuring inputs like seeds, using tractors. Moreover, the inputs are not readily available in Tamulpur, some needs to be procured from Rangia. Lack of facilities of training has appeared as another challenges towards taking up any new source of livelihood. The youths who has aspired to learn driving, has expressed that there are no driving institutes within the vicinity of 5-10 km. Leaving behind everything in the village and going to take training is sometimes challenging from them. For taking up driving as a profession, they need to be familiar with the technologies like GPRS tracking, live location sharing through watsapp etc. and unless they are trained well, they don’t feel they can do justice to their job. Even electric repair and maintenance, though has been taken up as a vocation by some of the youths, but if they want to learn how to develop the wiring circuit for a house, they find it difficult as there are no institutes to train them on this.

**Urban**: For Rangia also the responses have almost come similar as that of Tamulpur. Highest number of responses have appeared in the others section. Here, the difference in attitude among the rural and urban youths is clearly visible. The youths from Rangia, have shown lack of attitude towards doing something new, no ambition and are satisfied with whatever they have. They don’t have any higher aspirations in life. Shutting down of “Apollo” factory in the area, has rendered most of the youths unemployed. Among the other reasons are the unavailability of right kind of training facilities indicates that, the youths aspire to open Gyms, but there is no training institute to certify them. They can train themselves under the mentorship of someone, but getting a certificate is a challenge. Without good certification, one cannot attract clients. The girls desire to scale up weaving but lack of orientation on modern designing, the products woven do not get the right market/market price. They also feel that there is a gap in getting the capital for purchasing the looms of the right choice.

1. **Discussions-**

**Opportunity Gaps- Rural and Urban-**

The major areas where the rural and urban gap has been felt are:

1. The respondents from both rural and urban areas have expressed that they are engaged in agriculture. But the percentage of respondents from urban pockets are less than that of Tamulpur. But clearly there is a difference in their income. The income from agriculture for a youth from Tamulpur is maximum upto INR 40,000 but for a urban counterpart it is INR 1,20,000. This difference is huge and the reasons are apparently due to proximity to market, knowledge about the market prices, and access to transportation as compared to the rural areas.
2. For taking up new sources of livelihood, the training is a major gap. There are no accredited institutes which can train the youths and prepare them for the vocation they desire wish to take up. For driving, the youths from the rural areas have expressed that there are no institutes within the vicinity of 5-10 kms which can train them and can also equip them technically.
3. Besides, the gap is also felt that the opportunities for expanding one’s business remain limited in the rural areas. As, for instance if a rural youth wants to open a garage for repair of parts of vehicle, he cannot always do it as he does not have access to all kinds of inputs within his own village. The person has to run to Rangia or Guwahati for getting every single input for repair. Even if a youth who wants to engage himself in agriculture, finds a critical gap in availing the right kind of input to take it up to a large scale
4. A gap in pursuing higher education for the rural youths is seen, in terms of their accessibility to the institutes/colleges. The more interior is his/her place of residence is, he/she needs to travel by shared vehicles and sometimes gets difficult for the family to make the ends meet by giving away money on transport daily. The students who can walk off to their institutes can afford to spend more number of years in education than compared to the one in bicycles.
5. The types of assets which are owned by the rural and urban counterparts has also shown that in the rural areas, mobile phones are possessed by almost everyone and is also the same in urban areas, but vehicles are also some kinds of assets which are possessed highly by the urban youths. These vehicles are used for passenger and good carriage from Rangia to nearby villages and also sometimes to Guwahati.
6. For those youths who want to take up vocations like Personal and Beauty Care and Gym instructors have expressed that there are options for getting trained under the mentors but the issue is of getting the certificate for the same. Without a certification, these vocations cannot attract clients/customers.

# **Conclusion:**

We have examined and contrasted the patterns of opportunity gaps in rural and urban Assam. We have found that the aspirations of the youths from the rural areas are high, with the intent to earn more by diversifying the income earning opportunities. This process has also been accompanied by some convergence in the occupation choices being made in the two sectors. Specifically, the contraction in agrarian opportunities in rural areas that has accompanied the ongoing structural transformation of economy away from agriculture has been met by an expansion of irregular wage earning occupations in rural areas at a significantly faster rate than the corresponding expansion of the same occupations in urban areas.

The youths from the rural areas are aware of the recent developments, new trends in occupations, occupational shifts and they are also willing to take up the change, but they lack the right kind of skill for the vocation. The training institutes can offer more short term courses for the rural youths in the form of mobile units which equip the individuals with the right of the skill at the appropriate time. Moreover, the urban youths are also keen on taking up the occupations which are fast picking up but certain gaps like support for procuring the capital in any form may it be machines is a challenge.

Different kinds of means which help in strengthening the digital literacy campaign, can go a long way in bridging the gaps between the rural and urban areas. The use of search engines like google can help the rural youths to supplement their different ideas around different topics, even though they miss the regular school/college classes.

# **Bibliography:**

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# **Annexure: Questionnaire**

**Structured tool: Rural-Urban Opportunity gaps**

1. **Respondent’s personal information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Gender: 🞏 F 🞏M Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Marital status: 🞏Married 🞏Unmarried

Caste: 🞏 GEN 🞏 OBC 🞏 SC 🞏 ST Rural/Urban: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Socio-economic details:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Name of your village/town: |  |
| 1. Name of the block and district: |  |
| 1. No. of households in the village: |  |
| 1. Distance from the nearest urban area: | 🞏 Within 5 kms 🞏5-10 kms 🞏 10-20 kms 🞏 >20 kms |
| 1. Head of the household: | 🞏 Father 🞏 Mother 🞏 Grandparent |
| 1. Source of income of the head member: | 🞏 Salaried 🞏 Regular Wages  🞏 Agriculture 🞏 Irregular wages |
| 1. Approximate income per year |  |
| 1. No. of family members: |  |
| 1. No. of siblings/brothers and sisters: |  |
| 1. Ration card: | 🞏 Yellow 🞏 Red  Others\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. Did you have access to the following? (Mark all that is applicable) | 🞏 Private Toilet 🞏Private Bathroom  🞏Electricity 🞏 TV 🞏Mobile 🞏Vehicle  🞏Fridge 🞏LPG 🞏Others\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

1. **Livelihood and Education Opportunities:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. What is your source of Livelihood? (Occupation) | 🞏 Agriculture 🞏 Livestock Rearing 🞏 Daily Wage Labour🞏 Small Business🞏 Non-Farm Services🞏 Salaried 🞏Unemployed |
| 1. What new kind of livelihood would you want to take up? | 🞏 Agriculture and allied 🞏 Information Technology 🞏 Retail and Hospitality 🞏Driving🞏Body Building🞏Beauty and Personal Care🞏 Tailoring 🞏Weaving  🞏Others\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. What will be the average income from the new source monthly? | 🞏 2000-5000 🞏 5,000-10,000 🞏Above 10,000 |
| 1. Why haven’t you taken it up yet? | 🞏 Availability of raw materials If yes, what kind?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  🞏 Not eligible 🞏Shortage of capital and machine🞏Training Availability🞏Relocation  🞏Others:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. Any specific skill set present in your area? | 🞏 Carpentry🞏Bamboo Handicraft 🞏Tailoring 🞏 Spinning &Weaving 🞏Mobile Repairing 🞏 Beauty parlour  🞏 Computer skills🞏Driving |
| 1. Level of education: | 🞏Below primary 🞏 Primary 🞏 Class X 🞏 HSSLC 🞏 Graduate 🞏Graduate and Above |
| 1. Type of school: | 🞏 Government 🞏 Private 🞏 Anganwadi |
| 1. Did you complete your primary education on time? (by 10 years of age ) | 🞏 Yes 🞏 No |
| 1. Distance of school from house: a. Within village b. Within 5 kms c. 5-10 kms d. 10-20 kms  e. >20 kms | Till Vth 🞏a 🞏b 🞏c 🞏d 🞏e  Till Xth 🞏a 🞏b 🞏c 🞏d 🞏e  HSSLC 🞏a 🞏b 🞏c 🞏d 🞏e  College 🞏a 🞏b 🞏c 🞏d 🞏e |
| 1. Mode of transportation: | 🞏 Walk 🞏 Bicycle 🞏 Shared vehicle |
| 1. Presence of teachers in the school: | 🞏 Regular 🞏 Irregular |
| 1. Parent’s literacy: | 🞏Illiterate 🞏 Literate |
| 1. If above is literate, parent’s education level: | 🞏Below primary 🞏 Primary 🞏 Class X 🞏 Intermediate 🞏 Graduate |
| 1. Presence of both parents in the household: | 🞏 Yes 🞏 No |
| 1. Why did you not pursue higher education? | 🞏Unavailability of schools/teachers 🞏Access( no mode of transportation)  🞏 No hostel facilities  🞏Weak in studies/Failed  🞏Will get married soon  🞏Family’s personal probs 🞏Had to provide for fam(financial) 🞏Not willing to  -Don’t desire to study  -Discriminated by classmates  -So what? What after education?  -Can earn more without studying  Others, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_- |
| 1. Respondent’s special remarks: |  |
| 1. Signature of the Respondent 2. Date |  |

1. https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/densurb/densurbmethods.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-1)