

Girls in school, a report card

On India's progress in achieving gender parity in the area of school education.

By **Ramesh Chakrapani**

India has made remarkable progress in the field of gender parity in school education.

However, many States still have a long way to go in ensuring that no girl child is left behind.

Data from the Department of Higher Education under the Ministry of Human Resource Development on the number of girls for every hundred boys in classes I to XII in 2011-12 offer a variety of interesting insights into the state of girls' education across the country, the most significant being the remarkable progress achieved by the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes vis-a-vis the national average and the performance of the

north-eastern states.

AHEAD OF THE NATION

Members of the S.C. and S.T. communities have clearly embraced B.R. Ambedkar's exhortation to "Educate, Agitate, Organise" and extended it to the girl child to empower themselves.

Across the five metrics of classes I-V, VI-VIII, IX-X, XI-XII and I-XII, S.Cs have outperformed the national average, while S.Ts have fallen short of the rest of the nation in just one metric, classes XI-XII.

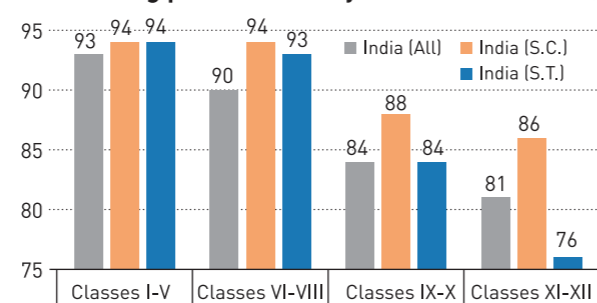
NORTH-EASTERN STATES

The eight north-eastern States, including Assam, shine a beacon to the rest of the country in the area of sending girls to school, with Assam,

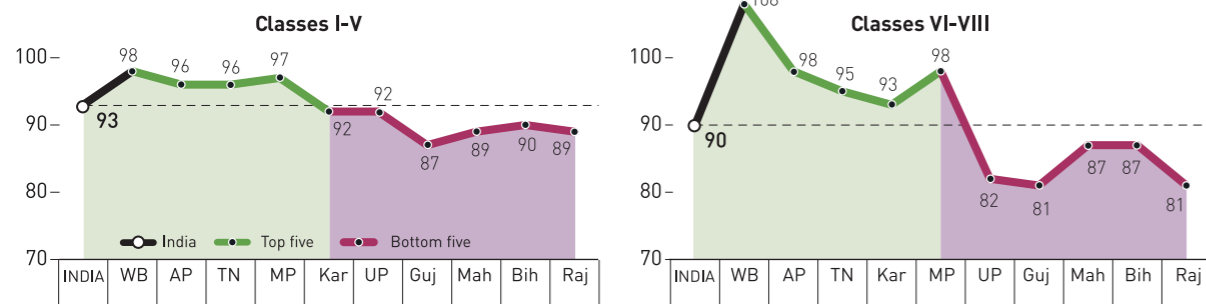


S. SIVA SARAVANAN.

Scintillating performance by S.Cs/S.Ts (2011-12)



How the most populous States fare in girls' education (number of girls per 100 boys, for 2011-12)



WB: West Bengal; AP: Andhra Pradesh; TN: Tamil Nadu; Kar: Karnataka; MP: Madhya Pradesh; UP: Uttar Pradesh; Guj: Gujarat; Mah: Maharashtra; Bih: Bihar; Raj: Rajasthan

Meghalaya and Sikkim having achieved parity or even gone beyond in many metrics. The so-called backward or less developed States of north-eastern India bring into question the very idea of development, especially when seen in the context of a markedly better performance when compared with industrially developed and more prosperous States such as Maharashtra, Punjab and Gujarat.

SOUTHERN SCENE

The four southern States (data available only for undivided Andhra Pradesh) have traditionally ranked high in terms of social and educational development, and it comes as no surprise that they are all far ahead of the national average in every category, with Karnataka alone falling short in just one category, classes I-V.

According to the 2011 Census, among the 10 most populous States, which together account for three-fourths of the country's total population, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar count among the laggards. The real shocker is the

performance of the prosperous States of Maharashtra and Gujarat, which have fallen behind the rest of nation on most counts.

Despite racing ahead of

the nation in areas such as industry and agriculture, Maharashtra, Punjab and Gujarat are behind even the worst developed States in the country in the field of girls' education. The

information forces a reassessment of the concept of development. There is a need to think beyond gross product numbers in order to achieve true progress.

State of the nation

(Number of girls per 100 boys in classes I-XII, all categories, 2011-12)

