

## ***Analytical Note on Data Collected from Universities in Assam***

***[Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati; Cotton College State University,  
Guwahati University & Tezpur University]***

*Community Engagement with Higher Educational Institutions and Social Responsibility in  
Higher Education*

### ***Category I: Linking learning with community service***

*In this approach, students and teachers apply their knowledge and skills in a chosen community to improve the lives of people in that community. This can be achieved through 'adoption' of a specific village or slum, and then providing engagement opportunities to students from various disciplines and courses to apply their knowledge to address the challenges of that specific community*

### **IIT-GUWAHATI**

There are student projects as part of their academic requirement which have relevance of community engagement. Projects undertaken by faculties under different department also have a sizable component of community engagement. Some of such examples are:

- ***Rural Technology Action Group- North East (RUTAG-NE) under the Department of Mechanical Engineering***

This is a facilitator group since 2006 which aims to upgrade rural system to most effective levels for boosting the rural economy. It provides R&D to technical problems in rural sectors. Some of the projects undertaken by it are:

- (i) To improve on the traditional process of Eri Silk production which is time consuming and laborious, RUTAG-NE has developed a machine which can complete a day's work in an hour.
- (ii) By engaging artisans and communities it has successfully set up a pilot project on production of plain Muga Silk fabric with power loom at the Export Promotion Industrial Park in Amingaon, Guwahati.
- (iii) To solve the problem of high transportation cost among the farmer in Goalpara region which host Darrangiri banana market, the largest banana market in Asia. RUTAG-NE has developed a robust user friendly modified bicycle for carting more number of banana bunches. Using this technology the vendor saves an additional amount Rs. 150 per day.

- (iv) Other projects such as S&T intervention in supari business have optimised the production of supari and have led to the economic upliftment of rural women in district of Dhubri, Goalpara and Barpeta in Assam.
- (v) The development of low and affordable Pirn Winding machine for power looms and handloom requirements have increase productivity and earning potentials of weavers at Sualkuchi in Kamrup district. The machine was made with local materials, and demonstrated to the local weavers.
- (vi) RUTAG-NE has other projects such as S&T in value addition of bamboo and multi- nutrient feed for yak which have helped entrepreneurs and farmers in the region for their livelihood.

#### **COTTON COLLEGE STATE UNIVERSITY**

- The Department of Botany under the banner of Botanical Hobby Centre has developed a low cot microbiological kit to study microorganism at the school level which have helped school around the region to adopt such technology with ease.
- It has been proactive in organising various programs to impart the knowledge of microorganism in the community.

#### **GUWAHATI UNIVERSITY**

This University does not seem to offer activities that fall under this category of ‘Service-Learning: Learning with the community’

#### **TEZPUR UNIVERSITY**

- The University previously had certain outreach programmes which were carried out by its various academic departments like English, Hindi, EVS and Math under which the faculty members provided free teaching in the schools of the nearby areas. However, since February’ 2014, an integrated village development programme was initiated, under which an adjacent village called *Amolapam* has been adopted.
- National Service Scheme (NSS) has adopted 4 villages (excluding the *Amolapam* village which has been adopted by the university) and conducts regular healthcare/educational activities/plantation drives for school children.
- The NSS also assists the University in the *Amolapam* village adoption initiative.

- The various initiatives the NCC undertakes include the National Integration Camp, Animal Training Camp, Tree Plantation Drive, Blood Donation camp, Literary Programmes, and Training Programmes for the NCC cadets.

### **UNESCO Chair's Comments**

*Appreciable work has been done under the framework of 'Learning with the Community'. Sustained efforts are needed to carry on the good work, and add to it the diverse components of 'community engagement'. This can add to the social relevance emerging out of such initiatives.*

## **Category II: Researching with the community**

*In this approach, various faculties and programmes of higher educational institutions devise joint research projects in partnerships with the communities. In this approach, the community's own knowledge is integrated into the design and conduct of the research. New research by students and their teachers gets conducted and students complete their thesis/dissertation and research papers to complete their academic requirements (which can later be published), and at the same time the community's knowledge is systematised and integrated in this research*

### **IIT-GUWAHATI**

In IIT-G, research projects are initiated by various units, which look to engage local communities, for solving their problems at the day to day level. Some of such examples are:

1. *Departmental Research Projects*

- Departments such as Biotechnology, Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering and Centres for Energy, Environment have projects on waste water treatment, Bio fuels, Flood Management, solid waste management and soil erosion.

2. *Specialized Centre initiated research projects*

- The Biogas development and training centre has helped farmers in the management of solid waste and biomass gasification for renewal energy source.

### **COTTON COLLEGE STATE UNIVERSITY**

1. *Women Forum*

The Cotton College Women Forum takes up research on women related issue of NE India.

2. *Departmental Research Projects*

- Departments like Anthropology, Geology and Economics have projects dealing with Altitude and Human biology among the Monpa community, comparative study on the effect of Bio social factors on the Birth-Weight among Assamese Hindus and Muslim in Guwahati city, assessment of rainfall- induced shallow landslide in the Narakasur hill of

Guwahati by physical based modelling approach and study of growth of entrepreneurship in SSI in Assam.

- Various other programs like flood and river management, disaster management looks into the mitigation, safety, early warning system, and awareness in rural and urban communities.
- Some projects such as the study of seeds of the indigenous rice (*Oryza sativa*) cultivators, the study of microbial profile of fermented foods consumed by various tribes of Dima Hasao of Assam have been initiated by the Department of Botany.
- The project undertaken by the Department of Geography on the study of Occupational Health of tea garden labourer of Upper Assam, the structure and transformation of hinterland of Guwahati City and a social geographical study about the influence of television and internet on students of Assam, adds value to the community.

### **GUWAHATI UNIVERSITY**

#### *1. Departmental Research Projects*

- The Department of Statistics has a Population Research Centre which conducts research in the field of demography and socio-economic aspects of population and family welfare in NE Region.
- As part of the Health Statistics Course the students go for outreach program to local communities and study issue on education & health.
- Projects on the study of school dropouts, slum study of Guwahati city with focus on women and children, Health status of tribal people in Assam and role of migration in the demographic situation are some that the department have taken up through various collaborations.

#### *2. Institute of Information Technology*

Some projects such as design and development of multilingual dictionary- cum- digital Assamese thesaurus and development of Assamese language in the aspects of ICT are relevant initiatives for benefit of the community.

## TEZPUR UNIVERSITY

- The students under M.A. Sociology programme have to prepare a dissertation in their final two semesters based on their field experience with the communities both from nearby the university campus as well as from other parts of northeast.
- Earlier, the students pursuing Masters/Diploma in Mass Communication and Journalism, used to undertake projects concerning issues like deforestation, human-animal conflict, human trafficking, etc. However, now only the post-graduate students carry out reporting on different aspects of village life in the nearby areas.
- The Department of Energy conducts study of energy consumption pattern, demand-supply and gap performance efficiency of energy devices, Grid integration of renewable energy as well as energy recovery from locally available biomass under the M.Tech course.
- Under the ‘Rural Hybrid Energy System Project’ , the local people are involved during the analysis of energy efficiency process conducted by the Energy Dept. for the Ph.D. and M.Tech courses.

## UNESCO Chair’s Comments

With respect to the projects undertaken and the framework of ‘Researching with the community’, some pertinent questions in this regard which needs to be answered are:

- ✓ *How are the projects designed? Who designs them?*
- ✓ *How does it benefit the communities? Or is it solely for academic research purpose?*
- ✓ *Are the communities engaged in such projects? If yes, how is community engagement envisaged in such research projects?*
- ✓ *How do the different projects benefit the communities?*
- ✓ *Is there any mechanism through which local indigenous knowledge is integrated into such research?*

### ***Category III: Knowledge Sharing with the Community***

*The knowledge available with students and teachers in various disciplines is made available to the local community to realize its developmental aspirations, secure its entitlements and claim its rights from various public and private agencies. These can take the forms of enumerations, surveys, camps, trainings, learning manuals/films, maps, study reports, public hearings, policy briefs, and engagement with urban homeless shelters, teaching and health services in poor communities, legal aid clinics for under-privileged etc.*

#### **IIT-GUWAHATI**

In IIT-G, knowledge sharing initiatives with the community, by way of various educational/social outreach programs is generally done through the following channels:

1. *Students Gymkhana Council under Welfare/Cultural & Technical Boards*

The Welfare Board has a Social Service Club which carries out activities to inculcate social commitment among the students through reflective exercises.

- (i) Zero Illiteracy Zone is initiated to motivate kids towards education and is conducted around the vicinity of the campus and some targeted localities.
- (ii) Collection of old clothes and distribution drives to help the needy people, blood donation camp and Green Campus campaign for environmental conservation and sustainability are conducted as part of social awareness and responsibility.
- (iii) Alcheringa the annual cultural festival of the institute provides platform for the youths to be pioneers in the field of art and culture.
- (iv) Udaan a social initiative by Alcheringa where students from the institute visits underprivileged children in village, slums and special care homes to interact and spark up hope in them. Culture and art of various blends like indigenous, traditional, classical and contemporary are promoted with participant from the region, national and international. This provides the opportunity for students from various educational institutes from within the city as well as the region to be exposed to the rich cultural experience
- (v) Other initiatives like Social 360 invites children of 'Snehalyala' orphanage to the campus for a one day campus tour, where they participate in various workshops and are able to attend counselling and talk sessions.

## *2. Department of Design*

The department of Design through its courses and projects has envisaged several initiatives of engaging with the community and improving their lives in the aspects of health, education, art & culture and livelihood capabilities. Some of them are;

- (i) Development of human centric design to bring menstrual education among rural girls in Assam in collaboration with health centres, Asha workers and doctors. Here, a board game is designed on mobile phone system where incentive is given for quizzes on health information.
- (ii) Product design for awareness of pregnant women health care, tool kit learning aid for chemistry for school children, pineapple peeling machine for local communities in Shillong, Meghalaya and analysis of textile design of the Tai- phake and Tai-Khamiyang communities.

## **COTTON COLLEGE STATE UNIVERSITY**

### *1. Cotton College Women Forum*

The Cotton College Women Forum conducts extension services for underprivileged children and women of villages around Guwahati city with focus on girl child education, health and livelihood issue.

### *2. Centre for Media Studies*

It organises workshop and training programs to educate the people with mass media culture such that it help them to harmoniously integrate mass media into their cultural lives.

### *3. Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC)*

Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC) organises entrepreneurship awareness and other skill development programs.

### *4. NSS activities*

Voluntary blood donation camps are organised in the campus as a part of service to humanity.

## GUWAHATI UNIVERSITY

### *1. Community Radio Service*

A nodal initiative of the Guwahati University is the Community Radio service Radio Luit 90.8 FM. Programs on general awareness about health, education, environment, scientific temperament, folk culture, music and various cultural programs are part of its main activity. Interactive talk with personalities and programs specifically aim for women and children are significant component of the initiative as well. Some of the significant features of this service are as follows:

- The radio service has several programs with target specific objectives and groups. The target groups constitute the university students and its larger community, and the vicinity of 15 km radius.
- For the students it broadcast news pertaining to university activities such as seminars, workshops, extracurricular activities, hence it remains apolitical in nature.
- It provides an open forum for the university community daily between 7- 8pm where the members can participate through phone call. This usually takes the form of addressing social and academic issues faced by the students, it also give opportunity for the community to share their experiences and opinions on issues such as health, education, environment, art & culture.
- The radio service also conducts several initiatives in visiting the surrounding village communities as well as remote indigenous communities to document their stories, cultural life, folk lore which they have to share.
- In its outreach program, awareness campaign on AIDS, child labour and sanitation have been predominant, in such activities the participation of the community has been active in assigning roles of ownership and responsible stakeholders.
- One area where the community radio service stands apart from other similar services has been in bringing out '*what the community wants*'.

### *2. Department of Botany*

The Botanical forum conducts various extension and outreach program such as plantation, conservation, sustainable utilisation of valuable plant resources and biodiversity awareness programs.

3. *Department of Communication and Journalism*

- A major avenue of the Department of Communication and Journalism is its New Ways Comics initiative of dealing with social issue through awareness campaigns. It is also leading the campaign on Media Literacy in the communities.
- The department collaboratively work in tandem with the community radio service.
- The purpose, target audience and benefits of the awareness campaign come under the fold of the activities of community radio service.

4. *Department of Disability Studies*

- It develops teaching-learning material for person with disabilities for community mobilisation.
- It also provides training for Master Trainer and in- service teacher in special education and rehabilitation centres.
- It organises lectures on barrier free environment, awareness campaign, street meetings, interaction session, field trips and case studies in different places in Assam.

5. *Department of Assamese and Folklore Research*

- It conducts literacy programs, the nature of which is non-academic.
- The target audiences are rural indigenous communities and grass root level communities spanning across age and gender.
- The program aims to achieve primary literacy in Assamese language.
- The department also seeks to incorporate the heritage of the Assamese culture through its archival works.

6. *Institute of Information Technology*

- It conducts awareness program on e-governance, ethical hacking and ICT for the local communities.
- Target audience are the students, faculties, government employees/staffs.
- Nature of the program has been primarily based on seminar lectures and workshops.
- The design and structure of the program are module by the department faculty.
- It attempts to bring awareness about the e-services of the government and the process to avail them.

### **TEZPUR University**

- The Department of Energy has displayed ‘Renewable Energy System’ exhibition at some schools in Tezpur town, wherein the local people were explained the use and importance of renewable energy systems.

### **UNESCO Chair’s Comments:**

With respect to the findings emerging under ‘Knowledge sharing with the community’, some of the questions that arise are:

- ✓ *Are these awareness programs meant for the community? If yes, it needs to be explicitly stated.*
- ✓ *Also, information needs to be given on the ways in which the community benefits from such programs, apart from the regular students.*

## **Category IV: Designing New Curriculum and Courses**

*In consultations with local communities, local students, local community-based organisations, HEIs design new curricula and courses that respond to specific needs of the community; such courses may be short-term workshops, certificates and degrees as well. They are meant for community members, as well as students already in formally enrolled HEIs.*

### **COTTON COLLEGE STATE UNIVERSITY**

Such courses at Cotton College University are being offered through the following channels:

#### *1. Open University*

The Study Centre for the Open University Courses offers Bachelor Preparatory Courses for students who cannot get access to full time formal learning; it also offers other diploma, degree and master courses.

#### *2. Entrepreneurship Development Cell*

The Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC) of the college aims to foster entrepreneurial spirit among students and unemployed educated youth in the community. The Centre for Mass Communication and Journalism under EDC provides one year diploma courses. EDC organises entrepreneurship awareness and other skill development programs.

#### *3. Weekend courses*

The college also offers summer weekend extramural courses on; Understanding Society: Themes from sociology and Anthropology, to increase the level of exposure of the community to varied topics of interest and help understand human beings and their culture.

#### *4. Summer Schools*

A summer school in Astronomy and Astrophysics with hands on experience in data analysis, tutorials and screening of astronomy- related movies is also conducted. These courses help the students of the local community to engage in holistic learning and gain valuable experience.

### **GUWAHATI UNIVERSITY**

In Guwahati University, initiative on new courses is taken up by:

#### *1. Institute of Distance and Open Learning (IDOL)*

- IDOL of Guwahati University offers opportunity for students to can not avail conventional academic education because of limited post graduate seats and livelihood compulsions.
- With its exam and study centres all over Assam its outreach capacity is large enough to incorporate aspirants from different communities to pursue professional and academic disciplines at bachelor, masters and PG diploma level.
- It is also the only institute to offer PG courses of five 8<sup>th</sup> schedule languages.
- IDOL has played a crucial role for increasing access and equity of higher education to senior citizens and has helped in adult education of this region.
- It uses e-learning portal to enhance learning opportunities by way of self-assessment tests, online & offline discussions.

## 2. *Department of Linguistics*

- It offers a course on Literacy & Language Education which has a component of community engagement.
- It targets indigenous communities, prepares language learning material for their language.
- It has come into collaboration with several institutes, organisations and research centres to enhance fieldwork involving collection, documentation, and description of language data.
- As part of this initiative MA students have carried out linguistic fieldwork among the Bodo, Mizo, Tai-Turung, Adi-Galo, Singpho, Ahom and Tangsa Naga communities along with their experts.
- Beside the good practise of field work, the department encourages native speaker of indigenous languages to study their own language.
- The field work look to integrate rural indigenous knowledge by involving the native speakers in collaborative workshop programs where their knowledge about grammar and orthography is taken into account for academic research.
- The community benefits in gaining mother-tongue literacy education through Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) program. The Rava and the Singpho communities are such example.
- The department partners with Summer Institute of Language (SIL) to carry out the above program.

- Teachers use what the children already know, their language and culture, the knowledge and experience they bring from their community to help them learn new concepts in school.
- Learning is guided and depended on community members to provide with stories, songs, cultural knowledge and values.

### UNESCO Chair's Comments

Some key questions in this regard are:

- ✓ *The activities of IDOL mentioned above needs more detailing with respect to the engagement with the rural communities.*
- ✓ *How do such courses benefit the community, apart from benefitting the regular students?*
- ✓ *Are there any special provisions for students belonging to the poor community?*
- ✓ *Are the courses designed keeping in mind the specific needs of certain sections of the communities? How do they envisage community engagement?*

### **Category V: Including Practitioners as Teachers**

*Local community elders, women leaders, tribals and civil society practitioners have enormous practical knowledge of a wide variety of issues—from agriculture and forestry to child-rearing, micro-planning and project management. This expertise can be tapped by inviting such practitioners inside the institution to co-teach courses both in the classrooms and in the field.*

Presently, HEIs in Assam do not seem to engage in the practice of inviting local practitioners to come and teach in the institution.

### **Category VI: Social Innovation by students**

*In consultation with student unions, associations and clubs, student initiated learning projects which have a social impact can be supported. Such social innovation projects by students can also have meaningful links to curriculum and courses.*

#### **IIT-GUWAHATI**

Various innovative projects of social relevance such as All Terrain Walking Apparatus for the Disabled and Automated Mess Payment System are initiated by the students under various clubs of technical board.

#### **COTTON COLLEGE STATE UNIVERSITY**

Such initiatives are absent.

#### **GUWAHATI UNIVERSITY**

Such initiatives are absent.

#### **TEZPUR University**

Such initiatives are absent.

### UNESCO Chair's Comments

- *More details of such student initiated projects (as in IIT-G) having social relevance, needs to be brought out.*
- *More such examples can be researched and listed with proper detail.*
- *Any link of such projects to the course/curriculum of the students' needs to be mentioned. If not, their relevance and value to the student's profile as well as the exact benefit construed to the community needs to be detailed.*

### Surveyor's Remarks

HEIs in Guwahati still need a huge contribution for a dynamic shift in the conceptualisation and implementation of community engagement. Although, there are visible degrees of activities which can be ascertained to have a character of community engagement, the lack of an institutionalised framework for a two way engagement is still missing. The idea of community engagement also needs to be reframed for HEIs, Communities and other collaborators to meet its target purpose.

Lack of orientation at the policy level has created an absence of synergy between the academia and the community for long- term partnership of projects. This is evident by courses which have high value for community engagement, but suffers constrains with its major component being theoretical and its practical aspect limited to short- term implications. At present, community engagement efforts range from student initiatives such as social cultural activities and academic projects, to faculty projects. Observations specific to three institutions covered in the survey are as mentioned below:

### IIT-GUWAHATI

- The institute has the potential for a long-term holistic engagement where the community is seen as a partner as well as an asset.
- However, the present state as highlighted by the faculties reveals several constrains, such as lack of man power, interest among faculties, funding, basic skills of communication, time, cooperation from the government.
- Others issues are social barrier with the community, professional commitments and institution guidelines. Besides establishing a policy at the institutional level, several

other initiatives needs to be taken, such as bringing social awareness, providing communication as well as management skills to the communities for successful engagement.

- Forums for interaction and grievance reprisal needs to be establish so that communities may provide the necessary information which will help in problem mapping.

### **COTTON COLLEGE STATE UNIVERSITY**

- The co-curricular & extension services of the college serves as a major contributor to community engagement programs, while the departmental projects/programs plays a partial role.
- The NSS unit of the college plays an active role in assisting the various activities initiated by the college community.
- There are several factors which limits the capacity of the college to engage with the communities as part of the students' learning experience.
- The lack of proper forum to communicate, support from the government, autonomy, time, funds, workforce, awareness among the faculties are among some of the impediments.
- Others such as the rigidity of the curriculum, absence of interdisciplinary approach leads to further divergence between the college and the community.
- Although the college have several initiatives which cater to the need of the community, it has to circumvent these obstacles to truly embark on a long term engagement which will benefit both the institute and the community.

### **GUWAHATI UNIVERSITY**

- The clubs and societies under different departments in the university contribute to aspects of community engagement programs through its extra-curricular activities.
- Some departments are proactive while others have not being able to device ways to incorporate exposure to community learning.
- Departmental projects have also up to some level being successful in engaging with the community.

- Expect for few departments like Linguistic and Botany others do not have a component of community engagement in their course curriculum.
- Although the University have been quite vocal about its community engagement initiatives, it lacks the active participation of the community.
- There seems a lacuna of long term partnership which actually provides the foundation of sustainable initiatives with fruitful results.
- The need to promote capacity building among the community to holistically engage with the University is urgent.
- Also the community has to be sensitised to trust the engagement process in the process of community development.
- Impediments such as lack of financial resources, time, networking and forum to understand community problem, social & cultural barrier, infrastructure besides the policy in academic course structure are practical issues which have to be dealt in order to make the whole process generative.

### **TEZPUR UNIVERSITY**

- Although the University has maintained some amount of community engagement, there is a lot of room for making this engagement wider and deeper.
- In order to step up its endeavours toward strengthening its social engagement, the university can incorporate such components in the existing curricula which provide more space for knowledge sharing with the community rather than following a mechanical relationship with the community or just to complete some academic assignments.
- To foster engagement of the local community, the university resources should be shared with the people wherever possible.
- Joint research projects in partnership with the nearby communities are being conducted in the University but most of them do not involve full participation of the community who remain mere subjects in such projects.
- In order to link research with community knowledge, there should be equal participation from both University and the communities.
- However, the rigorous continuous evaluation system of the University with five (5) tests per semester seems to restrain the students from taking part in various community service activities.

- The structure of the University curriculum throughout the country compels the students to concentrate more on the grades due to which they are hardly enthusiastic to get involved in such community service works.
- On the other hand, whatever they do mechanically under compulsion of the curricula repetitively often exasperates the community and it becomes counter-productive.
- Being located in a backward rural area with a multicultural demographic landscape, Tezpur University can do a lot to offer a new model of engagement of the higher educational institutions with the community.

### UNESCO Chair's Closing Remarks

#### **Positive side**

- Starting at a bright note, the fact worth mentioning is that here in Guwahati, the term 'community engagement' comes out of the lens of 'arts/humanities', through which it is often viewed. Engagement of Science students in bettering the lives of the communities is welcome change to the old school of thought which associated it solely with the arts/humanities students.
- The design and conduction of novel and innovative courses for the community is another bright pointer in this regard.
- Student initiated projects, for the benefit of the rural communities which are rare in other HEIs are seen to be common place in a premier institution like IIT-G. This definitely paves the way for other HEIs to follow suit.
- With the above points in place, the trend of 'community engagement in HEIs definitely deviates from the 'NSS Framework', and goes a step further towards the community in order to engage with it in a meaningful way.
- Innovative mechanisms like the Community Radio, can go a big way in bringing about sea-change in the field of relevant community engagement.

#### **Flip side**

- Notwithstanding the good starting points mentioned above, still certain section in the academic sphere view such activities as being 'extra/co-curricular/social service'. This is one of the prime reasons for the absence of academic credits/value to the work done under this framework. Efforts are needed to step out of this thinking and accord a

dignified status to 'community engagement' activities, wither by awarding it with due credits under the regular course, or integrating it in the course curricula itself.

- The complete absence of providing encouragement to local practitioners by crediting their knowledge is a bit of a dampener. We need to realize that along with the knowledge that resides among the University premises, there is a sea of indigenous knowledge that is present among the rural communities, which needs to be tapped, preserved, documented and accorded due status and recognition.
- Prima facie, the research projects appear to be solely belonging to the academicians. Efforts are needed in the direction of execution of joint research projects, which integrates the knowledge and expertise of the local community as well. It is a noted fact that the rural communities have immense knowledge with respect to the resources around them. This knowledge if tapped and use can be mutually beneficial.
- In addition, even the extension programs which are organized do not seem to have a clear cut objective with respect to community engagement. Mostly, it is done as part of the routine procedure to be carried out, as per the existing rules and regulations.
- Considering the limited instances of student initiated research projects, such initiatives needs to be encouraged and incentivized.

All in all, considering both the sides of the coin, it can be said that the ground in Assam is fertile for pursuing 'actual and relevant community engagement' in letter and spirit. However, there is no denying that much effort is needed in this direction to bring all the dis-oriented activities at a common platform, and under a common framework. Notwithstanding the present limitations, much can be done in this regard, for which there is a need to streamline institutional policies, practices and its activities in an attempt to engage with the communities. Since de-incentivised work fails to bring in fruitful results, attempts are required to attach such activities to the regular evaluation of the students, so that the exact purpose of community engagement is achieved, and the University thence is able to fulfil its social responsibilities.