

Community Perceptions on Education
A Study in North East Karnataka

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

As a part of Universalisation of Elementary Education, the "Azim Premji Foundation" has initiated several programmes to improve the quality of education in primary education particularly in rural areas of North East Karnataka. These include the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP), Computer Assisted Learning (CALC) Programme and the Learning Guarantee Programme (LGP) all of which are implemented jointly with the government of Karnataka. Involvement of the community and their participation is extremely important in improving the standard of education. Hence, advocacy and communication about education and learning has to be an important aspect of the Foundations tasks. The LGP and the ALP in particular incorporate significant efforts in this direction involving screening of films and village community meetings. The LGP has, in addition, the awards function, press coverage, wall posters, school plaques etc contributing to an increase in the awareness and perceptions about education.

At this stage, a need was felt to understand the community member's perception on various aspects of education and schooling in the region. This was to provide data on perception related indicators among the community members on education. Similar study could be conducted at a later date to understand the changes and improvements in these indicators as this would provide an assessment of the effectiveness of various programmes and communication efforts. The study results would also be helpful in providing inputs for future communication efforts and designing programmes.

1.2 Objectives

The study was aimed at obtaining the following from the various community members

1. assess their perceptions regarding education in their region
2. obtain their assessment of quality of education in the schools
3. determine their involvement in the education system
4. obtain their awareness about the Learning Guarantee Programme

1.3 Methodology and Sample Structure

A structured questionnaire based approach was used to collect the required data. The questionnaire used had a combination of close ended as well as open ended questions. This is provided in the annexure to the report for reference. The respondents for the study comprised adult individuals selected at random from various villages in North East Karnataka.

The data collection was carried out by the Area coordinators of the Foundation who were briefed and trained prior to the exercise. The study covered a total of 3977 respondents from 41 blocks in all the eight educational districts of NEK. In each village, between 15 and 20 respondents were interviewed. The fieldwork for the study was completed between May 15 and June 15, 2004.

The detailed sample profile in terms of gender, age group, children in the 6-14 years age group is given in the annexure. The key aspects of the profile which need to be made note of are:

- across the districts, males comprise between 60% and 65% of the sample while females comprise 35% to 40% of the sample. The sample is thus slightly skewed in favour of males
- More than 55% of the respondents are below 35 years of age group and a further 21% are in the 26 to 30 years of age group
- about 75% of respondent households have school age children (6-11yrs) and 98 % of these are enrolled in school
- A quarter of the respondents have some connection or association with education system by way of being a teacher or as SDMC member or as an education dept. official etc.

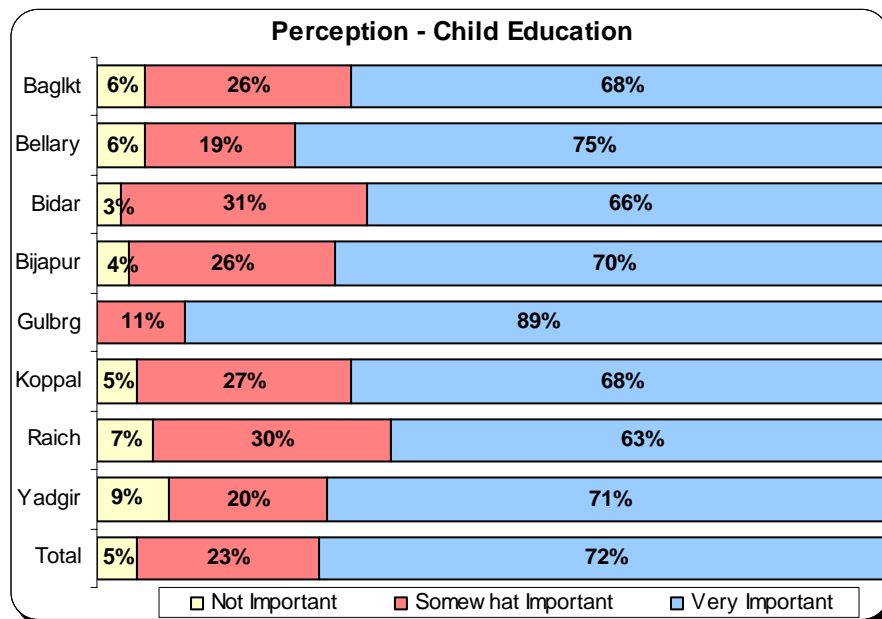
2 FINDINGS

2.1 Perceptions on Education

A large proportion of respondents (72%) feel that educating children is very important. But this also means that the others (28%) do not think it is very important. The proportions across districts are similar. However, Raichur shows a relatively poorer attitude and Gulbarga the best among the districts. The interesting aspect of this response is that the illiterate and less educated (upto class 4) show a slightly more favourable attitude towards educating the child. This is a positive aspect.

Perception about Importance of Child Education

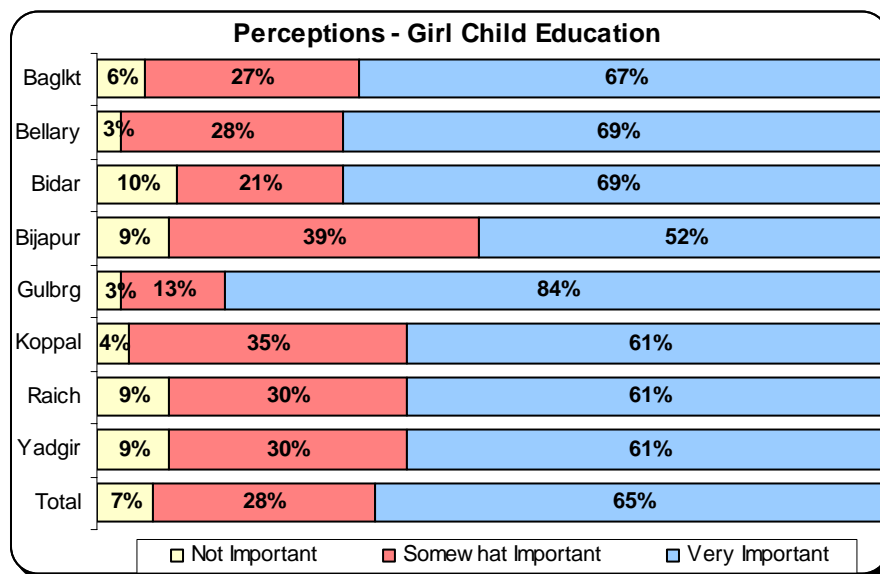
District	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Bagalkot	6%	26%	68%
Bellary	6%	19%	75%
Bidar	3%	31%	66%
Bijapur	4%	26%	70%
Gulbarga	0%	11%	89%
Koppal	5%	27%	68%
Raichur	7%	30%	63%
Yadgir	9%	20%	71%
Total	5%	23%	72%



Interestingly, when it comes to the education of the girl child, the proportion considering it as being very important drops to 65%. Here too, the feedback is most favourable in Gulbarga. Over a third of the respondents across all the districts do not seem to be giving a high priority to educating the girl child. This perception is similar across males and females. The most unfavourable response comes from Bijapur – a low 52%. In other words, almost half the respondents here do not view education of the girl child as being very important. This is a matter for concern.

Perception about Importance of Girl Child Education

District	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Bagalkot	6%	27%	67%
Bellary	3%	28%	69%
Bidar	10%	21%	69%
Bijapur	9%	39%	52%
Gulbarg	3%	13%	84%
Koppal	4%	35%	61%
Raichur	9%	30%	61%
Yadgir	9%	30%	61%
Total	6%	28%	65%



The above data can be converted into an attitudinal rating score on a three point 0-2 scale where a score of 2.0 indicates 'Very important' and a score of 0 indicates 'Not at all important'. On this basis, the different districts are positioned as follows. As can be seen, the highest gap between child education score and girl child education score is in Bagalkot.

Attitudinal Rating Score – Child Education

District	Importance of child education	Importance of girl child education
Bagalkot	1.89	1.61
Bellary	1.69	1.66
Bidar	1.64	1.59
Bijapur	1.66	1.43
Gulbarga	1.89	1.81
Koppal	1.63	1.57
Raichur	1.56	1.52
Yadgir	1.62	1.52
Total	1.67	1.58

Open ended questions were asked to understand the respondents' reasons for importance providing educating to the child. The reasons are summarised below separately for any child and for the girl child.

Importance of formal education for children

Usefulness of providing formal education	Proportion of respondents
To increase knowledge levels	53%
For a better future for the child	15%
To help in getting job / employment	9%
For financial improvement	8%
So that they can become good citizens	6%
For the development of the child	4%
To reduce / avoid inequality	2%

It is interesting to note that 6% of the respondents have indicated 'to become good citizens' as a reason. The most important stated reason is to improve the child's knowledge levels.

Importance of formal education for the girl child

Usefulness of providing formal education	Proportion of respondents
To provide equal opportunities	27%
To provide minimum educational needs	23%
To increase knowledge levels	21%
To provide them empowerment	8%
For a better future for them	8%
For improvement of the family	7%

The reasons for educating the girl child are somewhat different. Chance for 'equal opportunity' and 'empowerment' of the girl child are making a strong appearance here. The other reasons are largely similar as above.

2.2 Preference for type of school

The respondents were asked to indicate their preference between a school with an active SDMC on the one hand and a school with good infrastructure (but not an active SDMC) on the other.

Preference for Type of School

District	Well equipped school	School with active SDMC	Can't say
Bagalkot	43%	45%	12%
Bellary	39%	45%	17%
Bidar	34%	44%	22%
Bijapur	39%	30%	31%
Gulbarg	33%	60%	7%
Koppal	21%	56%	23%
Raichur	32%	51%	17%
Yadgir	42%	38%	20%
Total	35%	47%	18%

The verdict on this aspect is split and not decisive. The preference for a school with active SDMC is higher at 47%, perhaps indicating that the respondents consider involvement of the parent body as being important in the performance of the school. This proportion is higher for the subset of respondents who have been associated with school activities.

2.3 Feedback on the schools in their area

Almost half the respondents (46%) indicated that the quality of learning in the school in their area was good with a further 8% indicating it to be excellent. At the same time, about 7% of the respondents are not satisfied with the quality of learning in the schools in their area. Among the districts, Bagalkot, Yadgir and to some extent Bijapur show a more favourable picture. The proportion indicating satisfaction is quite high. There would hence be a need to understand the methods used by the community to assess the quality of learning.

Perception of Quality of Learning in School in their village

District	Not a good school	Just about average school	A Good school	An excellent school	Can't say
Bagalkot	4%	31%	52%	11%	1%
Bellary	5%	33%	54%	6%	1%
Bidar	5%	41%	45%	7%	2%
Bijapur	10%	27%	52%	11%	0%
Gulbarg	11%	36%	43%	8%	2%
Koppal	4%	53%	34%	7%	2%
Raichur	12%	43%	36%	6%	3%
Yadgir	4%	32%	52%	11%	1%
Total	7%	37%	46%	8%	1%

Continuing on the same topic, the respondents were asked for their perceptions about the feasibility of improving the school in their area. On the one hand, it is good to see that there is general acceptance (89%) of the fact that with some efforts, it will be possible to improve the quality of learning in the schools. On the other hand, this is somewhat at a variance with the response to the question above. Among the districts however, the perception in Bijapur is not as unequivocal as in the other districts.

Scope for Improvement of School with Efforts

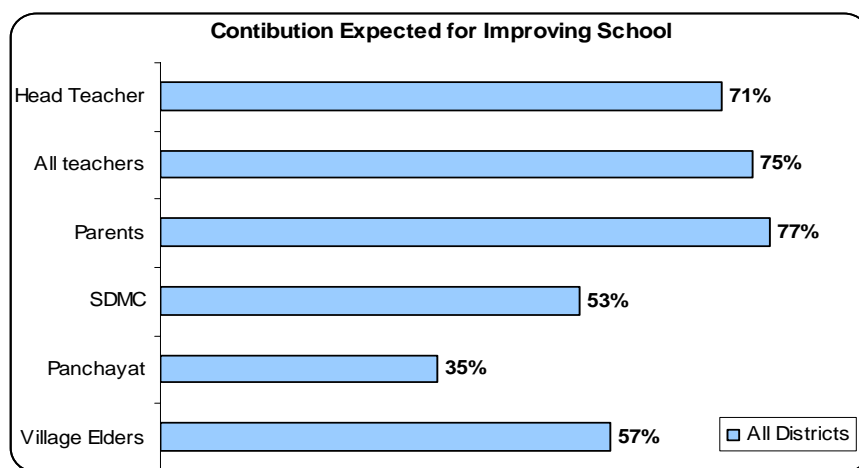
District	Yes	No	Can't say
Bagalkot	90%	2%	8%
Bellary	93%	1%	6%
Bidar	89%	2%	9%
Bijapur	75%	0%	25%
Gulbarg	93%	2%	5%
Koppal	86%	1%	13%
Raichur	89%	1%	10%
Yadgir	96%	0%	4%
Total	89%	1%	10%

2.4 Who can contribute to improving the school

The respondents were asked their perceptions about whose responsibility it was to contribute to improving the quality of the school. The three categories identified as the maximum contributors are the head teacher, all teachers and parents. Interestingly, the segment most capable of contributing was indicated as the parents. Just over half the sample indicated the importance of the role of the SDMCs. However, at the district level, there are differences in proportions but the sequence of relative importance of contributors is similar.

Contribution to improving school

District	Head Teacher	All teachers	Parents	SDMC	Panchayat	Village Elders
Bagalkot	78%	58%	76%	61%	50%	58%
Bellary	78%	89%	88%	58%	36%	59%
Bidar	79%	30%	65%	47%	10%	58%
Bijapur	65%	76%	70%	44%	22%	47%
Gulbarg	81%	94%	94%	79%	59%	75%
Koppal	56%	69%	60%	40%	28%	41%
Raichur	63%	61%	69%	42%	26%	55%
Yadgir	77%	90%	90%	53%	47%	88%
Total	71%	75%	77%	53%	35%	57%



In a slight contrast to above statement as many as 75% of respondents believe that the SDMC can play a role or contribute to improvement of learning in school.

SDMC role in Improving Learning in Schools

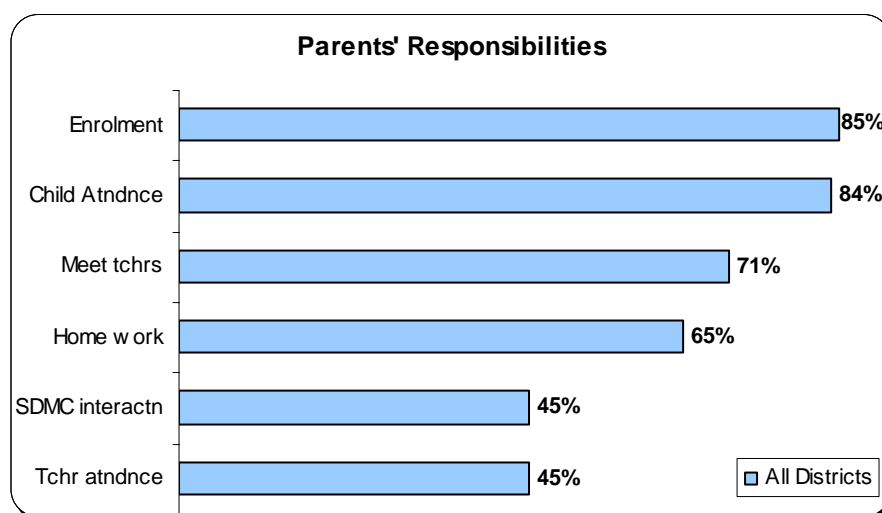
District	Yes	No	Can't say
Bagalkot	78%	8%	14%
Bellary	76%	4%	19%
Bidar	74%	16%	10%
Bijapur	66%	6%	28%
Gulbarg	97%	2%	1%
Koppal	75%	4%	21%
Raichur	66%	9%	23%
Yadgir	57%	23%	20%
Total	75%	7%	18%

2.5 Parents responsibilities

There is a general acceptance of the role that parents can play in their children's education. Ensuring enrolment of the children and their attendance are clearly understood as the primary responsibilities

Perception of Parents Responsibilities

Districts	Enrolment	Attendance	Meeting teachers	Home work	SDMC interaction	Teacher attendance
Bagalkot	90%	89%	77%	69%	54%	66%
Bellary	92%	88%	72%	77%	43%	47%
Bidar	88%	74%	53%	32%	33%	24%
Bijapur	93%	86%	74%	69%	43%	42%
Gulbarg	90%	96%	91%	80%	67%	61%
Koppal	68%	77%	59%	56%	38%	31%
Raichur	71%	68%	65%	43%	42%	31%
Yadgir	94%	94%	81%	67%	46%	70%
Total	85%	84%	71%	65%	45%	45%



2.6 What is a good school

The respondents were asked an open ended question on how they would assess a good school. The responses are summarised below.

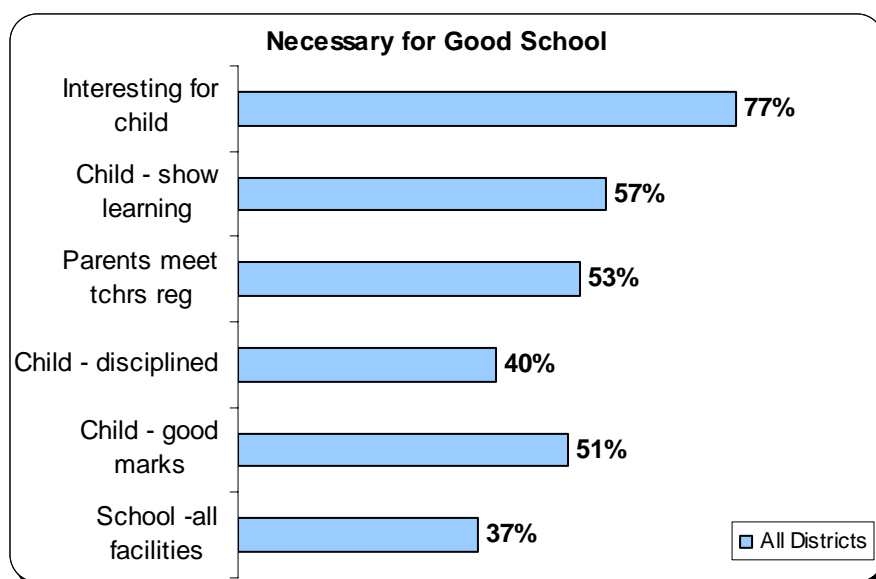
How to assess a good school

Ways to assess	Proportion of respondents
Child should learn in school	35%
Child should get and do homework with interest	31%
Teachers should be attending regularly	28%
Children should be interested in going to school	18%
There should be a change in the behaviour of the child	9%
By visiting and observing the school	5%

Responses to the same question when asked in a structured form are given below. Perceptions about what can make a school 'good school' vary across districts. On an overall basis though, the most prominent indicator is 'child must find the school interesting'. The other important visible indicators mentioned are child being able to demonstrate learning, child getting good marks in school and parents interacting with teachers regularly. Facilities available at school are considered relatively less important.

Aspects that make a school good

District	Interesting for child	Child must demonstrate learning	Parents meet teachers regularly	Child is disciplined	Child gets good marks	School has all the facilities
Bagalkot	78%	44%	39%	37%	58%	55%
Bellary	81%	53%	56%	42%	52%	42%
Bidar	78%	41%	50%	44%	45%	45%
Bijapur	80%	61%	36%	36%	45%	41%
Gulbarg	80%	68%	63%	42%	64%	34%
Koppal	63%	64%	55%	47%	51%	27%
Raichur	79%	58%	68%	32%	51%	25%
Yadgir	89%	71%	55%	25%	40%	24%
Total	77%	57%	53%	40%	51%	37%



2.7 Awareness of LGP

On an overall basis, about 39% of the respondents indicated awareness of the LGP. The awareness is highest in Bidar and the lowest in Yadgir. The differences between districts are sharp.

Awareness of Learning Guarantee Programme

District	Aware of LGP
Bagalkot	49%
Bellary	30%
Bidar	54%
Bijapur	33%
Gulbarga	40%
Koppal	43%
Raichur	47%
Yadgir	26%
Total	39%

Source of Awareness

Source	Proportion of respondents
Through the LGP awards function	1%
Through children	4%
From education dept officials	3%
Through teachers	16%
From evaluators	5%
Through SDMC members / others in village	4%
Saw posters / banners / wall paper	7%
Through newspapers / magazines	3%

The source of awareness data indicates that the most source about the programme has been the teachers followed by mass media publicity. Children themselves have also been talking about the LGP though to a lesser extent.

3 CONCLUSIONS

1. In North East Karnataka, 72% of the respondents have indicated that providing formal education to children is extremely important. This attitude reduces to 65% when it comes to education for the girl child. This is a statistically significant drop. Though in absolute terms the numbers do not look small, the figures should ideally be close to 100%. This is an indication that there is still some way to go on this attitude. This is all the more important with respect to attitude towards the girl child. This aspect will need to be emphasized in the future advocacy and communication efforts of the Foundation.
2. The reasons for educating children have been clearly indicated. While the main reasons, as to be expected relate to increasing knowledge and to improved livelihood opportunities, a small proportion (6%) have also indicated 'to become a good citizen' as a reason. As regards the girl child over a quarter of the respondents have indicated equality of opportunities and empowerment as reasons. These numbers would also need to be increased through communication over a period of time.
3. About half the respondents have indicated that the schools in their area, in their perception are not very good. It would be reasonable to expect that, over the next few years, with the efforts of the foundation, this proportion should improve substantially.
4. The ways that the community members generally use to assess a school are clearly indicated – child should learn in school, child should be interested to go to school and more interestingly, teachers should attend regularly. An indication of how the child's learning is measured is through the amount of homework and the interest that the child shows in doing the homework. This is thus an important aspect that needs to be kept in mind for future efforts.
5. The community members seem to see the role of the parent in learning and education in the right perspective. Almost 80% respondents believe that parents have to play their part in terms of enrolment and attendance. In addition, there is also a belief (65 – 70%) that they have to be more involved in the learning process of the child by way of involvement in homework and meeting teachers. These are positive indicators. On the other hand, involvement or interaction with SDMC does not figure prominently in the list of responsibilities for the parents.
6. Awareness of the LGP appears to be fairly high at 39%. The more important indicators to be looked at here are the sources of awareness. The mass media and the publicity efforts like wall posters seem to have impacted less than 10% of the community. The more prominent source indicated is 'teachers'. This is an important input. On the one hand, the media mix probably needs to be reviewed. Admittedly, the field work was carried out before the screening of the LGP films. This activity could change the picture to some extent. On the other hand, the teacher emerges as an important disseminator of information and probably is a more credible source as well. This aspect could perhaps be leveraged to advantage by the Foundation in future efforts.

ANNEXURE - 1

Gender wise Sample Distribution by District

District	Total	Males	Female
Bagalkot	410	63.4%	36.6%
Bellary	1172	62.7%	37.3%
Bidar	175	68.0%	32.0%
Bijapur	437	61.8%	38.2%
Gulbarga	393	69.2%	30.8%
Koppal	618	67.5%	32.5%
Raichur	581	70.9%	29.1%
Yadgir	190	70.0%	30.0%
Total	3976	65.8%	34.2%

6-11 years Children and Enrollment in school by District

District	Children in 6-11 yrs age grp	Children in 6-11 yrs in school
Bagalkot	55%	98%
Bellary	70%	99%
Bidar	87%	97%
Bijapur	72%	97%
Gulbarga	72%	97%
Koppal	75%	99%
Raichur	77%	98%
Yadgir	84%	100%
Total	72%	98%

Respondent Age Group

Age Group	Proportion
Up to 25 yrs	17%
26 – 35 yrs	39%
36 – 45 yrs	26%
46 – 55 yrs	11%
Over 55 yrs	5%
Not given	2%

Level of Education by District

District	Illiterate	Up to 4 yrs school	5-9 yrs school	SSLC	College but not grad	Grad / Post grad	Professional
Bagalkot	14%	5%	18%	23%	17%	17%	2%
Bellary	20%	11%	20%	14%	13%	9%	1%
Bidar	31%	7%	13%	19%	15%	13%	1%
Bijapur	15%	9%	18%	21%	18%	16%	2%
Gulbarga	12%	9%	18%	22%	14%	12%	1%
Koppala	12%	13%	22%	17%	17%	11%	1%
Raichur	21%	10%	16%	18%	9%	11%	2%
Yadgir	10%	10%	19%	19%	11%	13%	0%
Total	17%	9.8%	19%	18%	14%	12%	1%

Respondent involvement in schooling

District	Teacher	SDMC member	Edu. office employee	Not Connected
Bagalkot	6%	16%	3%	75%
Bellary	6%	11%	3%	80%
Bidar	1%	21%	2%	76%
Bijapur	6%	11%	3%	80%
Gulbarga	4%	11%	3%	82%
Koppal	5%	21%	3%	71%
Raichur	5%	17%	4%	74%
Yadgir	8%	12%	4%	76%
Total	5%	14%	3%	82%

