

Peoples's Participation In Rural Development : A Case Study In Dibrugarh District Of Assam

* *Biraj Dutta*

INTRODUCTION

Participation in general means the processes where in people are closely involved in economic, social, cultural and political affairs which affect their lives. When viewed from the dimension of dealing with development plans or programmes for the people, it simply implies participation of the people in all stages viz- planning, formulation, decision making, sharing the benefits of development, monitoring and evaluation appraisal. People's Participation is defined in Oxford Dictionary as, "*taking part or becoming involved in an activity by the people*" (Oxford Dictionary). According to the Webster's Third New International Dictionary and Seven Languages Dictionary, participation means, '*the action or state of taking part in something actively*'.

Participation, according to the UNESCO document is, '*collective sustained activity for the purpose of achieving some common objectives, especially a more equitable distribution of benefit of development.*' (UNESCO)

The term *People's Participation* means direct involvement of the people and not indirect involvement through their representatives. In the existing socio-economic and political structure of the society, in most of the developing countries, the representatives of the people are likely to represent the interests of the rich, rather than of the poor who reside in rural areas. The success of the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) is not possible without active and widespread participation of the people at large. However, in a vast developing country like India, direct participation of the people can be possible only through the Grama Sabha at the Panchayat Level.

People's participation is essential for the decentralization of power in a democratic form of government. Constant and active people's participation in the affairs of the government is the pre-requisite condition for the success of participatory democracy. As soon as the people become aware of their rights and privileges, they come forward to cooperate with the various activities of the government.

People's non-cooperation and non-participation have caused a serious problem in successful implementation of the various Rural Development Programmes (RDPs). Thus, it can be said that without active people's participation, effective implementation of RDPs cannot be ensured. Lack of active people's participation at different stages of planning of India is the root cause of high growth of poverty and unemployment (Sundaram, 1997; p. 295). Moreover, active people's participation provides the opportunity to have a due share in the decision making and implementation of various developmental activities throughout the country. The understanding and co-operation between the officials responsible for rural development and that of the people is very much essential for the successful implementation of the RDPs. It is the responsibility of the people to build up their own villages with the support of the rural development officials. It is quite impossible to develop and channelize the local resources without the involvement of the local people through the community development organizations and programmes. Active people's involvement and participation makes the authorities aware about the problems of the community and can ensure effective and efficient implementation (Hazarika, 2004; pp. 86-95). However, under the existing social system, equitable participation of the poor masses in the process of development can be regarded as a gradual process. The active people's participation, involvement and control of the people in the development process can give rise to a socio-economic system more conducive to the attainment of economic development along with a great degree of social justice (Mishra and Sarma, 1983; p. 58). The term people's participation can be understood in terms of three principal ways :

- (1) Political Participation
- (2) Participation in Administration, and
- (3) Social Participation

* *Ph.D. Research Scholar*, Department of Political Science, Dibrugarh University, Assam-786004.
E-mail: jaanbiraj@gmail.com

Political participation refers to those voluntary activities by which the members of a society take part in the selection of rulers at different levels of the government, and directly or indirectly associate themselves in the process of formulating a public policy. In case of political participation, people take part in the elections of Member of Parliament, Member of State Assembly, Members of Urban Local Self Governing Institutions, Rural Local Self Governing Institutions, Members of District Councils, and moreover, people also participate in the indirect election of the Members of the Rajya Sabha, Upper House of the State Assembly House, etc.

In a democratic setup, people get a special opportunity to get involved in the affairs of the decision making and its implementation. There is a need and necessity of democratic decentralization of power at the grass-root level through which people's participation can be ensured to a great extent. The revolutionary 73rd Constitution Amendment Act of 1992 ensures people's participation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. On the basis of the decisions taken at the Grama Sabha, the activities of the PRIs are prepared accordingly. The new PRI's Act ensures people's participation in policy making, policy implementation, monitoring of policy execution, and policy evaluation by themselves.

The meaning of Social Participation is extensive in nature. It includes socio-economic development, social justice, national interest, mutual understanding of the people, social responsibility, and identification of various activities including social participation of people.

Yadav (1980) stated that the term people's participation can be well understood by four senses:

- (i) People's participation in Decision Making.
- (ii) People's participation in implementation.
- (iii) People's participation in monitoring and evaluation of development programmes and projects.
- (iv) People's Participation in sharing the benefits of development.

The concept of people's participation is an integral part of modern democracies, particularly for India so far as the concept of democratic decentralization is concerned. The constitution itself assures an extensive, constitutional protection to the people's autonomy in various stages of decision making, policy making, policy implementation and policy performance evaluation, which is designed to establish India as a truly welfare democratic state. At present, more than 80 percent of India's total population is living in rural areas and in search of an effective governmental or non-governmental mechanism for their all round development. Therefore, by the term '*people's participation*', we basically understand people's individual as well as collective involvement in the rural development activities of our country (Dutta, 2004; pp. 201-209).

People's participation in planning and implementation of development programmes and projects lead to the selection of the types of projects which are of direct benefit to them and will also generate more gainful employment. The utilization of ideal labour resources in productive employment will lead to an increase in productive employment (Local Level Planning and Rural Development, 1986).

Emphasizing the importance of people's participation, Reddy (1979; p. 124) very correctly stated that participation enriches the planning process by checking the reliability of data, ensuring commitment of the people to targeted projects for the rural sector, rationalizing proposals by the agencies concerned, reducing unreasonable pressure through informal channels and finally, basing the proposals on the judgment of the people affected by the programmes. It can be added here that people's participation aids in resolving the problems of the community, and ensures efficient and smooth implementation of the various RDPs.

It is a universally acknowledged fact that the goals and our socio-economic development is not achievable unless the citizens actively involve themselves in the preparation, implementation and follow up processes of the development plans and programmes. Though this basic philosophy was highly accepted, right from the days of planning, till today, the spirit of participation has not been realized. During the last two decades, several new approaches like '*top down planning*', '*planning from below*', '*bottom up planning*', '*micro level planning*', '*resource based planning*', and '*multi level planning*' have been planned in the context of involving the people in every phase of development (Sundar, 2006; p. 218). According to Working Group on District Planning, public participation is needed at all local levels for the following reasons:

- 1) To take note of the needs of the population.
- 2) To mobilize local resources for plan implementation, including people's labour.
- 3) To decrease the level of conflict during planning and implementation stages.
- 4) To increase the speed of implementation of securing the co-operation of the people.

- 5) To increase the legitimacy of authority and;
- 6) To reduce popular resistance to decisions.

People's participation in rural development is also important, especially when the government aims at providing the basic needs of the people. The basic needs are more important for the local people than anything else. As such, they show positive interest in the provision of basic needs. It is a fact that local people know well about their problems, and hence, they are the best judge in bringing out the solutions of their problems. The government responsibility is to create an environment that permits the local people to seek their best interests freely. As a result of active people's participation, the beneficiaries can get the maximum from the administrative agencies. Also, as a result of people's participation, the rural people will be in a better position to assess their own rights and responsibilities. People's participation is also necessary to lessen the gulf between them and the administration (Sundaram, 1999; p. 503).

It has long been argued that people's participation is essential for the success of the RDPs. People's participation should be encouraged owing to the fact that people in villages know their needs better than government officials working at the block, district and state levels. Non-involvement of people in the development programmes is also a great concern and challenge for rural development. No programme can be successful without people's participation. Thus, it has been observed that people's participation is having a great importance in RDPs. People can participate in the RDPs by several means-directly and indirectly. Direct participation includes active membership in organizations, taking up leadership positions and getting involved in projects. Indirect participation is helping the programmes and projects of the organization to become successful by making available to them, the necessary resources and assisting the community development officials and leaders.

According to Dillon and Hansara (1995; p. 7), the main objective of people's participation are :

- 1) Better planning and implementation of rural development programmes.
- 2) Mobilization of additional resources required for rural development programmes.
- 3) Empowering the people, particularly the poor , to play an effective role in rural development.

Rural development and people's participation should go together and both these components are highly essential for the integrity and the unity of the nation. In order to keep people united and feel responsible, involving indigenous people in developmental programmes framed for their own development is very much necessary. This not only helps to accelerate economic growth of the nation, but also helps to achieve balance regional development, which alternatively checks the drift of rural population to cities in search of employment to a large extent (Sundar, 2006; p. 219).

The basic objectives of the RDPs are to secure the full development of material and human resources of rural areas on an area-basis and develop local leadership and self-governing institutions. The central idea is to raise the rural community to a higher level of living with the active participation and initiation of the people, as people's support and participation forms the basic approach to RDPs (Thekhamalai, 1983; p. 22).

The involvement of the local leaders and people through their Community Development Organizations is most essential in developing and channelizing the local resources. Likewise, a participatory democracy stands on the basis of group or community involvement in the proper use and conservation of physical resources. The successful irrigation projects, community forest or soil conservation projects are ample evidence of the result of people's participation. It is the strategy around which the development process revolves (Mishra and Sharma, 1983; p. 58). Participation of the people in the rural development is very essential. However, it cannot be derived through imposition; it should be voluntary. Participating voluntarily and willingly can lead to better results. Equal share of the benefits of development is possible through equal participation both by the male-female and the rich and the poor. When it is carefully observed, there may be different forms of participation, but generally, it has been divided into two forms of people's participation in the rural development activities :

- 1) Formal Participation and
- 2) Informal Participation

Formal participation is that where the people can take part directly in the process of development. However, in this practice, it is not possible to set together all the local people and discuss things in the formal decision-making structure as the people cannot be allowed to sit together with the decision makers or with the policymakers. Thus, people's participation can be viewed as informal participation. There are various measures through which people's

participation can be expected. The mediums are discussions, consultations and meetings, etc. The decision makers before taking the decisions on any important subject concerning rural development can hold discussions with the people and thus oversee their opinion regarding any development programmes. They can also informally consult with the people or can hold public meetings to know the opinion of the people regarding any RDP, which is the form of informal participation. Usually, the rich persons of the area always come forward to take an active part in the schemes and thus, influence the decisions to get the lion's share of benefits. However, as soon as the poor masses become educated and conscious about their rights, they start to take part in the decision-making process along with the elite groups. Thus, with the growth of technical and political consciousness of the poor, the general people get involved in the development process and so, can influence decision making and can make rural development activities more effective and largely beneficial to a larger number of people (Patgiri, 2009; pp. 168-169).

In the recent years, people are getting an opportunity to involve themselves directly in the rural development activities because of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, which provides for strengthening the Grama Sabha at the Panchayat level. Now, the people are in a position to discuss various matters relating to their basic problems such as roads, school buildings, water supply, sanitation, agriculture and other rural problems, etc. in the meetings of the Grama Sabha (where every individual listed in the voter list is eligible to be a member of the Grama Sabha) and take an active part in the decision-making process at the Gaon Panchayat level and thereon.

Thus, the successful implementation of the various rural development programmes not only depends upon the effective functioning of the various administrative agencies viz - DRDA, Blocks and Village level functionaries, but also depends upon effective people's participation at all levels of people's participation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

For the present study, District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Dibrugarh, Assam was selected with the following objectives :

- 1)** While dealing with the problem of people's participation in rural development programmes, it is desirable to discuss the level of people's participation in rural development activities implemented by the DRDA, Dibrugarh, Assam.
- 2)** Further, it was intended to discuss how far the DRDA, Dibrugarh has been successful in creating people's awareness and participation in rural developmental activities.
- 3)** Another objective was to examine how far DRDA, Dibrugarh has been successful in transforming rural development programmes as people's programmes from the point of view of the importance of participatory rural development.

METHODOLOGY

For the present study, both primary and secondary data were used. For the purpose of primary level of data collection, altogether, 250 individuals were interviewed from three Development Block and nine Gaon Panchayats under DRDA, Dibrugarh. While identifying the individuals, 120 respondents had been selected from the list of the IAY beneficiaries and the remaining 130 respondents were the honorable President/Secretary of the female SHGs. A structured questionnaire was used for collecting the information. The selection of the individuals was made from the list of beneficiaries from the Annual Reports of the DRDA, Dibrugarh.

For the secondary level of data collection, various books, journals, reports, government documents, dissertations and unpublished M. Phil and Ph. D. Thesis were consulted. In order to ascertain the extent of people's participation in rural developmental activities of the DRDA implemented by the Blocks through the Gaon Panchayat (GP), it was desirable to study the perception of the people towards the various rural development programmes. The whole question of rural development programmes becomes academic, if the general citizens are not aware of their problems and the sense of responsibility in solving their own problems through a common platform. Therefore, the study was conducted with a view to examine people's participation in rural development activities in the context of nine Gaon Panchayats in three Development Blocks of DRDA, Dibrugarh in the state of Assam. Out of the 250 sample respondents who were selected for the field study, 29 were from Lahoal GP, 27 were from Bakul and Ekoratoli GP under Lahoal Development Block, 28 were from Nadua and Dikom GP, 27 were from Hatiali GP under Panitola Development

Block, 28 were from Gandhiya Bhajoni GP, 27 were from Tengakhat GP, and 29 were from Dharia Dighalia GP under the Tengakhat Development Block. Here, people's participation in rural development programmes was examined in the context of participation in planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and share of benefits of the RDPs.

BRIEF PROFILE OF DIBRUGARH DISTRICT

As per the Statistical Hand Book of Assam 2005, the total area of Assam is 78438.00sq.km, out of which 77476.23 sq. km comes under the rural area and 61.77 sq. km comes under the urban area. The total area of Dibrugarh district is 3381sq. km, out of which 3330.36 sq. km comes under the rural area and 50.64 sq. km comes under the urban area. Out of the 26312 villages, 25124 are inhabited villages in Assam and 1309 out of the 1345 are inhabited villages in Dibrugarh. There are 2489 Gaon Panchayats in Assam and 93 Gaon Panchayats (GP) fell in Dibrugarh (Statistical Hand Book of Assam, 2005). The Table 1 highlights the basic information about the district of Dibrugarh.

Table 1 : Basic Information About Dibrugarh District And Assam											
District/ State	Area Sq. Km.			Population			No. of Villages		No. of Household		G.P.
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Inhabited	Rural	Urban	
Dibrugarh	3381.00	3330.36	50.64	1185072	956634	228438	1345	1309	182032	46542	93
Assam	78438.00	77476.23	61.77	26655528	23216288	3439240	26312	25124	4203976	710847	2489
Source: Assam Statistical Handbook, 2005											

GENDER WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Gender is an important determinant in people's participation in the various rural development activities because the movement and easy communication to some extent depends upon the gender of the individual. Further, the family responsibility of the individual also depends upon his/her gender. Hence, gender is considered as an important component in determination of people's participation in the rural developmental activities.

The 250 respondents in nine Gaon Panchayats in three development blocks of Dibrugarh were classified into two categories - Male and Female, where a majority - 80.80 percent were female respondents, and only 19.20 percent were male respondents (Table 2).

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE 73rd CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACT

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 is an important legislation towards empowerment of the rural people through the decentralization of power at the grass root level. Further, the Act has made provision for providing the necessary guidelines to increase people's participation thorough the three tier Panchayati Raj Institutions, where they are allowed to take part in the decision making processes of the PRI's through the Grama Sabha. Therefore, it is important to spread awareness about the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act among the rural population. The respondents were questioned regarding their awareness of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. The responses of the respondents were as follows- only 30.80 percent respondents stated that they have a little bit idea or had heard about the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. On the other hand, a majority (69.20 percent) of the respondents did not have any idea about such an important Act which ensured the rights of the rural people (Table 3).

Further, the respondents were asked about their knowledge on the powers conferred by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. It is important that people have knowledge about the powers conferred by the Act for the empowerment of the rural people to take part in the decision making process of the PRI's through the Grama Sabha. In response to this question, the responses of the respondents were as follows- only 21.20 percent respondents stated that they were aware of the powers conferred by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act to the PRI's. On the other hand, a majority of the (79.80 percent) respondents were ignorant about the powers conferred by the Act to the PRI's (Table 4).

Table 2: Gender Wise Distribution of The Respondents				
Name of the Block	Name of the GP	Sex Wise Distribution of Respondents		Total
		Male	Female	
Lahoal	Lahoal GP	2(6.89)	27(93.11)	29(100.00)
	Bakul GP	6(22.22)	21(77.78)	27(100.00)
	Ekoratoli GP	2(7.40)	25(92.60)	27(100.00)
Panitola	Nadua GP	2(7.14)	26(92.86)	28(100.00)
	Hatiali GP	7(25.92)	20(74.08)	27(100.00)
	Dikom GP	4(14.28)	24(85.72)	28(100.00)
Tengakhat	Gandhiya Bhajoni GP	8(28.57)	20(71.43)	28(100.00)
	Tengakhat GP	8(29.62)	19(70.38)	27(100.00)
	Dharia Dighalia GP	9(31.03)	20(68.97)	29(100.00)
	Total	48(19.20)	202(80.80)	250(100.00)
Source: Field Study				

Table 3: Respondents' Knowledge About The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act				
Name of the Block	Name of the GP	Knowledge about the 73 rd Constitutional Amendment Act		Total
		Yes	No	
Lahoal	Lahoal GP	9(30.03)	20(79.97)	29(100.00)
	Bakul GP	11(40.74)	16(59.26)	27(100.00)
	Ekoratoli GP	8(29.62)	19(70.38)	27(100.00)
Panitola	Nadua GP	7(25.00)	21(75.00)	28(100.00)
	Hatiali GP	8(29.62)	19(70.38)	27(100.00)
	Dikom GP	10(35.71)	18(64.29)	28(100.00)
Tengakhat	Gandhiya Bhajoni GP	7(25.00)	21(75.00)	28(100.00)
	Tengakhat GP	9(33.33)	18(67.67)	27(100.00)
	Dharia Dighalia GP	8(27.58)	21(72.42)	29(100.00)
	Total	77(30.80)	173(69.20)	250(100.00)
Source: Field Study				

ATTENDANCE OF THE RESPONDENTS FOR THE GRAMA SABHA MEETINGS AND TAKING PART IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS OF THE PRIs

Attendance of the respondents in the Grama Sabha meetings and taking an active part in the decision-making process of the PRI's is an important component of determination of people's participation in the rural development programmes. Therefore, the respondents were asked about their presence in the Grama Sabha Meetings and their participation in the decision-making process of the PRIs. In response to this question, the respondents replied in the following way- only 21.20 percent respondents always attended the Grama Sabha meetings of their respective GP, 16.00 percent respondents never attended the Grama Sabha meetings, and a majority (62.80 percent) of the respondents attended the Grama Sabha meetings whenever they got the time to do so. They were also asked about their involvement in the decision-making process of the PRIs through the Grama Sabha meetings, and their reply was the same, as it was in the case of attendance of the Grama Sabha Meetings. Only 21.20 percent respondent always took an active part in the Grama Sabha meetings of their respective GP, 16.00 percent respondents never attended and participated in the Grama Sabha meetings, and a majority (62.80 percent) of the respondents attended and took part in

Table 4: Knowledge About The Powers Conferred To The Grama Sabhas By The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act				
Name of the Block	Name of the GP	Knowledge about the Powers conferred to the Grama Sabhas by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act		Total
		Yes	No	
Lahoal	Lahoal GP	5(17.24)	24(82.76)	29(100.00)
	Bakul GP	7(25.92)	20(74.08)	27(100.00)
	Ekoratoli GP	4(14.81)	23(85.19)	27(100.00)
Panitola	Nadua GP	6(21.42)	22(78.58)	28(100.00)
	Hatiali GP	5(18.51)	22(81.49)	27(100.00)
	Dikom GP	8(28.57)	20(71.43)	28(100.00)
Tengakhath	Gandhiya Bhajoni GP	5(17.85)	23(82.15)	28(100.00)
	Tengakhath GP	6(22.22)	21(77.78)	27(100.00)
	Dharia Dighalia GP	7(24.13)	22(75.87)	29(100.00)
	Total	53(21.20)	197(79.80)	250(100.00)
Source: Field Study				

the decision-making process of the Grama Sabha meetings whenever they got the time to do so (Table 5).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE GRAMA SABHA MEETINGS

Information about the Grama Sabha meetings is essential for active people's involvement and participation in the meetings. Therefore, the respondents were asked about the source of information about the Grama Sabha meetings to be held in their respective Gaon Panchayats. In response to this question, the replies of the respondents were as follows - 21.20 percent respondents stated that their source of information were the members of the GP/ward members, 17.20 percent got the information from the office of the Gaon Panchayat, and 61.60 percent stated that they hardly received any information about the proposed Grama Sabha meetings to be held in their respective GP's (Table 6).

RESPONDENTS' RESPONSES REGARDING RECEIVING ADEQUATE INFORMATION FROM THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRIs

The respondents were questioned whether the information provided by the PRIs was sufficient or not - as dissemination of information through the PRIs is very much essential to make the people aware about the various schemes introduced by the Government of India for the development of the people of the rural areas. Further, proper information is very much essential and the probable beneficiaries of the various schemes are also important for effective people's participation in the RDPs. Without proper dissemination of information among the people, rural development programmes cannot be effectively implemented by the concerned public office or institution. Therefore, it was essential to enquire about the reliability of the information supplied to the people by the PRIs.

The responses of the respondents were as follows- out of 250 respondents, 52.40 percent respondents stated that they received adequate information about the RDPs from the PRIs, and were satisfied with the information provided by the PRIs. 19.20 percent alleged that they never received any information from the PRIs office and also from the ward members of the concerned Gaon Panchayat, 28.40 percent respondents stated that sometimes they received the needed information from the PRI's office (Table 7).

Table 5: Respondents' Responses Regarding Attending And Participating In The Grama Sabha Meetings					
Name of the Block	Name of the GP	Always	Never	Whenever get time	Total
Lahoal	Lahoal GP	5(17.24)	3(10.34)	21(72.42)	29(100.00)
	Bakul GP	7(25.92)	5(18.52)	15(55.56)	27(100.00)
	Ekoratoli GP	4(14.81)	5(18.52)	18(66.67)	27(100.00)
Panitola	Nadua GP	6(21.42)	4(14.28)	18(64.28)	28(100.00)
	Hatiali GP	5(18.51)	6(22.23)	16(59.26)	27(100.00)
	Dikom GP	8(28.57)	3(10.71)	17(60.72)	28(100.00)
Tengakhat	Gandhiya Bhajoni GP	5(17.85)	5(17.85)	18(64.30)	28(100.00)
	Tengakhat GP	6(22.22)	4(14.81)	17(62.97)	27(100.00)
	Dharia Dighalia GP	7(24.13)	5(17.24)	17(58.63)	29(100.00)
	Total	53(21.20)	40(16.00)	157(62.80)	250(100.00)
Source: Field Study					

Table 6: Respondents' Responses Regarding Receiving Information About The Grama Sabha Meetings					
Name of the Block	Name of the GP	Information Through GP Members	Through GP Office	Occasionally receive the information	Total
Lahoal	Lahoal GP	5(17.24)	5(17.24)	19(65.52)	29(100.00)
	Bakul GP	7(25.92)	3(11.11)	17(62.97)	27(100.00)
	Ekoratoli GP	4(14.81)	5(18.52)	18(66.67)	27(100.00)
Panitola	Nadua GP	6(21.42)	4(14.29)	18(64.29)	28(100.00)
	Hatiali GP	5(18.51)	5(18.51)	17(62.97)	27(100.00)
	Dikom GP	8(28.57)	4(14.28)	16(57.15)	28(100.00)
Tengakhat	Gandhiya Bhajoni	5(17.85)	6(21.42)	17(60.73)	28(100.00)
	Tengakhat	6(22.22)	5(18.52)	16(59.26)	27(100.00)
	Dharia Dighalia	7(24.13)	6(20.69)	16(55.18)	29(100.00)
	Total	53(21.20)	43(17.20)	154(61.60)	250(100.00)
Source: Field Study					

RESPONDENTS' RESPONSES REGARDING RECEIVING THE NECESSARY INFORMATION FROM THE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Further, the respondents were enquired regarding the information provided by the Government officials regarding various schemes implemented by the Government of India. In this connection, the responses of the respondents were as follows - 30.80 percent respondents replied that they received the necessary information from the Government officials, 31.20 percent stated that did not receive the necessary information from the Government officials, as and when it was required, and 38.00 percent stated that sometimes, they received the necessary information (Table 8).

RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION ABOUT THE APPROACHABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

When the respondents were asked about the approachability of the Government officials, they replied in the following way- 30.80 percent respondents replied that the Government Officials were approachable to some extent and a majority of the respondents (69.20 percent) stated that they were not approachable or helpful to the general public (Table 9).

Table 7: Respondents' Responses Regarding Receiving Information From The Elected Representatives of The PRIs					
Name of the Block	Name of the GP	Respondents' View			Total
		Yes	No	Sometimes	
Lahoal	Lahoal GP	16 (55.17)	5(17.24)	8(27.59)	29(100.00)
	Bakul GP	17 (62.96)	3(11.11)	7(25.93)	27(100.00)
	Ekoratoli GP	13 (48.14)	6(22.23)	8(29.63)	27(100.00)
Panitola	Nadua GP	15 (53.57)	5(17.85)	8(28.58)	28(100.00)
	Hatiali GP	13 (48.14)	7(25.93)	13(48.14)	27(100.00)
	Dikom GP	17 (60.72)	4(14.28)	7(25.00)	28(100.00)
Tengakhat	Gandhiya Bhajoni GP	13 (46.42)	6(21.43)	9(32.15)	28(100.00)
	Tengakhat GP	13 (48.14)	7(25.93)	7(25.93)	27(100.00)
	Dharia Dighalia GP	14 (48.27)	5(17.24)	10(34.49)	29(100.00)
	Total	131(52.40)	48(19.20)	71(28.40)	250(100.00)
Source: Field Study					

Table 8: Respondents' Responses Regarding Receiving Information From The Government Officials					
Name of the Block	Name of the GP	Respondents' View			Total
		Yes	No	Sometimes	
Lahoal	Lahoal GP	8(27.59)	10(34.49)	11(37.92)	29(100.00)
	Bakul GP	7(25.93)	9(33.33)	11(40.74)	27(100.00)
	Ekoratoli GP	8(29.63)	9(33.33)	10(37.04)	27(100.00)
Panitola	Nadua GP	8(28.58)	11(39.27)	9(32.15)	28(100.00)
	Hatiali GP	13 (48.14)	7(25.93)	7(25.93)	27(100.00)
	Dikom GP	7(25.00)	8(28.57)	13(46.43)	28(100.00)
Tengakhat	Gandhiya Bhajoni GP	9(32.15)	9(32.15)	10(35.70)	28(100.00)
	Tengakhat GP	7(25.93)	6(22.22)	14(51.85)	27(100.00)
	Dharia Dighalia GP	10(34.49)	9(31.02)	10(34.49)	29(100.00)
	Total	77(30.80)	78(31.20)	95(38.00)	250(100.00)
Source: Field Study					

RESPONDENTS' OPINION REGARDING THE SELECTION OF THE BENEFICIARIES FOR VARIOUS RDPs

The views of the respondents regarding the selection of beneficiaries for the various RDP's are as follows- 48.00 percent respondents replied that the selection procedure of the beneficiaries of the RDP's was good , but on the other hand, a majority (52.00 percent) of the respondents stated that the selection procedure of the beneficiaries was helpful to a small percentage of the people (Table 10).

RESPONDENTS' OPINION REGARDING POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON THE SELECTION OF THE BENEFICIARIES FOR VARIOUS RDPs

The views of the respondents regarding the selection of the beneficiaries for the various RDP's are as follows- 52.00 percent of the respondents replied that the selection procedure of the beneficiaries for the RDP's was politically influenced to a great extent, but on the other hand, 48.00 percent of the respondents stated that the selection procedure of the beneficiaries was impartial in nature (Table 11).

Table 9: Respondents' Responses Regarding The Approachability of Government Officials				
Name of the Block	Name of the GP	Opinion of the respondents		Total
		Approachable	Not Approachable	
Lahoal	Lahoal GP	8(27.59)	21(72.41)	29(100.00)
	Bakul GP	7(25.93)	20(74.07)	27(100.00)
	Ekoratoli GP	8(29.63)	19(70.37)	27(100.00)
Panitola	Nadua GP	8(28.58)	20(71.42)	28(100.00)
	Hatiali GP	13 (48.14)	14(51.86)	27(100.00)
	Dikom GP	7(25.00)	21(75.00)	28(100.00)
Tengakhath	Gandhiya Bhajoni GP	9(32.15)	19(67.85)	28(100.00)
	Tengakhath GP	7(25.93)	20(74.07)	27(100.00)
	Dharia Dighalia GP	10(34.49)	19(65.51)	29(100.00)
	Total	77(30.80)	173(69.20)	250(100.00)
Source: Field Study				

Table 10: Respondents' Responses About The Selection Of Beneficiaries For Different Rural Development Programmes				
Name of the Block	Name of the GP	Opinion regarding the selection procedure		Total
		Good	Helpful to reach a handful	
Lahoal	Lahoal GP	14 (48.28)	15(51.72)	29(100.00)
	Bakul GP	13 (48.14)	14(51.86)	27(100.00)
	Ekoratoli GP	13 (48.14)	14(51.86)	27(100.00)
Panitola	Nadua GP	13 (46.42)	15(53.58)	28(100.00)
	Hatiali G.P.	13 (48.14)	14(51.86)	27(100.00)
	Dikom GP	14 (50.00)	14(50.00)	28(100.00)
Tengakhath	Gandhiya Bhajoni	13 (46.42)	15(53.58)	28(100.00)
	Tengakhath	13 (48.14)	14(51.86)	27(100.00)
	Dharia Dighalia	14 (48.28)	15(51.72)	29(100.00)
	Total	120(48.00)	130(52.00)	250(100.00)
Source: Field Study				

RESPONDENTS' OPINION REGARDING FULFILLMENT OF THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE BY THE GOVERNMENT

The respondents were also asked to give their opinion regarding the fulfillment of the needs of the people by the Government. In this regard, they replied in the following way- 30.80 percent respondents stated that the government has fulfilled the needs of the people, 38.00 percent stated that the government had succeeded in fulfilling the needs of the people to some extent, but 31.20 percent stated that the government had failed to fulfill the needs of the people through the various schemes for rural development (Table 12).

RESPONDENTS' OPINION REGARDING PEOPLE'S COOPERATION IN THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

In this regard, the responses of the respondents were as follows- 48.00 percent stated the people of their respective Gaon Panchayats were co-operative in the rural development programmes, and 27.20 percent stated that the people were opportunists and were on a lookout to grab opportunities for the benefit of their own selves. 24.80 percent of the

Table 11: Respondents' Responses About Political Influence On The Selection Of Beneficiaries For Various Schemes				
Name of the Block	Name of the GP	Respondents' View		Total
		Prevalence of Political influence	Impartial selection	
Lahoal	Lahoal GP	15(51.72)	14 (48.28)	29(100.00)
	Bakul GP	14(51.86)	13 (48.14)	27(100.00)
	Ekoratoli GP	14(51.86)	13 (48.14)	27(100.00)
Panitola	Nadua GP	15(53.58)	13 (46.42)	28(100.00)
	Hatiali GP	14(51.86)	13 (48.14)	27(100.00)
	Dikom GP	14(50.00)	14 (50.00)	28(100.00)
Tengakhath	Gandhiya Bhajoni	15(53.58)	13 (46.42)	28(100.00)
	Tengakhath	14(51.86)	13 (48.14)	27(100.00)
	Dharia Dighalia	15(51.72)	14 (48.28)	29(100.00)
	Total	130(52.00)	120(48.00)	250(100.00)
Source: Field Study				

Table 12: Respondents' Responses About The Fulfillment Of The Needs Of The People By The Government					
Name of the Block	Name of the GP	Respondents' View			Total
		Yes, it fulfills the needs	No, it does not fulfill	Fulfills to some extent	
Lahoal	Lahoal GP	8(27.59)	10(34.49)	11(37.92)	29(100.00)
	Bakul GP	7(25.93)	9(33.33)	11(40.74)	27(100.00)
	Ekoratoli GP	8(29.63)	9(33.33)	10(37.04)	27(100.00)
Panitola	Nadua GP	8(28.58)	11(39.27)	9(32.15)	28(100.00)
	Hatiali GP	13 (48.14)	7(25.93)	7(25.93)	27(100.00)
	Dikom GP	7(25.00)	8(28.57)	13(46.43)	28(100.00)
Tengakhath	Gandhiya Bhajoni	9(32.15)	9(32.15)	10(35.70)	28(100.00)
	Tengakhath	7(25.93)	6(22.22)	14(51.85)	27(100.00)
	Dharia Dighalia	10(34.49)	9(31.02)	10(34.49)	29(100.00)
	Total	77(30.80)	78(31.20)	95(38.00)	250(100.00)
Source: Field Study					

Table 13: Respondents' Responses About People's Cooperation In Rural Development Programmes					
Name of the Block	Name of the GP	Respondents' opinion			Total
		Cooperative	Not Cooperative	Opportunists	
Lahoal	Lahoal GP	14 (48.28)	7(24.14)	8(27.58)	29(100.00)
	Bakul GP	13 (48.14)	6(22.23)	8(29.63)	27(100.00)
	Ekoratoli GP	13 (48.14)	8(29.63)	6(22.23)	27(100.00)
Panitola	Nadua GP	13 (46.42)	9(32.15)	6(21.43)	28(100.00)
	Hatiali GP	13 (48.14)	5(18.52)	9(33.34)	27(100.00)
	Dikom GP	14 (50.00)	5(17.85)	9(32.15)	28(100.00)
Tengakhath	Gandhiya Bhajoni	13 (46.42)	7(25.00)	8(28.58)	28(100.00)
	Tengakhath	13 (48.14)	9(33.34)	5(18.52)	27(100.00)
	Dharia Dighalia	14 (48.28)	6(20.69)	9(31.03)	29(100.00)
	Total	120(48.00)	62(24.80)	68(27.20)	250(100.00)
Source: Field Study					

respondents stated that the people were not cooperative at all (Table 13).

CONCLUSION

From the present study, it can be said that the level of people's participation in the rural development programmes in the three Development Blocks and in nine Gaon Panchayats was not satisfactory. The study reveals that the level of people's participation in rural development was not much encouraging. Various studies on people's participation reveal that the level of people's participation in the developing countries is passive and marginal. Moreover, there is a tendency on the part of the administration to alienate the people. The only way through which the rural people can participate in the rural development programmes is by sharing the benefits of the various RDPs implemented by the DRDA through the Development Blocks as well as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The introduction of the Panchayati Raj system provides an opportunity to the people to participate in the local affairs through Grama Sabha. *From the study, it was found that the DRDA, Dibrugarh failed to create awareness among the people and transform the rural development programmes into people's programme from the point of view of the importance of participatory rural development.*

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